



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Gift of a Father's Love – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Tim Clinton & Dr. Dobson

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Roger Marsh : A father's unconditional and patient love is the most priceless gift he can give to his children. And today on Family Talk, we're going to hear more about the importance of fatherhood from Dr. Dobson and Dr. Tim Clinton. Last time, they shared heartwarming stories of their own fathers and described the legacy that they hoped to leave his dads as well. In just a moment, they'll continue offering helpful advice that only comes with years of dad experience. Now, as a quick reminder, Dr. Tim Clinton is a bestselling author, counselor, and our cohost here at Family Talk. He also serves our ministry as the Executive Director of the James Dobson Family Institute. Well, here now is the rest of their conversation on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: Tim, somehow winning your children to Christ often comes out of that kind of intimate relationship. When our son, Ryan, was two years of age, we always then and since, we always pause to pray before we eat. We thank Jesus for the food. And I was gone on this occasion, I was out speaking some place. Shirley just spontaneously turned to Ryan before they ate that day and said, "Ryan, would you like to pray today for this food?" And he had never been asked to do that. He's two years old and he looks around, kind of startled him. And then he bowed his head, folded his hands and said, "I love you, daddy. Amen." And when I heard that when I got home, I saw what an important role I play in his life. I represent God to him, and it's too big a job.

I didn't want the responsibility of standing in God's shoes to my son, but that's what we are called to do, and to introduce our children to the things that matter most. And I said earlier, if you succeed at that, you have succeeded. If you fail at that, in a sense you have also failed.

Dr. Clinton: What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own family, his own son, his own daughter?

Dr. Dobson: I was listening to Dr. Ed Young speaking on television.

Dr. Clinton: I love Dr. Young.

Dr. Dobson: I think it was last Sunday. And when he had finished his sermon, he sat down. And I've heard him say this before, it characterizes his ministry. But he talked about when he was a little boy, and then when he was a teenager. And inevitably when he would get ready to go out for a date or leave the house, his mother would say to him, "Ed, remember who you are. Remember who you are. You belong to the King, don't forget that when you're making your decisions." And how powerful is that to arm a child with that kind of understanding of his identity by saying, "Remember who you are, son."

Dr. Clinton: I really believe that if father's knew ... Society wants to paint dads and men as buffoons, distant, disengaged, basically idiots who could care less about their children and more. And in some instances, it's true. I know a lot of people out there who don't have a father in their life, or they've had a bad relationship with their dad. But, if men, if fathers knew the level of influence they really had. When you say your image of God is often seen through the eyes of your own father, it's so true. I know my approach to God is very different because of my relationship with my dad. I actually believe God's there, that He cares, that He's active, that He's present in my life. I love that Scripture where it says that you can cry out and call Him, "Abba Father." Which really means, "Daddy. Daddy." To believe God is that present, and that loving, and just in your life.

Dr. Dobson: One of my favorite verses in the entire Bible is in Psalm 103, where it says, "As a father pities his child, the Lord pities those that fear Him." That is an illustration I can get my teeth into because I know how I feel about my children, and God actually feels that way about me. He cares about what I care about. When I hurt, He's feeling it. You talk about an illustration of God's tenderness for us.

Dr. Clinton: Dr. Dobson, I've often wondered ... And I've got my own conclusions here, but I want to go to Ephesians 6:4 where it says, "Fathers, don't provoke your children to wrath, but rather bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." I've often said, "Why is that verse there?" And I said, "Why is that verse really there?" And I've concluded that Paul wrote those words because a dad can provoke. Or he can ... As he wrote in Colossians, discourage his children. I don't think we realize the power of our words.

Dr. Dobson: They are very vulnerable to us.

Dr. Clinton: Extremely vulnerable. I know my son, Zach, he says, "Dad, there's something about you that just, it makes me just step back for a second." And I don't even see myself like that. But your presence, what you say or what you don't say, where you show up or where you don't show up, it screams volumes to these kids.

Dr. Dobson: Tim, when you consider what we've said through this interaction, does it irritate you to see what sitcoms on television and commercials on television do to the image of a father? They make them fools. You'd never know that men have any substance to them at all. In the sitcoms, the wife is always beautiful and poised. And the father is an absolute adolescent nut.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah. It makes me mad because it portrays the fact that you can basically eradicate a father, just get rid of them, put them under the bed. Erma Bombeck once said that she was playing dolls one day and she got to the daddy doll and didn't know what to do with it, so she put him under the bed. That stunned me for a moment and I thought about what it must've been like for her to grow up in her childhood. And I thought about where we're at now. But if you look at the research that's out there, Dr. Dobson, on fathering, listen to this: "A father, when he's present and active in the life of his child, these children show higher academic performance, better cognitive development, they're less anxious, they're a lot more empathetic." Remember in your book, *Bringing Up Boys*, you talked about the gift of a father, especially in the life of a boy. That he teaches him how to do emotion regulation, how to be empathetic, how to manage his testosterone, and more.

By the way, the research also says this: "When a dad's there, a boy or a young girl will have stronger male and female identity. They're less given to peer pressure." What else do you need to hear? How about the downside? When he's gone, "they have an increase in academic and social difficulties, there's an increase in teenage pregnancy, there's an increase in drug and alcohol abuse. There's an increase in crime, in suicide and runaways, incarceration." What's the number one common denominator for those on death row? No dad. Do dads matter more than ... I think you can imagine.

Dr. Dobson: And I wrote in my subsequent book, *Bringing Up Girls*, and many people do not know this - they, they know what you just said - they know that boys need their dads because they need to understand what it means to be male, to be a father, or a husband, or a man. What they don't know is that girls need their dads every bit as much as boys do. And because of their emotional vulnerability, I think in many cases, more. The father is the first one to tell a girl that she's pretty, if it's going to happen. The first male to do that is a dad. He is probably the first one to kiss her, first one to hold her in his arms. The first one to be there when she's upset or crying. The one who steps in to defend her. She gets her self-esteem almost totally from her relationship with her dad. She watches him carefully when he's in the room, she listens to what he has to say. He has a role to play in her life that is not even parallel to what the mother contributes.

And of course, everybody knows what a mother does for a child, boy or girl. But many people, many men, do not know that the girls are watching and they want to know if they're important to their dads.

Dr. Clinton: My daughter, Megan, got married not long ago and it was one of the most difficult days of my life.

Dr. Dobson: Did you cry?

Dr. Clinton: I cried, man, just like a baby. I couldn't get myself pulled together. It was right before I had to walk her down the aisle. I'm walking all over the place, trying to hold it together. Dr. Dobson, I agree with you. There's something about that

opposite sex relationship too, like a dad/daughter, mother/son, type thing. I think there's something a little unique that flows out of that. But I saw a piece too, Dr. Dobson, not long ago that said 76% of teen girls ... And this goes along with exactly what you were saying, said that their dad influenced their decision on whether or not they would become sexually active before marriage. That's profound.

Dr. Dobson: If you ask most people about that, they would think that the peer group is doing the primary influencing. The truth of the matter is it's dad and it's mom. It's both of them.

Dr. Clinton: That's a stunner.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, it is.

Dr. Clinton: The concern I have, Dr. Dobson ... Let's talk about the Church just for a moment. I saw this from a website called churchformen.com. Listen to what they found: Typical congregation today in our country, 61% female, 39% male. They found that there are 13 million more women than men in America's churches. They found this, that 70% of boys raised in the church are probably going to abandon it when they hit their young adult years, and many never return. Here's one more piece they said, churchformen.com. 90% of American men believe in God, five out of six American men call themselves Christian, but only one in six attend church on any given Sunday. I'm thinking about the influence factor we're talking about and how ... You talk about legacy. I know that you've spent so much of your work lately on building a family legacy, and the gift of a father to his son or daughter. And the most precious one is the gift of Christ, that he's conduit through which God wants to channel that message of eternal hope and life in Christ. What's the most important thing you can give to your son or daughter?

It isn't just being at the ball game. It's in everything that you do, that you reflect Christ in those moments. That God has simply given you those children because He's entrusted you with them. And your greatest calling is to give them the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, the gift of salvation, to encourage them to have a personal relationship with Christ. To me, it terrifies me-

Dr. Dobson: Well, let me go back to what-

Dr. Clinton: ... in a good way.

Dr. Dobson: ... you said earlier, Tim. Is it ever too late? There are an awful lot of men listening to us now, I hope, that are saying, "I can't go back and relive those years. They're gone, my kids are grown and they don't know Jesus. Is it too late?"

Dr. Clinton: Can I tell you a story real quick? I was doing a radio interview with a pastor. Actually pastored a church out in Nashville. It was his birthday, he was 51 years old when I did the program. He said, "Tim." I said, "Yes.", "I feel like a boy today." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "My dad today on my 51st birthday called me and told me for the first time he loved me." He said, "You know what that does to a 51 year old pastor who's a big burly man? It makes him feel like a seven year old boy today."

Dr. Dobson: Why do you think, culturally, men are uncomfortable doing that?

Dr. Clinton: I think most men grew up without that kind of affection or reach. We know from research that boys tend to be held less, cuddled less than more. I think if we're going to make them a man's man, we toughen them up. And we think somehow that if we show affection, that we're not really teaching them to be a real man. There's a balance in all that. The greatest gift you can give to your kids is to let them know, by the way, number one, that you love their mama. And number two, that you really love them. They actually can hear you in their minds eye say, "I love you, Tim. I love you, son." Think of the words of God when He said, "This is My beloved Son-

Dr. Dobson: "In whom I'm well pleased." Yeah.

Dr. Clinton: It's never too late to start being a great dad. What do you do if you can't make that happen? I think that's where the Church steps in, Dr. Dobson. I think that's where ministries like Family Talk and more become so important. We've got to teach others that God is ... Hey, "Though my mother and father forsake me ..." The Psalmist said, "... the Lord will deliver me up." He's a Father to the fatherless, number one. And number two, that we take on and develop ministries where we embrace these children. We step into their life, we pour into their heart, into their world, truth, love. We reach to them, so they intern what? Someday will take that and give that as a gift to their own kids.

Dr. Dobson: The most important thing that a dad can do is to pray for his kids every single day. Make a commitment to the Lord that before your head hits that pillow at night, you are on your knees, either symbolically or physically, and you're calling out to the Lord and saying, "Lord, I'm not perfect and I didn't do everything as best that I should today. But I want You to know that I love You and I'm trying to serve You, multiply my words and my thoughts in the lives of my children. And I pray that they will come to know You." I also prayed for many, many years all through the childhood of my kids. I said, "Lord, I know I've expressed this to You before, but I'm going to do it over and over and over again. When my kids get to a place that they're beyond my reach, when they get to a place that I'm not the primary influence on them, when they're in their late teens or early 20s, and my job is essentially done. I pray that You will put somebody in the crossroads there.

They can go down two paths, and I pray that You will put a godly person there for both of them to speak truth to them." I prayed that. I bet I've prayed that

1,000 times, and Shirley has joined me in it, asking not only for the Lord to use me in the lives of my children, but to give me allies in that process. Because that's what I care about more than anything else. And that prayer that I've prayed so many times starts with this statement, "Lord, more than a prayer for my health or Shirley's health, more than my profession, more than any book I might be writing, more than anything else in my life, put this at the top of the list, come to live in a meaningful way in the lives of my children." And He has from the beginning. But Satan is walking the streets and he's doing everything he can to discourage them, and to frustrate them, and to pull them away from the Scripture.

Dr. Clinton: Dr. Dobson, I want to echo that. There was some work that came out not long ago. I think Perspectives and Family Ministry published this first, but they talked about the influence of the faith of a father and the outcome of church and a life in Christ. They found that if a child came to Christ first, there was about a 3, 3.5% chance that the family would follow. If mom came to Christ, there'd be about a 17% chance that everyone would follow. But if a dad came to Christ first, 93% chance that the family-

Dr. Dobson: Wow.

Dr. Clinton: ... would follow Christ.

Dr. Dobson: That's powerful.

Dr. Clinton: Is that not unreal?

Dr. Dobson: My goodness. What a responsibility.

Dr. Clinton: Do dads matter? Dad, we want to encourage you that it's never, again, too late to be a great dad. Dr. Dobson, one of the things I'm sitting here asking myself, and that is what would you say ... Let's give some Dobson gold here for a moment. What would you say to the man out there who is overwhelmed, probably really discouraged that he's lost connection with his children, for whatever reason. And he's listening to the program, he's probably shed some tears and he's saying, "God, would You do something special for me? Would You restore the heart of my children back to me? And maybe my heart back to them? God, would You do something?" What would you say to him?

Dr. Dobson: Well, I've lived that, Tim. Maybe an illustration would be appropriate. I was at USC school of Medicine and my books were bestsellers, and I was getting hundreds and hundreds of speaking requests and trying to take as many of them as I could. I was running, and huffing, and puffing trying to do everything. I really had the notion for a period of time that everything that was good in God's sight, I had the responsibility for. So I was just moving too fast, and I began to be aware that the Lord was saying something different to me. I was reading a book, it was written by Norm Wright.

Dr. Clinton: I love Norm Wright.

Dr. Dobson: You know Norm Wright. And it was not on this subject. It was on in-laws and outlaws. It was about getting along with those in-laws in your family. And in there was a Scripture. And as I was reading it, the Lord said to me, "This is for you. This was written for you." On the basis of that Scripture and that evening, I called my agent the next day, Mac McQuiston is his name and he's still a friend of mine. I had breakfast with him and I looked him in the eye and I said, "Mac, I'm not going to be able to speak anymore. Cancel everything I've got, I'm staying home. I'm not going to do this anymore." And he got a funny look on his face because he was earning a living representing me. And I said, "I really don't know, Mac. All I know is that this is what the Lord is telling me to do." And he fulfilled that, he did what I asked him to do.

And one year later I signed a contract with Word Publishers to have them record the final event that I was doing, a citywide events. There were 3,000 people there. We were in San Antonio, Texas, and we recorded what became the Focus on the Family film series that was eventually seen by 80 million people [crosstalk 00:22:07] while I stayed home. That's one illustration of the fact that you can make changes, you can reorder your life. When you feel like you're making a mistake, think it through and figure out a better way. And in this case, the Lord led me to it.

Dr. Clinton: I came home one evening ... Another story, just to couple with that. And Zach was about two years old. I was coming in the garage door and I could hear this bundle of energy blowing my way. I opened the door and he's screaming, "Dad. Dad. Dad." And he's just going crazy. And then just stopped and he looked up in my eyes, he looked down at my feet. He looked back up in my eyes, and he looked down at my feet again. And then he put two words together, "Shoes off. Shoes off, dad." Because it meant if I took my shoes off, I'd stay home.

Dr. Dobson: My goodness. Out of the mouths of babes.

Dr. Clinton: Out of the mouths of babes. Our prayer ... Again, some see it as a verse of prophecy. But in Malachi 4:6, it says, "And He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."

Dr. Dobson: That's the end of the Old Testament.

Dr. Clinton: That's the last verse in the Old Testament. And that's our prayer, that God would do that, maybe for you. As a dad or as a mom, somehow God would bring into the life of your children that godly influence.

Dr. Dobson: What better place than that to end our conversation, Tim. It's been a pleasure talking to you about something you and I both feel viscerally. This is not just a Scriptural principle, or many of them, but it comes from the heart, and I believe it also comes from the heart of God. I hope that some of our listeners have been

touched by what we've had to say in these two days in this conversation. Thanks for being with us, we'll do it again.

Dr. Clinton: Thanks, Dr. Dobson.

Roger Marsh : You've been listening to Family Talk and Dr. Dobson's timeless conversation with Dr. Tim Clinton. Now, if you've been touched by this two-part broadcast, be sure to leave your thoughts on this topic on our Facebook page. You'll find our profile by searching for "Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk." We would love to hear what stood out for you or what you learned from these two broadcasts. So join the conversation on Facebook by searching for "Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk." We sure look forward to hearing from you. Now, as you've heard over the past couple of days, fatherhood may be the most important job you'll ever do. We want to support you and help you grow in this God-given role. And to help you do that, be sure to browse our resources page at drjamesdobson.org for helpful tools to help you be the best father you can be. That's drjamesdobson.org, and then click onto the Resources tab on the top of the page. Be sure to join us for our final program before Father's Day coming up on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Hope you'll join us then.

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

Roger Marsh: Hey everyone, Roger Marsh here. When you think about your family, and where they will be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? Are you hopeful? What kind of legacy are you leaving for your children, and their children? Here at Family Talk, we're committing to helping you understand the legacy that you're leaving for your family. Join us today at drjamesdobson.org for helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. James Dobson himself! And remember: your legacy matters.