



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Grandparenting: Using Your Best Years for Your Greatest Legacy – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Ken Canfield

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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 here at Family Talk. As a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist, I'm honored to serve as the resident authority on mental health and relationships here at the James Dobson Family Institute. I also serve as president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. Thank you for joining in today on this edition of Family Talk. Hey, if you have grandchildren, you know that grandparenting is an experience that makes your heart happy. I'm a grandpa, actually, I'm called Papa, and I have to tell you it's one of the best things that's ever happened to me. It's true when they say grandparenting is the payoff of parenting. When my heart connects with the little heart of my granddaughter, Olivia, I call her Papa girl, the power and beauty of a legacy really unfolds.

She could pretty much do no wrong in her Papa's eyes, and the joy doubled this summer as Julie and I welcomed our second granddaughter in July. That's right, Olivia, our granddaughter has a little sister now named Sophia Diane. She's an absolute gift from God, what a joy. We couldn't be more happier and more proud of our daughter, Megan and our son-in-law, Ben. I'm getting after my son, Zach, I'm telling Zach and Evelyn, it's time to pick up the ball here. Well, our guest today believes that grandparents have a unique opportunity to call our grandkids to greatness. He's one of my favorites. His name, Dr. Ken Canfield, and he has committed his life to strengthening fathers, families, and grandparents. Ken is the founder of the National Center for Fathering and the National Association for Grandparenting.

He has served as consultant to national, state and community leaders. He was given the Father of the Year award by the National Congress for Men and Children, and the Most Outstanding Alumnus award from his alma mater, Friends University. He also received the Polish Presidential Medal of Honor. Ken is the author of numerous articles, both popular and scientific, by the way, has written 12 books, including *The Seven Secrets of Effective Fathers*, *They Call Me Dad*, *The Heart of Grandparenting*, which we're going to talk about today. He's

been interviewed on *Oprah*, NBC's *Today Show*, ABC's *World Tonight*, *700 Club*, numerous radio and television programs.

Ken and his wife, Dr. Michelle Canfield have 15 grandchildren, and they currently reside in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Ken believes that families can be strengthened and restored when grandparents step up and offer their wisdom experience and unconditional love, and that involved grandparents have a way of nurturing, teaching and encouraging children like no one else. Ken also says that grandparenting offers a unique opportunity to build a lasting and meaningful family legacy. Grandparents, Papa, Gigi, whatever you're called, from your place in the family, you can connect hearts and build bridges between generations. Hey, here's a small piece of trivia. Did you know that last year, the top rated most listened program on our airwaves was Dr. Dobson and me speaking with Larry Fowler and the Legacy Coalition about the virtues of being a grandparent. You're going to want to check that one out. Search for Larry Fowler up on our website. Ken, by the way, so thrilled to have you here on Family Talk. Always a delight to get a chance to sit down with you. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Both fellow grandparent, Tim and Dr. Dobson, I just want to say we're the stage and age where there's still life and vigor. When we see our grandchildren, you can feel it surge inside you. Our work is not done. I just want to say historically, Tim, AACC, yourself, teaming up with Dr. Dobson is a win-win. As I think of people who arguably have influenced the family, the Christian family, more than anyone in the last half of the 20th century, it's Dr. Dobson. Thank you for his work that you're carrying it on and I'm eager to talk to those grandparents, especially grandmothers today, because it's time, Tim, for the lionesses of the kingdom to roar. You get a grandmother connected with the grandchildren and they find that, in some way, the culture is exploiting them or are things going down, they are ready to roar, so let's roar for all grandparents.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love it, Ken. Hey Ken, you and I, let's step back in time for a moment, really connected in the world of fathering. Ken, your work with the National Center on Fathering and your writing and so much more, I remember, Ken, when you taught a simple principle to this young dad right here. It was the ICAN principle. You said, as dads, we need to be involved, we need to be consistent, we need to really be aware and then nurturing on how we are as dads. Ken, that got locked in my brain. I know today, we're going to talk about the heart, H-E-A-R-T of grandparenting. Ken, I step back as I went through your new book and congrats again on just doing this work, but wanted to ask you, how did you make the shift from fathering to grandparenting? What was it? What took you down that road?

Dr. Ken Canfield: Well, I had no idea. When you're fathering and parenting and mothering, you're just trying to get through the day, change diapers, get kids here and there, whatever it is, discipline the kids. When grandchildren came into my life, Tim, it was like, what just happened? I saw because, Tim, truth be told, testosterone dips with age. We've been working hard, we've been pushing and all of a

sudden I looked in the eyes of Dee, my wife, and they just came alive. I saw power in her and it's like she became very instrumental and like you, who's going to get emotional and weep on these little grandchildren that God's blessed you with, we become more emotive and caring, and so it's like a change in role and a change in expression, and this is so rich and it happened to me, Tim.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, when I saw some of the statistics, it was kind of staggering to me about how many baby boomers are becoming grandparents. Can you take us in there, Ken? I saw this, 8 million children under the age of 18 in North America either live with or cared for primarily by the grandparents. That is unbelievable.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yeah. Well, if you look at the data, demographers tell us that as much as one third of your life, Tim, you're going to live as a grandparent. Now this wasn't on the table years ago, when the life expectancy was in its high 40s at 1900. Now, we're in the 70s and 80s, so get ready. But this data point, we don't know what to do with. As much as 15% of your life you'll live as a great grandparent. Oh my goodness! Why has God given us this extended opportunity? But what you pointed out right there is something I just got to say this. If you are a grandparent raising grandchildren, if I get to Heaven before you, I'm nominating you for the Congressional Heavenly Medal of Honor, because right now over 8 million kids under the age of 18 are being taken care of, Tim, full-time by their grandparents.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, you talk about how grandparents are a big time underused resource in the family system? We talked about some of the stats here, but you noticed that there's real opportunity here. I think a lot of what we want to communicate through today's broadcast is that very message. Take us there, Ken. You use a word up front in the book called redemptive grandparenting that I thought was really significant.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yeah. Tim, I'm going to get real personal through this broadcast, share my own heart, because this is an opportunity to maybe make right, which you didn't have the wisdom or insight to do in your parenting. If you're a grandparent, get your children together because that relationship is so key. Are there issues that need to be talked about? Reconciled? I'd say yes. Thinking back, I would do some things differently. When you have an opportunity, go to your kids and say, "I've been pondering this role of being a grandparent, and I thought I did the best I could as a father or mother, and I made some mistakes," and then you'll get like my kids, "Oh really, Dad? Could you be more specific?"

I then say, "Well, I remember this time." Then, if you look at them and say, "Yes, I need to ask forgiveness maybe. I need to move forward, but let this be on the record, I want to be the greatest and best grandparent I can be. What can I do to support you?" You'll see brightness in their eyes. This is how we connect this generational lock that has been missing in our busy America, Tim.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, it's interesting to me, we talked about the joy of grandparenting, the significance of it, there's a lot of benefits to it. When Sophia Diane was born, our second grandchild, we were at the hospital and we were waiting for Sophia's older, big sister, Olivia, Papa girl, to come to the hospital. I went out in the hallway to wait for her, Ken. She was with her other grandparents, and when they came into the hospital, and they came into the hallway, Olivia, way down that hallway saw me and I said, "Papa girl." She said, "Papa," and she took off screaming on a dead run. She's three years old, down that hallway, looking for her Papa. I said, "That girl's brilliant. She just picked up about two or three more Christmas presents just on that one trip down that hallway, right there."

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, and they get into your arms and you begin to realize again, all over the significance of childhood development, the significance of influence in her life, people who are around her and how important it is to parent and to grandparent well.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yes. Listen listeners, his emotions. I know Tim Clinton from years back, he had places to go, people to see, deals to do, he was driven. Now, a little grandchild runs down the hall and he becomes a big teddy bear. That's the emotive part. Grandfathers, listen closely. That testosterone, maybe it's dropped a little bit, maybe a lot. Remember, there's nothing more powerful than the touch, the blessing that you get and reciprocate by giving it to your grandchildren, so make those arms wide and do whatever you need to do in order to engage the heart of that grandchild and you'll live longer and healthier. That's what the research says.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's amazing. Ken, grandparenting, I guess, maybe when we were growing up looked a little different. Things have changed a lot. I know that you've taken a hard look at how things have changed. Ken, can you share some of what you found and what we need to know?

Dr. Ken Canfield: Well, first of all, the dislocation geographically, we have grandparents living hundreds of miles away. Your grandchild may be overseas in some capacity. What we have right now is other means to stay connected. Use those means. Whether it's a written word, a FaceTime is so vital. Those will be kept and pondered on as these grandchildren go. But you may say, "Hey, I got teenage grandchildren." For sure. They are busy. They've got activities and so forth, but don't underestimate your role as a unique family member to send a blessing, and that blessing I do believe is the foundation that will give identity in a way no other will and that's part of the age, the heart of grandparenting.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. When I grew up as a boy, I never met my grandfathers. They were gone by the time I was raised. Then, my grandmothers, both sides were living, but really didn't connect all that much with them. I'm now learning the significance of how meaningful it is to have grandparents dote on you. Maybe they'd be available as another listening ear, another safe place for kids to land. Ken, they offer that

and so much more. In a lot of ways, grandparenting has changed because a lot of grandparents are now all becoming primary caregivers too, because everybody's working so hard. You got two parents working outside the home, et cetera, and so I know people look, even Julie, she's a real "daily help" to Megan with the girls. There's a lot of value there, but there's a lot of responsibility too, isn't there?

Dr. Ken Canfield: Right. Almost a third of grandparents today like you had little to no contact with their grandparents. I remember reading Dr. Dobson's autobiography years ago, and I've been to his grandfather's grave site. He never met his grandfather, Tim, but his grandfather prayed. He was deceased from what I understand, and though Jim didn't meet him, his grandfather prayed and the prayer that he prayed came about through his grandson and he never met them. I don't know what your situation is today, grandmother or grandfather, you may be on life support, you may be in a hospice, your prayers are being processed and heard by a heavenly father and they have generational power.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know there are a lot of grandparents listening and parents out there saying, "You know what? We need to strengthen our family." Ken, you made it a mission to put together a way for us to understand what we can do to become better grandparents, to strengthen our family systems, to help encourage our mom and dad if they're stepping up as grandpa and grandma in the lives of our kids. That's what this broadcast is all about. Ken, like you taught us on fathering, the ICAN principle, you have what's called the heart principle. Actually, it's your book, *The Heart of Grandparenting*. Let's begin, Ken, you're alluding to it. The very first piece for the letter H is heritage. The word heritage for a moment, are you just talking about our family history?

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The stories, the pieces that build who we are.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm thinking, as you were talking, I was thinking about my son, Zach, for a moment. My dad was in World War II, and a gentleman, who was a member of the AACC. I came to find out was actually on that boat with my dad and he said, "Tim, I think I know your dad." I met him at an AACC event, a conference, and I said, "Really?"

Dr. Ken Canfield: Wow.

Dr. Tim Clinton: He said, "Yes. We served on the USS Pennsylvania together. I'm going to send you a special gift." He sends me a picture of the USS Pennsylvania. I framed this thing. I put it up my own wall, and then I remember being at the feet of my dad and my dad would tell me what it was like to be in the South Pacific. He had a plaque in the upstairs of our old farmhouse that he had up there was this World

War II plaque. We would sit, I couldn't believe, he would talk about how those fighter planes would come in trying to blow up their ship, "Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!" like this. He said, "Tim, we were petrified." He told me about dropping a shell over the side of the boat.

Ken, in this, as he and I are talking, my dad basically shared with me that freedom isn't free. He said he was so happy, by the way, to get home from the war. He kissed the ground when he got to the States and he couldn't wait to get back to Dubois, Pennsylvania. Ken, I'll never forget taking that story, sharing that with my son, Zach, using those artifacts and then taking Zach up to Arlington cemetery. We walked together through the cemetery, just the two of us, seeing these sea of white crosses and how that freedom isn't free. Those are the pieces you're talking about, right? Because that's the stuff that needs to be transmitted generationally. We can't lose our stories. The good and the bad of it, Ken, because there are lessons in all of it.

Dr. Ken Canfield: The place where you entertain your grandchildren, the place that they see you living is so critical that you participatedly tell them those stories and bring them out, because they're not going to hear them any other place or if they do, they're going to hear a diluted version, maybe something that isn't as accurate as what you just described on the Pennsylvania, that will empower. I can see future Clintonites, your grandchildren looking up, seeing that picture and say, "Hey, grandpa. Someday I want to go to the Naval Academy or West Point," because we can't underestimate again how our dwelling, how our stories cash asked vision.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, I can't help but think of the Old Testament and the story of Israel. Often, what happened when Israel got sideways, they forgot the stories and the faith of their fathers. Ken, it wasn't transmitted. It wasn't carried on, was it?

Dr. Ken Canfield: It wasn't. You're right. I've read today, Jeremiah 35. Jonadab and a grandson of Jonadab kept something the nation of Israel didn't keep. Some requirements that God had placed on them. Jeremiah says, "Look at this." Where did those come from? A lineage and heritage, and the grandson of Jonadab was acknowledged by Jeremiah as the carrier of those. Tim, we have got to resurrect that within our hearts and share it in an open, gracious way.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What do you say to the grandparent who would say, "Hey, my kids don't seem to be that interested. How do I stay on cue here? Or how do I get this done? What's the best way for me to do this, Ken?"

Dr. Ken Canfield: It's complex, Tim. You may be the type of parent that was talking all the time with rules and dictums, et cetera. When you're a grandparent, and I liken it to this, being a parent is like old Testament, you have expectations, discipline and so forth. But as a grandparent, it's like New Testament. You're full of God's grace. What I'm saying is be patient. Those grandchildren are observing you. They're seeing if you're a priority or not. When you express that priority and do special things, it puts a jog in their memory bank that will be referred to during

times of growth and maturity. If you're a grandparent in that state saying, "My grandkids are so busy," or, "They live across the pond," or whatever it is, make sure that you still are keeping that heritage and what you want to pass on alive. Put it down in paper. If you don't have access, there's so many grandparents that are estranged from their grandchildren, because of generational difficulties, and we'll talk about that in just a minute, but that's what I'd say.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, in *The Heart of Grandparenting*, H is for heritage, E is for example. I guess the old saying is things are probably better caught than taught.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In other words, if they see it. What about role modeling? How does this work? What do we need to understand, so that you cannot not communicate? In other words, that's a good double negative maybe. As grandparent, your grandkids are, they have their eyes on you, they're watching you closely, Ken, aren't they?

Dr. Ken Canfield: Everything. Now, Tim, I've learned that reading the impact of grandparents, your example penetrates, particularly at the marriage. Now, personally, I've had this in a very painful way. Tim, my wife of 43 years, Dee a gem, she passed away three years ago.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Dr. Ken Canfield: We moved in, Tim with my daughter, Sarah and her family, three grandkids, and for the last year, we cared for Dee. They saw a granddad feed, care for and do all the stuff. I didn't know I was doing hospice for about a year, but as I now ponder three years later and just as we revisit the grief and agony that we went through in this prolonged sickness, those grandchildren had a part in that. We actually lived in the lower level of their house. Healthcare, whether you're a grandmother or grandfather, those grandchildren see how you're going to care for your mate and that's marriage at its worse. For better? Oh, you can go on great trips and do great things, but for worse, that is something that is like gold that will be in their memory banks.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, it's everything. I don't think we really understand or fully grasp how much our kids soak us in, how much they need us. It's easy to think, "Oh, we don't really matter," but, Ken, grandparents really do. By the way, they can be one of the greatest treasures to mom and dad in their journey of parenting if we can get all this stuff right. Our special guest again has been Dr. Ken Canfield, he's the founder of the National Center for Fathering and the National Association for Grandparenting. He has a book out called *The Heart of Grandparenting*. You want to be sure and pick this up, *Five Keys to Being the Best Grandparent Possible*. You also want to be sure and mark your calendar, September 11 is National Grandparent Day, a day we celebrate grandparents. Ken, it's, again, been a delight to have you. Can't wait for our conversation again tomorrow. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Me too, Tim.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and that was part one of a very encouraging conversation featuring our own Dr. Tim Clinton and his good friend, Dr. Ken Canfield. They've been discussing the quintessential virtue of grandparenting and using your best years to leave your greatest legacy. As you may know, I am a grandfather myself, and I've shared some stories about my grandkids with you before here on the broadcast. One of the things I enjoy the most about being a grandparent is seeing that moment of discovery. When one of the grandkids figures out they can do something on their own or something that works on their body like, "Hey, I can pinch this between my thumb and opposing four finger and carry it around." Michael Card, the songwriter refers to that as the sunrise of the smile of a child. It's one of my favorite moments and having grandchildren who are anywhere from age 11, all the way down to little Nazareth, who's scheduled to make his debut next month.

That's one of my favorite parts of being a grandparent, and I know you probably have some great grandparent stories as well. Well, Dr. Clinton and Dr. Canfield will continue their discussion around grandparenting on tomorrow's broadcast here on Family Talk, so make sure you tune in for that. Also, if you'd like to learn more about Dr. Ken Canfield, his books or his ministry, visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Well, thanks so much for joining us today and from everyone here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, remember to join us again tomorrow for another helpful edition of Family Talk.

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