



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Focus on the Future

Guest(s): Dr. Tim Clinton

Air Date: November 12, 2021

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Hello, and welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and I'm stepping in for Dr. Dobson today to interview a familiar voice, our very own Dr. Tim Clinton. We're going to talk about Tim's brand new book called *Focus on the Future*. Now before we get started though, let me give my guest a brief introduction. Dr. Tim Clinton is president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and co-host of Family Talk, the radio ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. He is recognized as a world leader in mental health and relationship issues and spends much of his time working with Christian leaders and professional athletes.

He's the author of over 30 books and has served at Liberty University for over 30 years in numerous leadership and academic positions, including Professor of Counseling at the James C. Dobson Center for Child Development, Marriage and Family Studies. He is also the resident authority on mental health and relationships for the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Dr. Clinton is married to Julie, they have two children and one adorable grandchild. Now, that's just a summary of a few of the many things that Dr. Clinton has accomplished. Let's listen now as Tim and I discuss this brand new book called *Focus on the Future*.

Roger Marsh: Tim, we have you here to talk about your brand new book, which is called *Focus on the Future*. We are looking at this brand new book, *Focus on the Future*, and I know you're thinking of your granddaughter, that you're thinking of your daughter and your son and everybody who is raising kids right now. What compelled you to write the book, *Focus on the Future* right now?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Roger, I think all of us would agree over the last 18, 20 months or so it's been such an upside down world.

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And there's been a real beat down on individuals and families when you think about the pandemic with the resulting lockdowns, the loneliness, and so much more that came with it. And then you throw on top of that, just the events that

were happening in the world around us, from the election mess to the transition and a new administration. We were racing for a vaccine and trying to figure that piece out. And the next thing you know, we're thinking maybe we're going to get over this COVID thing and be free. And here comes the gift that keeps on giving and it's COVID Delta variant. And then the vaccine mandates, Afghanistan and everything. Roger, it's been just wild. And the truth is, through all this, I think everyone knew intuitively that there would be sort of an uptick in mental health issues. But I'll tell you what, I don't think I've ever seen the fear I've seen in people. The stress that's come with it, then it's like the anxiety piece is off the charts.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I don't know if you've followed any of this, but anxiety prescription medications are at an all-time high.

Roger Marsh: Oh man.

Dr. Tim Clinton: People, yeah, who are struggling with depression, discouragement, because there's so much happening in the world around them and even suicidality. And so when you look at all this and you think about, well, maybe let me just slow it down, let's close the doors for a little bit at the house and figure out where we're at. My daughter, Megan, she said to me, "Dad, I don't know. I worry a lot at night. I can't turn it off. And the TV, everything just keeps coming at us. And Dad, honestly, I worry about Olivia," our granddaughter, and she's growing up, "and is there anything we can do? What are we going to do? I mean, isn't there hope?" When you get up on social media, when you get up on the news networks and you're overdosing with all that, it's like we're dazed.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We had a world conference recently on mental health. And what was interesting about that world conference is there was a buzz around trauma-informed care. People were talking about trauma-informed care. Here's why they were talking about it, Roger. It's because this word out there, "collective trauma," has become the real buzz in mental health. And what does it mean? It means when you look around the world in your everyday life, people are really hurting.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And this has been very traumatic. And so with that, now you set up, "where's the conversation going to go here, what can we do?"

Roger Marsh: Yeah. And one of the issues I know you bring up in your brand new book, *Focus on the Future* is, yes, America is a traumatized nation, but you also believe that we're in kind of a bit of a reprieve right now. Talk about what you mean by that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I was interviewing Ralph Reed not long ago. And in it he talked about don't bet against America. And I said, "Ralph, you got some hope in you." "Yeah, even though I'm frustrated, Tim, don't bet against America. I'm hopeful about where

we're at. I'm hopeful about the people I have around me, even though there's a lot of discouragement, even though there's a lot of challenge. At the end of the day, there seems to be a stirring going on. It's like people are getting really frustrated. They're done being silenced. They're done being shamed. They're done being stigmatized." And that recent incident that took place up in Loudon County, Virginia.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: [crosstalk 00:05:16] and these mama bears showing up at these meetings. And I'm telling you what, you talk about stirring the pot. And people are like, whoa, what's happening. And there is something stirring. And I hope in the midst of it, we press ourselves into speaking truth in love. We've got to figure all this out in a meaningful way. But people are saying, listen, we have to step up and into this moment. And I'm telling you, the real hope that we have, ultimately, and as Christians, our hope is in God.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Why you cast down all my soul? Hope thou in God. And so Roger, when I look at the people around me and I see people who are discouraged, at the same time there's this kind of worst of times, best of times, maybe this is an opportunity where God is going to do his greatest work. And you know that sometimes what the old Puritans called the valley of vision is where we get to see things differently. And then God does his best work, and may that be true of this hour.

Roger Marsh: You know, as you talk about this, *Focus on the Future*, I think about the church. I think about the family. I think about these institutions that have just been under attack. And in the same way that the mama bears are stepping up and saying, "Hey, we're not going to have this anymore." I get the sense, and I sense you do to, Dr. Tim Clinton, that the church has been poked one too many times. I mean, talk about why you believe there's really power in the church, kind of spearheading this movement.

Dr. Tim Clinton: My dad was a rural country pastor, three small circuit-riding churches, central Pennsylvania, one church on Sunday morning, probably averaged about 10 or 12 people. He preached faithfully there. But the backbone of this country, you know, are in those kind of churches all over this land, not just the megachurches. It's the faithfulness. In the scripture, Paul said, "moreover, it's required among stewards that they be," what? "found faithful." My dad was a faithful man. And he believed in the power of God and that stuff goes deep inside of my heart because I believe in that message. I believe God sees us. And if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, you know that verse?

Roger Marsh: Amen. Second Chronicles.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You bet. And when they do that, Roger, things begin to turn.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And I really believe, I really believe with all my heart there are people, there are millions of people who are saying, "that's where I'm at. And God, we need you now more than ever. We don't need you less. We need you more." And by the way, we'll talk about relationships and things more in a moment. But we don't need each other less, we need each other more. The antidote to trauma in life is relationship.

Roger Marsh: Amen. Dr. Tim Clinton's new book look is called *Focus on the Future: Your Family, Your Faith, and Your Voice Matter Now More Than Ever*. And we're discussing it today here on Family Talk. Tim, whenever I think about Dr. Dobson addressing a group of people, it's always just so captivating. It's so compelling. He, and you write about this in the book, *Focus on the Future*, he really was a prophet of sorts in terms of, here's a guy who paved the way for Christian mental health professionals back in the seventies when no one was doing that kind of thing. And now, if it weren't for people like you and Doctor who can help us understand the world that we're living in, the neuroscience behind the way a lot of people are feeling, we wouldn't be able to really understand what's happening. And yet he was a prophet, I mean talking about what was going to happen in the church, what's happening with the family. We're facing those issues right now, aren't we?

Dr. Tim Clinton: I dedicated a special chapter in the book to Dr. Dobson. No one in my mind has done more for the family in our lifetime, in our generations than Dr. Dobson.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And you know, you're right. Go back and look through his work: very prophetic. God put something in his heart and those timeless truths, Roger, I think are going to live on for a long, long time. I know at the ministry, that's our commitment here. Stand strong with Doc all the way.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because you know why, when you look at focusing on the future and the variables that you can control, one of the things in the book we talk about is your own family. So if this is dad talking to my daughter, Megan, or my son, Zach, I'm going to say to them, the best thing you can do, and I dedicate a chapter to this, it's take care of your own family. We will win this fight, you know that, one family at a time. When it comes to the faith, we'll win this fight, one person, one congregation at a time. The issue of the family, Roger, I just think about, what can you do at home? We got to get home and deal with screen time. We got to get home and deal with pornography. We've got to deal with the issue of fatherlessness.

What encourages me when I consider this whole issue of fatherlessness is that a lot of young dads are stepping up to the plate.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They're saying, "you know what, I grew up without a dad, and this is not going to happen in my house." It's like a football team. You're not getting into our end zone, not in my house.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Roger.

Roger Marsh: I love that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And they're saying, no, we want something different. How and what do you do to make all that work? What's interesting is I try to encourage people. Here's some new research we're finding, for example, how important, Roger, dinner is, dinner time. When you think of teenagers, you often think teenagers don't want to hang out too much with the family. But yet when you look at indicators that identify factors of health when it comes to teens, a couple of discriminating factors pop up. One of those consistently is, do they eat dinner with their family? And so this research that's out there about dinner time is fascinating to me. We've learned about healthy kids, that is important. Do you eat together as a family? And when it comes to teens, here's what's interesting. The more you eat dinner together, they've found, the more healthy the kids were.

Let's go a step further. I'm not talking just about food. By the way, yes, if you eat dinner together, you tend to eat more healthy than you do all the junk food or what have. But Roger, it wasn't that, it was the dynamics of what was taking place around the dinner table, what was happening in terms of connection. Then in the midst of it, one of the questions I had was, is there a drop off? In other words, is it, Tim, eating two times a week together with your family? Is it three times? What is it? You know what the research showed? There's no drop off. The more you eat dinner together, the more healthy your kids tend to be. Isn't that wild?

Roger Marsh: I love it. I love it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Spending time together, special time. It's an interesting concept in mental health and what's called attachment-related theory. If you'll spend 20 minutes, a day of command-free, special time with your kids, the results are revolutionary, especially in overcoming things like defiance in children. When parents are able to connect one on one, just think about this, just for 20 minutes or so a day, doesn't have to happen every day during the week, but if you have children, just think about that. If you were able to spend 20 minutes a day with them, Roger, we have found in the midst of it, that there's a dynamic

that takes place that says you're important to me. I begin to learn things that are significant about you, what motivates you. It gives me an opportunity to talk about maybe some of the tough stuff that happened at school today, maybe some of the tough stuff that's going on in my private life and by the way, kids spell love how?

Roger Marsh: T-I-M-E.

Dr. Tim Clinton: T-I-M-E.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And so Roger, in the midst of all that think about what is happening and what can happen inside of our own homes. Let's focus in on what really gives us life.

Roger Marsh: Dr. Tim Clinton's new book is called *Focus on the Future*. And we're talking about the importance of relationships. And I'm going to share a quote from your book, Tim. I know that's not fair, if you don't have the book right in front of you, of course, because you wrote this a while ago, but hear me out on this, because I love this quote. I'm going to put it up on my wall in my office here. "Interpersonal neuroscience is showing that we're made for relationships. Good relationships equal good medicine, bad relationships equal bad medicine." Can you talk a little bit about the science part of that? I mean, we've talked about it from the faith and family component, but help us understand what's really going on inside our brains when we're in good relationships.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Roger, we just had that world conference again, back in Orlando, not long ago. And a lot of the discussion there was about the power of relationships. And what we're learning, and this is amazing to me is that relationships can have the same kind of medicating median effect on the brain as good medicine. Now, step back and think about that just for a second. Relationships, can have that kind of an impact on your brain? Yes. This whole new world of interpersonal neuroscience.

So when you are in a healthy relationship with someone, it could be transformational. I mean, if you actually believe that mom or dad loves me and you get it and you really believe it, that does something to you. Just intuitive, isn't it?

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When you're just thinking about it, it's just intuitive. Now, think of it in the reverse for a moment. Toxic relationships, bad relationships. It's just like, somebody's screaming, you're just like your father. Roger, what it does is, it fragments you. You know what it does to kids? It's like scrambled eggs in their brain. They can't even process it. And when your world gets turned upside down, it gets confusing. Dr. Dobson taught us early on that often we view God

through the eyes of our fathers. And if our relationship with our dad was broken, confused, conflictual, we saw dad as angry or what have you, how do we often view God? And then when we go through that valley in our life, when we go through seasons or challenges in our lives, when things get dark, we often think God doesn't care about me, or he is not there for me, or my prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. Yet what God wants us to know is that he's a loving father.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And it's often really difficult to get someone who grew up in brokenness to understand that. You know why? It's not wired into them. It's not how their brain functions really. And so we begin to "fix that" by what? Working in healthy relationships. That's the goal here. And so that's a profound statement. It's something that really is captivating mental health right now. At the end of the day, one closing piece on it that I find fascinating is, it sets up the door for a transformational relationship with God. If we believe that human relationships are that powerful and can have that kind of impact on us for good, nothing more beautiful in all the world than to be in a relationship with someone who's supposed to love me and they actually love me, or nothing more painful to be in a relationship with someone who's supposed to love me and they don't love me.

When you understand the idea of the significance of love, and then realize that your creator, God, loves you. And if you can believe that God loves you and that he's there for you, I'm telling you it can change everything in your life. When Francis Chan wrote that book *Crazy Love* years ago, I think it was "touching that nerve right there". Tim, all I've ever wanted is for someone to love me. You know what, Tim, the greatest gift I can give to you is to let you know that God loves you.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Boy, if you can get that piece right, it'll change everything.

Roger Marsh: You know, one of the things you deal with, Dr. Tim Clinton, in this new book, *Focus on the Future* is something that you refer to as "generational responsibility." And that sounds like a fancy way of saying mentoring, from one generation to the next. And I get the sense, and I want you to comment on this if you would, that when it comes to the greatest generation and boomers who are primarily who a lot of people who are listening to us today, but younger parents are coming along too, millennials and generation Z. By the time we get to those two demographics, we're kind of looking at them, I hate to say it, like they're a lost cause. And yet they are the future, that's the catalyst for change in the culture, especially generation Z. Who is generation Z? How do we work for them instead of dismissing them?

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think, first of all, Roger, I think it's important for us to see them. We're busy, we're preoccupied. We miss a lot of what's going on in the younger generation around us. "Dad, you just don't get it. You're out of touch." You know that, it's, "Hey, back in our day." "Oh, here we go, dad. Yeah. Back in my day, this and ..."

And Roger, you know what I'm saying here, but at the same time, there's a great word called, attunement, to be attuned to our kids, means to really be in touch with them, to be in that moment where you get it. You've heard of the word parroting. You know that. You do it all the time. You parrot back, Tim, I think I hear you saying this.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Roger, in our relationship with our kids, it's making sure that we do hear them, that we understand, for example, their anger or their frustration. Too often, parents don't give kids even an opportunity to express their anger or their frustration. Hey, don't bring that attitude in here. And yet we silence a meaningful conversation, something that could really help. And then when you get this going on, I think you open up the opportunity, Roger, to have conversations with your kids, to have conversations that need to happen, to have conversations that can help them migrate into adulthood. And as Dr. Dobson has taught for years, parenting is ultimately about setting them up to launch into adulthood.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that's a big, huge task and responsibility.

Roger Marsh: It's tough to think about now, but to also then think about what the future holds. It's a two pronged approach that you're presenting in this new book, *Focus on the Future*. Dr. Tim Clinton, I'm going to put the spotlight on you for one final question here. We see what's happening in the culture. The church is under attack, masculinity, fatherhood, parent, family. Everything is just in the crosshairs of secular society. It would appear, the statistics say church attendance is down. Church membership is down. Fewer people are coming to faith in Christ. Does that mean that Christianity is in decline in the United States? How do you answer that question?

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, Roger, we tried to look at a lot of the research around that very question, because a lot of people are wondering what's happening. I think there are people out there who are all over the place when they try to respond to those kind of questions. Here's what I see. I see the core of Christianity getting stronger, I do. I think people are realizing that in this life, it's brief and full of trouble and that we don't need God less, we need God more.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And I see people pressing into the heart of God. Now, are they questioning maybe some of our focus or our emphasis in the church and more? Of course, that's just kind of the nature of boomers and millennials and Gen Z'ers and more. But at the end of the day, something's happening. And I agree with Dr. Dobson. In this moment, we pray earnestly that the Church, big C, would

awaken and take Her rightful place for such a time as this. And make God, hey, move among the hearts of the people. God's doing something, Roger, like I've never seen before.

So as we focus on the future, what really become true is the byline on the book, that your faith, and it starts at our home, our personal lives, dealing with our own personal issues and challenges. Our family, strengthening the family. They've got to destroy the family, but if you strengthen that family and we win this battle one family at a time. And then your voice, stop being silent, stop being muzzled, stop being intimidated, but find that voice and say, listen, this really does matter. Hey, what sayeth the Lord? What is truth? And let's hold tenaciously onto that. Who knows what God's going to do. And only eternity is going to, I mean, tell us what happened for such a time as this.

I'm so thankful, Roger, for voices like Dr. Dobson, and there are great men and women of faith all over this country and around the globe who stand strong, who anchor their lives in Christ, who have a firm commitment to the church who want to see people speak truth in love so that what, ultimately in the end, it's about God being glorified. He gets all the glory. And may the people rejoice at what God's doing in and through that kind of leadership for such a time as this.

Roger Marsh: Tim, the issue of masculinity, let's stay here for just a moment because you write in the book about how fatherlessness is such a huge problem. It's a culprit of much of the decay that we see in the culture. The statistics you have in the book are just staggering. 90% of all homeless and runaway children from fatherless homes, 85% of youth in prison, fatherless homes, 75% of all teens in treatment for chemical abuse, fatherless homes. Those numbers are overwhelming. What can we do to help these kids?

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, it's interesting, Roger, too, is an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that the greatest social ill of our day is the absence of dad from the home. They know it. Even more than that, an overwhelming majority of Americans believe this, that a dad makes a unique contribution in the life of his son or daughter. And what you just quoted, just backs it all up. Do dads matter? Ah, more than you'll ever know. Thank God by the way, that he's a good, good father. And he's a father even to the fatherless. Amen.

Roger Marsh: Amen. The new book *Focus on the Future*, Dr. Tim Clinton, it's a very personal book, lots of stories, anecdotes, things from your background about your dad and his influence. And of course, Dr. Dobson and his influence on your life and on all of our lives too. Tim, where can we find a copy of this brand new book?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Roger, thanks for asking. You can pretty much get it anywhere books are sold, up on Amazon, Books-A-Million, Borders, or what have you. And Roger, again, this book is all about how you are family, your faith, your voice matter more now than ever. I'm praying that it's a gift to people, especially like my daughter, Megan, who says, "Dad, what can we do for such a time as this?"

Roger Marsh:

Well, that concludes my conversation with Dr. Tim Clinton on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Tim's new book is called *Focus on the Future*. It really is a must read. It's an encouraging, practical call for every Christian to defend and care for their families and to work to restore broken relationships so that we in turn can restore our nation as well. Now, if you'd like your own copy of Dr. Clinton's new book, *Focus on the Future*, we are offering it to you as a thank you for your gift of any amount today in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Just visit us at drjamesdobson.org/radiooffer to request your copy. [Drjamesdobson.org/radiooffer](http://drjamesdobson.org/radiooffer) and request your copy. Or you can give us a call at 877-732-6825 that's 877-732-6825. Thanks again for listening and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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