



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Becoming a Wingman for Life: Today's Promise Keepers

Guest(s): Chad Hennings

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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: In I Kings 2, David tells his son Solomon, "Be strong, act like a man and observe what the Lord your God requires. Walk in obedience to Him and keep His decrees and commands." On today's edition of Family Talk, we're going to talk about what that means in modern society, especially for younger men who don't have the same biblical foundations as their fathers. I'm Roger Marsh, and you're listening to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Of course, you can learn more about Family Talk and the JDFI by going to drjamesdobson.org.

It was back in 1990 when coach Bill McCartney of the University of Colorado, Boulder started an organization called Promise Keepers. The goal, calling men back to God's Word. Two years later, Dr. Dobson invited Coach McCartney to be on the Focus on the Family broadcast, to talk about his ministry. This radio appearance helped to propel Promise Keepers along, and it became a thriving ministry, encouraging men and ministering to them, as well. Well, the culture of the landscape has changed a lot since 1990, but the fact remains that men still need encouragement, accountability, and mentorship. So, the Promise Keepers Men's Conference is coming back. And this year, it'll be on July 16th and 17th in Arlington, Texas, and streaming digitally.

Our guest today here on Family Talk is Chad Hennings, a Christian speaker, a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, and a board member for Promise Keepers. During his time at the Academy, Chad was a Falcon All Academic and All Conference defensive lineman, and went on to play and win three Super Bowl championships with the Dallas Cowboys. Chad is a former US Air Force fighter pilot and author and entrepreneur, and founder of Wingmen Ministries. Chad and his wife, Tammy, reside in Flower Mound, Texas, and they have two children.

Our cohost, Dr. Tim Clinton, and Chad Hennings, had this conversation at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Dallas, just a couple of weeks ago. Let's listen in, now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, it's so great to have you join us for this edition of Family Talk.

Chad Hennings: It's my pleasure, my honor to be here, Tim.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, let's go all the way back. What a storied career, and we're going to talk about your time in the NFL, a little bit about the Air Force Academy, et cetera, but go all the way back, Iowa, farm boy, how does God take and weave that kind of a story?

Chad Hennings: It kind of goes back, depending upon the age of your listener, to that Mayberry RFD experience. Small town, small, rural community, where it's all about family, American work ethic, traditional values, where you're allowed to dream. And that's where I think that, for me, growing up on a farm instilled in me several things, the honor of God, respect for your elders, the respect for your nation, the opportunity to serve, importance of relationships, and commitment. To me, I think that was one of the biggest traits that I learned is that, you're going to get knocked down, growing up on a farm and experiencing athletics early on is that, you're going to get kicked in the teeth. And it's, "What do you do thereafter?" It's a choice. It laid a phenomenal foundation for me. And I was just very fortunate and blessed to have had family around, not only my mom and my dad, siblings-

Dr. Tim Clinton: That support system.

Chad Hennings: And that support system, aunts, uncles, grandparents, great-grandparents. It was a phenomenal foundation.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, two of the storylines involve sports and service, military service for a moment. And I love them both, because at the end of the day, there's something about both of those lanes, if you will. And it's very instructive when it comes to adversity, challenge, because you have to overcome, or you've got to fight your way through it. Let's start with your athletic career. Boy, growing up, farm boy, Iowa high school. In high school, you were a wrestler as well as a football player.

Chad Hennings: Actually, I was a better wrestler than I was football player, coming out of high school.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You won the high school state championship.

Chad Hennings: The state championship at the heavyweight division as a 6'4"-

Dr. Tim Clinton: In Iowa.

Chad Hennings: In Iowa.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Which is like the wrestling-

Chad Hennings: They talk a lot about football in Texas, right? I was definitely the king of sports, in my opinion. It's almost a cult following nowadays. But very fortunate again, to have that. What I appreciated about wrestling, you talked about performance and dedication, that was the only sport for me, where it's, you have no one else to blame but yourself. So you have to be able to have that mindset and courage to realize that it's you versus your opponent. You can't blame anybody else. It's just you out there. And I think that instilled in me, I get a lot of those great traits that have carried over into other aspects of my life, whether it's academia, business, my faith, you name it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, a lot of what's happening in modern day culture is this beat down on men, this move to emasculate or feminize men and more, quite concerning. A lot of people just like, they're torn up about trying to figure out why that messaging, and why is that happening? Any thoughts on that?

Chad Hennings: To me, it's obvious. If Satan wants to take us out and to divide us, he has to take out the man, the father, because it's, he's the pinnacle of God's creation. If you can get men to question their identity as to who they are, and as to what their purpose and fulfillment and how they fit in the structural aspects of our society, you can take out society. You can take out everybody. And to me, I always go back to that aspect of one of St. Paul's exhortations or salutes, in 1 Corinthians 16, "Be watchful. Stand firm in the faith. Act like men. Be strong." There needs that masculinity.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Strong words.

Chad Hennings: And what King David said on his deathbed, he said, "Son, I'm about to go the way of the world. Be strong and show yourself to be a man." So what does that signify? It's strength, masculinity, servant leadership, everything that traditional biblical view of manhood can be summed up in those two verses, in my opinion.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, you come out of high school, wind up moving to the US Air Force Academy, right?

Chad Hennings: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Playing football and serving your country. Tell us about that transition. What was it like?

Chad Hennings: For me, it was a comfortable transition, because growing up on a farm where I had a lot of the discipline, because if you don't work, you don't eat, on a farm.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, yeah.

Chad Hennings: And that aspect of, I grew up playing athletics, so I wanted to play Division 1 college sports. And for me, the education, the holistic education, because the Academies really do emphasize mind, body, and spirit, and for me, I wanted a

challenge that was unlike going to a traditional football powerhouse or a traditional college. I wanted something that was going to push me to truly see, quote/unquote, if I had the right stuff. And that was why I attended the Air Force Academy. You can't argue with 18,000 acres on the front range of the Rockies. It's just a beautiful campus.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I was just there last weekend. Oh, my goodness, beautiful.

Chad Hennings: Beautiful campus.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You, while you were in the Academy, you became a pilot, qualified and actually served, and thank you for your service, over in the Middle East. The story keeps rolling. You wind up, again, overseas, serving your time. At the same time, you're getting recruited or drafted in the NFL. Cowboys decided to take a chance on you when it didn't even really make sense.

Chad Hennings: Right. I was drafted prior to graduating from the Air Force Academy.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Okay.

Chad Hennings: So, they retained my rights, similar to what they did with Roger Staubach back 20 years prior to that, when he graduated from the Naval Academy. So, I'm flying these missions, flying out of Incirlik, Turkey, outside the city of Adana, into Northern Iraq, to help support the Kurds, to provide a presence there, it was called operation Northern Watch and Provide Comfort. I spent six months flying those 45 missions out of Turkey, into Iraq. And then our armed forces did something that they had never done in the history of the Air Force, since 1947. They waived, because of our downsizing of our armed forces, we won the Gulf War, peace broke out, the Berlin Wall came down, they waived not just for me, but across the board, commitment time.

Now, a little math. I had an eight-year military commitment. I had been in for four years at this point in time. So technically, playing for the Cowboys was never going to be an option. I would have been 32 years old. But our armed forces waived the commitment, not just me, but across the board. A lot of guys got out and went to fly for the airlines. I was able to raise my hand and say, "Hey, I could go play for the Dallas Cowboys." So my kind of claim to fame, was I flew my last mission in Northern Iraq, constituted as a combat mission in Northern Iraq, and I played in the Super Bowl the same year. That's how fast life happened.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Insane. Three Super Bowls, again, storied career, just amazing. Chad, take us to a new place in your life. I mean, you're writing, you're speaking after you retired out of the NFL. God's given you an amazing platform doing real estate, doing your thing. But you have a real burden, a real heart for men. It's almost a desperate heart for men, because we're in a desperate situation in our country. You're now serving on the board of Promise Keepers. Everybody remembers PK

of old and the amazing events with Coach Mac, Coach McCartney and everybody, Joe White building the cross, and now Ken Harrison, who is a good friend of yours, CEO, chairman of the board. And the team of you have decided that God is saying, "Let's do something again here." What's it all about?

Chad Hennings:

Just to what we've been talking about earlier, regards to men, that there is a battle for the hearts and minds, the identity of what it means to be a man today. And men, they may not be able to define it, to put their finger on it, that there's this internal struggle within them about, "Who am I as a man?" and with that, there's an epidemic of isolation amongst men. It's very difficult for men to open up the kimono and say, "I've got issues. I'm not holding it together. I have relationship issues. I have issues with my job." It's just, "There's nobody that I can trust." And what Promise Keepers is stepping up to the plate is saying that, "Now's the time that we're here to define what biblical masculinity is, to talk about the importance of discipleship." I call it gathering a wingman. You know, who is your wingman?

Every time that I would fly a training mission or mission in combat, I never went solo. I always had another plane, another jet, another pilot, that we would go to accomplish our missions. And that's the concept of what PK is doing. We do one event a year to celebrate, to bring men together, to bring men back to repentance, but say, "Okay, now's the time to get off the bench and get into the game. We no longer have the opportunity to be stagnant, and be apathetic, and allow other people to do it. You have an impact on your family and your community. Let's go. Let's do it. And by the way, you don't have to do it alone. There's other men around you that can help you walk through this thing we call life." But how to do it in a biblical manner, not to lord over your family, but to be a steward of your family. And there's a huge distinction between the two.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Yeah, it's confusing, because in the media and the arts, there's such a beat down again on men. They're seen basically as porn addicts, distant fathers, pathetic husbands, lazy, not really caring about life, or don't know how to do relationships. But when you look at the research and you ask everyone out there, "Do men, do dads matter? 90 plus percent of them will say, "Yes," that men matter, and they make a unique contribution in the life of their son or daughter and the world around them. Yet, we also know that probably the greatest social ill of our day is the absence of dad, or the absence of godly fathers, from the home and more, Chad.

Chad Hennings:

I had read a study, it was actually a study that was quoted in Farrell and Gray's book, *The Boy Crisis*. They talked about not just from a psychological standpoint, but from an actual biological standpoint, that when there was not a father, a male figure in the home, the telomeres on your cell, which indicate length of life, the telomeres in those kids that did not have a father in the home were shorter than those kids that grew up with a father in the home. So there, scientific evidence that showed it's shortening the lifespan, biological lifespan, of these kids that don't have a father. God and His awesome wonder have weaved this thing of life, that it truly defines the importance of both a mom and

a dad, a man and a woman, to raise a holistic family. Because it impacts not only psychologically, but also biologically.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, if men are so bad, the research then you would think would show that when dad's not in the home, the kids would do better. But the research shows the complete opposite.

Chad Hennings: You name it, from incarceration rates to finishing high school, bullying, to confidence levels, are they individuals of character, it all goes back to a father being in the home. What should be not the norm, but should be the exception, my hat's off to those moms that, because of separation, that are raising their kids. They're doing the best that they can, but there's no excuse that we, as men in the body of Christ and the church, can't be mentors to those young men, to show them what it means to be a man. We all need fathers, whether physical fathers or spiritual fathers.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm finding that most of the women out there, they want the same thing for the men in their lives. They love their sons. They love their husbands. They love their dads. They love their brothers. They don't like this beat down that we're seeing, Chad, and they want them to step up into the moment. We know that there's toxic behavior, but toxic behavior doesn't mean masculinity is toxic. There's a big difference between those two worlds.

Chad Hennings: Amen. And I firmly believe, in my heart of hearts, I believe that the squeaky wheel gets the most grease, and a lot of things that we see, whether coming out of Hollywood, out of media, out of social media, it's a minority that is banging the gong against masculinity. But I do believe the majority of Americans, and particularly mothers and dads, they realize the importance of what biblical masculinity stands for.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I grew up in central Pennsylvania, and we have a hunting camp that we go up to every year, and the boys go together. And that is one of the most precious times of the year, especially for me and my son. Because when we go up there, something happens. The whole world closes out. And when we start sitting around the campfire, when we're out on the range shooting guns, when we're walking through the woods, putting up a tree stand, and by the way, this could be replicated in any situation, no matter what your love or your hobby or sport is, there's something, Chad, that takes place. And I know we're going to talk about the Promise Keepers event here in a moment and more, but talk to us about that need, that dynamic, and the power that comes with it.

Chad Hennings: As little kids, we all grew up, you had to play in sports, playing army, playing soldier. You're with your buddies.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Chad Hennings: And there's that sense of identity, individual as well as corporate identity. And where I go to this, the importance of these relationships, the last 20-plus years have been highlighted by post-traumatic stress of a lot of these soldiers coming back from downrange Iraq, and Afghanistan, and battling these issues where they can't reconcile certain things in their minds. I just read a statistic today that suicides, both the active duty as well as veterans, have surpassed in the last, since 9/11, suicides have surpassed the active deaths that we've had in the War on Terror. And that's an atrocity. And it goes back to isolation, which you just referenced.

But you talk about the modalities of treatment for isolation or for post-traumatic stress, are the ability to do what you and I are doing now, have conversations. To talk through, to help process, not necessarily to fix, but to help process. And when I've been studying a lot of that, about our active duty military and our veteran community, it translates so well to the Christian community. Men are isolated. There's this whole thing that, you have to show the world, that you have it all together, that you have no chinks in your armor. We, as men, we're all fallible. We all fall short. We all sin. We all have succumbed to temptation. But we need to surround ourselves with other men that we can be totally transparent, to form those masculine, transparent, Christ-centered relationships, to be able to thrive.

And for me, I've experienced on both sides of that. We may tap into this later in our interview, but going through the medical issue that I had with my son during my time when I was playing with the Cowboys, I couldn't go to my teammates and say, "Man, I'm not holding it together. My son's suffering, my mind is elsewhere, and I'm doing everything I can just to be able to perform on the field." I didn't have anybody to help me process through what I was going through. And that was the impetus for me, my passion for men is because I've been there, done that. And I realize the power in getting together with other men, of how that can transform lives.

Dr. Tim Clinton: July 16, 17, Cowboys Stadium, a chorus of men who will begin to sing praises to the Lord, hear stirring messages, take us into that moment. Call men.

Chad Hennings: It's an opportunity for men to gather, not only if you can't be there physically, on that July 16th, they're going to be doing a simulcast all over the world, in many different languages all over. So it's going to be an opportunity for men to gather physically and virtually, to see and hear from men and realize that God's grace is as alive today, and is as relevant today as it's ever been. It's okay to repent, to return to God, but we need to surround ourselves, to praise Him to realize that He is our heavenly Father and that we still can have an impact on our family. God can work miracles, and can still restore those relationships, can still restore who you are as a husband, as a father as a friend to other men, and to increase your impact in your community. That's what PK's is all about to encourage men, to repent, to reconcile, to come back to Christ, and to lead, to go forward.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I've been in the room, with my son beside me. And those are moments, they're like defining moments. Something gets stripped from you. Nothing else matters.

Chad Hennings: It goes back to that aspect of identity, who we are. For men, your typical male conversation would go something like this, "Hey Bob, how's it going?" "Great, how's the wife?" "Great, how's the kids?" "Great." That's all I need to know. And it's a very superficial aspect. But we realize that we, as men, our identity is in Christ. And if you profess a belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the aspect of our purpose is to worship Him and to make His name known. Worship God in discipleship. That's all that matters. And whether you do that, no matter what you do, for me as a fighter pilot, as a football player, as a commercial real estate professional, as a doctor, as an attorney, stay-at-home, dad, it doesn't matter, that, in the bare essence of what we were created for, is just that, to walk in fellowship with God and His kingdom, and to tell others about Jesus Christ. It's simple.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It is simple, and it's powerful when men shed those things and want to lay, maybe some of those battles they have down at the foot of the cross, things they've been holding on to in secret, maybe alone, and they have those guys around them who are willing to help shoulder that load, walk with them. It gives them strength.

Chad Hennings: That's the other example, that we were not created to be alone. We were created to be a part of something greater than self. It's the body of Christ.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Chad Hennings: We all have different skills, different skillsets, strengths, weaknesses. And what I do well, I do well. But if I don't, I lock arms with somebody that, and we talked about in the aviation world, checks your six, look behind you, because we can't see 360 degrees around us. We have vulnerabilities. And you know, we're only self-aware to what we can acknowledge and see in our lives. But that's what the beauty of the body of Christ, of friendships, of relationships are, is to truly lock arms and be a true functional community.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know you guys have quite a lineup, Chad. You're not afraid to take on the issues. You're going to be talking about everything from porn, racism, meaningful relationships with God, each other, and more. A couple of people maybe you're really excited about, as a part of it, I know. That's a stellar lineup.

Chad Hennings: Phenomenal lineup. You know what I'm excited about? They've even given me a little bit of a platform. Before I announce this, I guess we haven't gone public with it, but we'll go public with here, I'm going to talk with some of my former teammates and guys that I played with in the NFL. Guys, Charles Haley, Tim Brown, Michael Irvine, all Hall of Famers. We're going to talk about aspects of things that they have struggled with as fathers, as men of faith. It's going to be a lot of fun.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's what men are looking for.

Chad Hennings: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Someplace where you've got meaningful conversations, not a beat down. This is a lift you up, encourage you and challenge you. It's support. It's challenge, support, challenge, let's move the needle.

Chad Hennings: It's to be men. We're not going to touch you with kid gloves, because that's not what men do. What we're there for is to acknowledge who you are as a man, and to lift you up, and to challenge, to your point, is to challenge and to continue to Edify who God created you to be.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Listen, you got to mark the date down on the calendar, July 16, 17. More information about it all, promisekeepers.org.

Chad closing thought, challenging us as men in this moment. Everybody knows there's a lot of division, insanity, chaos, confusion, and modern-day culture. If there's ever a time where David's words to Solomon ring true, "Son, show yourself a man," this would be an hour.

Chad Hennings: Amen. I want to encourage men to be hopeful. I read a quote by St. Augustine. It said, "Hope has two daughters, anger and courage, anger in the way things are, and the courage to change them the way they ought to be." That's what we, as men, need to grasp that, and take that, and move forward with it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, what a delight to have you again. Thank you for your service. What a storied career. And love your heart, your passion for men. You know what? We need to pray that God would do something that only He could get the credit for, and that men would be moved. I love Malachi 4:6, "That He would turn the hearts of the fathers toward their children, and the hearts of the children back toward their fathers, and that God's work would go forth."

Chad Hennings: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, thank you for joining us.

Chad Hennings: My pleasure.

Roger Marsh: Once again, to sign up to attend or to stream the Promise Keepers 2021 Men's Conference on July 16 and 17, go to promisekeepers.org. Now, you can also find a link to that site and more information about Chad Hennings and Promise Keepers when you visit our broadcast page, at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Or, if you'd like to talk with someone in person about Family Talk or one of our resources, please don't hesitate to give us a call. We're here to answer your questions, to pray with you, whatever you need. Our number is (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825.

Roger Marsh: Now, before we leave the air for today, I'd like to share some exciting news, thanks to some special friends of our ministry. We currently have a matching grant of \$300,000 set aside for the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. That means that right now, any gifts we receive will be matched, so you can do the math. A \$50 gift becomes \$100, a \$5,000 gift becomes \$10,000. That gives us the opportunity to reach twice as many parents and grandparents, to encourage twice as many families, and provide them with the resources that they need. You can make a donation online when you go to drjamesdobson.org. You can make a donation over the phone when you call us at (877) 732-6825, that's (877) 732-6825.

Thanks so much for listening to Family Talk today. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed weekend.

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

Roger Marsh: When you think about your family and where they will be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? Are you hopeful? What kind of legacy are you leaving for your children and their children? Here at Family Talk, we're committed to helping you understand the legacy that you're leaving for your family. Join us today at DrJamesDobson.org for helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. James Dobson himself. And remember, your legacy matters.