



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: How to Reach School Children With the Bible

Guest(s): Kori Pennypacker

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome into Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host of Family Talk. As a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist, I'm honored to serve with Dr. Dobson and as resident authority on mental health and relationships here at JDFI. I also serve as president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. Now thank you for joining us on this edition of Family Talk, and welcome to back to school week here on the program.

Dr. Dobson and I prepared a special lineup of interviews and programs this week to speak to and hopefully encourage those who are preparing to go back to school over the next couple of weeks from kindergarten to college. Now we want to help you transition well. There are a lot of moving parts for moms and dads at this time of the year from school supplies, packing lunches, sign up forms to be signed, paying tuition, no matter what it is, take a breath, take it in and just be present.

Mom, Dad, you got this, and in the famous line of that country music song, "It won't be like this for long." Well, I think today's show's going to enlighten you to what is possible on the spiritual side of going back to school. You may remember or know about June 25th, 1962 when the Supreme Court ruled that school sponsored prayers were unconstitutional in a landmark case, *Engle v. Vitale*. 60 years later, biblical truth seems to be eradicated from the public school system. The Bible used to be used as a reader, now it's considered highly controversial, even hateful by some, but did you know that by law, Christians have the ability to bring biblical teaching and the gospel to school-aged youth who attend public schools during the school day? While it is fact and our guest today on Family Talk is here to tell us about how we as concerned Christian members of a community and parents can bring the Bible to children in our local public schools. Her name, Kori Pennypacker.

Kori serves as CEO of Bible2School, which is a program that provides free elective Bible classes to public school children during the school day. The

children walk or a bus to a nearby church or partner location where trained volunteers engage the children in lively worship and Bible studies. Children and volunteers discuss how they can apply the Bible lessons in their lives and pray together. Kori is going to be telling us about Bible2School on today's program. She brings over 20 years of children's ministry and leadership experience to her position.

Kori, thank you so much for joining us on this addition of Family Talk. Dr. Dobson sends his regards.

Kori Pennypacker: Oh well, thank you so much for having me, Tim. Dr. Dobson is near and dear to my heart because I am a former Navy wife and my husband was out to sea when my three boys were young and Dr. Dobson got me through. Man, I listened every week. He is amazing. He helped parent my boys. He doesn't know it though.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kori, I hear that story so many times over. It's just amazing how God's used the ministry, Dr. Dobson through the years, and to strengthen all of our families. Kori, you and I first met at an Extraordinary Women conference. My wife, Julie, is the president of an organization called Extraordinary Women, they host conferences around the country. You and I met in Pensacola, Florida. When I saw your curriculum, you were sponsoring the event. You and I got a few moments to really talk through what God's doing in and through Bible2School. And Kori, I want you to just take us back for a moment. Tell us what Bible2 School is all about, who founded it and why?

Kori Pennypacker: Well, Bible to School was founded by a group of pastors in a small town called Manheim, Pennsylvania, and they actually were responding to a call to having children learn about God when there was divorce back then in 1979, and some kids were going to different parents' houses and a small percentage of them were not able to get to church. So, they base it on this released time law, this released time federal court ruling that you were discussing, and you're allowed to do this. You're allowed to take kids out of school in the middle of a school day to teach them about religious training of their choice. It could be Muslim, it could be Jewish. There's a big Jewish facet in New York, but Bible2School started with non-denominational Christian teaching, and it's going strong now. Definitely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, it's amazing, Kori, when you really think about God's Word for a second and kids growing up, the thing that has most people's attention, especially when kids go off to college is their lack of biblical understanding wisdom. Biblical literacy is off the charts, but it's interesting too, when you talk to people, I love to ask people, what's your favorite Bible verse? And they'll sit there for a moment, and usually they'll go back to when they were a kid, maybe Vacation Bible School or something, and they were taught verses. They had to do Scripture memory. I remember my mom teaching in VBS and forcing all of us to learn Scriptures that got lodged deep in my heart or people, usually when

they're going through a dark season, God gives them a verse of scripture that they hold onto. And it means the world to them, doesn't it?

Kori Pennypacker: It does. I have Scripture myself. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord plans to prosper you not harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future." That's my verse. But kids today, though, Dr. Tim, they do not have that framework. They do not have that foundation. We have kids that don't even know, every week, ask us, "Who's God? I've never heard of Him." And that just breaks our heart because kids don't even know who God is, let alone the Bible, let alone His Holy Word. And we talk about God's Word being God's text message to us, and so kids get that. They're like, "Oh, God's text message to us. Yeah, here it is." He loves us, and He wants us to know Him. And we know Him through His word.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kori, as you were quoting Jeremiah 29:11, that's my wife, Julie's favorite verse. My heart started resonating with Psalm 46, verse one, "Elohim God, He's our refuge and our strength. He's a present help during times of trouble." Verse two, there is "therefore we won't fear though the earth be removed, the mountains basically are cast into the depths of the sea." Tim, He's in the midst of it, and you keep going through it. He's in the midst of it. He's in the midst of it. Scripture does something.

Psalm 119:11 says "The word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you." Joshua 1:8, I just penned this down. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thy shall meditate therein both day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it for then you'll make your way prosperous and then you'll have good success." And I think through the years how I've been driven back to the Scriptures, especially during tough times, dark seasons, and it's the Scripture. It's the Bible. No wonder when you think about the role of moms and you think about children and those early developmental years, how important it is to get the Word of God into their hearts.

Kori Pennypacker: Well, it's hope and it's truth, and aren't we all looking for hope and truth? Not only in times of trouble or just to live our lives, but always. We're always looking for that, and it's so calming and gives us such inner peace around the chaos around us. And kids have chaos too. They're absorbing a lot in this world, and so the Bible has the same effect on them. When they hear the Word of God, our school teachers tell us that kids come back from Bible2School program, calmer, more confident and relieved that someone else is in control. God is in control, and we don't have to worry about it. So their worries and anxieties come down a bit just like ours do when we state just the verses you just said, my heart was going too and just calming when you were saying those verses

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Kori, Bible2School programs, we know the Bible. Well, God got kicked out of school back in the early sixties when they took prayer out of schools and people think, well, you're not allowed to have the Bible there, et cetera, but you guys have gotten innovative. You've gotten creative and you have this program,

and I want to talk more about it. But what I found interesting was people or the children who are attending these programs now, these Bible2School programs, 60% of them who attend, they don't even have a church home.

Kori Pennypacker: No, we're many times telling them about God for the very first time. And I think about the little boy named Gabriel, and this was something that always, always gets me. He was a little boy, blonde, blue eyed, curly hair, and his grandmother was raising him, like a lot of kids nowadays, their grandparents are raising them. And he did not know anything about God. He came during over lunch and recess. We have this program, and he came once a week, and he accepted Christ as his Savior one day.

And he came back to me and I said, "Well, Gabriel, this is so awesome. You accepted Christ as your Savior, He's in your life forever now." And he said, "Yes, I did." And I said, "Well, tell me about that." And I'll never forget what he said. He said, "I've always wanted to know how to get to Heaven, but no one's ever told me." I get choked up every time I think about that because these kids are in our neighborhoods. These kids play with our kids. They play with our grandkids. They are not very far from us, and they don't know who God is in our culture. So it definitely is something that is very needed and they're hungry for it. They want it. They want to know, they want to know who made them and who loves them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: This Bible2School program, again, is a program for public school systems, and you want people to know that you have a right to work this into your local community, your local school system. There's a way to get this done. How many schools are currently engaged with the Bible2School program, Kori?

Kori Pennypacker: We have 30 plus schools across Pennsylvania right now. We have interest in New York and Florida and Minnesota. We have 10 other states that are talking to us. So it is definitely a movement happening because like you said, it's the best kept secret in America. I hear people say it all the time, "They took God out of schools." I'm like, "No, they didn't. We can put them right back in. We just got to do it legally." And the way to do it legally is through, like we said, this federal released time ruling.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And what does that mean?

Kori Pennypacker: Well, it was actually in 1914 is when they actually took the Bible totally out of school, and politicians at that time said, well, "Kids are mind, body and soul. So we're going to take that spiritual part and give it to the community." Hence, you release them off a school campus so that the community can teach them about spiritual truths. So that's actually what was happening. What you were saying in the sixties is when they took prayer out of school, but in 1952, there was a Supreme Court ruling that it upheld release time that you can do this. It was challenged, *Zorach v. Clauson*. And I tell you what, from then on, people started using this released time, but there's 53 million public school kids right now, and only two or 3000 of these programs anywhere in the United States right now. So

that's why we said, "Hey, we want to make this easy for people." So that's why we got involved.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So, in other words, there's a federal law that says released time can be used for a Bible2School program. And what you have to do is the stipulations related to released time can't be held on at the public school. So the children have to go to another place.

Kori Pennypacker: Right, like a church or a youth center. They walk or they're bused offsite. They have to have-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Students have to have parental permission to participate, right?

Kori Pennypacker: Parental permission, and then it can't cost a taxpayer any money. So yeah, offsite, parental permission and no tax dollars, and you are legal. Each state might have a little tweak to that. In Pennsylvania, you can only do it up to 36 hours a year. In Ohio and South Carolina, the school boards have to approve a released time to be put in there. So there is a little tweak to it in different states, but all 50 states can do this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kori, I'm curious, is this like when they have play time, when they're outside, like recess time or something?

Kori Pennypacker: It can be any instructional time during the day. It could be any time. I know some that do it at the last period of the day. I know some other programs that do it in the middle of the day or the beginning of the day. When you do Bible2 School, we choose to do it over lunch and recess and in the middle of the day preferably because there's so much that the kids have to miss and you don't want that. So we partner with the school and say, "We can do this time of the day, but we are going to take them and take their lunches with them and come off site to the church, down the street, and we're going to teach them the Bible and it's one hour, and that includes travel time."

So that's 10 minutes walking and 10 minutes walking back. So our program that we've designed is 40 minutes long and you know a lot, you've written books and all that stuff, it's harder to condense things than it is to have a two or three hour program. So we try to get the most important things like you just talked about, the basics of who God is and what the Bible is and what the Bible is telling us in our lessons.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So, I'm assuming then there's a full curriculum that's been developed and you have a plan that you help parents work through to see Bible2School operationalize in their communities, in their churches, in their schools.

Kori Pennypacker: Yes, we serve second, third and fourth graders. So we equip parents in their communities, could be moms, dads, grandparents, we have them build a team first. Because we know that it takes the teams to do things. It takes the body of

Christ to do things. So, we have them build these teams and then implement this program, and it's second grade, Old Testament. Third grade, New Testament, and fourth grade, discipleship. And it's very VBS like. If people know what VBS is fun and science experiments, and we teach them with games and we teach them with dressing up as the Bible characters and we have Jonah and the whale and we have a big blow up 30 foot giant whale with gardening paper, duct tape, and a fan. And we teach you how to do things simply.

Kids love simple things and they don't know any better, but man, you go inside the belly of the whale with the whole class and the public school teachers are like, "Wow. Our kids went inside the belly of the whale." And we say, "Yeah, they really did go inside the belly of a whale." But then they go into small group and that's where the small group leaders come in, and they think about it question for the day on Jonah is how does God give second chances? And they have a bucket of ice water and the kids put their hands in it because Jonah was thrown into cold water. And so they put their hands in it, see how long they can keep it in. And the boys love this and then they get a blubber glove. It is a double rubber glove, it's disgusting with Crisco lard in the middle, and they get this blubber glove on, and then they put their hand in the water, and they can see, touch and feel how God gave Jonah a second chance.

And then we ask questions like, "How does God give you second chances?" And so we have these amazing discussions with the kids. We teach these communities how to do this, and it's a safe place for kids in the middle of the week, in the middle of a school day to talk about God and ask spiritual questions. And man, you're a counselor. You know they ask really great questions.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They do. My mother was an amazing Bible teacher, Kori. She would teach VBS, Vacation Bible School, and she always did the story hour. And my mother used flannel graph boards, and she would post characters up there. She was so good at it, Kori. Every kid in the town would come to Vacation Bible School just to hear her teach these stories. And she was mesmerizing. When you make the Bible come alive, those things, again, really get locked into the heart.

You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. Again, our special in studio guest, Kori Pennypacker, CEO of Bible2School talking about a fascinating program that they're launching. Well, that's been around for a long time, about 30 years now, and it really is starting to get traction, especially in today's culture and environment.

Kori, I want to go back to you and just talk about how you got involved. I heard that you got involved as a volunteer.

Kori Pennypacker: I did.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And you told that story earlier, but you have any other stories that really resonate with your heart that God's used to help you so good seed with this program?

Kori Pennypacker: Yes. One of my favorite stories as I got involved, and you get a lot of God stories when you're working with these children and giving them the Word of God, is that there was a question about how does God answer prayer? And we have a stoplight that we use and we say, "Yes, God answers prayer. Sometimes He says green, yes. Sometimes He says red, no. And sometimes He says yellow, wait." And this little boy raised his hand, a big smile on his face, and he said, "I'm yellow, I'm yellow." And I said, "What do you mean you're yellow?" And he said, "My mom's in jail, and I know that God's going to bring her back to me so I'm waiting and I'm yellow." And I thought, wow, these kids, even adults don't get the answers to prayer and what that's like, and these kids are getting it with childlike faith. It's wonderful.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kori, I love those stories. My wife would say this, "Tim, be sure and ask her, is there really a market?" Do parents send their kids to these programs? These are second, third, fourth graders in public school systems, will they send their kids to this?

Kori Pennypacker: Well, the big thing we found is that it's convenient. It's in the middle of the day. So, if your kids going to school, they're going to Bible2School, and don't have to pick them up or drop them off. And they're thankful that we're there and that their neighbors and their friends are pitching in and teaching their kids the Bible. And we love equipping them to do that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And the school systems are receptive?

Kori Pennypacker: Well at first, they're like, "What is this?" And, "Let me talk to our solicitor, what is it?" But we equip these moms and dads to come in with so much information. We want you to stay in your legal lane. We want the public school to stay in their legal lane, and it's a beautiful partnership. In fact, we have superintendents and principals that rave about us and one principal called us and said, "Wait a minute, why doesn't my school have this? You're in the district next door. Why aren't you in my school?" And she was upset.

And so these school administrators want the best for the kids, and they know that we can help them and be more positive influences on children from the community. And that's very helpful to children to have as many positive adults around them as they can.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kori, I know we're fighting time, but I wanted to highlight a couple of pieces. So, you have put together an entire curriculum, and what you do is you even tell those who are interested in starting a program like this in their local public school, second, third, fourth grade, the team of people that you need. A champion for your Bible2School program, a pastor, parent, business leader,

people can help fund this because there are some costs associated with this. Someone who does some networking, maybe someone who can talk to the schools, you also talk about a four step process for launching a Bible2School program. Can you just highlight a couple of those pieces real quick for us?

Kori Pennypacker: Sure. We have them build their team first, and then once they build their team of those four people of the pastor, the parent in the school, the networker, the Christian business leader, then we give them the actual toolbox, because we have all the best practices. We have all the student registration templates. We have what all you should buy. It's just a plug and play just like a franchise model, if you will. And we also give them a website.

So right away, they can accept online student registration, and they can accept online donations. So we're really setting them up for their own little program and it's totally done by the community, and we equip them on every level and let them, let the body of Christ in your community do this program. But we have all the tools for them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We've got such admiration for people and organizations like you, Kori, and what you all are doing, Bible back to school, as you were talking, I just wrote down in my notes, 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 "For all Scripture given by inspiration of God." In other words, it's God breathed, and "it's profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction and righteousness." And I love this. Paul wrote these words that "the man or woman of God, that the child of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In other words, here's your life plan. This is what you need to anchor yourself in.

And I was thinking about reflecting on the temptation of Jesus. When Jesus was led into the desert by the spirit of God, He fasted 40 days and 40 nights, hungry. The tempter comes to Him and says, "Hey, if you're the son of God, command these stones to become bread." And what was Jesus' response? It is written. "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." It's a beautiful piece and how much we need God's Word in our everyday life. And it needs to start early and young.

If people want to learn more information about Bible2School, where do they go, Kori?

Kori Pennypacker: They go to our website, Bible2School.com, and that's Bible, the number two, school.com. And I have one more God story I'd love to share, it's from this summer. And there was a volunteer who was out in his yard, and his neighbor came over and said, "Hey, I didn't know you're a volunteer. My kids go to Bible2School, and they come home and they love it. But I don't know about God, will you teach me?" I thought this is the family, not just the children need the Scripture you're talking about, but the whole family needs it. And I need it too. I know it's just a wonderful thing that we have God's Word that we can hide in our hearts.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Our special guest today again has been Kori Pennypacker. She's the CEO of Bible2School, fascinating project God's using to really impact public schools all across the country where we can bring God's Word back to school. Kori, such it delight to have you on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here at Family Talk, we salute you pray that God would continue to lead and bless all your efforts. Thank you for joining us.

Kori Pennypacker: Thank you. It's a privilege.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Family Talk, and that was Dr. Tim Clinton's recent interview with Kori Pennypacker, CEO of Bible2School. I'm Roger Marsh, and as you heard in today's conversation, Bible to School is an innovative program that equips Christians to bring the hope of the gospel to school-aged children and their communities. What an incredible opportunity to reach kids for Christ.

Now, if you've been praying about a way to reach kids in your community with the gospel, Bible2School just might be the perfect avenue to get started. To learn more about Kori Pennypacker and Bible2School, visit drkamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, or give us a call at (877)732-6825. That's (877)732-6825.

Well, it is "back to school" week here at Family Talk and all week long, we'll be sharing encouraging programming to help you as you get back into the swing of things this school year. Make sure you listen in all week long. Until next time, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for joining us here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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