



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Path Out of Loneliness – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Mark Mayfield

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Dr. James 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: Welcome to today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm so glad you've joined us for the program today. I'm Roger Marsh. And what we're about to hear is the conclusion of a two part conversation on the topic of the book, *The Path Out of Loneliness* by Dr. Mark Mayfield. Our co-host Dr. Tim Clinton interviewed Mark Mayfield recently, and their discussion was covered in grace and absolutely inspired. By the way, if you missed yesterday's broadcast, which contained the first half of their conversation, just go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast, and you can listen to it online.

Dr. Mark Mayfield is a former pastor, a licensed professional counselor, a board certified counselor, and CEO of Mayfield Counseling Centers. He has more than 14 years of professional counseling experience treating anxiety, depression, and PTSD, as well as substance abuse, domestic violence, self-injury, and suicide. He is passionate about the integration of faith and mental health and especially equipping pastors and leaders to be frontline mental and emotional healthcare givers. He lives with his family in the Colorado Springs area, which is where the Dobson Family Institute is located. So, let's go now to the conclusion of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Dr. Mark Mayfield on the topic of Mark's book, *The Path Out of Loneliness* here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, so great to have you back here on Family Talk. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah. Thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, we began our topic, our discussion yesterday, dialing in on your new book, *The Path out of Loneliness: Finding and Fostering Connection to God, Ourselves, and to One Another*. The thing that probably sobered me, caught my attention most Mark, was just really thinking about how many people battle with loneliness from maybe being up in years to our kids. Mark, you're a research buff. I found that interesting. That's part of what you love to do. But Mark, what do you think sobered you the most? What caught your attention that said, you know what, this is really a big issue. I know you talk about your

own personal journey. Maybe you could weave that in as we get started today, but just reminding us about how big of an issue this is in modern day life.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Well, I just was baffled by the stat that, and it was just a small survey, couple thousand people, but 36% of those surveyed didn't have anybody, anybody to turn to and that's at least whether we argue that that's reality or that was their perception doesn't matter. They felt like they had no one to turn to, 36%. Extrapolate that, generalize that to the population of the world. That's millions upon millions, upon millions of people that feel like they have nobody to turn to. That's what broke my heart.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I've spent some time educating pastors as they pursue their graduate level education Mark. And one of the things that really caught my attention through the years is how lonely it is to be a leader. And in Christian leadership, a lot of pastors are very alone. They feel like they don't have anyone to talk to. That if they do talk to someone they're going to get killed and I think it's an epidemic at the ministry level.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Oh, it is. I think it's 7,000 church's closed their doors every month in the United States. 1500 pastors walk away from the pulpit. And I think it's the perception that they have nobody to turn to. And I think that's why I'm so passionate about working with churches and I know you are too of how do we provide them with resources to go you're not alone and even if it is finding a counselor that's in a city over, a Christian counselor so there's some anonymity there, that you have somebody to talk to. And I think the lie that Satan continues to perpetuate for, especially for our pastors, is that they have no one to turn to. And the term lonely at the top. It's a big deal and it's something that we need to be paying attention to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In a lot of ways, Mark, I guess you could say, Hell loves to get us alone. He loves to get us to a place where we feel like there's no one there for us, that God's not even there for us. And that's a very dark place to be. A lot of our kids are there, Mark. Our kids are battling like never before. We mentioned yesterday that surgeon general report that just came out saying, we've got a quote tsunami disaster on our hand right now. And the coming effects of it, Mark are very, they're scary. They're beyond challenging. This is horrifying.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah. I'm glad that he said that. I think we need to be paying attention. Something needs to really shake us up. But I think we also need to pay attention to the generation, this generation that has lost a lot of things. I mean, if you think about it, they're on their third year of school with regulations, with restrictions, with things that may or may not happen. We're coming into the spring, maybe they just finished homecoming. Maybe they didn't, maybe they're going to have prom coming up. Maybe they're not. Are we going to have graduation in person? A lot those things are just kind of hanging out in the back of our heads and these kids don't know what to do with it. And even if we did

have it, would they want to go anymore? Because I think there's a lot of, I lost it. I didn't have it, have nothing to look forward to. What's the point?

Dr. Tim Clinton:

We were together at the world conference for the American Association of Christian Councilors in September in Orlando. And I was shocked at how many people showed up and Mark, how happy people were just to see one another, just to say hello. We're dying for connection. And the scary thing for me I think, in this whole COVID issue is it's like all these variants that are continuing and people are saying, you know what? You better just get used to it. And people are still filled with fear and they don't know how to adjust. And so this loneliness piece that's so wired into modern day culture, you're wondering, are we going to win this battle here, Mark? How are we going to win this battle?

Dr. Mark Mayfield:

I think the big piece is intentionality. And so some of the steps that I talk about and how do we begin the process of walking out of this is we have to start with ourselves. But I think even before that, we have to understand God's intent and God's heart. I like reading through Genesis. We know just if we've gone to church, that that's the passage where sin enters the world, Adam and Eve took of the fruit and now we have sin. God's walking through the garden going, Hey, where are you guys? Not geographically challenged, He knew where they were, but there's that separation now that this engagement relationally. But I like looking at that and obviously through my researcher brain, that that's when loneliness and separation entered into this world, different term for sin, but loneliness, separation.

But if you look at it, I started digging through Hebrew and Greek, the Septuagint and it's the Hebrews, text to find a word for relationship because I thought, okay, the antithesis of loneliness is relationship. Well actually the antithesis of loneliness is redemption. And we see that in the Hebrew that the word *ga'al*, or *lutroo* of the Greek really means to redeem, to pay ransom, to buy back. This is where I want people to understand that the moment that loneliness and separation entered in the world, God already had a plan for redemption and relationship comes out of that word by proxy. And so I think it's so beautiful to see that he was beginning the redemptive work of buying us back, of redeeming us from what was lost. We got to take a look and go, okay, how do I see God?

How do I see God in all of this? Is he this big mean person that's doing these things to me, or is he this loving God that has relentlessly pursued me from the beginning? And He's still continuing to pursue me. And we need to let that sit with us, spend time with what that really means, because I think that changes something in us to go, okay, I'm not a victim of loneliness. I am a survivor within loneliness and what do I need to do to begin to walk out of it? And I think there's that big mindset shift that we need to have. And now I'm walking out of loneliness with God and He's refining me and I'm going to be vulnerable going, yeah, I've got these choices I've made in my life, have had some consequences. I need to redo some things. No judge, no shame. Right. But I think that's the biggest part. We want to go out and help others. We're counselors, right? We

want to go out and help others first. And I think sometimes we don't take the time to go, okay, how should I help myself first?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Mark, you run the Mayfield Counseling Centers. Saw where you guys do thousands and thousands of counseling sessions every year. You're seeing a lot of people for a lot of issues, but at the core of it, most people really struggle with who am I? How do I fit in? How's this all working? Does God really love me? Is He even there for me? Mark, where do you start for a person who's been living in darkness for a long time and they feel very disconnected? They're not even sure God is there. They want to believe that He's good. They want to believe that He sees them, that He knows the number of hairs on their head and all this kind of Scripture.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Sure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: But Mark, they don't feel them. They're like Thomas, I got to see the nail prints in your hand. You got to reveal yourself. You got to show yourself to me because I feel really disconnected.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Well, I think first, if we've done the work in our own lives and we're ready to spend time with people and helping them out of loneliness, we don't need to have a timeline. And I think that's, especially in our American culture, we want to go, okay, what's step one, what's step two, what's step three? How long should I be on step one? How long should I be on step two? It's not that simple. I think the big piece is if we've got people in our lives that are asking those questions, that are struggling, the best thing we can offer them is our undivided nonjudgmental presence. Just to be with them. I don't know who said this, but a lot of times the only Jesus people are going to know, that the Jesus that's in us and if that leads them to the understanding of who God is, that's a great piece, but we need to be patient.

We need to have long suffering and perseverance. There's something so powerful in people's ability to tell their story. So as an individual that wants to engage that, ask questions, be curious, begin to just value the humanity of the person sitting across from you. And then once that is happening, begin to ask questions around their identity, begin to speak into their identity. Who's they are. Right. I hate the question, who am I? Because I think, we start going, I'm a CEO and I'm a-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Whose am I?

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah no, that's... Yeah. Who's am I needs to be the question that we ask.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, I was talking to Julie. It was this week. We were chatting and she was just making a statement. She said, "Tim, when I get away from the Word and I miss my quiet time, it's when I began starting to spin in my own mind." And she said, "There's something about being able to practice His presence every day,

knowing that we've got an audience of one." And that's why God's given us His word. You know that.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As we engage the Scriptures and they're illuminated by the spirit of God, it bears witness with our spirit. That's what Paul said, that we are the children of God.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that we're a friend of God. It's beautiful Mark, when you can get to a place where you actually believe that you're loved by God and that you understand that He's your friend.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: And it's not based off of the feeling of the day.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's not about performance. There's nothing I can do.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah. And there's peace in that and there's hope in that. And I think from that, I give three antithesis to loneliness. Identity is the first one, whose am I? If we can answer that, wrestle with that, it inspires us to go, okay, what's my purpose? And our purpose actually has to flow out of our identity. It can't flow from anything else. And so, whose am I will flow our purpose. And from that purpose then hope happens. When we begin to work on our identity, does the hope come before the purpose or the purpose come before the hope? But they almost hit simultaneously when we know whose we are. And we are rooted in whose we are. That's something that we have to do individually, but it's something that has to be done in community as well.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and your host here. We're talking today with Dr. Mark Mayfield, former pastor, licensed professional counselor, board certified counselor, founder and CEO of the Mayfield Counseling Centers. He's written brand new book, powerful book called *The Path Out of Loneliness: Finding and Fostering Connection to God, Ourselves, and One Another*. You know someone who's really struggling on a journey trying to make that connection, this is a gift. This is a real gift to us all. Mark, the importance of the church and I'm going to use the word big C here, the Church and the importance of one another. Our friend, John Townsend wrote a book not long ago called *People Fuel*.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yep, great book.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That we are important to each other. Mark, talk to us about when we unselfishly participate in the life of another person, what happens to us?

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Science shows that our brain actually reaches its fullest potential when we're in a safe, trusting, and reciprocal, engaging relationship with somebody else. But I would even go as far as to our systems, our bodily systems, our cardiovascular system, our oxygenation system, our immune systems all reach their peak performance when we are in a relationship that is safe and inviting with somebody else. But when we're also giving of our ourselves to somebody else. I think the church in recent years has done somewhat of a disservice in that we haven't really engaged in understanding the holistic aspect of who and how God has created us from a mind, body, spirit perspective.

And that's part of the reason I wrote the book the way I wrote the book, is we have to integrate those. They can't be silos. And so the strength of our community, the strength of our connection directly correlates to the strength of our mental, emotional, and physical health. And we have to make sure, and this is why I say, we have to take care of ourselves first and answer these hard questions first, because it's not, I'm going to sacrifice myself at the expense of somebody else. This is where I talk through the greatest commandment love Lord, your God, with all your heart, mind, and soul and strength and the second is like it, which actually in the Greek means equal to love your neighbor as yourself.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Love God, love people.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah. And love ourselves. And if we don't do any of that well, we're suffering in other areas because I think you meet a lot of people. I've been that person. I'm going to fall on my sword to take care of somebody else, but I'm not going to take care of myself. And that's not the way it's meant to be. It's supposed to be equally reciprocal engagement.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's something about feeling connected with someone else. There's something beautiful. Maybe that's why, and I saw some staggering research like on men, when men go through a divorce and they never get back into a relationship, they take years literally off of their life.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yep.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, if you're in a home and you have no connection with someone, it just fades quick.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: It does. Anybody that's listening that's kind of relating to this, I'm just going to encourage you to go, okay. Ask the Lord, what is a small risk that I need to take to begin to put myself out there again, to be able to connect with somebody? Is it showing up to a men's night if you're a divorced or single father at church. It might feel odd. It might feel weird, but at least put yourself out there. Is it, I've been burned by the church? We could all say that. Don't use that as an excuse. Go and find someplace to be in community with somebody else. It's going to take work. I talk about this in the last chapter. I call it the messy embrace. It's

not clean. It's not easy, but it's good. And we have to stay in there, we have to hang in there, we have to recognize that the people that we're trying to help or that we're trying to engage with are fallible human beings.

We have to be wise with that, but we can't blame people for their shortcomings. If we're rooted, like you were saying earlier, we need to be rooted in Christ and whose we are before we go out and have expectations for others and connection. And so I think moving from victims, to survivor, to thriver is kind of my desire to see people. We can all relate to being victims of loneliness, but let's look at this as a survivor mentality. And then let's move into thriving in the struggle and all. It's a process. Sanctification, if you want to call it that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And maybe that's why Paul wrote those words, Hey, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together,"

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Like some people do. But rather come together and be a source of encouragement and love toward one another. Mark, it's inherently therapeutic. That's why maybe small groups become really powerful and important.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's why picking up the phone and calling a friend and praying over something, sending a message and saying, you know what? I love you. And you're important to me. Maybe that's why the apostle Paul said, Timothy, listen. Would you come and see me, come before winter. Even the great apostle Paul needed that connection, that relationship piece, Mark.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that's what we're trying to break down here. Don't get lost in the pace, and the pain, and the pressure of everyday life that you lose everything around you. And the next thing you know, you wake up and it's like, where is everybody? What's happened? Mark, bring us home. You spent all that time in this research, you spent all this time writing this book, *The Path Out of Loneliness*, give us those special, special nuggets. Tim, if there's one or two things that you need to remember out of our conversation coming out of this book, this is the thing that really wired up deep down inside of me. And it was like the aha, I got it. I get it God. I get it.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: I think if I were to say one thing, and this just come to me, as we've been talking, is that we need to understand that the power of the Triune God resides within us for redemption and for healing that has been gifted to us in our relationship with Christ. And so I think a lot of times we feel helpless. I don't know what to do. And it's like, no, your presence, the presence of the Triune

God resides within us. That is power enough to bring healing and to bring hope to others. And so, when somebody says, "I don't know what to do." Yeah, you do. Just be with people and be with people well, because that will begin the process of this path out of loneliness.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're broken Mark, in relationship. I believe we're healed in relationship.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: One by final piece here Mark, I wanted to ask you. What if it's really dark and I've been trying, and I'm stuck, a lot of fear, a lot of depression, anxiety, even maybe some bad thoughts in my mind. Mark, you've been doing counseling for a long time. Talk to us about the significance of reaching out, maybe to a counselor, professional, someone to help me through that time.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Right. I mean, we've talked about this, this whole last two episodes. We can't do this. This life is not meant to be done alone. And if we're in those dark places, there's nothing shameful about asking for help. And I think that's a big risk. Take a risk. Step out of your comfort zone and call somebody for help. That might be scary. So find, I know the AACCC has a great list of Christian counselors. I know a lot of churches have partnered with Christian counseling, but find a good Christian counselor that you can just reality test with.

And sometimes that might mean we're going to need to reevaluate and maybe we need to do medication. Don't be afraid of medication at this point, make it maybe a stepping stone on the right direction so that you can get to a place where you're not feeling so dark, that you can start doing the work. But God has designed and created so many great tools and resources through his creation to be able to help us with this. And so I think we need to definitely push past some of that stigma that if I do this I'm weak, or if I'm on medication, then something's wrong with me. No, these are all tools to get us to a place of equilibrium so that we can begin to live our best life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Mark, since the pandemic has hit, I mean, counseling services are soaring. I mean, counseling practices are packed. It's amazing.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Today's generations are much more open to seeking out help. And by the way, they're finding help. There are a lot of godly professional counselors out there now who can help, minister and pour hope and help and encouragement and life into you. And it's just all about taking that first step. Right, Mark? You got to do something. Somewhere you got to take some responsibility here. And when you do, I think that the return that comes back is amazing. It's certainly fun to see what God's doing.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, congratulations again on your new book, *The Path Out of Loneliness: Finding and Fostering Connection to God, Ourselves, and One Another*. I know here at Family Talk, we're so delighted and so grateful to have you come in and join us live. And it's been fun. I'd like to take a moment Mark, if you wouldn't mind and would you just pray today? Because I just believe in my heart there's some real people out there who they have some tears maybe coming down their face or they're worried about a loved one who feels lost Mark, and they need a fresh touch from God.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Absolutely. Yeah. Let's pray. Almighty God, we just come before you and are grateful for this conversation. Lord, I thank you that you are a God that is the same today, yesterday, and tomorrow, and you're not going to ever change. And so, I pray that if there's somebody that's listening that is just lost Lord, I pray that Your redemptive hand would reach down into their lives and make them known to you today in a very tangible and a very beautiful way Lord. I pray for those that are wanting to help others in their lives. Lord, I pray that You'd give them the courage to step up and to say, "Hey, I know you're not doing okay, but I'm here and I want to be with you. And I want to sit with you however long it takes."

And so, Lord, I pray that whoever's listening throughout this country, Lord, that small little wildfires would begin as people are taking care of each other and they're being connected to You. Lord, there is a way to end the epidemic of loneliness and You've given us the guidebook to that in your Word. And so, I pray that we would step up and we would step into others' lives to let them know whose they are and the identity that You've placed on them. Thank you that You never give up. Thank you that You continue to pursue us no matter what. And thank you that you've provided a way through the redemption of the cross for us to have hope. Your name, amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I was in a meeting not long ago with Dr. Dobson and we were focused in on the challenges of the day and he decided he'd stopped the meeting. He just didn't like the way it was going. He said, "We got to stop and we got to pray." Mark, he knelt and I remember him saying these words, "God, this seems dark. This seems evil. This seems overwhelming." And then he said these words, and they resonated in my spirit as you were praying, he said, "Except God, that You are with us. You are with us. We claim that today."

Hey, and if you're struggling right now, I want you to pick up the phone and call. Here's a toll free number (877) 732-6825. That number again, toll free (877) 732-6825. That's the James Dobson Family Institute. We have people available right now to talk with you, to pray with you, to encourage you. Also, if you'd like to find a counselor in your area, you can go up on our website, the American Association of Christian Counselors, it's aacc.net/connect. Find a council like Dr. Mark Mayfield. Mark, even when it seems all alone and there's no one there, He is with us. Thanks for reminding us of that. Thank you for joining us, Dr. Mark Mayfield. Such a pleasure to have you.

Dr. Mark Mayfield: Thank you, Tim.

Roger Marsh: Well, that was the conclusion of Dr. Tim Clinton's two-part conversation with author and counselor, Dr. Mark Mayfield here on Family Talk. That toll free number once again, (877) 732-6825. And please know that we have staff waiting on the other side of the line, waiting to take your call. Pray with you, suggest resources and more. Again, (877) 732-6825. And the web address for finding a Christian counselor in your area is connect.aacc.net. That's the word connect.aacc.net. Now, if you missed any of today's or yesterday's programs, go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast, and you can get caught up. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. You can also find out more about Dr. Mayfield, his book, *The Path Out of Loneliness* and Mayfield Counseling Centers while you're there. Well, we're out of time for today, but I hope you'll join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

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