



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: They Call Me Coach: Ministry from the Pulpit and the Field – Part 2

Guest(s): Pastor Tom Mullins

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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: Welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, sports can have quite an impact on us as individuals. I'm sure the experience that you had growing up might have been little league, T-ball, peewee football or soccer. Perhaps you played on a high school team and that really helped to shape you as an adult. I am so grateful for the men who coached me during my childhood years, whether it be little league baseball or YMCA basketball, even onto the track and cross country teams in high school. I'm so grateful for the influence of the men who were coaching me back then and I know you have a great love and respect for the people who coached you as well.

Now, Pastor Tom Mullins is back on the program with us again today. This is part two and the conclusion of his conversation with our own Dr. Tim Clinton. They'll be discussing how sports and faith have impacted him and what role God played in his life through sports. Now, if you're not familiar with Pastor Mullins, he's an author, speaker, and the founding pastor of Christ Fellowship Church. He founded the church along with his wife, Donna, back in 1984.

Christ Fellowship began with humble beginnings, only a few people meeting in the Mullins' living room. Now, it has grown to a multi-site church with over 30,000 members. They meet on multiple campuses across southern Florida every week and also online. Global attendance is growing. Before his life in ministry though, Tom Mullins was an athlete and then a big time high school football coach. Tom has carried the lessons, passion, and the skills he gained from on the field, the things he saw in the eyes of the young men he was coaching and their yearning for male mentorship all carried over to how he's serving the Lord off the field today. Tom and his wife Donna, by the way, have two grown children and several grandchildren.

Now, this episode was recorded while Pastor Tom Mullins and Dr. Tim Clinton were backstage at the recent Men's Ignite Impact weekend in Virginia this past March. Let's join them now for the conclusion of this conversation right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Coach. I really, what I wanted listeners to hear today was, God is at work, God is at work. He's doing something that I think people don't even realize, and there's stirring, there's fire that's starting to happen. And Coach, in the midst of it, as you guys built your ministry, you and your wife Donna and more, you started equipped. You've teamed up with John Maxwell, so many other people. You started a Place of Hope. Coach, tell us a little bit about that because you care for people who are down and now you care for people who are broken.

Pastor Tom Mullins: My wife got the revelation because we were supporting children's homes around the world and she said, "Honey, they're hurting people right in our own backyard. What are we doing for them?" So we birthed Place of Hope over 20 plus years ago. Tim, we've touched now over 30,000 children in our region through our Place of Hope ministry. We have residential care. We bring children in the foster system into family unit group, six to a home. Full-time live-in parents and we have now five campuses throughout our region and we have a home for young women who find themselves pregnant and they don't know where to turn. Well, we have a home for them where they can come and give birth to their babies. Matter of fact, this past Sunday we had a dedication of five of our babies from our home for our mothers. And then, we're helping young people who graduate out of foster care.

What do they do now? They're 18, they're out of the foster care system. But we have a system for them now to move into and we help them go to school, get a job, fill out resumes and learn how to live as an independent. And we do the same thing with these young, single moms. We transition them from our home where they're giving birth to their daughters or sons and then move them into apartments where they learn how to live independently, get a job, take care of their family. So we're trying to cover it from birth all the way up until the mid-twenties. It's a phenomenal ministry and it's so needed and we're so rewarding. This is my wife's vision, Donna, to really do this. And I've just got behind her and helped her get going and God has blessed it tremendously.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's what James talked about when he said that's pure religion, really about their getting out and being the hands and feet of Jesus everywhere we go.

Pastor Tom Mullins: And it's expanded our influence in the community and we're working with homeless vets in our community. We're doing a lot. We really have taken the opportunity to really reach people in our region. So everywhere from working with municipalities, police forces, fire stations, hospitals, to the homeless, we're mobilizing an army. And our region of care and assistance, we want our cities to know we are their go-to team. Whenever there's a need in that city, we're ready to step up and be there to assist our city and touching people with the love and message of hope of Jesus.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Tom, I've always appreciated how strong your commitment is, your resolve. And I think that probably goes back to some of that coaching days. Hey, we're here to get it done.

Pastor Tom Mullins: Got you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's what it's all about. Truth and love.

Pastor Tom Mullins: That's it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Coach Mullins, my dad pastored for almost 60 years in the hills of central Pennsylvania, old circuit-riding preacher. And one of the things he would always say is, keep on keeping on.

Pastor Tom Mullins: Come on.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Keep it going until the clouds break and the shadows flee away. Keep on coming.

Pastor Tom Mullins: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Keep on coming. That's what he put in us. Keep on coming. Tim, don't ever stop. Keep on coming and keep yourself anchored in Him, meaning in Christ. Because that's our hope, that's our strength. Coach, reflecting back, do you think sports gave you a voice, a sense of being identity or what have you?

Pastor Tom Mullins: Oh, unbelievably so. It opened up so many new avenues for me. It not only opened up for me to get a higher education, to have an opportunity to play at a college level. I flew in my first airplane on a trip. You got to realize, Tim, I grew up a very humble kid in the country and I was in the sixth grade before we had an indoor toilet. We had a path called an outhouse. Hello. Now, I'm traveling with teams. My world's being broadened and I'm being introduced to people on all different levels. So it helped shape me as a person and I think better prepare me to be an effective witness for our Lord and Savior.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Coach, along those lines, I think about your career, how God has led you through all of that. What was the impetus behind all of it?

Pastor Tom Mullins: Being a player, you always want to play at the next level. I remember we had a Dallas Cowboy pro scout come to practice and he timed us all and we did strength measurements. And there was a while I thought I might have a chance to play at the next level. I received such a severe knee injury, it really changed my career path. I don't know if I would've ever made it on a pro level or not, but everybody wants to believe they could have done that. But I knew if I wasn't going to play, I was going to coach because I love the game, I love the interaction, I love the dynamics of it all. And then my college coach gave me a graduate assistantship to work on my masters and coach of the team, so I had the privilege to coach.

After that year of coaching, I said, "This is my calling. This is what I want to do the rest of my life." I want to coach, because I love my coaches and I love that

value they brought to me. And I knew I could add value to the young men and help call the very best out in them. Calling the champion out in others is the one of the most rewarding, fulfilling aspects of life. And that's what coaches do and that's what I wanted to do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: No wonder Billy Graham made that quote, "A coach will influence probably more people in a year than most people do in their entire lifetime." And Coach, I'll add this, for good or bad, that it really matters how you're anchored as a coach and the gift that you give to the players around you, what it's all about.

Pastor Tom Mullins: Exactly. And I've had the opportunity to influence a lot of my young men, lead a lot of them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and try to always uphold that standard with them and let them know that their gifts and abilities came from God and now they're using them to bring honor to Him. And I still coached, even in the high schools, back in the day when my principal was a believer, so I was never given a hard time over praying with my team, very open about our testimonies. And so we've always tried to give God the honor in everything. But coaching laid the format for my life, I'm so thankful for the coaches I've had and the coaches I've coached with and that's why they still call me Coach today.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know, it's amazing. Something tells me that you probably could get those kids to run through a brick wall.

Pastor Tom Mullins: I learned I had to run through it with them. So if you run through it with them, they'll run through it with you, that's for sure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that. Coach, I know this, in life, a lot of counseling we do, and I think it applies to sports, athletic competition as a coach that you have to be attuned. There's a word we call it attunement. In other words, you have to dial into the uniqueness of that player in front of you. Coach, that's critical, isn't it? Because you have one coaching style, some may not gravitate to it. They're wired up differently and they can get lost in that shuffle. But that ability to speak directly into that, have you had to put your hands or your arms around some kids through the years?

Pastor Tom Mullins: I think the great coaches had an intuitive ability to read the players' needs and how they were motivated. And you have a general motivational structure you do with your team, but to bring out the best in each individual, you've got to know that player. You've got to understand their family dynamic, where they came out of, what motivates. And you can almost tell and read them on how they respond. There were some players I knew that to get the best out of them, I had to grab them by the face mask and pull them in close and get them. Come on, man. And others, I pull them aside, put my arm around them and talk to them in a very soft voice about what's going on. What can I do? How can I help you? But the big thing is, if a player knows you truly care about them-

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's everything.

Pastor Tom Mullins: ... really care about them, they'll follow you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They will.

Pastor Tom Mullins: They'll follow you. I tell young leaders all the time, I said, "Before anybody's ever going to follow you in your leadership, there's three questions they're going to ask that have to be answered. The first question is, can I trust them? Are they a trustworthy person? Are they going to be consistent? Are they going to be a person of the word? Are they going to show me these signs that I can trust them? The second one is, do they really care about me as an individual?" So the first one is a character question, really. You've got to have a character. Second one's a compassion question. Do they really care about me, that compassion? And the third one is, do they have the ability to help me go to the next level? And do I see evidence that they're always trying to go to the next level? And I tell young leaders that.

So when you're coaching, you've got to be consistent in how you are with your players every day. And you got to model what you want them to be, you've got to be the culture if you want to establish the culture with them. And then I think that whole compassion element is, you got to express that. And I try to have a personal touch with every single player. I had hundred players on my team. I try to have 100 personal touches. If you notice in games, in pre-game warmups, you watch. A lot of the coaches, they'll walk through the pre-game warmups and touch every single player. They'll touch them on the shoulder pad, hit them on the head, slap them, give them a high five, give them a grip. What are they saying, it's a touch of affirmation to every player, you matter. You matter to me, you matter to this team, you're going to matter in this game. And that's what coaches do. And I think that's the great thing, and the great coaches are great at that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's power in that. I remember interviewing Grace Ketterman, old pioneering psychiatrist, and she told me one time, she said, Tim, I believe, and this is fascinating to me, that kids need a hundred touches a day. In other words, you should reach out and make sure and let them know because it communicates proximity, but it also communicates powerful affirmation.

Pastor Tom Mullins: It's in my DNA so much as a coach, I have a problem because I'll walk up to men, total strangers I won't even know and I'll hit them in the chest. I'm checking out your pecs. You've been working out, you've been lifting, I'm grabbing their arms.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I saw you trying to do that with Ray Lewis and Derrick Brooks in here.

Pastor Tom Mullins: Hey, hey, those guys are in shape, baby.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You bumping that, you're bumping rock.

Pastor Tom Mullins: Yeah, you are. Those guys are in shape. But no, I think that's something that men need that kind of affirmation too.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Growing up, they didn't really receive a lot of that.

Pastor Tom Mullins: I'll tell you, how many men have never had a hug from their father. I had this guy one time come up to me and he wanted prayer after service and he was built like a double-wide trailer. This guy's big. And I said to him, when I got done praying, I said, "Son, give me a hug." And he backed away from me. He pulled away from me and I grabbed him. I reached in and went and grabbed him. He's like a double-wide refrigerator so I couldn't get my arms all the way around him. I made a mistake, I pulled him in, Tim, on me and he dropped his head on my shoulder and started weeping like a baby.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Pastor Tom Mullins: His wife's standing there and she said to me, "You're the first man that's ever hugged my husband. Not one man has ever hugged him in his life." And then his weight started to buckle my knees. I was about to go down. I thought he was going to pancake me. So I got out of the grip. But I told him every week, this guy was in church every week, "You wait right over here, son, when I walk out I want a hug." And turn sideways so people can get by you. So he was over there. He's now in glory. But that shocked me that, and it also reinforced the fact how much men need other men to affirm them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Coach, as we go, what a fascinating discussion and just love who you are. I love your heart. I love how God works in and through you. People want to learn more about you, the ministry, where can they go?

Pastor Tom Mullins: GoChristFellowship.com.

Dr. Tim Clinton: GoChristFellowship.com

Pastor Tom Mullins: And they can reach everything we need there. We have the church, all the information. All of our information's there and God is doing a great work in South Florida. But I tell you, Tim, I'm encouraged because I have a privilege now to be a mentor of a lot of young pastors across America.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know you do.

Pastor Tom Mullins: And across the world. God is moving. There is a move of God right now happening across our nation, which gives me great hope for our future.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And to that end, we pray that God would do something so spectacular that the people will rejoice at who He is and what He's doing in our midst.

Roger Marsh: Roger Marsh jumping in here to say we are about out of time as we conclude the one-on-one backstage interview. But Dr. Clinton wanted to give you a sense of how Pastor Tom Mullins connected with the men and ignited their hearts to serve God and each other through Jesus and scripture. So with that, let's close today by going to the stage at Men's Ignite as Coach Mullins inspired the audience with his unique style and pitch.

Pastor Tom Mullins: Here's the scripture I want you to know. We're going to close on this scripture. It says in Second Chronicle 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord brings through the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him." All He's ever looked for is somebody that has a heart fully committed to Him. It's a heart issue. It's not about how strong you think you are or not strong or how gifted you think you are or not gifted or how you compare yourself to somebody else, has nothing to do with that. Has to do with you and your heart with the Lord. And when your heart's fully committed, God will empower you to fulfill the mission.

All right, one more football story. I got to tell you one more and I'm going to quit. I took over a high school team, my first coaching assignment out of college in Florida and they'd never had a winning season. So that's the one reason I got the job. And I take them over and I come in and they only had 20 some players a year before I got there. And I said, Hey, I was out recruiting, man. I was out speaking, I was out doing and stuff and I said, "If you come, you work hard, commit yourself, you will dress for the games." So man, they came and I looked at them, I lined them up athletically, the most athletic to the least athletic looking kid and start passing out equipment. 100 kids came out for practice. I got down to the last kid, the 100th kid, his name was Carl Pierce.

Carl. Meet Carl Pierce, this little skinny kid. He was so skinny, unathletic looking, walk like a duck. Came in, I said, "Son, what position you going to play?" He said, "Coach, I'm going to be a wide receiver." I said, "Okay, wide receiver." I said, "We got any wide receiver pads left?" They said, "Coach, we've used them all up. We've used the JV pads, varsity pads, freshman pads. We've been borrowing pads from the Peewee league. We have nothing left." I said, "We got to have something left." They said, "Oh yeah, there's this one pair." And they bring it out. We had this 300-plus pound defensive tackle the year before. Carl, I don't know if he weighed a hundred pounds. And we put the shoulder pads down over him. They fell off of him. He stuck his arm up through the neck hole and he says, "Aren't he's a little big, Coach?"

I said, "No, son, you can catch the ball from any position. Don't worry about it. Put him in there." We put towels and taped them in there. We only had one helmet left, you guessed it. He had a little old small head. And this kid, this kid had like an eight and three quarters or something, whatever, big old head. We put three cheek pads on each side, took socks and stuffed them all around. No matter what you would do, when Carl would run, his helmet would turn and his nose was out the ear hole. Well, there's only one pair of pants. You guessed it, his legs fit down in one leg of the pants. No belts, used shoestrings. When Carl

had to hold his pants, do one arm jumping jacks where things would fall off of him. Everybody made fun of him, but he would not quit.

So come time for the first game, I had to dress him. So I said, "Son, here's the deal. You run out the very last one. We're going to get out and we get in a line, don't move. Just stand there and hold your pants." So we're warming up and he's standing there just holding his pants. That was his thing. Kids made fun of him. It was unbelievable. So we go play our first game, we win. Play our second game, we win. Play our third game, we win. We play our fourth game, we win. We're four and oh, undefeated. Now, we've tied the best record of the school's history. We're four and oh. Now we're in our fifth game. Buddy, we're fighting. We're fighting. We're trailing the whole game. We're behind. Finally, about two minutes to go, we go to take the go ahead touchdown.

All we got to do is kick the ball off, hold them for one series, run the clock out. We're five and oh, we're going to get ranked. We're on our way to the state playoffs. I am pumped up. So the field goal team goes out on the field. I had this guy named Ward Cesar Jakes, big old linebacker from Florida State was on my staff and he was in charge of specialty teams and defense. And they ran out on the field and as I would do, I'm counting, I said, "Coach, coach! We've only got 10 guys on the field. Get somebody on the field." I said, "Time out, time out." The referee said, "You had no more timeouts." And I hit Ward Cesar. I wasn't a pastor then. I hit him. Boom. I said, "Get somebody on the field."

And by the way, I have to look up to him, he's a big man. I say, "Get somebody on the field." He turned without looking, grabbed the first body beside him and threw him on to the field. And my worst nightmare emerged as Carl Pierce goes on to the field. Carl has never run a play. He doesn't know where to line up. I don't know if he knows which direction to run. And he's on the corner, he's a contain man. What are we going to do? They blew the whistle. They went running down. It looked like body parts were falling off Carl as he was running down the field. Suddenly, there's a fumble at about the 25-yard line. The guys are hollering, "Fumble, fumble. Who's got the ball? Who's got the ball? Who's got the ball?"

"I got it, Coach. I got it." He comes running off the field with a ball. His helmet's sideways. He's holding onto his pants. He's got the ball. Ward Caesar Jakes is going, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus." We watched the game films. Carl ran down. This is no joke. The helmet had turned across. He couldn't see where he was going. And the running back ran into him and got tangled up in his pads. Got tangled up in his pads. And then somebody speared Carl in the back and knocked him over onto the ball.

Now, why do I tell you this story? I tell you this story because the devil lies to us and tells us that nothing fits, nothing's right. You're not equipped, you're not prepared. Don't listen to any of that. All God's looking for from you is a heart that's passionate after Him. So grab up your stinking pants and run hard after

God. Run hard and God will do great things because it's never too late to become the man God's called you to be.

Roger Marsh:

Men do need affirmation and encouragement from other men. I'd like to challenge every guy listening to this broadcast right now to consider how you can lift up another man this week. It may be a guy that you just meet out on the street somewhere or acknowledging a man who just accomplished something that was very difficult for him to do. You affirm that guy and then watch God work through your kindness. You'll be amazed at what kind of results it can bring.

Now, if you'd like to go back and listen to any part of this program, you might have missed either in part one or part two. Remember, you can listen again on our website at drjamesdobson.org. You can also listen on the official Family Talk app on your smartphone. Now, if you don't have the app on your phone yet, it's simple, just download it today from your app store. Once you're on the app, you can create your own account and customize the content you receive.

We've talked a lot recently about how we can support men, but let's not forget about the ladies too, and more specifically, moms. We know that moms work hard every day of the year. And if you're a mom, you know exactly what we're talking about, don't you? Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we want to support and encourage you as a mom in your daily walk with the Lord. So when you visit us online at drjamesdobson.org/empoweringmoms, you can sign up for a special eight-day series of inspirational and empowering words of encouragement just for mothers. That's drjamesdobson.org/empoweringmoms.

I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the JDFI thank you so much for making us a part of your day. 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.

Dr. James Dobson:

Hello, everyone. Do you need help dealing with the everyday tasks of raising a family? I'm James Dobson here, and if you do, I hope you'll tune in to our next edition of Family Talk. Our main purpose in this ministry is to put tools into your hands that will strengthen your marriage and help you raise your kids. Hope to see you right here next time for another edition of Family Talk.