



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Grandparents and Their Vital Role – Part 2

Guest(s): Larry Fowler

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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: Well, hello. There I'm Roger Marsh. And you know, December is racing down the home stretch. You've got to be wondering, "Where has all the time gone?" Well, here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we want to thank you for sticking with us through what has been for many, a tough year. Better together, let's cast our eyes on God's promises and direction in 2022. Amen?

And with that, we are committed to providing you with quality programming throughout the coming years. So, let me ask you, have you started making plans or goals for the new year yet? Well, if you're a grandparent, might I make a suggestion for your New Year's resolution? How about working to strengthen your relationship with your grandchildren? Listen to today's broadcast to hear some practical tips on how to do just that. Because today on Family Talk, we are sharing the second half of Dr. Dobson's helpful conversation with grandparenting expert, Larry Fowler.

By the way, if you missed yesterday's program featuring part one of this conversation, you can find it by visiting drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Both today's and yesterday's broadcasts are two popular programs from this past year. And as we wind down the month of December, and all of 2021, we wanted to share some of our favorite programs with you from these past 12 months.

Dr. Dobson's guest on today's program, once again, is Larry Fowler. Larry is the founder of Legacy Coalition, a national ministry, focused on equipping Christian grandparents to fulfill their Biblical role of impacting their children for Christ. Larry and his wife, Diane, have two grown children and seven grandchildren; and they live in Riverside, California.

The Legacy Coalition serves and ministers to grandparents through podcasts, webinars, blogs, and other resources. The ministry also conducts an annual national conference on Christian grandparenting, called the Legacy Grandparenting Summit. Today, Dr. Dobson and Larry Fowler will be sharing some stories from their own lives. They'll also talk about the importance of

blessing your grandchildren, and what that actually looks like in practice. Here now is Dr. James Dobson, to begin today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We were talking last time about building relationships with your grandkids. I had another godly grandparent, a grandmother in this case, who was grouchy and cranky and boring and never played with me. And when I went over to the house, I was bored. Guess who I was not influenced by, particularly? That one. She loved the Lord, but she never seemed to understand why our relationship mattered.

Larry Fowler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And again, it illustrated for me the importance of taking the time to know that child.

Larry Fowler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: You have written in some of your materials, that it's important for grandparents to bless their grandchildren.

Larry Fowler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Talk about that.

Larry Fowler: Well, I had only heard the word blessing. I wish I would have known this years ago. I'm guessing you had this on your show many years ago, and I missed it.

Dr. James Dobson: We did.

Larry Fowler: But the whole idea of the verbal blessing.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Larry Fowler: Pronouncing the Levitical blessing over your kids was something... That is a pretty new idea to me. I have only known of that idea for maybe 10 years. And if there's anything I wish that I would've known early in my journey as a grandparent, or even as a parent, it is this.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm sorry. We learned that from the Jewish community.

Larry Fowler: We do. We do.

Dr. James Dobson: The children of Israel and the early examples.

Larry Fowler: Yeah. And we have kind of done away with rituals in our Christian faith, that are actually very important teaching tools. That's one, in the Jewish faith. There's a very, very important teaching tool, in addition to all the other benefits of a

blessing. But I see the blessing as we're talking about, as a opposite of prayer. Prayer is speaking to God on behalf of others.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Larry Fowler: A blessing is speaking to others on behalf of God. And who better to do that than a grandpa or a grandma, into the lives of grandkids? So, we regularly bless our grandkids, especially the little ones that live near to us. My youngest is now six. When he was two, we would take him for the afternoons, and he'd have a nap at our house. He would protest the nap every time. My wife Diane would tell him, "Micah, it's time for your nap." And he would, he would say, "No want to take a nap." And he would protest. And she wouldn't listen to it. She'd just say, "Okay, but before you do, grandpa wants to give you a blessing."

She would bring him over to me, and I would take this very, very active, never standing still two-year old, put my hands on his head, and something miraculous would happen. He'd stand still. And I'd put my hands on either side of his face, look him in the eyes, give him a great big smile, and I'd say, "Micah, the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine up on you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Now go take your nap." And you know what? He never protested his nap after I pronounced that blessing.

Dr. James Dobson: No kidding.

Larry Fowler: He would go right up and lay down and go to sleep; and that was it. And after a while, he wanted it. He would say, "Grandpa, you give me peace?" Because at two years old, that's what he called it.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Larry Fowler: He remembered that last phrase.

Dr. James Dobson: You think he understood what you were doing?

Larry Fowler: No. No. Not so much. At one point, this is still when he is two, he said, "Grandpa, what's peace?" Try explaining that to a two-year old. So, I'm not sure he had a comprehension, but he knew it was something loving and positive and good. As our grandkids have gotten older, of course, how we do it is different.

Dr. James Dobson: These are wonderful ideas, Larry. We're talking to Larry Fowler. Have you written a book on this?

Larry Fowler: No. But there's some great books out there.

Dr. James Dobson: Why not?

Larry Fowler: I Haven't. Well, because there are some good books out there. I have chosen to write on some things for which there are no books. Gary Small and John Trent have an incredible book on *The Blessing*.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact, you asked me if we'd done a radio program on this subject, and it was with them.

Larry Fowler: Oh yeah. So, there's not so much the need for that. A good friend of mine, Cavin Harper, has written a book called *Courageous Grandparenting*. And in that book, he has a chapter on *The Blessing*. And so, there's material out there on... And there are videos on it too, where parents and grandparents can watch, to get an idea of what's meant by *The Blessing*.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me read you something I wrote since we're on that subject.

Larry Fowler: Awesome.

Dr. James Dobson: This is from my book *Legacy*. By the way, I think it's important to understand the difference between a legacy and an inheritance.

Larry Fowler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: An inheritance comes from what you give, usually materially, in money or property or whatever it is. An inheritance is things.

Larry Fowler: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: A legacy is what you build in someone.

Larry Fowler: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And we're talking today about building a legacy in your grandchildren.

Larry Fowler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I want to read to you from my book on *Legacy*. "Psalms state precisely what God wants parents to do regarding the training of their children. The verses were intended not only for the children of Israel, but for you and me. This is our assignment: read these verses carefully. "Oh, my people, hear my teaching. Listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter hidden things, things from old. What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us, we will not hide them from their children."

"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord: His power and His wonders, the wonders He has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob, and established the Law of Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation will know them, even the children yet to

be born. And they in turn, will tell their children. They would put their trust in God, and not forget the deeds, but would keep His commands. One generation commends your works to another. They tell of your mighty acts. Come my children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Psalm 34:11 and Psalm 78. Isn't that wonderful?

Larry Fowler: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: That tells us what, as grandparents, we ought to be trying to do.

Larry Fowler: You know what's fascinating to me about Psalm 78 is, I love those verses. Psalm 78 is a recounting of the history of Israel that wasn't all so good. But I think that that Psalm was written somewhere around 500 years after Moses, maybe? Somewhere around that time. How many stories from our ancestors of 500 years ago do we know?

Dr. James Dobson: Man.

Larry Fowler: But somehow, they were able to pass on those stories for 500 years.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that amazing?

Larry Fowler: And that's the vision that grandparents need to have. And it's interesting that there in Psalm 78, it mentions two generations that are not yet born. And we tell grandparents, "That's a vision you have to have. This is not about you impacting your grandchildren, and have them grow up godly. Your vision has to be for your grandchildren's grandchildren."

Dr. James Dobson: That's what I was really trying to say with *Legacy*, in that-

Larry Fowler: Yeah. Yeah. That's what legacy is.

Dr. James Dobson: We lose the generational understanding if we're not careful. That's what's worrying me right now about the generation that's growing up now. They don't know Christ, and they don't know the Scriptures. And they don't know what revival used to be. We lose that generational impact. And that's what we're commanded to do, is don't forget the wonderful things the Lord has done in our family. If you have a Christian family, your grandkids need to hear those stories, and know about it.

Larry Fowler: Well, and when you're a young parent, you don't necessarily... Or a parent of even middle schoolers or teenagers; you don't think of so much about passing on the family stories to your kids. When do we start thinking about that? When we become grandparents. That's why the engagement of grandparents is so important. If they're going off on cruises, and they're going to just retirement villages, and separating their relationships with their children and grandchildren,

those stories, those faith stories, never get passed on; because you kind of naturally don't think about doing it when you're a young parent.

Dr. James Dobson: And kids love stories.

Larry Fowler: They do.

Dr. James Dobson: They want to hear them.

Larry Fowler: They do. They want to hear them. And in fact, I have a few stories. I tell my grandkids, "I'm going to keep telling you these stories over and over again, until you can tell them back to me. Because I want you to be able to tell this story to your grandkids about your grandfather, way after I die."

Dr. James Dobson: What do you tell to them?

Larry Fowler: I have a long story that is too long for this; but it's about a time that I saw God perform a miracle, and use me to help save a little girl's life that had cancer, over in the country of Ukraine. And it's too long for this. So, I tell them that whole story. It's stories of when I saw God work.

A much shorter story is one time... We raised our kids in Southern California. And one time we were traveling on a freeway there in Ventura County of California; and right in front of me, the two cars crashed and hit each other. And I was right behind them. Instantly, I knew there was a car on this side and on this side of me. I couldn't swerve to avoid it. There was only one thing to do. And that was head for the opening, right between these two cars that had crashed.

And God just helped me to hit that opening perfectly. I got a scratch on my left wheel well, and a busted mirror on my right side; so, I actually hit both cars.

Dr. James Dobson: You're kidding.

Larry Fowler: But I went through without any scratches or any further incident. And I tell my grandkids, "God protected us. We could have all died, and you wouldn't even be here, if God hadn't protected us for that. Now I want you to tell your grandkids about the time that God saved us." And so, it's those kinds of stories.

Dr. James Dobson: They go to church, and they may not hear the sermon. They'll remember that story.

Larry Fowler: They will remember.

Dr. James Dobson: Larry, you have shared a story about how you got started working with grandparents. And I think it's wonderful. Share it with us.

Larry Fowler: Well, it was very personal first. Way before I was in ministry, it was personal. My daughter's first marriage failed. My son-in-law at that time, had made some terrible decisions over and over again. And she'd finally had all she could take of affairs and drugs and different things. And she and her three little ones moved in with us. And for a number of years, I was both dad and grandpa. I did not want my grandsons to follow in the sins of their father.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Larry Fowler: And that was the beginning of me saying, "I'm going to step it up as a grandparent." I still hadn't thought about the Biblical component of that. I didn't realize that there were commands in the Scripture about what I was to do as a grandparent. I didn't realize there were examples there. But that was where I got my start. And there's just not really any perfect families. All of us have issues; and how we respond to the issues is so important. And God took this tragedy in my family, in my daughter's family, and He's used that in their life, in her life, for good.

Dr. James Dobson: Was that the beginning of a mission of ministry?

Larry Fowler: No. That came a lot later. That was all just the personal commitment that I was making to myself and to my daughter. "You know what? I'm going to step it up. I'm going to be the dad to these boys. And I'm going to be a grandpa, too." She's since remarried. And when she remarried, she now has this wonderful, godly husband that we just love. He's adopted her three kids, and I don't have to be dad anymore. I get to be grandpa now. But he also had a daughter that we met for the first time when she was 14. And so, we've had the experience of trying to connect with a step-granddaughter; and that's been a journey. And we're seeing that God, in His grace, has made that better as well. And we're now having an opportunity to really connect with her a lot more.

Dr. James Dobson: When we began our time together last time, you talked about churches not really focusing on grandparenting. And in your writings, you talk about a ministry vacuum. Is that what you were referring to?

Larry Fowler: That's what I'm referring to. I thought, "How could it be, that tens of thousands of churches across America understand rightfully that they need to equip parents?" And after all, that's what your ministry has been about.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, now they're doing that, to some degree.

Larry Fowler: They are.

Dr. James Dobson: But we're talking about grandparents here.

Larry Fowler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: They don't think of them.

Larry Fowler: How can there be tens of thousands thinking about parents, and not even one ever thinking about grandparents? So that's what we wanted to change. And now we're seeing hundreds of churches. It's growing all the time; hundreds of churches that are saying, "We're going to start a grandparent ministry. We're going to equip them to be the disciples, the grandparents."

Dr. James Dobson: What a great idea.

Larry Fowler: Well, we believe in the local church.

Dr. James Dobson: I've been working with families for 44 years, or more than that, really. And I have not stopped to think about a ministry specifically for grandparents. But that's deeply... And grandparents have needs of their own.

Larry Fowler: They do.

Dr. James Dobson: They need to know how; they need to be equipped and motivated.

Larry Fowler: And we know the role is different. You said that.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Larry Fowler: The role is a little different. You can't parent anymore.

Dr. James Dobson: You dare not try.

Larry Fowler: We say it this way. Yeah. You better not try. We say it this way. "You're still the parent, noun; but you must no longer parent, verb, unless invited." And that last part is the key.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Larry Fowler: If they invite you, okay. But other than that, keep your mouth shut, for the most part.

Dr. James Dobson: Larry, we talked about it yesterday, about the cultural changes, and what that does in the family; and what it does to Christian grandparents whose, maybe their sons and daughters don't want you talking about spiritual things. Let's turn that corner, and talk a little bit about when parents want the grandparents to help. We're talking about transgender stuff and LGBT, and all the things that are going on out there. Many parents are desperate for help at that point, in explaining and dealing with what's happening at school.

Larry Fowler: It is important to think through, "What is a parent's responsibility from what is a grandparents' responsibility?" And the grandparents' responsibility is different.

For example, if I would go down to my neighborhood school as a grandparent, I wouldn't carry much weight. I wouldn't carry near the weight that a parent does. So, there is a difference.

So, what can a grandparent do? Well, here's the question that I would ask your listeners, and you as well. "Why do we take the position that we do?" Because we believe in the Word of God.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Larry Fowler: Amen? That's it.

Dr. James Dobson: That's sum total.

Larry Fowler: Sum total. That's it. So, what a grandparent can do, is focus on this underlying foundational issue. And you say, "I believe the Bible. I can trust the Bible. I believe it." And depending on the permission that we either have explicitly or understood permission from our adult children, we can then get specifically about the things that the Bible teaches.

But, if we're not sure, we can still build that strong foundation, so we talk about how amazing the Bible is. We talk about prophecies that God fulfilled. If I were to ask a grandparent, "Why do you believe the Bible? Why do you believe the Bible is the Word of God? Okay. Tell your grandkids. If they get to the same point of conviction that the Bible is God's Word, and they rely on it for their point of view, they'll come to the same conclusion." And so, we can build the foundation, even though our situations vary as to how much we can actually talk about the issues.

Dr. James Dobson: And the older they get, the more important it is for you to talk about that.

Larry Fowler: More important. In fact, you know that the main worldview of a child is typically pretty well formed by age 12 or 13.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Or before.

Larry Fowler: Or before. So, doing those things in the early years of a grandchild's life is really, really significant. So, we build the foundation. That's what grandparents can do.

Dr. James Dobson: And there's such a need for it. Homosexual ideology is everywhere today.

Larry Fowler: It's everywhere. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And the transgender message is everywhere. And they have control of our kids in the public schools frequently.

Larry Fowler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And there is an urgency; you refer to an urgency. There should be a passion to do what you can to counter the lies that are being told.

Larry Fowler: And every one of our grandkids is going to hear that. We can't shield them from those messages. Just as you're saying, they're dominant in our culture. So, what do we do? We make sure they hear the other side. And the other side is of course, what Scripture has to say.

Dr. James Dobson: May the Lord continue to bless this wonderful ministry, and bless you. How can we pray for you, Larry?

Larry Fowler: Well, of course, I'm a novice of this thing of leading an organization. I need wisdom. I've been a second guy. I've been a vice president before. I never led anything. So, the idea of leading an organization is way beyond me. That keeps me dependent upon the Lord. So, ministry wise, you can pray for that.

Larry Fowler: The most important thing is, I want to fulfill those first two words of Deuteronomy 4:9. I want to watch myself; and I want to end this life continuing to become more godly with each year that passes. I'd appreciate prayer that God would enable that.

Dr. James Dobson: Those tears are precious. You care about this issue.

Larry Fowler: I care, too.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope that that emotion will go out from this studio, and touch people across the country, and maybe around the world.

Larry Fowler: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Thanks for taking the time to be with us a second time. I really feel your passion, and I share it.

Larry Fowler: I know you do.

Dr. James Dobson: And I'm a grandparent, too. And I can take all of advice I can get. Give your wife my regards, Diane, and she didn't like studios, but you bring her here next time.

Larry Fowler: Okay. I sure will.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you, my brother.

Roger Marsh: Wow. I don't know about you, but I was certainly inspired by this conversation. This two-part discussion on the topic of leaving a godly legacy as a grandparent was right on target. After all, God isn't keeping us grandparents around so we can simply buy an RV, and drive off to the desert. Grandparents have a God-

ordained duty to impact their kids and grandkids for the Lord, as long as we are able.

Now, if you'd learn more about Dr. Dobson's guest today, Larry Fowler, and his ministry, the Legacy Coalition, visit our broadcast page, at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. You can also give us a call at (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825.

Now, before we end today's program, I'd like to let you know that right now is a special time here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks to some special friends of our ministry, we have a matching grant in place this month, here at the JDFI. Any gift that you contribute to the JDFI during these last few days of December will be doubled. That's twice as many families encouraged, twice as many marriages given a message of hope. And remember, a gift to Family Talk is the perfect way to ensure that Biblical values are defended on the airwaves and in the public square.

As you're making your year-end financial planning plans right now, please consider a tax deductible donation to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. You can make your gift online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or you can make a contribution over the phone, at (877) 732-6825.

Well, that's all the time we have for today. I'm Roger Marsh. And I think my wife, Lisa and I are definitely going to be working some grandkid time into our schedule today, and later on this week, because we've been inspired by what we heard on today's and yesterday's programs. And if you're a grandparent, I hope you'll do the same. From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, enjoy the rest of your day, and may God richly bless you and your family, as you walk and grow in relationship with Him.

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

Dr. James Dobson: There was a time when uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters were available to give parents a helping hand with child rearing. But more typically today, the extended family is spread all over the continent, and might not even be trusted anyway. Even grandparents are sometimes unavailable, because they're just as busy as their kids.

Let me share a humorous poem with you that describes this situation. I have no idea who wrote this piece, but I think you'll enjoy it. It's called, "Where Have All the Grandmas Gone?" "In the dim and distant past, when life's tempo wasn't fast, Grandma used to rock and knit, crochet, tap, and babysit. When the kids were in a jam, they could always count on Gram. In that day of gracious living, Grandma was the gal forgiving, but today she's in the gym, exercising to keep slim. She's off touring with the bunch, or taking clients out to lunch; going north to ski or curl. All her days are in a whirl. Nothing seems to stop or block her, now that Grandma's off her rocker."

Well, now we know why grandma isn't at home waiting for a call. But if that's an accurate portrayal of today's family, children are the losers for it. They not only need mothers and fathers who are passionately committed to them, but also the care of other adults who love them like crazy. And grandparents are the most qualified to play that role.

Roger Marsh:

To find out how you can partner with Family Talk, go to drjamesdobson.org.