



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: From Foster to Adoption: Finding a Forever Family

Guest(s): Dave Donaldson and Wendell Vinson

Air Date: November 14, 2022

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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.

Roger Marsh: Thanks so much for joining us for Family Talk, the radio ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and we appreciate that you've welcomed us into your family. Family Talk is only possible because of you. Your prayers and generosity help us remain on the air. Now, if you enjoy our programs each day, please share them with a friend. And don't forget about your local radio station or your streaming platform as well that you listen to this program on. That outlet is incredibly important to ensure that biblical truth is heard in the public square. So when you contact us, be sure you identify how you hear us. Well, it's Monday, so happy Monday. A lot of us are heading into the week with Thanksgiving and the upcoming holiday season on our minds, thinking of upcoming vacation time or maybe figuring out your plans or thinking about what to cook or bake for the holiday. And you might be thinking about exactly whom you'll be sitting down with.

Family, friends. Well, maybe we encourage you to take the time to think about those less fortunate as the holidays approach. Maybe someone from your church community who is alone this holiday season and would love an invitation to come over to your house and spend some time with your family. On today's Family Talk program, Dr. Tim Clinton sits down with our ministry friends Dave Donaldson and Pastor Wendell Vincent to discuss how a tragic accident led to a life changing time for one family. Dave and Wendell are both from CityServe, an incredible nonprofit organization that is working to empower and equip those less fortunate in cities and underserved communities all across the country. We're going to hear Dave provide his own testimony in honor of national adoption awareness month. That's right. November is the month in which we, and hopefully much of the body of Christ will step up for the least of us, the babies and the children without homes or parents that are in foster and state care.

Dave will also share with us how his neighbors poured their hearts into creating a loving home and a foundation for him and his siblings after tragedy struck his family long ago. Now, before we listen in, I'd like to reflect for just a moment on

Hebrews 13:16. It says, And do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices, God is pleased. That is a powerful statement from God's holy word. All right, Dr. Tim Clinton, let's get into today's program right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dave and Wendell, welcome back.

Dave Donaldson: Thank you. It's good to be back.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dave. I know that this burns a little deeper in your heart and it goes back to when you were a boy and goes to a story that pretty rough on a boy. You mind sharing with our audience why you do what you do.

Dave Donaldson: In 1969, my dad was a pastor and he and my mother were faithfully serving and we were in the car together because the babysitter didn't arrive and I won't forever forget the lights of her car shining through that back window, and then our dad asking us to exit the vehicle. Well, moments later as they were driving down the freeway, a drunk driver slid across the divide, hit their car head on. Our dad was killed instantly. Our mother survived, but they basically had to pin her body back together again for her to survive. And I recall my two brothers and I going to the hospital to see her for the first time. And we peered through the glass into her room and she was so beaten up and broken that my older brother, when she mentioned his name, he collapsed to the ground beside me. And so there we were three boys, a younger sister, wondering what's going to happen next? Where are we going to get food, clothing, and shelter?

And people responded. They responded to our cries in a very tangible way. It took several months for our mom to get strong enough to cook. People brought us hot meals almost every night. And my mom loved to joke that she had many gifts, but cooking wasn't one of them. And that was true. I like to joke that most of the time she would use the smoke alarm as the timer. And so we pleaded with these people to continue to bring his meals after she somewhat recovered. But this family, the Davises, they didn't have a big home. They didn't have a big bank account, but they had big hearts and they invited us into their single wide trailer. And I recall walking up to that trailer and I was scared, I was hugging my pillow with one arm and my bag with the other. And I wondered, would this be another stop along the way? Would they want us and keep us?

And as we shuffled inside, Mr. Davis gave us a hug. And this is what he said. He said, "You are with family and this is your home." And Tim, that four letter word changed our lives because it meant that Davises were willing to not only share their space, but they're willing to share in our pain, our sorrow, in our anger. And that's what Jesus has done, left all the glory of heaven to come down here on earth to be with us and to share in our sorrows and our joys. And so the Davises, they're the heroes. They made room for us even though it wasn't convenient. And even though they didn't have a lot of space, they made room in their lives, but also in their home, in their hearts.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I was just thinking about what it must have been like to be a single parent mom, trying to raise a family in the midst of all that and those lonely difficult nights. My dad, when my mother passed away, I asked my dad how he did it. And he said, Tim, I wasn't ready for this. He said, The toughest time is when I'd reach over for her in the middle of the night, there was nobody there anymore. Tim, I would reach for her and she's not there. And it just caused me to swallow. And I thought that part of the story I don't think people give enough attention to, because that's a painful journey. And to have someone come alongside of you, and sometimes Dave is just a ministry of presence. Sometimes it's a spoken word over you.

Dave Donaldson: It is.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Your family with us. You know that? And it's staying the course. James said, what? A real ministry is to visit the widows and the orphans in their affliction to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Calls us to it. Yeah. We don't see a lot of that, you know that? We get so lost in our own worlds. And by the way, it's been a rough couple of years. The pace and the pain and the pressure of modern day life, it's overwhelming. And people usually give into that and they then don't see beyond the four corners of their own home anymore. But boy, if they could just reach out.

Dave Donaldson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: If they could just be there, just speak life.

Dave Donaldson: I think that's so well said. I do recall many evenings hearing my mom cry out to God and moan because of her husband being gone, but also the pain. But there was this path to healing, the grieving, the gathering. And when people are in pain, it's like an animal that's wounded, they go off and hide. And the enemy picks them off. But our mom made sure we were in church, we were staying close to each other, to our family, to the Davises and others, and then the giving, the giving. And she taught us something, Tim, very powerful. To me the most spiritual words that she taught me was, Get up, get up, each and every day. Get up, walk into the presence of God and then give. And if God can get it through you, he'll give it to you. And so that was the model.

And I mentioned to you before we started this show, something that we discovered of hers recently. It was a metal box that was hidden in a deep large box. We opened it up and we found these file folders. One of the file folders had denial letters when she was trying to get a job, when she was trying to get up. But next to those denial letters, there was another envelope. And it had her tax returns for three years when she was one of the lead buyers at Cordis Dow Chemical. Why would she do that? We believe it's because she wanted to remember the nos, but she also remembered, wanted to remember the yeses. And so we have decided we're not victims, we're wounded healers, and we're going to say yes to the single moms, these young girls that are caught in human

trafficking, people that are enslaved by drugs. We're going to say yes and we're going to help raise up the church to say yes in America and around the globe.

Wendell Vinson: One of the things that really empowered Dave's mom is that she had a faith community around her.

Dave Donaldson: Amen.

Wendell Vinson: Through that tragedy, through every failed application for a job, there were some people in her life that were cheering her on, that believed in her, that were with her because she was part of the community of faith. One of the things we've seen through the pandemic is the lack of health in our society right now, mentally, emotionally, is really part of lost connections. People don't feel as connected anymore as they did, and that sense of lost connection has caused a sense of disease. In reality, just imagine how the person that is hurting or broken, struggling in life, but also all alone is really in a weakened position.

And so the church has this opportunity to be with people, with them on that journey toward health, with them on that journey toward a better place, if we'll walk with them, if we'll make the journey with them. We often say that compassion's scalable. Many people never start because they think it's, I can't do something unless I can do that big thing. Well, Jesus said, just a cup of cool water in his name matters. And compassion is scalable. People start where they're at with what they have, and then God multiplies their capacity. But just start where you're at with what you have and be with people in their time of need.

Roger Marsh: What an amazing story we've heard so far. Friend, if you're just joining us, you are listening to Family Talk, a ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and if you like our program and want to learn more about the JDFI, you can visit us online at Drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Okay. Let's jump back into today's program right now now with Dave Donaldson and Wendell Vincent here on Family Talk.

Dave Donaldson: Tim, this is what's so exciting about what Wendell said, because the Davis has made room. And then years later, I was putting on the National Summit for foster care and adoption during the Bush administration, and I was hearing the stories of these children and their plight being passed from home to home. And so I went home and I asked my wife, who Wendell will tell you, is one of the most loving, compassionate people. I asked her, Would you be willing for us to become a foster parent? And she replied, What? We already have three kids. We have no more room in our lives. But we began to pray and God challenged us to make room, to make room. And so we invited a young lady out of the foster care system named Barbara. And I got to tell you, the first time we met her, she was on the couch and she had her arms crossed over her face and she had been neglected, she had been abused.

And so we invited her, decided to invite her into our home, and she walked up to our home and we looked outside and she was hugging her pillow with one arm and her bag with the other. And as she walked up, I'm sure she was thinking, Well, they really want me or keep me or will I get passed to another home? But as she shuffled inside, we gave her hugs. And I said, Barbara, you are with family and this is your home. That young lady, that young lady graduated from college with honors, married a wonderful young man, is a librarian and a tutor today because somebody that didn't have much decided to make room.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When I was in college, Jack Wetson, who used to head up Word of Life, Schroon Lake, New York, came to Liberty University to speak. And in the midst of his address, he looked at all of us. I wrote these words down. He said, "God has no greater plan than to use people like you and me as vessels through which he channels his message of hope to other people."

Dave Donaldson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: How we go about that is in a million different ways. But the issue is, will we go about, yes, being about our father's business, what God wants to do? See, it really is true. It's not about us. It's about what God's doing in and through us to draw people to himself. Second Corinthians one, three and four, He's the father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who comforts us so that we in turn can comfort others. See, it doesn't start there with comforts us. That's right. So that we in turn can comfort others with the comfort we ourselves are comforted by God.

Wendell Vinson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's soul care ministry.

Wendell Vinson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And when we do that, we expose them to him. We bring light into the darkness is what we do. Now we know the rest of the story. See, it's that piece that motivates me, that puts energy and skipping my walk. And so the question is, what can I do? How can I serve? And let's go back to the mission of CityServe. CityServe trains, equips and mobilizes the local church to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ in its community through compassion. I'm going to come back, here's your opportunity, because people are looking for an opportunity to make a difference. Tell us what it is they could do maybe through what you do.

Wendell Vinson: Well, there's opportunity for every person, every believer, every church to engage in the brokenness around them. Many times people think that the big social ills of our day are too big, but they're not too big. The church is the answer. And so we want to encourage every church and every individual to say, I'm going to today start. I'm going to take some steps toward being with someone, making that journey with someone toward wholeness. I'm going to

engage in some way. Certainly CityServe stands ready to help churches and individuals in their community, but just start in their community serving the herding, serving the broken, serving those in need. Like the social ill challenge of foster care and adoption that Dave just mentioned, people sometimes think, which is too big. How can we ever fix this? In reality, Tim, the stats are that if one church in a community, one out of every four churches would just highlight the need for foster care and adoption. And if only one person out of that one out of four churches raised their hand and said, I will step into that need.

That need, every single adoptable child in America could be raised in a Christian home today. If just one person, one church, and if only one person out of one four churches raise their hand and say that I'll step into that. It would be met. Every child in that adoption system would be in a Christian home. And when you think about all the social ills, so many of them flow out of the breakdown of family in all of our other systems in America that flows out of just fatherlessness. And the church has an opportunity to start and to make a difference that will have an eternal impact.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Will CityServe tell me how to do that? Will they come alongside of us?

Dave Donaldson: In addition to the gifts and all the home furnishing, school supplies that we're distributing through our warehouse hubs to pods, to local churches. We have 10 initiatives, and one of those is foster care and adoption. And as Wendell so well put, it's a key to you being blessable. And you think about it, Tim. God said, I'm going to be a father of the fatherless. We have the honor to be the fulfillment of his promise to these kids. Wow. What an opportunity. And that's why I like to say I'm a possibilitarian. We can do this. We can eradicate foster care. It'll simply make room. Now, there are some families that would say, I can't take in a boy or girl into my home in foster care or what we like to call forever family, but you can provide respite, a break on weekends. I got to tell you, our daughter, when we had to leave town, she would go into other foster homes and what I saw in those other homes would break everybody's heart.

One home, this lady had three foster kids and she had locks on the refrigerator, the cabinets, these kids, she wasn't cleaning them up. And she joked, They're our truck payment. They're our truck payment. When our daughter was dropped off at our house, she was dropped off like a FedEx package. So we're believing, we've got 480,000 kids in the system. We're believing now with the reversal of Roe v. Wade that in no time, how many more are going to enter the foster care system? And there are those who would say, Well, that's why we should keep Roe v. Wade because we don't want to fill the system with more kids in a system that many describe as a virtual graveyard for these kids. But when all that's said, we got the church. We got the church. If the church will rise up, wrap our arms around these kids, take them in as foster parents, adoptive parents, provide respite. There are many things that you can do to help these foster families. Then this is highly achievable,

Dr. Tim Clinton: One family at a time.

Dave Donaldson: Amen.

Wendell Vinson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I want to make sure I get that quote right, "You are with family and this is your home." What a beautiful, beautiful statement. That's the gospel.

Dave Donaldson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yep. As a loving, tender father, he extends his arms to us and says, Welcome home.

Dave Donaldson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And may the people rejoice that who God is because of the good work of CityServe. We salute you and pray that God would continue to bless and direct your efforts, especially for such a time as this.

Dave Donaldson: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: This is a dark hour, but you guys bring a lot of light. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his entire team here at Family Talk, his wife Shirley, and so many more, again, we salute the good work that God's doing in and through you, and may he continue to do just that. Thank you both for joining us.

Dave Donaldson: Thank you, Tim.

Roger Marsh: Well, this story just touches your heart, doesn't it? You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and if you missed any part of today's interview, remember you can listen to the entire program on our website at Drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. While you're there, you can find other programs that discuss a wide range of topics as well, including family, marriage, kids, and current national issues. Feel free to explore the programs we have broadcast and know that we are working hard to provide you with content that you can use in your walk with the Lord. We also want to take a moment to thank you for your prayers and your faithful financial support. This is your program and we remain on the air because of you. We cherish the friendship we share with you, and we are able to do so much because of your kindness, your prayers, your notes of encouragement, and your recommendations.

As we enter the season of giving, remember that your gifts and generosity allow us to continue to help young and new families grow in their walk with the Lord. Now, you can make a secure donation to the JDFI online when you go to drjamesdobson.org, or you can give a gift over the phone at (877) 732-6825. When you call that number, you'll be connected to a member of our care team and someone there will be happy to speak with you, to listen to you, to answer

your questions, and even pray with and for you if that's what you need. Again, that number to call is (877) 732-6825.

Now, if you're feeling the Lord moving in your heart to send a tax deductible donation in support of our ministry, please make note of our ministry mailing address. It's the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, PO Box 39,000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. The US Postal Service is a great, safe and easy way to send your financial donations to Family Talk. So again, make note of our ministry mailing address. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, PO Box 39,000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, zip code 80949. From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening and join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Someone said, If you connect a boy to the right man, he seldom goes wrong. And I believe that to be true. If a dad and a son or a daughter can develop some common interest together, the rebellious years really shouldn't be all that troubling. I had that kind of relationship with my own father and the full force of his contribution hit me a few years ago when suddenly he laid dying of a major heart attack. As I stood by his bedside, I thought back to the very happiest moments of my childhood, how my dad and I would get up very early on a wintry morning and head about 20 miles outside of town to our favorite place. We'd park the car, we'd climb over a fence and follow a little creek bed back to an area that I called the big woods.

He'd get me situated under a fallen tree that made a little secret room, and then we'd wait for the sun to come up listening to the squirrels and the birds and the chipmunks. And the entire panorama of nature unfolded before us. Those moments together with my dad were absolutely priceless to me. There was a closeness that made me want to be like him, to choose his values as my values, and his dreams as my dreams, and his God as my God. That's the power of a man to set a kid on the right road and I can think of no wiser investment of time in the entire realm of human experience.

Roger Marsh: To get involved, go to drjamesdobson.org.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi, this is Dr. Tim Clinton for the James Dobson Family Institute. Are you leaving a lasting and godly legacy? When you think about your family after you're gone, are you worried about them or are you competent they'll hold on to what you've taught them? At the Dobson Family Institute, we're committed to helping you understand the importance of passing on your faith. Check out Drjamesdobson.org today for helpful hints, tips, and advice to help make this happen. Remember this, your legacy matters.