



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: My Faith Journey Through the White House and Beyond

Guest(s): Kayleigh McEnany

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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: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I'm so glad that you've joined us for today's program. For decades, Dr. Dobson has been committed to defending righteousness in the public square. On many occasions, he has encouraged Christians in America to engage with policy makers. He has urged his listeners to make their voices heard and to stand up for what is right. And he continues to do so even today.

Well, our guest today here on family talk understands the importance of policy and how politics, whether we like it or not affects all of us long term, her name is Kayleigh McEnany and she served as the 33rd White House press secretary within the Trump administration from April of 2020 until January, 2021. Kayleigh holds a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University, and a JD from Harvard. She's a conservative political commentator and author. She also serves as an on-air contributor for *Fox News* and is co-host of *Outnumbered*. Kayleigh is married to Sean and they have one daughter. Recently, Kayleigh McEnany spoke to a crowd of over 4,000 women at an Extraordinary Women event in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After speaking to the crowd, she sat down and talked with our own Dr. Tim Clinton backstage. Let's listen to their insightful conversation right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, such a delight to have you join us here on Family Talk. Dr. Dobson wishes he could be in here with you, and sends his regards.

Kayleigh McEnany: Well, I am a big fan of Dr. Dobson. He has left such an impression across this country. I've had the honor speaking at so many grassroots organizations in various states that he's the reason they even exist. And to see the work they're doing for life, for liberty at their state capitals, he's left an impression on this country and it's for the better.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, you've written a new book called *For Such A Time As This: My Faith Journey Through The White House And Beyond*. It's an amazing, amazing work. The stories. I love the stories inside there, a few pictures and more, but hey, you serve the nation as the White House press secretary under President Donald

Trump. Tell us a little bit about growing up in Tampa and what kind of began to shape you early on just as a young girl.

Kayleigh McEnany: Yeah, so, I was born in Jacksonville, ended up moving to Plant City, Florida. Went to school in Tampa where we eventually moved, but for most of my life, I was in Plant City, Florida, strawberry town, strawberry capital of the world. Small town, great roots where every Tuesday, Thursday we'd be out at the baseball field with my brother. I worked in the concession stand. I was so proud to be making \$5 an hour. I was so blessed to have a mom and a dad that invested so much in their children with their time, but not only that, with their faith. Taking me to a Southern Baptist church where in those pews I heard biblical truth and I knew it to be true. And it was ingrained in my heart. It equipped me for going off to Oxford and Harvard and these institutions that aren't always known for their Christian theology that they teach. There I've had many great professors, but it put a truth in my heart that no matter what a fellow student said or a professor or whatever I was being taught, I knew my moorings because of my mother, my father, and my Savior that they introduced me to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, your dad talked a lot about developing a worldview, read that, tell us what that meant to you and how those seeds got deep down inside of you.

Kayleigh McEnany: Yeah. So my father, he was someone who is very smart. He's a business owner, built a roofing company from the ground up, and he's always loved the study of Christianity, apologia, apologetics, the root word giving a defense of your faith. He's always loved that aspect of Christianity. As I've heard my pastor say, "You don't have to check your brain at the door with Christianity." When you dig into prophecy in the complexity of the human body, I mean, there's no other conclusion than God exists and Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior if you truly dig into it. So he taught me to love the study of Christianity as much as the faith aspect of it. And I went on this expedition to learn more about my faith and I'm blessed to have a dad that did that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A reason for the hope that lies deep within you.

Kayleigh McEnany: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's what Paul said. You have quite an academic pedigree, and I want to make sure people understand where you went to school and maybe some of the experiences academically that helped prepare you for the role that you had.

Kayleigh McEnany: Yeah. One that stands out was when I went to Oxford, I had heard just in passing in Florida from someone who ended up going into government, that he spent a year abroad at Oxford. And I thought, "Oh, that's interesting." I'm a homegirl. I don't like travel abroad. That's just not something that I've really done or really had a deep desire to do. But I thought, "Oh, that's interesting." He told me they had this tutorial system where you read your paper out loud and

you're essentially cross-examined by a professor or they call it a tutor for every word you write. Like, "What's your source on that? Why would you say that?" And my first tutor was a former member of the Palestinian liberation organization.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Really?

Kayleigh McEnany: Yeah. So as this Western kind of Christian conservative, pro-Israel person, this was my world view, I was up against someone who thought very differently, different life experiences. And she ended up being one of my favorite educators. She challenged me and learning from her made me better. I say iron sharpening iron, the biblical concept of two people making one another better. And those instances made me better.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, you went on to Harvard Law School and got a law degree. And I don't know if people know this. I thought it was fascinating. You actually worked in the White House communications office for President George W. Bush, right?

Kayleigh McEnany: Mm-hmm. Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What was that like?

Kayleigh McEnany: That was something else. I was an intern. I'm very, in my book, I'm very real about the adversities that I faced in these roles. I remember not forgetting, I don't think I put this in the book, but forgetting to fax part of President Bush's schedule to a group of reporters one day and literally my boss who is rather hardcore, and let you know it, came over, "Why didn't you fax this list? Half of the reporters don't know where the president is." And I went to the bathroom and cried. It was rigorous. It was tough. I'm clear about my shortcomings, but to go from intern where I got to stand in the back of the room and watch Dana Perino give a press briefing, not knowing more than 10 years later, God would have me in that same position. It's really surreal.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You learned some skills or maybe some hard issues about how to remain calm, especially in the face of adversity and challenge and push. You thought those type things were really significant as you look to the future roles that you were going to take on.

Kayleigh McEnany: Absolutely. And you know what's funny, I'm obviously a person that's conservative, but it was liberal mentors that really kind of coached me and helped me along the way. Van Jones was one of them. He told me, I'll never forget. I rounded the corner of they call it the green room, it's where you sit before you go on set. And I'm rounding the corner into the green room the first time at *CNN* on election night. And I'm nervous because the panels are kind of stacked in an ideological way that I knew I'd be in an embattled position. And as I'm turning the corner, Van Jones says to me, "I love your cross." Literally he'd not even introduced himself. He just said from the corner, "I love your cross," in

front of a group of people. And he's someone who's exhibited Christianity in my interactions with him to the point of my first appearance, "Hey, you have something in your teeth, take my mirror," and helping me along the way and coaching me and guiding me.

And it's those mentors that I've relied upon. Alan Combs, late Alan Combs, who told me, "Don't fight fire with fire, fight fire with water," which was words of wisdom. So, I'm very grateful to those who are able to see past their ideological bend and just say, "I'm going to help this young girl." And those are two people who did.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, let's fast forward to 2020 and your life's about to change radically. A phone call comes your way, take us into those moments.

Kayleigh McEnany: It was unexpected. I think people think, like a normal job, you apply to a job. You put in your resume, you get a call, you get interviewed for that job. It's not that way in government, and certainly it was not in the Trump administration, from my experience. It was out of the blue. I was the president's campaign press secretary and people would think you'd have a ton of access to him and get to know him well, but I didn't. I mean, a few passing interactions, a few phone calls I receive that were short and "just good job on this or that."

I get this call. I'm with my daughter, she's in the backseat, my mom's driving and I'm trying to hold a pacifier in my daughter's mouth to make sure she doesn't scream as the president's calling. And I answered the phone and out of the blue, he asked me, "Do you want to be my White House press secretary?" And I said, "Yes, it would be the honor of my lifetime." And it ended up happening. And look, I think it's a job that God meant for me to take at a really tough time in American history. I argue it was one of the most aberrational times with COVID-19 and all that transpired over the summer and beyond.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, there's something about you that endeared the American people to you. There was something that was resonating from you. And I want to go to your first press conference, walking in like a den of lions in there, craziness. I mean, can you tell us what it was like?

Kayleigh McEnany: Yes. It was a rigorous preparation, no doubt about it. I was never a spokesperson or a press secretary that just would have talking points put in front of me and say them. I was someone who wanted to write the talking points, who wanted to ... I had a great team, amazing team. Two advisors in particular, Julia and Chad who did an awesome job, but together we would work for hours and hours and hours brainstorming the hardest possible question we could be asked and we pride ourselves on, usually we'd identify the hardest question that would be the toughest answer and it would never be asked. So we do pride ourselves on that kind of preparation, but more than that was the spiritual preparation for that moment. It's hard when you have people shouting questions at you, it's hard when a *Playboy* reporter in the back of the room, and

that's was his outlet, would scream at me as I'm walking off in a way that was derogatory, that was wrong.

I don't think any press secretary on any side of the aisle deserves to be treated in that fashion, but Sarah was, I was, but that's where grace under fire comes in. And I often refer to Ravi Zacharias who said, "Behind every question is a questioner with hurts, with predispositions, with reasons they ask the things they do." And when you look at people through the lens of humanity, it gives you the ability to know that Christ is beside you. The person you're speaking with is someone created by Christ whom Christ loves and created. And when you take that kind of outlook, you're given serenity because you're relying on someone bigger than you. And it is bigger than you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here and our special in studio guest, I guess, here at the Mabee Center backstage, Kayleigh, again, you just came off stage, 5,000 women out there. Kayleigh, you shared some stories while you were on stage that really resonated with those women about who Christ is to you, what He meant to you, especially in those high pressure moments. Take us into that just for a moment. I think our listeners would love to hear that from you.

Kayleigh McEnany: Yeah. I walked down the aisle as a young girl and became a Christian and gave my life to Christ. And later that evening, my dad prayed with me and I believe I became a Christian at that moment. However, I think it was many years later when it moved from my head something I really believe, to my heart, something I understood on a more personal relationship level. And it was when I was living in New York City, I was a young girl, just out of college, super lonely. New York City, they say it's a city of millions of people, but so you can never feel so lonely sometimes because it's just transactional. And you're surrounded by people, but sometimes you lack those intimate interactions, especially as a young girl, not knowing many people.

I was going through a bad breakup and I called my mom, she wasn't available. She wasn't by her phone. And I got home and I was laying in my bed and crying and it was just the lowest point. I felt so low. And then I got a call and it was from an unknown number I answered. And it said, "This is the Journey Church. We feel like we should pray for you. How can we pray for you?" And I don't know who that person was and they don't know that I'm sharing this story, but it was that moment that I believe Christ spoke to me via someone else. And ever since that moment, I've just known beyond a shadow of a doubt. I've always known He was real. But now I know He's a person beside me at all times of the day, especially in those darkest moments. And that's how Christ uses people. I say for such a time as this, whoever that person was, He used for such a time as this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As you share in the book, you go back into the story of Esther, but really you apply this, not just to your life, but to everyone's life. That we're all called into this moment and silence isn't an option. I mean, there's so much going on. I

think people are just done with everything. It's like, they're crying out and asking God to hear their prayers and to respond to from Heaven. Kayleigh, I wanted to ask you, what was it like working for President Trump? I mean, everybody knows that his kids love him very well, but what was it like being in the White House and close with him?

Kayleigh McEnany: He always kept you on your toes. There's no doubt about that. He always kept you on your toes. But look, I had such a great relationship with him. He a wonderful person. There are so many interactions I have that I remember as almost fatherly. One such interaction was, we were at a campaign rally. We're on Marine One. This is the helicopter you take after you leave Joint Base Andrews and you're landing on the White House lawn and the grass is blowing back. And this was actually before we took off, we're leaving on Marine One. And he says to me, "Why are you here?" And I'm like, "Well, I'm your press secretary." I thought it was an odd question. I got a little defensive. "I'm your press ... What do you mean, why am I here?"

And he said, "No, why are you here? It's Saturday night, do you have a husband, a daughter? Shouldn't you be with them?" And I said, "Well, as it stands, my husband might be pitching in a baseball game. He plays baseball," and he goes, "Your husband might be pitching, but you're here with me." And he turned around, he goes, "The Trump show, the greatest show on earth." And then all night he kept asking me, "How's your husband doing? How's your husband doing?" All night, like repeated refrain. And then we're landing after the rally and we're getting down on the grass, it's blowing back, the helicopter's landing. And he says, "Kayleigh, you know what? Next time don't come with me, send one of the young kids, go be with husband, go be with your daughter, go to my private dining room, put your feet up and watch your husband pitch." And I did not take him up on that offer. However, it meant a lot to me. And that's my memory of him, is just someone who's almost fatherly to me who expected excellence from all of his staff, but who was wonderful.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, I know a lot of our listeners would want to hear about your daughter, Blake and your husband, Sean. And how did you manage all that?

Kayleigh McEnany: A great support system. I am incredibly blessed that I had a mom who, I left my daughter during a global pandemic in Florida and went up to DC where I had an apartment. And I didn't know when I'd see her again, but I had a mom who would just, as much as she could fly her up to see me. I have a mother-in-law who helps enormously. My husband, of course, helping a ton now. But it's a family endeavor. I wouldn't be able to do it without them. And I'm really blessed because I know childcare is a hardship for a lot of women in this country. It's an issue I'm passionate about, but I'm blessed that I have this support system.

Dr. Tim Clinton: People are looking to you still a lot for your voice. What's Kayleigh have to say? You're showing up, relationship with *Fox* you're on all kinds of programs. What are the two or three most significant issues that people better get after?

Kayleigh McEnany: Yeah. Life and liberty. If you ask me why I'm a conservative, it's the issue of life. As a young girl, when I learned the partial birth abortion debate was going on when I was in high school, thereabouts and it struck me at my core, the notion that ... I literally would go on Google images as a young girl, because I wanted to see what this was. I think if this is something that needs to be legalized, you need to look at what is attempting to be legalized. And I would look at images and my stomach churned that there could be a fully formed baby and that there are some people in this country that thinks that fully formed baby could be exterminated on the way out of the womb. Life, I believe in, from the moment of conception, there have been 62 million babies killed in this country.

One fifth of the United States population after *Roe*, and that there were some people that you had a, I believe it was a five, four decision. You had four justices that were for legalizing the constitutionality of partial birth abortion, not just abortion, partial birth abortion. And you had five brilliant justices that could rule in that fashion. We're at a crossroads in this country. Abortion is now on the Supreme Court docket, the *Dobbs* case. And I hope to no longer remain in the company of North Korea and China and be one of eight countries that allows abortion after 20 weeks. It's a stain on America's reputation. So life. Second to that, religious liberty. But that issue in particular.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let's talk about the press, the censorship suppression issues, the fake news journey we've all been on, but it just seems like they want to tell people what to think now, too. They're going to censor you if they don't like what you believe. If you don't believe what they believe. And Kayleigh, how in the world did we get here? Why are we going in this direction? What's the insanity of this?

Kayleigh McEnany: Yeah. It is insane. How we got here, we live in such a culture that, exactly, you don't think like me, we cancel you. I think we got here by leaving Christ and leaving the ability to see one another as human beings, as people who make mistakes, who are flawed, who do trip up sometimes. And when we lose that ability to see one another as imperfect human beings that make mistakes, but can have redemption. That's the Christ story after all, that's the story of the new Testament is a sinful world and a Christ that redeemed that world. And we've lost sense of that story, that formed human history. And when you lose that, you lose the ability to see others as imperfect, much like yourself. And you become a mini God in essence, willing to cancel whomever you think should be canceled.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. They say in the election, the last election that evangelicals overwhelmingly voted for President Trump, it was like 81, 87%. If you look at modern day Christianity, there's a lot of words, buzzwords, that are now showing up like Christian nationalism, dominionism, deconstructing their faith and publications often, a few of them, on the liberal side, want to communicate that the evangelical world's beginning to splinter, or what have you. I don't see that. But what I do see is the media picking up on it a lot. And there is a lot of conversation about Christians and politics. What's your take on all that, and

what are you seeing? And what are you hoping for as we looked at the midterm elections coming up?

Kayleigh McEnany: So, Christians have to be involved in politics. My former pastor, his name was Pastor Ramage gave a sermon, it was two or three weeks before the 2016 election. And he didn't name parties or candidates or political figures, but he gave the principles of Christian voting. And one of those principles is Christians belong at the ballot box. Christians belong in a public conversation. We must be there. And the one thing that stuck out to me, and I share this with any of my Christian friends, I don't care how a candidate publicly speaks, what you think of their soaring rhetoric. The baseline principle for Christian voting is is this candidate for life?

And if the answer to that is no, you as a Christian should not vote for that candidate. And my pastor shared that with the congregation. And I think that's right at base, no matter what candidate it is, if the candidate does not stand for life, that as a Christian, you should not vote for that candidate. And that's always stuck with me. And I think that that's an animating principle to the religious right, to Catholics, to evangelicals. And I think many Christians vote in that same fashion and think in that same fashion.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Very recently, Kayleigh, politics are important because policies are important. And then they said policies are important because people are important. And if you take that flow there for a moment, it makes sense. They affect our everyday life. Look at the recent vote that came into the Senate. We're talking about a vote that was going to go and legalize abortion, what, up to birth. It's unconscionable to me even having these kind of conversations. How in the world can that happen in modern day culture? And voting party line. It's like, you're kidding me.

Kayleigh McEnany: Exactly, exactly. And good for Senator Joe Manchin, but it is scary. That's where Christian accountability must come in because we backtrack, partial birth abortion. We finally all agreed like, "No, this is not, this is a thing of the past. This is a scar on our history." And now we're back to still essentially talking about abortion until birth. So we've got to make our always heard. We've got to be loud and bold. And that's when being on Dr. Dobson's show it's apropos, I think, because I've had the pleasure of going to the Center for Christian Virtue in Ohio and going down to Georgia and Nebraska and seeing these family oriented organizations.

Virginia, I spoke in Virginia just before the Youngkin election to an organization there that they rally for life. They rally for liberty. And one organization I recently spoke at literally has a base right beside the state capital. I think this is the Nebraska group I spoke to and they're in the halls talking to legislatures about the importance of life and liberty each and every day. And it's because of Dr. Dobson these organizations even exist. And I've had the blessing of going to across the country and seeing the fruit of his great works.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, a lot of what we talked about today is in your new book, *For Such A Time As This: My Faith Journey Through The White House And Beyond*. Fascinating read, it really is. From the first page, right on through. A lot of pictures in there. A lot of stories about your time in the White House and your experiences with the president and everyone else who served there. But Kayleigh, the message that keeps coming back to me is at the end of the day, it's all about who we are in Christ. If we don't have that, we're not anchored, we're lost. Someone picks up the book. What was your real goal? What was your aim?

Kayleigh McEnany: To give the reader a window into my journey with Christ. Yes. I go through, it's partly memoir of my time in the White House. It's partly memoir of my life, my childhood, how I grew up, but it's mainly my relationship with Christ. And the one takeaway that I want people to have is I've had struggles. I've lived a very blessed life, but through the struggles, it's 2 Corinthians for 4:17. I write it, try to write it in almost every book I sign and it's, "For your light and momentary troubles are achieving for you a greater glory that will outweigh them all, so focus not on what is seen, but what is unseen for what is seen is temporary and what is unseen is eternal." So, whatever you're going through, health hardship, financial, marital hardship can use that for good. If you don't focus on what you're seeing in front of you, but focus on the eternal, which you can't see, but I promise you is there.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And who knows, but that you're called for such a time as this. You know that. Kayleigh, as we wrap up here, two words, I heard you say out there, courage and kindness, they resonated really well with the people. Give us your closing thoughts on that.

Kayleigh McEnany: I think there's no more important time than now. It's a frightening time in the world for Christians, this time is for the time for Christians to stand up and speak truth, but we must do so with grace. And so my message that I'd like to leave everyone with, is have grace under fire. And don't be scared of the fire because there's another in the fire with you standing next to you as that Hillsong song says, so share the truth and know that Christ is with you when you do and share it with grace.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kayleigh, if people want to get a copy of your new book *For Such A Time As This*, or they want to learn more about you, where should they go?

Kayleigh McEnany: So, Barnes and Noble, Walmart, Amazon, for those who buy on Amazon, or wherever books are sold. I think you'll enjoy it. And I hope it will bless you like it blessed me to write it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, if people want to follow you on social media, Kayleigh, where do they find you?

Kayleigh McEnany: It's @KayleighMcEnany. So very simple, hard to spell McEnany, but if you Google like MCE and Kayleigh, it'll come up, I promise.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Great. Hey, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the team at Family Talk, we salute you. We love the work that God's doing in and through you. And we love how you're courageous and kind. Thank you for joining us.

Kayleigh McEnany: Thank you, Dr. Clinton. It's been an honor to be here and to speak at two of your events in Lynchburg and Tulsa. It's been great. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: And that concludes an insightful conversation between our own Dr. Tim Clinton and former White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany here on Family Talk. Be sure to visit drjamesdobson.org to learn more about Kayleigh, her work and her latest book entitled *For Such A Time As This: My Faith Journey Through The White House And Beyond*. Again, our ministry web address is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825. Well, that's all the time we have for today. I'm Roger Marsh. Thank you so much for listening and please join us again next time right here for another addition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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