



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Importance of the Family – Part 1

Guest(s): Howard Hendricks

Air Date: January 7, 2021

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- Dr. Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. Thanks for listening to our program, which each day addresses topics related to the family. In fact, supporting that sacred institution is a core mission of our ministry. Dr. Dobson has always believed the timeless truth that the traditional family unit is the bedrock of culture. Any threats to this pillar endangers our way of life. In just a moment, you'll hear a presentation exploring why the family is so crucial and why we need to fight to preserve it.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Our speaker today is the late Bible teacher and professor, Howard Hendricks. He was affectionately referred to as the Prof for his six decades of service at Dallas Theological Seminary, educating young minds and inspiring some of his students to go out and become great evangelists themselves. Professor Hendricks also wrote over 20 books and spoke in some 80 countries around the world.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: This program was recorded at Dallas Theological Seminary many years ago, but it's still relevant and applicable to the state of the family in today's trying times. There's a lot to get to, so let's begin. Here's a classic message from the late Howard Hendricks that Dr. Dobson personally selected for you to listen to today on this edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.
- Howard Hendrick...: This afternoon, I want to speak to you on the subject, "Why be concerned about the family?" One of the alarming trends transparent to the thinking Christian is the disappearance of the distinctively Christian home. I refer not merely to a home where Christ resides, but to a home where Christ rules. To a home where Christian truth filters down and permeates into every area of that home.
- Howard Hendrick...: I believe we need to remind ourselves periodically that one of the inviolate historical facts is that no society, no culture has ever survived the fragmentation of its family life. And I believe the family today is unraveling like a cheap sweater. The collapse of every civilization has always been preceded by the unraveling of marriage and the family.

- Howard Hendrick...: I am convinced Satan has a strategy, and Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians that we are not ignorant of his schemes. The longer I have thought about this, the more I am persuaded that the linchpin in the satanic strategy is to dislodge the Christian home.
- Howard Hendrick...: Sometime ago, I received a letter from a student of mine now serving with distinction in Canada. Many of you know Bill McRae because he served here in the community, pastoring a church for a number of years, and then went to London, Ontario to pastor the North Park Community Church. And more recently, he has become the president of Ontario Bible College and Theological Seminary.
- Howard Hendrick...: In the course of that letter, he made this statement: Dear Prof, recently, we were informed by a family who has a direct connection with a Satanist group in the city of London, that this group has been praying to Satan specifically for the destruction of the marriages and families of a number of the leading evangelical Christian workers in our community. Just three weeks ago, it was announced at a Christian conference in the vacation land of Ontario, that the satanist groups in this province had a conference, during which time the group in London was held up as a model to be followed by others because they had succeeded last year in eliminating five of the leading evangelical pastors from their ministry as a result of either a marriage breakdown or a major family problem. Three of whom were graduates of our seminar.
- Howard Hendrick...: Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a fun and games proposition. He's playing for real, and the stakes are extremely high. The problems in family life today are epidemic. And interestingly enough, some of the highest levels of Christian leadership are infected with the same disease.
- Howard Hendrick...: As a matter of fact, I have had more young people in the last six months say to me, "Where do we go for models in the Christian community of good marriages, good families?" You need to know that some of the most prominent Christian leaders are in the process of getting a divorce or are currently living in sin. The result is the pedestals are empty to many of our young people. And they're asking, "Where are the behavioral models? Where are the people who flesh out in their marriages, in their families, what God has called us to?"
- Howard Hendrick...: I believe these facts are forcing a question. It's the question I want to answer today briefly. Why be concerned about the family? I think there are four reasons which conspire to build a convincing case that the family is not an option, it is an essential, and that we've got to restore to its biblical place the family as God designed it.
- Howard Hendrick...: The first reason I would suggest for your thinking is the family is important because of the paramount importance of the home in the scriptures. You see, the doctrine of the family in the scriptures is not peripheral, it's central, it's structural. The basic unit of society is not the state, it's not the school. In fact, it's not the church. The basic unit in God's society is the family. The home is the

cornerstone of civilization. And when the home goes, the rest goes. It's just a question of time.

Howard Hendrick...: The more I examine the evidence, the more I am convinced that the most neglected doctrine in the scripture is the doctrine of the family. For your information, there is no comprehensive biblical statement of the doctrine of the family in existence today. We have never done our homework in this area. This still remains one of the greatest needs in the evangelical community. It's never been produced. And our failure has a very high price tag connected with it. And our dilemma is seen in evangelicalism. I know that there are many seminars, and there are many tapes, and there are many films, and there are books galore. But the interesting thing when you examine these is that conspicuous by its absence is a strong, biblical thrust to the teacher.

Howard Hendrick...: There are many people in the Christian community who can quote Dr. So-and-so or Professor So-and-so, but there are very few people who can quote the scriptures and say, "This is what God has said."

Howard Hendrick...: There are four seminal passages of scripture that I would simply run by you to demonstrate to you how central this doctrine is in the scriptures. The first of course is Genesis 1 and 2, the seed plot of the Bible. I don't need to spend a great deal of time to tell you that God roots the whole doctrine of marriage in the family in Genesis 1 and 2. This is the passage quoted by the apostle Paul, quoted by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Verse 24 reminds us it's for this cause that a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Howard Hendrick...: I've often tried to analyze, "What have I done over the years in marriage and family counseling?" You know what I've discovered? I've discovered that I can subsume all of my marriage and family counseling under one of those three statements in that verse. A failure to leave, a failure to cleave, or a failure to develop a one flesh relationship.

Howard Hendrick...: Or take the passage in Deuteronomy chapter 6, what many biblical scholars regard as the very heart, not only of the book of Deuteronomy, but of the Old Testament law. Where Moses says, preparing a whole new generation to go into the land, that, "I want these words that I'm commanding you this day to be upon your heart, and I want you to teach them diligently unto your children. When you wake up in the morning, when you go to bed at night, when you are walking by the road, when you are lying down. And I want you to place them upon your hands and upon your head," symbolizing the word of God was to control everything you do, everything you think about from the most intimate aspect of your bedroom to the most public aspect of your community life. To come away from a passage like this, and you say, "If we had never listened to anything else that God had said and put it into practice, we would never experience the tragedy that we are witnessing today."

Howard Hendrick...: Or take the Psalm 127, which I believe, first of all, sets forth a basic philosophy concerning the family. That is that you cannot build your home without the Lord. "Except the Lord build the house," he says, "you're laboring in vain, the building." And it's vain for you to get up earlier or to stay up later, because you'll only eat the bread of sorrows. God has no plan B.

Howard Hendrick...: And then he goes on to say, "But there's a perspective you need," and he uses three epithets to describe children. He describes them as heritage, he describes them as a reward, he describes them as arrows. And you think through the implications of that alone, and you'd never have the low level of thinking that obtains today concerning children, even in the evangelical community. Children are the heritage of the Lord. The word means assignment. So we think God gives us children because of what we can do to them, but the truth of the matter is God often gives us children because of what they do to us. Children are the reward. They're not an accident. They're not a tragedy. They're not a casualty. They're not something to be aborted and prostituted. They are a sign of God's favor upon a person's life. And they're arrows to be launched toward a predetermined target, and God gives us the privilege of being involved in the process.

Howard Hendrick...: Or take the freighted passage in Ephesians 5 beginning at verse one and going through chapter 6 and verse 4 where you have a whole series of relationships. Relationships that create responsibility. The relationship of a husband to his wife, the wife to her husband, the parents to their children, the children to their parents. And you get some of the most revolutionary truth that you have ever heard, given by the one who created the family, the manufacturer's instructions, if you please, and therefore, the one who obviously knows how they work. And of course, in our society, we have chosen to violate and ignore these basic specifications, but we cannot escape the consequences of bypassing the truth.

Howard Hendrick...: Now, I would submit to you that if we had no more revelations than that, and I can assure you, there is much more, we would have all of the reason in the world that would justify not only the art of family living, but a high priority on marriage and the family. But there's a second reason I'd like to suggest for you. That is we ought to be concerned about the family, not only because of its importance in the scripture, but also because of the strategic role and relationship between the church and the home.

Howard Hendrick...: Now, I believe there are only two divinely appointed agencies in the scripture. One of these is the home. The other of these is the church. The interesting thing is to see the relationship between these. See, the primary purpose of the home is to train people to function in the church. And the primary purpose of the church is to equip parents to function in the home. God never called the church to be a parent, but that's what most churches are trying to do.

Howard Hendrick...: And I'm just starting to think for a moment who has the child. The average church has the child for approximately 1% of his time. The average home has

him for approximately 83% of his time. The remaining 16% of his time belonging to the school.

Howard Hendrick...: Now just think through the implications of that. You see what we are trying to do in our churches, particularly when we are bypassing the home, we are trying to do the impossible. This is why any church that is not linked with the home is laboring against insuperable odds. It's a losing proposition. But when that home and that church are linked together in a cooperative, then you have an invincible combination that even let's say the so-called secular schools cannot dislodge.

Howard Hendrick...: I think what happens, though I think there is a great legitimacy to the Christian school movement and a fantastic contribution it has made over the years, is that often people who are not doing the job over here and a church not doing the job over here are trying to dump on these dear people an impossible task. Tasking them, "You lead my kid to correction. You teach them the word of God," when all the time God is saying, "That's your primary responsibility."

Howard Hendrick...: Now, if the church is doing its job and you've got them in a Christian school and you've got this triumvirate, then think of the advantage you've got to make an impact on that child's life. But if any of these is copping out in terms of the responsibility, then you are in serious trouble. This is precisely what is happening today. I think many of our churches, for example, are doing more to break up our homes than they are to build them up.

Howard Hendrick...: I was in a prominent church in the east some time ago, and a pastor stuck a church bulletin beneath my nose and said, "Look at that, Hendricks, something going on every night of the week." I said, "Are you proud of that fact?" It was obvious he was. I said, "I wouldn't be. I would be ashamed of that." I said, "Let's suppose..." And ladies and gentlemen, this is a tremendous opposition. I said, "Let's suppose that the people in your church were interested in cultivating their home life. On exactly what night of the week would you suggest they do that?" To which this pastor responded with the agnostic, "Well, I don't know." That pastor's ignorance forced the question, "Is it possible that our churches are doing more to break up our homes than they are to build them up?"

Howard Hendrick...: So we've got to ask some penetrating questions. What are we doing as a church to support this? Are we dislodging the members of that home every single night of the week?

Howard Hendrick...: I remember suggesting to a student some time ago who was grappling with this issue in his church and asked me the question, "What can I do?" I said, "Why don't you mark some time in the church bulletin, stay at home night?" So he got brave and the deacons got wild and they voted that in, Tuesday and Friday. Nothing could be scheduled in the church. Stay at home.

- Howard Hendrick...: So he thought, "As a good pastor, I'd better go around, find out what's going on." So he said, "I go around and find out what's going on. They're watching television." And he said to me, "Perhaps I discovered not only do you need to tell people to stay at home, you've got to tell them what to do when they stay at home." See, the average person left alone with his thoughts is tremendously lonely. And people don't have a clue as to what in the world they're going to do.
- Howard Hendrick...: I repeat, God never called the church to do the work of a parent. He called parents to do the work that only they can do, and the church to equip them to do that.
- Howard Hendrick...: There's a third reason I'd like to suggest for your thinking. This is freighted with implication. We ought to be concerned about the family because of the climate of contemporary society. The church was designed, it's very clear from the New Testament, to impact society. But unfortunately, all too frequently, the society is impacting the church.
- Howard Hendrick...: You see, we've got a reproduction of what we had in the early church. That is instead of the church of Corinth making an impact on the city of Corinth, the city of Corinth was making an impact on the church of Corinth. This is exactly where we are today. The church does not exist in a vacuum, it exists in a society. A society that impinges upon that church and the people who live in it, and you cannot escape from it.
- Howard Hendrick...: There are four major characteristics of contemporary society I'd like to share with you briefly. And if we had more time, you could think through the implications of these for the home. The first major characteristic of our society is the characteristic of secularism. Every now and then somebody says to me, "Aren't you concerned that they're not persecuting you out on the campus with, let's say, some evangelistic program you've got?" I say, "No, I'm really not. What I'm concerned about is I don't think we're that significant to be persecuted."
- Howard Hendrick...: You see, if you compare what happened in the first century in terms of what happened in the 20th century, you've got an altogether different group of people staying up at night. In the first century, the pagans stayed up at night, trying to figure out, "How in the world are we going to contain this sad thing?" Today, it's the Christians who stay up at night, figuring, "How in the world are we going to contain this kind of a secular society?"
- Howard Hendrick...: Secular society is one in which there is only one dimension. And you knew it would happen when our theologian friends contributed to the process by pushing God over the cliff with a, "God is dead" idea. I'm sure you read the book. God is dead, Nietzsche is dead, and I'm not feeling too well myself. This is the attitude on many a campus today. It's the fact that God is totally expendable. It isn't the fact that he is a live option among many options. It's the fact that he is never brought into the scene.

Howard Hendrick...: And of course, if you watch television, it's perfectly obvious to you that we are being brainwashed to be increasingly more secular with every program. So we have an ad which in effect says, "You only go around once in life, so you better grab all the gusto you can get." And then Jesus Christ comes along and says, "You really want to live a significant life?" The guy says, "Man, sure." "Good. Throw it away." "Throw it away? Lord, don't you know you only go around once in life? You've got to grab all the gusto you can get." And Jesus says, "No, I don't think I remember that part." The fascinating thing is that the average person who wouldn't drink a drop of Schlitz is shot through with that kind of a philosophy. A one dimensional lifestyle.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A thought-provoking presentation from the late Howard Hendricks about the importance of the family. This is Dr. Tim Clinton, and you've been listening to the first half of this message on today's edition of Family Talk. Listen tomorrow for the second half of Professor Hendricks' insightful wisdom and entertaining delivery on this subject.

Dr. Tim Clinton: If you'd like to learn more about his legacy, go to our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. While there, check out the many new features of our website, quickly access our latest programs by listening through the built-in broadcast player, or follow our trending videos and blogs from our growing field of experts. This fresh layout directs you to helpful materials on the topics of marriage, parenting, family, and culture.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You'll find Dr. Dobson's latest monthly newsletter there too, along with the massive archive of all those insightful newsletters and our entire audio library as well, all for free. That's drjamesdobson.org.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Thanks for listening today. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of Professor Howard Hendricks' lesson on the importance of the family. You don't want to miss it. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. Have a great day.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Hey everyone, Roger Marsh here for Family Talk. Where can you go to receive support and advice for you and your family? Family Talk interacts with millions of people every day with inspiring advice and tips from Dr. James Dobson on what matters to you the most. Whether it's marriage or parenting, you can be sure our Facebook page will keep you updated with how your family can succeed. Join us each day for the latest broadcast, resources, and inspiration. Nowhere else can you hear a thought of the day from Dr. Dobson, as well as a special message before you say goodnight. Now, you can be sure that every post on our page is created with you and your family in mind. So please take the time to visit us and become part of our online community at facebook.com/DrJamesDobsonsFamilyTalk. That's facebook.com/DrJamesDobsonsFamilyTalk.

Dr. Dobson:

This is James Dobson again. As we close today's program, I just want to thank so many of you out there who make this broadcast possible with your contributions, and I want to tell you how much your generosity is appreciated.