



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Finding True Forgiveness – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Dr. R.T. Kendall

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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:** Well, welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Now to begin today's broadcast, I have a question for you. Have you ever found yourself saying, "I could never forgive that person for what they have done to me"? Severe, emotional and even physical scars can certainly be very painful to live with and then move forward from, but despite these deep wounds, Jesus calls us to keep no record of wrongdoings against others, and that's certainly a challenge for many of us. Now, in just a moment, we're going to continue with part two of a classic conversation Dr. James Dobson had with Dr. R.T. Kendall. But first, here is a small portion of yesterday's discussion in case you might've missed it or if you'd like to refresh your memory.

**Dr. R.T. Kendall:** Jesus said, "If you forgive not men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will not forgive you your trespasses." And it's the chief way we grieve the Holy Spirit and if we knew what happens when we hold a grudge, we are hurting ourselves. We lose presence of mind, presence of God, sense of his leadership, the anointing in our lives, we are impoverished to the degree we don't forgive.

**Roger Marsh:** Now on today's program, Dr. Kendall explains some of the common misconceptions we might have about forgiveness and the detrimental effects of bitterness. We all may have been around a bitter person and have seen how it touches so much of their life as well as how it affects those around them. Our guest today, Dr. R.T. Kendall, knows quite a bit about forgiveness. He's a distinguished theologian, teacher and writer. Previously, he pastored at Westminster Chapel for 25 years and holds two master's degrees and two doctorates. Dr. Kendall has authored over 60 books including *Holy Fire* and the *Total Forgiveness* trilogy, which is the basis of today's broadcast.

But before we begin, I want to quickly mention that this month we have a special matching grant in place. Thanks to some very special friends of the ministry. If you feel led to give to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today, please know that your contribution will be doubled. You can easily make that

tax-deductible donation online when you go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

And now let's join Dr. Dobson and Dr. R.T. Kendall for the conclusion of their classic conversation on forgiveness right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: You talked in your book about what forgiveness is not. There's some concepts in there that do not represent true forgiveness. Why don't we start our discussion today with you describing those aspects of forgiveness that are sometimes confused with the meaning of the word.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, the first would be approval of what they did. In other words, the fact that you forgive them doesn't mean you approve. Someone may think, "Oh, he let me off the hook." Doesn't mean that what you did was okay, you certainly don't approve it. Jesus forgave the woman that was caught in the act of adultery, but then He went on to say, "Leave your life of sin." So you don't approve just because you forgive.

Dr. James Dobson: The second one was excusing what they did. Forgiveness is not excusing what they did.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Yes, you don't improvise for them and say, "Well, now here's why they did it." Or, "I excuse them. It's okay." That's not what we mean by total forgiveness. Total forgiveness is when you know exactly what they did and you still forgive them. Sometimes people think, "Well, I just put it out of the mind what they did." That's repressing and that's dangerous.

Dr. James Dobson: Number three is justifying what they did. That's pretty much the same thing, but explain the difference.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, it means to show a person or a statement or act to be right or just or reasonable. There's no way that evil can be justified. God will never call something that is evil, right, and He doesn't require us to do so.

Dr. James Dobson: And number four is pardoning what they did.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, I would define pardon as a legal transaction that releases an offender from the consequences of their action such as a penalty for a sentence. And this is why we do not ask that the guilty rapist be exempt from punishment. Such a person needs to pay their debt to society and society must be protected from people like that.

Dr. James Dobson: Number five surprised me and it dealt with reconciliation and you said there forgiveness is not necessarily the same thing as reconciliation. You can forgive without reconciling. Explain how.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, let's say a person has been unfaithful and it was your best friend. You forgive them, but it doesn't mean you're going to be best friends after that. Or take a person who's a child molester and this person has been forgiven, but I don't know that you would offer them a Sunday school class. And so that's the principle. Reconciliation. It means that everything's going to be just as it was, not necessarily. The key is whether there's bitterness and there can be total forgiveness, but not necessarily reconciliation.

Dr. James Dobson: Reconciliation also implies an equal forgiveness on both sides and-

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: ... you can only handle one of the two. You're not responsible for what the other person thinks or feels.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: There can be mutual total forgiveness, but it doesn't mean that you're going to be each other's best friend or that you want to go on holiday with them.

Dr. James Dobson: Number six is forgiveness is not denying what they did.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: You see, to deny as I said while ago, is like being in denial, repressing. I've known of people who said, "I don't believe they really did that to me," but I say, but they did. They did. The verse that you quoted on the previous broadcast, "Love keeps no record of wrongs." The Greek clearly shows that you recognize there was wrong. The wrong is not denied, but you decide to tear up the record.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there's several other concepts there and in the interest of time, let me go to number eight, which has to do with forgetting. You can't necessarily forget, many people say forgive and forget as though they're one and the same thing.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: No, you can't play games with-

Dr. James Dobson: You might not be able to forget.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: That's right. You can't play games with yourself. You do know what they did. You cannot forget. It is said that well, God forgives and forgets. Look here. He does know what He's forgiven us of and you can never forget what they did. But the brilliance in total forgiveness is when you know what they've done, you're not living in denial. You have remembered it, but you do forgive them and it is a sincere, genuine forgiveness.

Dr. James Dobson: The Scripture says our sins will be remembered against us no more. It's not that they won't be remembered in the mind of God. He knows everything, but it will not be remembered against us anymore.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: R.T., let's bring this down to an individual situation and try to address those who are listening to us with very, very specific reasons for the anger and the bitterness that's inside. Let's make it specific. Let's suppose we're talking to a woman who's 30 years of age who was abused physically by her father. Let's suppose that she was beaten. Let's suppose that both parents were abusive. Maybe they were alcoholics, and they subjected that child to unimaginable punishment and ridicule and she's now 30 and that still burns in her heart. Talk to her because there are people, I'm sure, who find themselves exactly in the same situation I just described.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, the first thing I would say to her is that I do understand. I really understand and although I haven't been through what you've been through, my heart aches for you and I don't know how you've endured it. I don't know how you stand it and I am sorry for what you are suffering. I can only say that there is a way whereby this evil can be turned into good and you can do what very few people do, and that is so to get over it that you actually pray for them and pray for that person to be blessed. And the result is that you are set free and you begin to see for the first time that the bitterness, however justified it seemed at the time, that bitterness was eating on your soul like a cancer and you were impoverished to the degree you didn't forgive.

And I have seen it in my ministry. When people do forgive, the freedom is so wonderful. They say to me, "I never dreamed it would be so good." It's wonderful, it's tremendous, and what it does for you is the thing. So I understand why a person doesn't want to do it, and I don't point the finger and I don't say shame on you for not forgiving because it's the hardest thing in the world, but I would want to motivate them for them to see how good it's going to be if you do it.

Dr. James Dobson: Will the Lord meet you halfway? Will He take a step toward you each time you take a step toward Him in this regard? Will He lead you in trying to deal with what at this moment seems impossible?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: I will say yes to that. I don't think anybody's ever asked me that question before, but yes, because He's touched with a feeling of our weaknesses. He's not there looking down, moralizing us. He knows-

Dr. James Dobson: He remembers that we're dust.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Oh, listen. And at the right hand of the Father where He is our intercessor, He has never forgotten what it was like when He was on this earth. So He's touched with a feeling of our weaknesses and I would say every step we take, God will witness and you can almost hear Him saying, "Good, good. Go on." And one works through it. And I don't say you'll come to it by tomorrow afternoon.

Dr. James Dobson: Or that it will be easy.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: It is not easy. It is the hardest thing one ever has to do. I don't think there's a greater challenge in this world.

Dr. James Dobson: You described in general terms your own experience with anger and bitterness against a person who had harmed you in the past and that it turned out to be one of the greatest victories of your life. When in that process did you begin to feel that you were doing what was right and that the Lord was accepting your offering at this point?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Okay, the answer is when I began to pray for them and when I meant it, there was an inner witness of peace and joy. It was so good and it was so wonderful, and I think maybe I should tell you that there's another motivation, in my case. Speaking personally, I want a greater anointing on my preaching than anything. And the thought of being able to preach with more power and to have greater insight was so wonderful. And then when I'd start getting bitter and thinking about what they did, it was as though everything was shut down. But when I forgave, it was as though I could begin to see things. And by the way, it works in marriage. I'll tell you a story.

One week in London, I was preaching all over England that week and I hadn't got to prepare a sermon. And usually when I was at Westminster Chapel, I'd start a Sunday morning sermon on Monday morning, but it was now Saturday and I'd gotten nowhere and my wife and I got into an argument that Saturday morning and it was pretty awful. I went to my chair and I started to say, "Lord, now give me something for tomorrow." I got nothing. It was 11 o'clock, "Lord, please, please help me." Nothing. One o'clock, nothing. Four o'clock, "Lord, what I'm going to say tomorrow's going to go all over the world. You've got to help me." It was as though the Lord said, "Really?" He won't bend the rules for any of us.

I went to Louise, I looked at her and I said, "I'm sorry, it's all my fault." We hugged, we kissed. I went to the same chair, same pen, paper, same Bible. In 45 minutes, I had everything I needed for the next day. What made the difference? You see, the Spirit came down. That's what I'm saying, the benefits of this. So it's not just that one case that brought about the book. It's something you have to live and every day or two, there's something that we're going to have to confront somebody who says something and why did they say that? You've got to live this life 24 hours a day.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you say that for those out there who feel they've lost the joy of their relationship with the Lord, that they might start by looking at their relationship with others-

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: ... and say, "Lord, is it here?"

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: "Is this why I'm dry as a bone?"

Dr. R.T. Kendall: I'm going to tell you, you can have people pray for you, you can go to the altar or you can go to communion, but if you are bitter before you go, you're going to be bitter when you come back unless you deal with it. And if it happens in your heart, the joy, well, it's incalculable. The benefits are wonderful.

Dr. James Dobson: To repeat what you said yesterday, which is a fundamental concept here, is that you don't necessarily have to go tell the person that you forgive them-

Dr. R.T. Kendall: No.

Dr. James Dobson: ... because they may not be ready to receive it, and that may not be what's required.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, nine out of 10 people I've ever had to forgive, you could put them under a lie detector and they don't think they've done anything. And you see that shows that I've probably hurt people and I don't know it. I've had people come to me and say, "I've forgiven you for that." I said, "Whatever did I do?" And I sincerely didn't know I'd hurt people. There are people that have hurt me. They don't know it. And so it's counterproductive. I sometimes say, when I preach this sermon, I say, now look, if you're convicted of this sermon, when the service is over, don't go up to the person and say, "I forgive you," because they're going to say, "For what?"

Dr. James Dobson: For what?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: And you're going to say, "Well, you know." And they're going to say, "Well, I don't." And then you're going to say, "Well, you should." And now you've got to fight-

Dr. James Dobson: There you go.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: ... on your hands. It's got to happen in the heart. The only time you say I forgive you is when you know they want to hear it so much. Then you tell them.

Dr. James Dobson: When I was in college, I went to a Christian college. We had chapel five days a week, and I remember an occasion or two where during revival or whenever it was, a student would stand up before the 1,500 people who were there and shout out loud enough for everybody to hear, "I just want Jack to know that I have been angry at him and he's done all these terrible things to me, and I forgive him." Embarrassed Jack half to death. It was an inappropriate thing to do, and that's not what we are required to do.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: It's got to happen in the heart. You are in a position like God is with us, and you know what it's like when two of your children aren't speaking to each other. Our heavenly Father feels that way when two of us aren't speaking to each other, and so we set him free when we forgive one another. And what you must do with children is not to take sides but say, "Well, and I can see why you are hurt. I can see why you were hurt, but you must forgive." Yeah, as a parent, I would definitely say that.

I'll have to tell you this. I had the greatest parents in the world. I had the most wonderful father. My earliest memory of my father is seeing him on his knees for 30 minutes. He did not think of going to work without 30 minutes on his knees every morning, but for some reason this teaching, I wasn't taught it at home. I'm telling you, it's a teaching that somehow we all know it's there, but it gets swept under the carpet when it comes to application.

Dr. James Dobson: R.T., the truth of the universe is in this concept and in this book because you took it right out of Scripture, and I would like to close our program today by asking you to pray for those out there who are bitter. They've been bitter for years and it has just been a bile that has affected them for so many years and they just can't seem to get beyond it. They can't forgive. Will you pray a prayer for us now?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Pray for all of us, for all of us need to be able to forgive. It happens to everybody, and it happens regularly because God made us very sensitive people. Now you talk about the Holy Spirit being likened unto a dove. We are likened unto sheep and we are easily led and easily influenced and easily hurt. And all of us get wounded by the casual things that people say around us when they don't even know that they've said anything that has hurt us. And so it's a common human experience and a difficult one to get beyond, and I would like you to pray for those who are going to try to do what you have said today.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Just before I pray, could I just say one thing? Imagine the person out there that's hurt more than anybody else who feels that he has the most he has to forgive because he would say or she would say, "You don't know what I've been through." My reply is the deeper the hurt, the greater the sense of God's blessing if you can forgive that. There are people around you that don't have the potential blessing you've got because they don't have to forgive what you have to forgive. But when you have been through what you've been through and still forgive, the power of the Spirit will be double, treble in your case.

Dr. James Dobson: Pray for us.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are touched with the feeling of our weaknesses. You know our frame. You remember that we are dust. And I pray for that person who's out there right now who's been so hurt, so betrayed,

abused, the object of infidelity, who's been lied about and people believe the lies, who's been hurt by a friend. And I pray for healing in that person at this very moment, and I pray that Your Holy Spirit will come into that person's room or car or wherever they are at this moment, and You will enable that person to forgive totally. To come to the place that he or she will stop talking about what they did and just cast their burden upon the Lord and forgive as You have forgiven us because You will not tell what You've forgiven us for.

Enable that person to set that other person free, that one will not try to intimidate. That we will not let them feel guilty, that we will let them save face and protect them from their darkest secret, and that we will accept it as something we must do as long as we live. Thank You that You understand this and that You don't moralize us, but You stoop to where we are and say, "Look, I forgive you." Set that person free and enable us all right now to pray as Jesus did on the cross, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing." And we thank You for the joy and the peace that will come. Heal that marriage, heal that relationship, set that person free and may healing come in these moments in Jesus' name, amen.

Dr. James Dobson: Amen. What a beautiful prayer. Dr. R.T., I don't want to patronize you or flatter you, but your book, *Total Forgiveness*, is one of the most important books that I've read in recent years. It was number one in the UK in sales, and it's been a best-seller here, and everybody ought to read this book, everybody. I think everybody needs to at least examine themselves and see if there's something here that the Lord would have them do. This book would be a real good place to start. Get it and read it and then apply it. And R.T., thank you for your influence in my life and for your ministry through the years. God has used you mightily and I am just grateful for your friendship and I appreciate you being with us.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, thank you for having me. God bless you.

Roger Marsh: Well, this certainly has been an important conversation about forgiveness over the past couple of days here on Family Talk. Hopefully, Dr. R.T. Kendall's words have been an inspiration to you to truly forgive someone who needs it. Now, if you'd like to listen to either part of this two-part discussion with Dr. R.T. Kendall and our own Dr. James Dobson, remember you can easily do so by visiting [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). You can also share this program with a friend or family member either from our website or from the JDFI Family Talk app on your smartphone.

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I'm Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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

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