



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Grandparenting: A Higher Calling – Part 3

Guest(s): Jay Kesler

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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: Hello and welcome to this Friday edition of Family Talk. Today, we will be sharing a very unique and dynamic program, part three, the final portion of Dr. Dobson's classic conversation with his friend, Dr. Jay Kesler about the high call of grandparenting. This interview was curated by Dr. Dobson from his vault of classics and has never been aired before on Family Talk. Today, Dr. Dobson and Dr. Kesler will be taking some questions from the studio audience. You won't want to miss their wisdom and insight as they answer pressing questions from real grandparents who are trying to be a godly influence to their children and grandchildren. Dr. Dobson will also give you a glimpse into his relationship with his own dad and how even in adulthood, he looks back with fondness and treasures the time he spent with his father.

Dr. Dobson's guest today, Dr. Jay Kesler is the former president and chancellor of Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. Dr. Kesler graduated from Taylor in 1958 and is best known for his writings and radio work. He has served as preaching pastor of Upland Community Church and was president of Youth for Christ from 1973 to 1985. He also served as president of Taylor University from 1985 to 2000. Dr. Jay Kesler is also the author of nearly 30 books, including *Ten Mistakes Parents Make with Teenagers* and *Being Holy, Being Human: Dealing With the Expectations of Ministry*. Now, before we get into our program today, if you've been blessed by Family Talk, won't you consider making a financial contribution to support our ministry? Our broadcast is completely listener supported, and we rely on your generosity to continue to produce great God honoring programs. To learn more about how you can give to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, visit drjamesdobson.org or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. And now let's join Dr. Dobson and his guest, Dr. Jay Kesler on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: My grandfathers were older. Two of them, the grandfather and great-grandfather had died before I came on the scene and my other grandfather was 80 years old. But grandmothers, I know a lot about because they had a great impact on my life and especially spiritually as I said earlier. How can a grandmother or grandfather go about conveying the most important thing in life

to little kids, putting it into their language? I don't even know how my grandmothers did it so well, but I mean, they really did communicate to me that this was important to me.

Jay Kesler:

Well, one thing that almost universally, and this may just be generational and the fact that my mother don't know how to run the VCR. I don't know. But grandparents apparently do more reading than parents today. And reading is a very intimate thing. To sit with a child, the body warmth them curled somewhere near you while grandmother reads and talks to you about things. And somehow or another I think also this idea of God, the heavenly grandfather is even more convincing to kids. I know our grandson, my oldest grandson, once we're driving down the driveway and just out of the blue, he said, "Grandpa, if the world got blown up by a hydrogen bomb, do you think God could put it back together again?" And I said, "Well, he did it the first time. Didn't he?" And he said, "Yeah."

Well, we drove just a little farther. And he starts singing "He's Got The Whole World in His Hand." And then he had, he's got you and me in his hand, he had mom and dad in his hand, he had his sisters in hand. He went through every human being that I know that he knew intimately at the time in his hand. And it just seemed to settle it, you know? I thought, well, why just because I said it? But then I'm kind of the authority around. I'm the patriarch of our little clan and I'm about as old as you get. And God must be old like that too. And I think that grandparents can by talking and affirming to them. Listening was a big thing, ran through this thing too. Grandparents tend to listen, not feel they got to give an answer right now.

Dr. James Dobson:

There is a time in child development when those kinds of issues are very interesting to them. I mean, if you don't capture those opportunities, then when they're 14 and 16 and 18, it's sometimes very difficult to make up for lost time.

Jay Kesler:

Well, another thing I try to do toward the end of the book is to talk about the role of the aging grandparent with dealing with mortality. And I've tried to encourage grandparents to deal with mortality when something comes up about death and maybe the grandparents say something about it and then the child, "Oh, well, you'll never die." "Oh yes, we will. Yes, we will. And I'm ready for that" and chance to give your testimony and tell about how you found the Lord and talk about the peace that passes all understanding.

I actually have sat with numbers of people who've moved off into eternity as committed Christians who did it well. I think it would be a good thing for grandparents to try to do well, grow old well. One probably doesn't need to unbutton a couple buttons on his shirt and get a gold chain and trade in his, what they say, 40 year old wife for two twenties, and then find out they're not wired for two 20 anymore. This whole idea. Yeah, yeah. Go back. But to really do it with dignity, I think kids respect this and they need it from grandparents.

Dr. James Dobson: I think that's what my grandmothers did for me. They talked a lot about Heaven. We don't do that anymore.

Jay Kesler: No...

Dr. James Dobson: We're so anxious. The ministers today talk about getting through tomorrow and capturing the power of God for more successful living and all that stuff, prosperity. And man, they talked in those days about a few more years to carry on and then I'm going to see Jesus. And they translated that to me as a four, five or six year old in a way that made me want to go there.

Jay Kesler: Well, in a way, it's the theme of the Old Testament. God was faithful throughout history. Therefore, He'll be faithful to you in the future. A grandparent who can tell a young person about their own youth, about God's faithfulness in their life, the vicissitudes of their life, the things they went through that were painful and struggling. And yet they now they've arrived at old age, happy with what God has given them. They don't have regrets and so on. This is very important stuff. It teaches more about sovereignty than all the theology in the world really.

Dr. James Dobson: I think you're enjoying this role.

Jay Kesler: I am, I am. And the thing that I'm enjoying most is the realization that it's a live real function. I even take the time in this book to get into the heritage of it, the thought of assuring their education, for instance. When you think about it, I think about our kids and our nine grandchildren. Will they be able to afford to educate our grandchildren? And if I can participate in some way in that process, I'll feel very good to be able to provide Christian education, for instance. As opposed to saying, well, I need one more trip to wherever. I'm not sure I do.

Dr. James Dobson: You deal in your book with what you call surrogate grandparenting. You need to explain what that is.

Jay Kesler: Well, what I found is that there are great many lonely grandparents really in our churches whose families have dispersed across the country. The grandchildren live in Philadelphia and they live in California or whatever. And yet the church also, because that same thing has a lot of little nuclear families in it, where there are families whose grandparents live a long distance away or single parent families. And one thing I found very effective is grandparents who adopt little families and become surrogate grandparents. "Come to our house on Easter or come to our house on Thanksgiving. You're not going to be able to go to Philadelphia. Come to our house."

And I've found that this grandma and grandpa whatever in the church is a wonderful function and gives many grandparents a great sense of belonging and sense of wellbeing, a sense of accomplishment and contribution. In fact, especially maybe with some of these little families with a single parent, totally cut off. They're the only human in the world, and to be able to come to

someone's house and to get in a family configuration. It's a powerful, powerful thing. I have a lot of data that shows it.

Dr. James Dobson: And you know what? The kids fall in love with them too.

Jay Kesler: Yeah, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: You don't have to be in the family for kids to fall in love with you.

Jay Kesler: That's right. And some of them really do not have any other known grandparent. And so you end up being a lifelong grandparent and that's a special blessing to certain people.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's ask the gallery if they have some questions for us. We've got a few minutes left. Invite you all to come to the microphone if you'd like, and either express your own experience with your grandkids or ask Dr. Kesler a question. We welcome you to do so. Give us your name and the city you represent.

Melody Peterson: I'm Melody Peterson. I'm from Olympia, Washington. I have two grandchildren. One, a little six month old boy and a two year old little girl who is two going on 35. I think the thing that I have enjoyed doing is ... As a parent, I was so involved with raising them and being concerned about them keeping up with the crowd and developing along with the others or ahead, and seems like, especially today, they're more excited about that kind of thing. One thing I do with my little Rachel is I constantly let her know that no matter what she does or where she is, that I will always love her. I tried to do that with my kids.

And I found that it meant a lot. It means a lot to her and that if ever I can be of help to her, even as a two year old, she knows that Grammy will love her. And whenever she does anything positive like obeying, which is interesting with her, because she's very strong willed. I will tell her how happy I am that she has obeyed. And now she'll come up to me and say, "Grammy, are you still proud and happy?" And that does. It means a lot. And they're never too young to hear how much you approve of them, how worthwhile they are and how much you love them.

Jay Kesler: That love that will not let me go theme is a tremendous thing. In fact, in this survey, I had an interesting thing, appeared several times where a young person that got into for their generation, keep in mind these were adults talking about their grandparents. We're going back a generation. And those who had gotten into deep problems like an unwanted pregnancy or had gotten in trouble with the law, almost universally said, "The one person who believed in me was my grandparents, my grandmother, my grandfather."

Dr. James Dobson: Even at the time.

Jay Kesler: Yeah. "I went to live with them and my grandpa always was proud of me. He understood me. He stood up for me." And these are people who've, this thing's 40 years in their past. But back then, same thing, you start with a two year old, but they get the idea. Well, is it Robert Frost who said, "Home is a place that when you go there, they have to take you in. Home is the place that when you go there, they have to take you in." And I think the grandparent sometimes can do that better than the parent because the parent's own life is on the line. Success or failure is into the parent. I mean, the kid does well or not, it reflects directly on you. The grandparent doesn't feel that pressure. They can give total acceptance.

Dr. James Dobson: Jay, let's tick off real quickly major landmines that grandparents don't want to step on. Well, we've talked about one of them.

Jay Kesler: I think interference in the discipline process, indulgence, attempting to buy them. I think the competition with the in-laws trying to we're the good grandparents, you're the bad ones. Putting down grandparents. One thing I ran into was numbers of grandparents who are Christians and the other set of grandparents are not. And I encourage them not to make the other grandparents into bad people because they're not Christians. Stick to your own testimony. Don't get into theirs and so on. Those would be no-nos. I think also the spoiling or the undermining the parents discipline by second guessing the parents safety net. I think you've got to stick with them. United we stand, divided we fall. You've got to stick with the discipline of the parent. And it has to be a pretty severe wrong I think to interfere and then never in front of the child, in my opinion.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. In the form of advice.

Jay Kesler: Yeah. Never in front of the child. I think there is a time maybe to take them aside and talk to them and I talk to numbers of ... We have a whole world and we'll get mail on this of intervention where grandparents have felt, "I've got to step in because my daughter is a drug addict." Or whatever. We have a lot of that with this audience, and here it doesn't seem like it, but you'd be amazed how many grandparents have been stuck with this problem to have to acknowledge, "My son is actually at this stage in his life a detriment to the grandchildren."

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, that brings up one of the most painful family situations that can occur. And I've seen it often. And that's where a grandparent knows that his or her son or daughter is irresponsible and would like to withdraw support and let him face the music. Get out there and get hungry if you have to like the prodigal son did, but they can't do it because the baby involved. There's a child there that they can't afford to let get hungry. And so they wind up taking their precious resources and supporting an irresponsible son or daughter in order to protect that grandchild.

Jay Kesler: Very common situation.

Dr. James Dobson: That is a tough situation.

Jay Kesler: It is. And there's no easy answer to that one. Has to be played case by, and I've seen situations where the grandparent has actually ended up saying for a short period of time, "Can we take this child into our home while the two of you get your act together?" And the disappointing thing on the part of many grandparents who I've talked to is that the children almost turned it over. That is they forgot they had children. They were so irresponsible, so immature. They went off and lived their single life as if they didn't have children. And this grandparent has this grandchild when the parents are still living. You hope that you can live long enough to see that thing come full circle. And I think it will many times. That is the child will grow up, mature and come back and take their responsibility, but it's a difficult one for the grandparent.

Dr. James Dobson: Next question.

Suzanne: Hi, I'm Suzanne from Colorado Springs. Along the same note, what you were just talking about. How can you help a family where the grandparents are raising their grandchildren because they have irresponsible children and the children know that as long as Mom and Dad are going to bail them out, they will never agree with what the court says and get it together and take their children back? Because if Mom and Dad give them a free ride, why should they be responsible? How can you help the parents? And the same token when those children have visitation rights to see their parents once a month or something and they come back and the parents have two weeks to undo the problems that happen during that visitation problem? Is there any help for them?

Jay Kesler: Well, I don't think there's any easy answer to this one. And I think it's painful. And I keep trying to think about God's long suffering to us. How often does God love us when it's really not fair of us to ask Him to love us? And the answer would be in all of our lives, a great deal. And I think the grandparent ends up being almost in the same position God is in, in relationship to the human race. That is, the grandparents get abused, used, manipulated, hurt, and how much more should they give?

Well, usually that answer to that is in relationship to their tolerance for pain. But keep in mind we have in the Christian gospel the cross. Jesus' tolerance for this went all the way to death itself. And in Hebrews, we read, "You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin." And I read that passage and I say, does this mean that we should-

Dr. James Dobson: Is that what it takes?

Jay Kesler: ... be that Christlike? And I think the answer is, and that's the stuff saints are made out of, but I think there are grandparents who end up being absolute saints in this kind of thing. Back to Jim's point. What about the child? Who are we punishing? And so you've got to be long suffering and is God's long ... God's

long suffering doesn't make sense to accountants even in this world. It is called grace. It's unmerited favor.

Dr. James Dobson: When the same action, the same loving action of perhaps giving support-

Jay Kesler: Hurts one.

Dr. James Dobson: ... hurts one and helps the other, you err in favor of the younger of the two.

Jay Kesler: I think you do, the helpless. You err on the side of the helpless.

Dr. James Dobson: Right.

Jay Kesler: And I attend a Saturday morning breakfast with older men and I'll have to say this to all the listeners. The grandfathers tend to pray almost exclusively for grandchildren.

Dr. James Dobson: That's where their heart is. Next question.

Joanne Larson: My name is Joanne Larson. We live suburban Denver. And we are new at this grandparenting business. Our son and his wife just had twins, and they live in Houston. And so I'm wondering what suggestions you would have that we can be effective grandparents long distance.

Jay Kesler: I'm suggesting in my book a couple things about it. One, the telephone's a marvelous thing and nothing wrong on with it. But I do feel that telephone's a limited instrument compared with the letter. I'd encourage, especially if they're old enough to read, I would write them because that's something you can keep, you can fold up. You can go back to. It's a treasure. It takes more time. People put more thought into letters. That's one thing.

I'd also encourage grandparents who have children living distance, that you try to arrange a period of time they can spend with you. On the plane today, by the way, a young man across the aisle, I said, "Are you coming home to Colorado Springs?" And he said, "No, I'm here visiting my grandparents." And I thought well, that's a wonderful thing. And I think to have them come for a couple days or for a week at a time, more can be bonded in a week than in 25 phone calls or whatever. So I think just working on that distance, never forgetting a birthday, remembering things like a test, praying for things they're going through. The sense of your partnership is a good thing, but I encourage you that telephone is something that's pretty casual touch in today's world compared ... Do it, but letters are better. Visits are better, taking them with you. And before they're 10 years old or so they love to go places with you. Then they've got somebody they want to go with rather than you.

Dr. James Dobson: My parents and I had many conversations, and Shirley, before they died. And I recorded them, and I've got those conversations today. And it is really

interesting to listen to them. One of them, my dad was actually recording a message to me. We sent letters by audio tape in those days. And so he was out walking for his daily walk out in the woods and carrying the little tape recorder with him and talking to me. And he was talking about what he'd been reading, what was on his mind, and we've hunted together a lot. And he came to a place and he said, "Now, Jim," he said, "If I were a quail, this is where I'd be. There's water over here. There's cover over there. There's food source over there. This is a ..." You heard them come right out from under him as he was talking. And it was such a neat take.

Jay Kesler: Grandpa is smarter than a quail.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, that's right. Okay. Hello, Ron.

Ron Luck: My name is Ron Luck. I'm from Monument, Colorado. As a young father, I did not take enough time with my kids and neglected to do the fun things that dads should do. As a grandparent, I want to make up for those mistakes. How do I do this without being too pushy?

Jay Kesler: Well, I think it shouldn't come out of guilt. Be careful that you're not driven by guilt and don't overdo it. I see this for instance with working mothers who feel very guilty because they're not with the kids so they wear the kid out when they get home from work. Kids says, "I want to sleep for goodness sake." They want to play until midnight because they've got to make it up out of guilt. So don't overdo it in that way. And I think there's a place to admit it. Your own kids might surprise you by saying, "You didn't do as badly as you think you did." But by the same token, I'd sure take advantage of the free time and all to do stuff with them.

This whole quality quantity saw they keep getting on, I've never liked it. You can't have much quality without some quantity, in my opinion. And so give them some time. And I think some of these time consuming things, fishing's a great one I've found. You get them on a boat and sit there and you got a lot of time to talk. You don't talk much about fish. You talk about God and sex and dragon flies and everything else in the world.

Dr. James Dobson: Jay and I sat in a boat in Canada, place called Moose Point Lodge and caught while I...

Jay Kesler: This guy is a fishing addict.

Dr. James Dobson: Going back to Ron's question about not feeling like he did the job right. All of us feel that way.

Jay Kesler: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: I think it's helpful to sit down with your kids and put that on the table and say, "If I had it all to do over again and I had the maturity and the insight I do now, I'd have done things a little differently. And I didn't succeed at everything I tried to do. I hope you can forgive me for that." But you know what? You won't succeed with everything you do either. You got to cut me some slack as you hope your son and daughter do you, because it is infinitely complex and you're not going to do it all right. You're going to make some big mistakes. And I did, but I loved you. There was never any that about that. Okay.

David Wallace: I'm David Wallace from Merced, California. And two comments. Dr. Kesler has mentioned the importance of maybe helping out at college level, especially Christian college level. My wife and I background in Christian education at elementary and high school level. Maybe grandparents, we've seen often where grandparents could help at even the primary level and get them started so that they will be willing to go to Christian colleges when they get to that age. Grandparents also can boast from time to time. We're proud of what our daughter and her husband did in raising their children.

Jay Kesler: Amen. That's great.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. Any last comment? Jay, thank you so much for being our guest. You hopped on a plane, you flew over here. Now you got turn right around to go home. I really appreciate it.

Jay Kesler: We got nine of them come for Christmas. We're going to lay them out like cordwood on the floor and let them sleep, and then wake up Christmas morning.

Dr. James Dobson: You have a quiver full of arrows. Right?

Jay Kesler: I sure do.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of your book is *Grandparenting: The Agony and the Ecstasy*. There's a little bit of both. Isn't there?

Jay Kesler: Yeah, there can be.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we appreciate you sharing this with us. We're going to offer your book. And anytime you've got anything to say that you say to our audience, our door is open, Jay. We sure love and appreciate you.

Jay Kesler: Well, enjoy being here. And from the day one, I've felt that this is a central need in this culture. And God did more even than I have to confess my faith was able to even ask, Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Jay Kesler: And we pray for you and Shirley that God will protect you in these days very, very much.

Dr. James Dobson: He has been good. And I tell you, people are praying for us. And that's what keeps us afloat.

Jay Kesler: All across the country.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, without that, it's just too heavy a load, and he is helping us. And I know they're praying for you too. You've got a generation of kids that are a representation of that generation that you're trying to educate and give them the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I pray that He will continue to be very near to you.

Jay Kesler: Thank you, brother.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Family Talk, and that was Dr. James Dobson with his guest, author and president emeritus of Taylor University, Dr. Jay Kesler. Today's program was the third and final installment of a classic interview that Dr. Dobson conducted with Jay Kesler, and their conversation had never before been aired on Family Talk. Now, I hope you've enjoyed Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dr. Jay Kesler over these past few days. We've entitled this three part program "Grandparenting: A Higher Calling." If you missed any installment of the broadcast, just visit drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. You'll be able to listen to the program in its entirety or even request a CD copy to keep or to share with a grandparent in your life.

Again, that web address is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Or you can give us a call at (877)732-6825. Our team is available 24/7 to answer your questions and provide resources to encourage and support you in your Christian walk. That number once again is (877)732-6825. As we close, from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thank you for making us a part of your day today and each and every day. We've come to the end of our time this week, and what a week it's been. Spring has sprung here in Colorado, and we hope it has for you as well. So get outside if you can and enjoy the gift of warm weather this weekend, and join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love. I'm Roger Marsh wishing you and yours a lovely weekend.

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