



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Amazing Power of Prayer

Guest(s): Dr. Tim Clinton

Air Date: March 13, 2020

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Dr. Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a listener supported ministry of James Dobson family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson and thank you for joining us today. The late theologian Charles Spurgeon once said, "true prayer is neither a mere mental exercise, nor a vocal performance. It's far deeper than that. It is a spiritual transaction with the creator of heaven and earth." What a humbling thought that is for us, although it's difficult to comprehend. When you bow your head and pray, we're actually communicating with almighty God. Today's program focuses on the power we have when we make that connection with him. This broadcast comes in the form of a devotional given by our own doctor Tim Clinton. I'm not sure that many of you know this, but we have a staff devotion every day here at James Dobson Family Institute. And last fall, Dr. Clinton was with us and he shared a personal story of how prayer had impacted his life. I was so moved by his testimony that I had him go into our studio and record what he had said. He shared a time when he saw the power of prayer powerfully in his life and encouraged all of us to experience that divine encounter with God himself. I don't want to give anything away about this story, but I will say it's remarkable how God intervened. Here's Dr. Tim Clinton on this edition of family talk.

Dr. Clinton: It's a joy to be a part of Family Talk and the team here. And I just wanted to give a word of encouragement to all of you who are out there listening who are day-by-day, standing with us as we really fight for the family and so much more. Pray that God would continue to have his hand of blessing and protection and provision all over this ministry. Today I want to take a few moments and talk to you about prayer. I'm going to share with you a story about prayer. The greatest lesson I have in my mind is a portrait of my father. Before I go there, how many times you heard somebody say this, "all we had left to do was pray."? "I mean, there's nothing else we could do. Cry out to Jesus is all we have left." Our lives are full of trials of stress, heartache, issues that really sap our strength, that leave us spiritually limp as a dishrag.

It's like, we're struggling. We're having a hard time. I don't even know what to do. God, are you there? Listen to David in Psalm 18, verse six. He said this, "In

my distress, I called upon the Lord. To my God I cried for help and from his temple," I love this, "he heard my voice and my cry to him reached his ears." Probably the most powerful lesson I've had in my life on prayer was a moment with my father. It was a moment of tragedy you all. I remember it was August 20th, 1976 and I had stayed home from football practice. We were doing two-a-days. I wasn't too sad to stay home, but other than an injury I had to my knee, I was going to go get my knee checked because evidently I had taken a shot and I couldn't hardly walk. And I remember I was in bed that morning and the phone rang in our farmhouse.

Our phone was out in kind of the common area, the hallway, and I could hear my dad say hello and almost instantly began to cry out and burst our bedroom door open. And I remember him yelling, "Tim, Tim, Tim," and "Candy's been involved in an accident," and out of nowhere, like out of a dead sleep myself. I jumped up and asked what was wrong and he said, "I don't know, but they wrecked the car and they said she's hurt really bad, we've got to go." And so I threw on some clothes fast. We took off down the stairs. I remember we had an old Buick outside and I told my dad, I said, dad, let me drive. I was 16 but I said, let me drive because I can drive on these old dirt roads. You jump in the passenger side, we'll take off and go.

It was about probably a mile and a half or so to get to the accident, on these old country farm dirt roads. And what was going on was my sister Candy had spent the night before at a friend's house and she was going to go help a friend of my mother's who was losing your eyesight, help clean her home. And so she jumped in the car with a girlfriend of hers who had just gotten her driver's license and they took off for the farmhouse and they decided, as kids do, to go a little bit further for a little bit extra ride. And they went down through the old roads up past the old, what's called the Zion Cemetery. And they turned back toward the farmhouse. And as they were going back, there was a sharp curve on that dirt road going down a hill and they lost control of the car. Well my sister Candace was seated in the backseat driver's side and when the car lost control going to its right, that back driver's side door hit the tree head on at about 35 mile an hour.

And my sister Candy's head went through the window and into the tree. There was actually even hair and stuff on the tree. Well, back to the scene. I'm driving like a mad man through these roads trying to get to the scene of the accident. One of the girls who was in the car had jumped out, took off running to get to a phone up at the farmhouse. She had to run about a mile to get to the farmhouse, to make the phone call, to call the ambulance and to call us. One of the girls stayed with my sister Candy and tried to stop her from bleeding profusely from her head. I remember as we made our way through the country roads and we pulled up to the scene of the accident, we were the first ones on the scene of the accident. Think about how much time has passed already.

And as I shoved that old Buick up into park, I remember starting to jump out of the car and my dad yelled, "Tim, you go and I'll pray." And as I took off running

for the car, my kid sister Candy, she's 14 years old. She was in that back seat. I remember running around the car and trying to jump into the back side of that disaster that had happened. And I got in there through all the cut glass and there's my kid sister Candy laying, it's a horrible scene. Candy had green gum all through her teeth and I reached down and I grabbed a check to see if she had a pulse and I found a pulse and I looked up and there's my dad by that old Buick down there on his knees crying out to God and I yelled, "Dad, she's got a pulse. She's still alive." He said, "Tim, take care of her, I'm praying, I'm praying."

Think about that portrait just for a moment. A boy helping his kid sister and watching his dad on his knees crying out to the Lord. Leonard Ravenhill, he said, "no man is greater than his prayer life." I'll say this. No nation is greater than its prayer life. Dr. Falwell, who I grew up under back in the day when I was going to undergraduate school and studying for pastoral ministry. He used to say this, "little prayer, little power, more prayer, more power, much prayer, much power." Jesus understood the deep need for prayer. Luke chapter five verses 16 and 17 says this, that he himself, Jesus himself would often go away into the wilderness, a lonely place to pray. Sometimes he would even spend the entire night in prayer to God. Think about that.

Paul reminded us in first Thessalonians 5:17. He said this, "pray without ceasing." How is your prayer life? What does prayer really mean to you? When do you pray? Even more, where do you pray? I remember as a boy other lessons that God began to teach me about prayer. We were messing around one day in an old barn and there was this old car in there and we got to tinkering around on the inside. It was all rusted out and everything, but here we found a set of keys for this old car and on the keys was a circle and then it had like a flathead screwdriver head. There were four of them around that circle. And it was on this key chain and I liked it. Inscribed on that was simply this, "prayer opens heavens doors." As a young man, I looked at that and thought, prayer opens heaven doors. E.M. Bounds, I later learned this, said, "prayer is the contact of a living soul with God." That God shapes the world through prayer.

Clement of Alexandria said this, "prayer is a conversation with God." We have an opportunity to what? Engage the creator of the universe. A God who wants to have conversation with you and with me. A God who wants us to cry out to him. He's like a loving heavenly father waiting for us to what? To come to him. It's interesting now in mental health, I've spent a lot of years in just looking at research. Research shows empirical support for the power of healing prayer. This is research. You actually can reduce your blood pressure. Healing prayer can change your mood. It can bring mental stability. It can bring about physical healings. Think about that. That's the power of prayer. Yes, prayer really changes things.

If you want to learn about prayer, you have to just spend time in God's word. Listen to these verses. Psalm 145:18, "The Lord is near to all who call on him in truth." Jeremiah 29:12 says this, "then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you." Isaiah chapter 30:19, "Oh people of Zion, who

lived in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help and as soon as he hears he will answer you." Think about that. John 16:24, "Until now, you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete." And I love James 1:5, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given to you." Do you pray with that kind of earnestness? Do you pray with that kind of expectation? Do you really believe that prayer opens heaven's doors? Do you really believe that God wants to hear your prayers?

Ask yourself, when's the last time you really meaningfully prayed to God? Why so little prayer? I'm often asked, why do people struggle with prayer? I think there are a couple of reasons for it. Number one, warfare. I think any time there's a battle going on, what's the very first thing you're going to do in war? You want to disrupt what? Communication patterns. You want to shut down their ability to talk. I think when you understand that we're really in a battle, like Paul said in Ephesians 6:10-20, we need to be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. Why? Because we're battling against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. If you have or your family has or your kids have any value to God, I really believe all hell will be against you. Hear me. We often pray, "Why?" Because we're in a battle between light and darkness. I think busy-ness is another reason. I think the pace and the pressure and the pain of modern day life has taken over. And the truth is we're so busy and then so tired, we don't take time to pray.

Years ago, third reason, I read this in a book by Richard Foster. It's his yellow book on prayer. But this really jumped off the page at me and I believe it's true. He believed that one of the key reasons why people don't pray is because they believe everything has to be right in their life before they pray. Think about that. When you're carrying stuff, when you don't feel very beautiful or when you feel broken or you feel whatever it is inside of you, shame, it often shuts you down. God wants you to come to him. It's like your kids. When your kids are in trouble, when they're doing something, don't you want them to come to you. So much the more is your heavenly father waiting and beckoning you to come to him.

The fourth reason I wrote down in my notes was broken relationships. Most people don't pray because it's hard to pray. Think about this. It's hard to pray for and with someone you don't like. And if you're struggling in your own relationships, it's also hard to come back if you're struggling in a relationship with God and to pray with him. I've heard men say this so many times, "Tim, if God knows me like you say he knows me, there's no way he could love me. Why would he want to turn his ear toward me?" How should we pray? I love this. The scripture's real clear. Jude 1:20. It says, we're to pray in the spirit: "Beloved, building yourselves upon your most Holy faith, pray in the spirit." In other words, pray at all times in the spirit. Ephesians 6:18 says it this way, "pray at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication." Francis de Sal said this, he who prays well is so absorbed with God that he does not even know that he's praying. That's a beautiful statement. The second way we're supposed to pray:

in Jesus' name. As Christians., it is in and through him, through Christ that we can approach God with freedom and with confidence.

I think we should pray also with a spirit of expectation. I remember years ago meeting with a Christian psychologist, Larry Crabb. And we met at a little place called Glen Eyrie here in Colorado Springs. And as we were chit chatting back and forth, Larry was sizing me up and I'm sizing Larry up. And Larry and I, we, we began to journey into our spiritual lives and he said, "you know what Tim, after thinking about," he says, "I think that you don't really come to God with a spirit of expectation." I'm like, what do you mean by that? He said, "I think you don't put any responsibility, or you don't expect God to do anything for you. Oh, you're religious. Oh Tim, you love the Lord. You do a lot of things right, but your God is kind of like tidy and in this box and you access him that way." He said, "Tim, I really think that you should come to God. You should come to the scripture. You should open your life up before him with a spirit of expectation that he loves you, that he wants and cares for you. And even more than that, that you can go to him with that kind of a heart. You can pray earnestly about and for issues in your life."

And here's a question for you. When you pray to God, do you have a spirit of expectation? Do you come to him like that or do you pray, "I hope, God, you'll hear my prayer. I hope that you'll do something for me." Number four, focused on others. James 5:16, "confess your faults one to another," and here's what the word says, "and pray for one another that you may be healed."

I think also go to Philippians chapter four and verse six, we should pray when we feel anxious and confused about life. We shouldn't just pray a little. We should pray a lot. Being anxious for nothing but in everything through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And Paul said something powerful in that passage. And he said, "the peace of God will flow from the God of peace, and it'll rein and rule in your heart and life." Do you really pray like that?

When should we pray? We should pray for those who are sick. James 5:15, we should pray when people use or hurt you. Matthew 5:44, we should pray when we're sick. James 5:13, we should pray for leaders and those who are an authority. 1 Timothy 2:2, we should pray without ceasing. Paul said, make your life a life for prayer.

Tell you another story about praying with my dad when I was young. I remember being in Zion Baptist Church in Ansonville, Pennsylvania. On a Wednesday night, we would go up during prayer time and we would pray together in groups and I would go up to the front pew. It was one of those old wood pews that by the way had a crack in the middle of the seat. If you sat in it wrong, it'd bite you. Remember those? Think about those just for a moment. We would kneel down. I knelt down by my dad and on every Wednesday night I pretty much prayed the same prayer. And I remember my dad saying something to me one night. He said, "Tim," carefully, he said this to me, "you always pray

the same prayer. Tim, it's okay to talk to God. Have a conversation with him. Learn to pray about what's in your heart." I never forgot it. We need to, and think about this, we need to get beyond shallow, repetitive, showy prayer. We need to get to a place where it's real, where it's authentic, meaningful, heartfelt, before our heavenly father.

Listen to the teachings of Jesus. Matthew 7:7-11, "Ask and you will receive. Seek and you'll find. Knock and it will be open to you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth. And he that seeketh, findeth. And he that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who if his son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good things to your children, how so much the more your father, which is in heaven will give good things to them, who," what? "Who ask him."

Let me give you some closing thoughts. We've all heard this. It's not prayer per se itself that holds the power, but rather it's God who is the object of our true prayer. The one to whom we pray. Remember that.

The second lesson, and this comes from E.M Bounds. Bounds said it this way, perhaps little prayer is worse than no pray. Little prayer is kind of like a make believe, a salve for the conscience, a farce or even a delusion. I think Bounds' statement was really this, understand what you have in this opportunity to pray to God. Understand what it means to have a conversation with him. Understand who he is. Those who come to him, the Hebrew writer said, must first believe that he is and that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Are you going to pray with that kind of understanding and that kind of heart felt expectation. Can you bring that to him? And in those moments right now, when you're praying, maybe for your prodigal son. Maybe right now you're praying for your marriage. Maybe right now you're praying about a job or your finances, there's so many things. Maybe someone just got a phone call about a terminal illness and you're crying out and saying, "God, do something. God do something."

One of my favorite songs is sung by Mac Powell and the band Third Day. It's simply this, "Cry Out to Jesus." I want to encourage you and I want you to know something. God is there and he wants you to come to him earnestly. And when you do, I believe he will hear your prayer and we pray that God would pour out his Spirit in a special, moving, powerful way in whatever issue or whatever battle you're going through right now. Our entire team here at Family Talk, we want you to know that we love and appreciate you and we want to join you in praying. Whatever issue it is that you're going through right now, and even more than that, we want to partner with you, labor together as we do this thing we call everyday life.

Roger Marsh:

Well, what an uplifting broadcast and we hope you've been blessed by Dr. Tim Clinton's words about the influence of our prayers here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and if you are in need of prayer, please call our offices at (877)

732-6825. A team member is standing by to listen to your request and take the time to join you in prayer. Again, our number is (877) 732-6825. Now, before we leave for the day, some of you might be wondering how the story about Dr. Clinton's sister ends. Here once again is Dr. Tim Clinton to share the remainder of that incredible testimony.

Dr. Clinton: I remember loading her up in the ambulance and they took off for the Clearfield Hospital. I'm told that they were driving in excess of like a hundred mile an hour to get her there. This was the preacher's daughter. And my dad was so loved up in those hills of Pennsylvania. And Candy made it to Clearfield Hospital. They immediately had to rush her though to Altoona Hospital because they weren't equipped to handle this traumatic brain injury she was going through. She was actually in a coma for 28 days I think it was, and miraculously came out of that coma, suffering a lot of the effects of a traumatic brain injury. But God began to do a healing in her brain and her body. And today Candy, after a number of years of rehab, it wasn't an easy journey. Candy later on married. She now has three children, granddaughter, and she's an amazing person who battles a lot of stuff still, but, physically, headaches and more. But I'll tell you what, her love for the Lord radiates. We kind of jokingly color Ruthie Graham because she talks about the Lord so much and loves him so much, and her kids love the Lord. And so that's Candy.

Roger Marsh: An incredible Testament of God's protection, faithfulness, and power was displayed through this incredible story. And if you were moved by this testimony, please let us know by connecting with us on Facebook. You can find our profile by searching for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Once you're there, you'll find today's broadcast post, and when you find it, you can leave us a comment. We enjoy receiving feedback as to how these programs are encouraging you and your family. So again, go to facebook.com/DrJamesDobsonsFamilyTalk. We look forward to hearing from you there. Well, that's all the time we have for this week. Join us again Monday for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed weekend.

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

Dr. Dobson: Well, thank you everyone for tuning into our program today. You may know that Family Talk is a listener supported program and we remain on the air by your generosity, literally. If you can help us financially, we would certainly appreciate it. God's blessings to you all.