



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Gift of a Father's Love – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Tim Clinton & Dr. Dobson

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- Roger Marsh: When you hear the word “father,” what comes to mind? Do you think of a classic, upstanding TV dad like Andy Griffith or Ward Cleaver, or are you picturing the dad you had or wish you had growing up? No matter the man you're imagining, it proves that dads play a significant and irreplaceable role. Today on Family Talk, we'll hear about the impact of fathers on a child's life from two very knowledgeable dads. Our very own Dr. Dobson and Dr. Tim Clinton have decades of fathering experience. They each have two children and have been married to their loving wives for many years. They both are licensed counselors with a heart for supporting the institution of the family, and we're going to hear a lot from them about this issue of fatherhood. So, with so much content, let's dive right in to this uplifting edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.
- Dr. Dobson: Well, Tim, thanks for being with us again it's always a pleasure to have you here.
- Dr. Clinton: Fun to be with you, Dr. Dobson.
- Dr. Dobson: We want to talk today about fathers and the role they play, why they are so critically important, and what happens when dads are absent or fail to do the job that God intended, and what happens when they do it right. How does that effort to influence child growth and development play itself out as the years go on. I know that you had a great dad, he's gone on to be with the Lord and hasn't he?
- Dr. Clinton: Yes, my dad James E. Clinton, Pastor. He was more than a father. He was a great dad, Dr. Dobson. Pastor for nearly 60 years in Central Pennsylvania. He was a rural country pastor, had in his midlife and on three small country churches, kind of a circuit rider, back in those days. But my dad, you know what I loved about him so much was his presence in our life. He's probably the kindest man I've ever met in my whole journey.
- Dr. Dobson: I'm a pastor's son too only my dad was an evangelist much of the time, and he was gone, and I'll talk about that in a minute. But many PKs, as we're called, grew up resenting their parents and their dads especially because it's such an easy thing for a pastor to justify working all the time. There's always somebody

in the hospital, there's always somebody waiting for him at the door wanting counseling or wanting to ask a spiritual question or to even lead people to the Lord and all those are worthy things.

But it has been traditional, I think, especially 50, 75 years ago, for pastors to believe, they honestly believed if they poured themselves totally into the church and to God's work, that He would take care of their homes and He would make up for their absence in their relationship with their children. I wish I could say that were true. It's not true. The Lord still lays that responsibility on us, and your dad somehow worked his way around it and saved time for you. How did he do it?

Dr. Clinton: I agree with you. I think most ministry leaders struggle balancing that time-work commitment to ministry and their families. And sometimes I think churches do that to our pastors. The demands that they allow him to be under need to, I think, be assessed and certainly dialed back some. And pastors I think need help with that, they do. They need people to speak into their life and say, "Don't do that."

Dr. Dobson: I've spoken to many groups of clergy men and clergy women. And I have said to them, "I recommend that you go to your pulpit and you say, 'I want you to know something. You will not be able to find me on Monday. It's my day off and it's a time I'm spending with my family. And there are other people that you can talk to, but I'm not apologizing to you for being gone on that day, I'm telling you to go and do likewise. I'm saying we all must reserve time and effort and energy for those that we love at home.'"

And my dad did it, I'm telling you, we lived in one period of my life in Beaumont, Texas, which is not far from Galveston. And on Monday, we'd get up and drive to Galveston and we'd spend the day on the beach together. And one time my dad even got a hotel room in our little town of San Benito, Texas. And we were there playing games and being together and eating together all day and nobody knew where we were. He was worn out and he needed to be with us. I think pastors have to just take that stand. If people don't like it, that's tough.

Dr. Clinton: My dad - I guess we had a unique situation - my dad, while he was a rural country pastor had a lot of demands on him, to supplement his income he drove the school bus. And that meant for where we lived that he picked up the students who lived in the rural country roads and actually brought them out to meet the yellow school bus, okay? And that meant for us as a family that my dad took us to school every morning and picked us up from the yellow school bus every afternoon. My dad loved not only his eight children, I have seven other siblings in our family that I grew up with.

Dr. Dobson: Really?

Dr. Clinton: Yes, five sisters, two other brothers. But he loved all those children on that school bus. He believed he had a ministry, a unique ministry God had given to him just with the school bus ministry. And I can tell you, I bet I could line them up and they'd tell you story after story about my dad, how crazy he was, but how much he loved the Lord. I remember when my dad passed away, Dr. Dobson, in DuBois, Pennsylvania, I went to the funeral home and stood in line for nearly six hours. In DuBois, Pennsylvania, that's a rural part of the country in Pennsylvania, for nearly six hours shaking hands with people from all over those hills up there who wanted just to take a moment and say, "Do you know what your dad meant to me?" And that was moving to me.

Dr. Dobson: And with eight kids, how did he find time for you? I mean, how do you spread yourself that thin, did he do that? What did he do with you?

Dr. Clinton: My dad, the memories I have of my dad, especially when I was young was he would be available to us. He took us swimming. We didn't have swimming pools back in that day, we swam in the "crick" as we say in Pennsylvania. Some say creek, it was the "crick."

Dr. Dobson: It's "crick" and "creek" and "branch" and "stream." You can tell what part of the country you're from by-

Dr. Clinton: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: ... the name you have for that.

Dr. Clinton: Those were the moments. See, Paul Tournier once said this, and I believe this, "The busy preoccupied parent misses many a cue or an opportunity to have influence in a son or daughter's life." What I loved about my dad was his constant presence. His ministry, Dr. Dobson, he made sure that every time we were going to church there was always a young people's activity. He had eight kids and they had to do something with him. And we had a ball team on Friday nights, we played softball and have the big bonfires. And those were the days that I grew up in.

Dr. Dobson: Was he there?

Dr. Clinton: My dad was always there. He played ball with us, he taught us how to play ball, he taught us how to fish, he taught us how to hunt. He loved the outdoors because he saw it as a bonding time. It wasn't really about hunting, it wasn't really about fishing, it was about us. As well-

Dr. Dobson: What did you learn from that? Did you ever run a carpool taking your kids to school?

Dr. Clinton: Dr. Dobson, I made a commitment with Megan and Zach that I was not going to allow my work, my ministry to interfere with my relationship with them. I

wanted to give them what my dad gave me. I promised myself I'd be at every ball game. If I could coach them, I'd coach them till I couldn't coach them anymore, which made sure I was dialed in with them. I just had to. And the gifts at night my dad had devotions with us, I love to read to my kids at night. And I'm not bragging, I'm just talking about the gift my dad gave to me, I wanted to give to my own kids. I would hope that if Megan and Zach came on here that they could just tell story after story, after story, Dr. Dobson. You know why? Because the gift that my dad gave to me, the gifts he gave to me with his presence - not just physical; emotional - they stayed late into his life.

Right before my dad passed away, the memories I have of my dad, they were, "Hey, Tim, come and get me and let's go to McDonald's and get one of them hot fudge sundaes. I like it when I get to put some of those nuts on top of it, let's just go for a ride and see if we can look for deer and we'll just talk." There was never a moment Dr. Dobson, that I didn't talk to him by phone, almost every day, that he didn't pray for me before we hung up the phone.

Dr. Dobson: Oh my goodness, what a heritage.

Dr. Clinton: Dr. Dobson, it's fascinating, a new research on play therapy with children. We're learning that when you're working with kids, you don't do traditional therapy or counseling, and it's a misnomer to think it's play when we talk about play therapy. What it really means is that you enter into their world. And as you enter into their world and they enter into your world, you begin to see their heart, the longings, the yearnings, the cry of their soul and more. And I think that's why, I mean it grieves me so much when I think about fatherless children, for example, even kids who have a dad who may be physically there but he's not emotionally connected with them. That father thirst, that father hunger, that pours out of them because the gifts of a father, regardless of what society may portray dad as, a dad matters so much. His presence or the lack of it has profound influence in the life of his son and/or daughter.

Dr. Dobson: Tim, we're bringing tears to the eyes of a lot of people saying, "I wanted that. I longed for that, I ached for it. I reached for my dad and he wasn't there for me and I wanted what you had with your dad." I still have women, especially, who come up to me and say, "You were my dad." I've never met 'em, I've never seen 'em. And they say, "I thought of you as my dad."

Dr. Clinton: One of the individuals who works very closely with me didn't have a relationship with his dad. And my dad became like his dad. He wept so much when my dad died. He just said, "Tim, your dad, he never made you feel like you weren't the only person in the whole world. When you walked into his world there was something about your dad that made you feel like you're his son or something. He loved you that much."

Dr. Dobson: You had lunch yesterday with man like this. He's become a great friend of mine, his name is Smithbaker.

Dr. Clinton: Yes, John Smithbaker.

Dr. Dobson: John Smithbaker. He's been here, but his dad was completely absent. And he talked here with tears in his eyes about how he longed for that and would have given anything for a dad to put his arm around him. Did you talk about that yesterday at lunch?

Dr. Clinton: We did.

Dr. Dobson: Did he?

Dr. Clinton: He just talked about the father hurt inside of him and what it was like, and you're right, he had tears in his eyes yesterday. He said, "Tim, because of that," he said, "I have made a commitment to mentor young boys, young men, and try to find someone." It's like James 1 passage where it says, "Pure religion before the father is to visit the widows and the orphans in their affliction." And he uses the outdoors as a way of training men, a lot of men in the church who don't know what to do, here's a ministry opportunity where they match up, pair up with a young man who don't have a dad and they teach them how to enjoy the outdoors and to participate in that young man's life so that this man can be a model of Christ in that young man's life. I love what John Smith Baker's doing. It's called Fathers in the Field.

Dr. Dobson: It is.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah. And think about what could happen in the church if men would take up that kind of responsibility to just mentor one or two or three boys and just say, "I want to be a dad to you as best way I can. I want God to use me to help you know that you're loved." And that you can develop a sense of mastery. "I'll talk to you about how to manage that testosterone that's in your body and all that craziness that you want to do. I'll climb trees with you, I'll help you change the oil in a car. I'll teach you how to change a tire." You imagine what would happen?

Dr. Dobson: Tim, I just talked about the woman who's out there who recognizes something that was missing in her life and how she feels about what we're saying. Let's flip that around and talk to the man who is saying, "Hey, you guys, it sounds good but I have no idea what in the world to do. My dad was not there for me, I've never seen it. It's never been modeled for me and I'm not even sure I like kids very well, and I don't know how to talk to them. Tell me what to do."

Dr. Clinton: There is some encouraging news out there. I think a lot of the younger fathers are stepping up to the plate and wanting to get involved. I studied this fathering thing a few years back and I learned a piece from a guy named Ken Canfield years ago.

Dr. Dobson: I remember him.

Dr. Clinton: Headed up the National Center for Fathering. Ken said, "Tim remember this acronym, 'I CAN' as a father." And I thought, "Okay." I means involvement. First of all, it starts by just getting involved with them. Go hang out with your kids, spend time with them. It may be awkward upfront, but that's okay, just get started and ask them what they want to do. Don't tell them what you're going to do or what you want them to do with you, go be a part of their world. Start connecting there, that involvement piece. C was consistency. Ken said, "Be consistent in what you're doing." I mean, really to me that means multiple times each week do something with your children, right?

Dr. Dobson: Right.

Dr. Clinton: A, really about awareness. Get aware of everything that's going on, learn everything you can about your child's world. Who are their friends? I've seen some studies out there that say two of the most healthy indicators of children are, believe it or not - these are discriminating factors - two most common things that pop up in all the research, whether or not a parent knows the name of the child's school teacher, and the second one is whether or not they ate dinner together. Those two key factors, and both of them communicate one thing really clear, that you know what's going on in that child's world. If you're too busy, too preoccupied, too caught up in all the demands of your own world, that won't happen. And then the N word, I can. Involve, consistent, aware, and then nurturing. That's just simply about being loving. Love on your kids.

Dr. Dobson: It never stops. Really you'll never stop being a parent.

Dr. Clinton: Ever.

Dr. Dobson: Because you're the only dad or the only mom that that child will ever have.

Dr. Clinton: You never stop being a parent. I waited for my dad to call me pretty much every night.

Dr. Dobson: He called you every night.

Dr. Clinton: I waited for my dad to call me.

Dr. Dobson: How old were you?

Dr. Clinton: I'm talking about right up to his death, I just waited for him to call me just to say, "Hey, Tim, thinking about you. Anything happening today, anything I can pray for?" And I tell you it was not long before he passed away, I went through a really tough time, really tough time. I had gotten myself into a situation and it was grim. I remember my dad praying earnestly, and out of nowhere this one afternoon he called me and he said, "Tim, God told me this is done. It's over now, it's going to be okay." And I said, "Dad, do you really think so?" And he

said, "Tim, I was alone with the Lord, and He gave me peace and I wanted to call you and tell you that it's done. You're going to be okay now."

Dr. Dobson:

Still encouraging you.

Dr. Clinton:

Still encouraging me. You know what I did from that phone call? I hung up, I prayed with earnest and I believed it. And you know what? God took that away that very day, that issue.

Dr. Dobson:

My goodness.

Dr. Clinton:

Well, I gotta say-

Dr. Dobson:

What a priceless gift from a father.

Dr. Clinton:

That's why when he was gone, I felt like a piece of me left. But then I realized, one of my last conversations with my dad, we went to a Smokey Bones restaurant down in Florida, and I knew that his days were few. And we had alone time, sitting across the table and we were talking and he said to me, "Tim, you know you and I are different here for a moment. God's called us to ministry. Let me say something to you, son. Hear me, my ministry started with my family and it's ended with my family. Remember that." And then he said this, "If you serve God with your whole heart, I promise you Tim, you'll be blessed." And one last thing: he said, "It's because of Him," meaning God, "our relationship with Him." He said, "Son, I'll see you again."

And then I got that phone call, it's the call you don't want to get. And my sister said, "Tim, dad is in the hospital and he's going septic and he's going to die, and he's going to call you." And my phone rang and it was my dad. "Tim it's dad." "Yeah, dad." "I just wanted to call you and tell you I love you and I'm going to the Kingdom of our God." And I said, "Dad, I know that. You've taught us that since we were little." I said, "Are you okay?" He said, "I'm doing okay." I said, "Tell you what, I'm going to leave right now, I'm coming. I'm going to get there to see you." And he said, "I look forward to seeing you."

I jumped on a plane right away. Julie and the kids drove home and I got there in time to get in the hospital room with my dad. I remember coming into the room and said, "Dad, I'm here." Grabbed his hand. I said, "You okay?" He said, "Oh, I'm just seeing little helicopters flying around." I said, "Have you seen mother yet?" He said, "Oh no, not yet. But Tim, I want to see her so bad." And he started fading, held his hand. That was the hand that held mine for a long time through a lot of stuff.

And later on that night they transferred him over to another hospital, Virginia Baptist Hospital. And my brother, Tom, was with him and Julie and the kids got home late. They came up to see him but he was basically unconscious. He'd respond a little bit, if you talked to him he'd squeeze your hand. And Tom said

"I'm going to stay with him overnight." And I said, "I'll stay." And Tom said, "No, just let me stay, Tim, I want to be with him. I'll call you if there's any issues."

About six in the morning I get a phone call and Tom said, "Tim, if you want to see dad before he dies you better get here right away." I said, "Seriously?" He said, "I'm telling you, get in the car and drive as fast as you can and get here." I jumped in the car. I drove like a wild man with my four-ways on. I pulled into that hospital underneath this pregnancy ward, it was like an overhang and I put my truck up into park. And I said, "God, this is the day." I said, "This is the day." I said, "Today I've never wanted to see it happen." And in that moment I said, "God, what do you think, and what am I going to do?" And He said, "Run."

I jumped out of the truck, I ran as fast as I could. Up through that hospital I ran all the way down that hallway. Dad was in the last room on the right. I burst open the door and Tom said, "Tim, grab his hand right now, he's dying right now." And I grabbed the hand of my dad. I said, "Dad, I'm here, I'm here." And it was like he knew I was there. And I just started praying Psalm 23 over him. I said, "I love you, dad." And God took him home.

And I went home and I pulled in the driveway and I walked in and had to talk to my kids about grandpa not being there anymore. And all I could say to them was this. I said, "Papa C's gone home. Now he's in heaven with nanny C now." And I said this to them, "If I came half the dad to you that he's been to me, you'll be blessed, I promise you. I'll do everything I can."

And every night, and I got to tell you, I got a text from my son, Zach, recently and he said, "Dad," this was for Father's Day. He said, "One thing that I really love about you is you even pray in front of me that God would make you a great dad." And I'm just saying to all those men out there, It's never too late, never too late to make a decision to be a great father. I don't care what the relationship is like, I don't care how broken it is, you can make a decision that you're going to be involved in the lives your kids. Give them that gift.

Dr. Dobson:

Even if you accomplish that, you will be a successful man. It doesn't depend on how much money you made or how much property you own or what you accomplished, otherwise, writing books and all the other things you can do. If you are a great dad, you have been successful because the priorities start there. It's job one. And from that relationship comes teaching about what we believe and about Jesus Christ. That's what my dad provided for me, and I had my own version of what you just described. I jumped on a plane. I was in San Antonio, Texas speaking to pediatricians and I got word that my father was not going to live through the night. And I ran to the plane and I got there and all the way to Kansas City. And I did get to see him and in fact, he lived a while after that, but I had a similar experience. And they say when you're saying goodbye to a father, if he was close to you, you feel like a little boy again. Did you feel that way? I felt like a child-

Dr. Clinton:

Absolutely.

Dr. Dobson: ... at the bedside of my dad.

Dr. Clinton: You never outgrow your dad.

Roger Marsh: Very, very thoughtful and a somber way to end this edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to Dr. Dobson and Dr. Tim Clinton's heartwarming conversation today. Now they have more advice and more stories about the impact of a father's love to share, so tune in again tomorrow. In the meantime, be sure to check out the many resources we have for fathers at drjamesdobson.org. On our resource pages you'll find helpful books, digital downloads, radio programs, and much more. Simply search for "Dads" on our resources page to tap into these meaningful tools.

One resource I'd like to highlight for you here is the broadcast set called What it Means to be a Godly Man. This radio show collection challenges men to be godly role models and encourages them to stand for righteousness. In the midst of this hostile culture toward masculinity, we thought it was time to celebrate fathers, so be sure to request this popular collection by visiting today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org, or if you prefer you can contact us by phone at (877) 732-6825.

As we close I want to remind you that Family Talk is completely listener-supported. As you browse our website and enjoy our programs, please consider how you can partner with us financially. Your generosity allows us to continue fighting for the institution of the family. Every prayer and every donation is greatly appreciated. You can pledge your gift online at drjamesdobson.org. That's D-R jamesdobson.O-R-G, or you can call us at (877) 732-6825. Well that's all the time we have for today, be sure to tune in again tomorrow for the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dr. Tim Clinton celebrating fatherhood. That's coming your way on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, thanks for listening.

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