



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Controlling Your Tongue

Guest(s): R.T. Kendall

Air Date: May 14, 2021

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

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, hello everyone, and welcome to Family Talk, the listener supported broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. In James 3:5-6 we read, "The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire." Again in Proverbs 18:21, "The tongue has the power of life and death." God has given us a very powerful thing in our ability to communicate, and as Christians, we need to be wise stewards of this gift. Our guest today here on Family Talk will be discussing the power of the tongue, what we can do to wield it in a godly way, and how to begin to heal wounds that come from the misuse of our own words as well as the words of others.

Dr. R.T. Kendall served as senior pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for over 25 years. He holds a PhD from Oxford University, also a Doctorate of Divinity, and has written over 60 books. Dr. Dobson met Dr. Kendall in 1992, and the two men have been friends and colleagues ever since. Today, Dr. Dobson will be talking with his good friend about the book, *Controlling the Tongue*. They'll also discuss the specific power and importance of a parent's communication with their children. Now, even though today's broadcast was recorded in 2013, its timeless wisdom is as practical and helpful for every Christian even today. Let's listen in right now.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. R.T. Kendall is back with us. He's been on the program here, Family Talk, and every one of those discussions have been insightful and interesting and I just love to have him come and be with us. You were the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years. You have written nearly 60 books. You speak all over this country. You are speaking more and are frankly more in demand in Christendom now than you were when you had been a pastor for 25 years.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: It is actually true. Here I am 77, and I can't take the engagements that I get offered, and publishers queue up wanting to book. I'm just very blessed that at my age, that people still want me.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you still have important things to say. And the most recent message of yours that we aired was greatly interesting to me because it also relates to my book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. And it was a sermon that you gave at Michael Youssef's church, the Church of The Apostles in Atlanta. And you sent me a tape of it and I loved it, called "Totally Forgiving God". It's those situations where, God disappoints us sometimes. And then we get angry at him and it's learning to forgive Him.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, that's the third of a trilogy. You are very aware of my book, *Total Forgiveness*, because you kindly interviewed me for that. And then there was a sequel to my book, *Total Forgiveness* called, *Totally Forgiving Ourselves*. And then a friend of mine suggested I write a book called, *Totally Forgiving God*. I wonder what people will think when they see the title, but they won't read the book. I want to make it clear. God has done nothing wrong. He's pure. He's just. He is guiltless. But because He could stop things that we don't understand, but sometimes doesn't, we have to let Him off the hook and say, it's okay.

And that's why I wrote that book, hoping to set people free. And I think I had a head start writing that book because your own book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, we're addressing the same issue. And you know, one of the greatest honors of my life, not only meeting you, Jim, but you asked me to write the foreword to your book, *When God-*

Dr. James Dobson: I dedicated it to you also.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: You dedicated to me, and then asked me to write the foreword to the new edition. And so we're on the same page. And here I am with you again today. And I just pray that our books will honor God and encourage a lot of people.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that message that you gave that day of, "Totally Forgiving God", and you just said there's also reference to it in my book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, I think that is the most criticized statement I made in that book because I've had theologians write me or call me and say, "God doesn't need forgiving." No He doesn't. But we need to forgive when you've lost a child, you've been at the Children's Hospital and you prayed so diligently. And that child goes on to be with the Lord. There is something there you've got to deal with.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, God can cope with the criticism. And we are told Psalm 142:2, "Pour out your complaint to God." And this is where we are, where people are. And that's what we've tried to do is address their hurt and say, look, you love God. You don't always understand what He does. And the great saints have had to face this. And even Abraham felt betrayed. God says you will inherit the land of Canaan, yet Stephen says he didn't get one foot of it. Do you think what's going on here? And Hebrews 11, it says, "All these did what they did by faith, but not one of them got what was promised." What's going on?

And it's an aspect of God's ways that some theologians are afraid to address and these things need to be addressed. And at the same time, we affirm the God of the Bible as being pure, holy, faultless.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you and I weighed in where angels fear to tread, but you have now published a book by that title, *Totally Forgiving God*.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Thank you for kindly mentioning it. I appreciate it.

Dr. James Dobson: I also want to talk to you today about controlling your tongue. And that's the title of another of your books. And we went out looking for that and couldn't find it.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, I didn't know it was out of print until you told me that. So far as I know you can go on amazon.com and see if you can get it.

Dr. James Dobson: Why is it so hard to control the tongue?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: I know this, it's so hard that James said, if we do control it, we're perfect. He said, we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone is never at fault, what he says, he's a perfect man. Now there's perfection, and there's perfection. If it's sinless perfection, it's not here, because according to James, we do have trouble in this area. And I don't know if anybody on the face of the earth has done it perfectly except Jesus. He was perfect. Do you know? We all I suppose have verses that we're not very happy with. Can I give you what is my most unfavorite verse? I think I just coined a word, unfavorite-

Dr. James Dobson: I know what it is. I'm anxious to hear your comment on it.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: I'll tell you. If God would ask me, "R.T., is there any verse in the Bible you'd like for me to leave out?" Well, I might have more than one, but here's the top of the list Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, "I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they've spoken."

Dr. James Dobson: Every idle thought. I mean-

Dr. R.T. Kendall: I mean, I don't like that. I don't like that at all.

Dr. James Dobson: How does that fit with grace?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, look, I think if you were to take that verse seriously and I try to do it, I think it would help us to control our tongues. If we realize that this is going to be broadcast on the day of judgment for everybody to hear, I think it would have some influence on us. I think that's one of the reasons Jesus gave it, so we would watch what we say.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And we have a hard time doing that. I mean, all of us. There're things that I've said that I wished that I could take back. Interesting thing is they're eternal. Once you have spoken them, you can never get them back in your mouth. And you criticize a spouse, you say something mean when you're angry, that woman or that man, or that child will remember that the rest of their lives and the more it hurt, the more they will recall it.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, James said one little spark can cause a forest fire. And you make an unguarded comment, you say to your wife... I've said things to Louise and as soon as I said it, "oh, I wish I hadn't said that, honey. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." But it's too late. I've said it. And that's the thing. We all make unguarded comments. And so James, in the third chapter of this little book talks about it. He says, "The tongue can no man tame." That's pretty strong. And people say, "Well, you can do it with the help of the Holy Spirit." I said, "Yes. And I've prayed for help all the time. It seems like sometimes the Holy Spirit doesn't help me." I think there's one time. One time you can be sure you'll get it right. You know what it is?

Dr. James Dobson: What's that?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Jesus said, "If you're called before Kings or you're called to testify, take no thought what you shall say. And you will be given in that hour what to say." I've had that happen maybe once when I addressed, well, I guess it's okay to say, I was called in to meet Yasser Arafat. And I took that promise, Matthew 10:20, "Don't take any thought of what you will say." And what should have been a 15 minute perfunctory visit went to an hour and 45 minutes. And all I did is talk to him about Jesus. I went back to see him five times. Every time I would go in there, I would claim Matthew 10:20.

And those are days that I think maybe God gave me words. I don't regret anything I said to him because I was under that promise and I'll use that same verse. What I will say, "Lord don't let me make a mistake today with this person or that." I didn't have the same grace. It's a mystery. Controlling the tongue, I think is the most difficult thing in the whole world.

Dr. James Dobson: In one of Hillary Clinton's books, she told a story about her relationship with her father, which was not good. And I may have shared this in the past, but let me do it again. She was a very bright student from elementary school, on through law school and made very good grades. And she could not get any kind of affirmation from her father. He just either didn't see her or always found the wrong thing to say. And on this occasion she brought her report card home. She may have been in sixth grade or the eighth grade. I don't know. And she brought it in and she showed it to him and it had all A's except one B+. And he looked at it and he said, "That must be a really easy school." She remembers that. That's what I'm saying. They remember these comments. Keep your mind focus on what is uplifting to your child. Don't go shooting off your mouth with these-

- Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, I can match that story. I came home with all A's and two B's and my father, instead of saying, that's good, that all A's, he said, "Son, if you work a little harder, next time you can have all A's." And the next time I got a report card, I got all A's, but there were three A minuses. And what do you suppose my dad picked up on? And, and he was a good man. I mean, I love my dad and the greatest influence on my life. But for that reason, I never felt quite accepted, that I could always do better. And I'm ashamed to say, I think has had an effect on my relationship with God. I think sometimes Lord, are you really pleased with me? And so words that are spoken to us when we're children, we just never forget.
- Dr. James Dobson: A woman gave me a paper that she had written to her teacher. I don't know how old she was at the time, but she really wanted to tell that teacher that she loved her and appreciated her hard work on her behalf. And so she wrote this entire page to the teacher and gave it to her. The teacher corrected the grammar and where she had spelled, you're, Y-O-U apostrophe R-E. She corrected it to say, your, Y-O-U-R. She nitpicked in that way. The message was from her heart and the woman took advantage of that opportunity and to correct her grammar. I mean, talk about losing sight of what you're there for. She missed it completely.
- Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well. Yeah. The third chapter of James it's the tongue chapter. 1 Corinthians 13 is the love chapter. Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter. This is the tongue chapter. The question, which comes first, the chicken or the egg, James talks about wisdom. Is it wisdom that will help you to control the tongue or is by controlling the tongue, will you be given wisdom? Do you have an answer to that?
- Dr. James Dobson: I have no idea. You're the theologian.
- Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, it's hard to say, but I know this, I define wisdom as having the presence of the mind of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit always knows what to do next. And I think if we develop the kind of relationship with the Holy Spirit, that we don't grieve him by any bitterness, by any unforgiveness, we will know what to say and we're given wisdom. And I think if you push me, I would say, wisdom will help you to control the tongue because wisdom being the presence of the mind of the Spirit, and you're going to know what to say.
- Dr. James Dobson: Let's get practical with this. You've got a husband and wife who are emotional human beings. We all are. They irritate each other. They get on each other's nerves. And then there are flashpoints that occur. And one gets really hurt, really wounded by something. And most of us will want to lash back. We want to hurt in return. We want to take advantage of our opportunity to pay back that one that we love. And so we come up with the meanest thing we can think of and say it. How do you help a person keep his mouth shut?
- Dr. R.T. Kendall: I say, when I preached my sermon, "Total Forgiveness", if the husband and the wife would both stop pointing the finger, any marriage can be healed by

sundown. If we would stop pointing the finger. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Love keeps no record of wrongs." Why do we keep records? Well, we keep records to prove we've paid. And so the husband will say to the wife, "I will remember that."

And two days later he does, he quotes back what she said. The way forward, Jim, we tear up that record. We burn it. It doesn't exist. And if we were to tear up the record of wrongs, then there's nothing to point the finger for. And that way the Holy Spirit moves in. There's no bitterness. There's no anger, no need to point the finger. And that is the way forward for controlling the tongue.

I made a fairly major decision a number of years ago when it indicated that my new theology would be a little different from my dad's and my father now thought that I'd broken with God. And I said, "No, dad, I haven't broken with God." And for years I did everything in the world to try to get his approval. Many years later, I never will forget it. In 1978 on a train from Edinburgh, Scotland coming into Kings Cross, London. My dad looked at me and said, "Son, I'm proud of you. God has been with you." I waited all my life to hear that, he didn't realize what it meant to me then.

Dr. James Dobson: How easy that would have been?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Yeah. I think his dad didn't affirm him. Moses was told that the sin of the fathers will count down to the third and fourth generation. And we're all products of damaged emotions in our parents. And I look at that my dad didn't get approval from his father. And so we pass it on and what we need to do as best as we can is to learn how to affirm our children and to love them and make them feel good and important. But I haven't been the perfect parent either.

Dr. James Dobson: The opportunity to repair the damage like that is so easy to do. It's easy to do. It just has to have conviction. And you just sit down and say, "I've thought that through and I was off base. You are a great son. You're a great student. And why I didn't tell you that, I just don't know, but I'm doing it now." I mean, what that contributes to the wounded person, it cannot be overstated.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: One of the most encouraging things I've ever heard you say that we can so easily correct things and make it so much better. My son, I call him T.R., I am R.T. I was named after my father's favorite preacher, Dr. R.T. Williams. And I named my son R.T., but we call him T.R. After 25 years in London, I was asked by Billy Graham to do a program for ministers. And they asked me questions and they had a whole hour, it was on video and they came down to 59 minutes.

As we got one minute left, they had asked me questions on what's it like for a minister in London? How do you prepare your sermons? What is your view of this? Then they said, we got one minute left. How should we use it? Tell us about your being a father, your role as a father. I said, "Stop. Please don't film this because on this, I have been a failure. For 25 years, I've put sermon

preparation first, thinking I was putting God first. I put the church first thinking I was putting God first. I now believe if I'd put my family first, I would have preached just as well, but I can't get those years back. But what I've tried to do is to say to my son and my daughter, Melissa, I let you down. I put the church first and I'm sorry. And I think I cannot say that enough." And for you to say that you could say these things to make them feel better. And I think that they do like to hear this and to undo what you've done-

Dr. James Dobson: And they will remember that for the rest of their lives too.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: I'm sure of it. There is a verse that says... There's a whole chapter on it in my book, *Controlling the Tongue*, that encourages me, no end. It's where the Apostle Paul said, "If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God. If we're in our right mind, it is for you." And he's talking about what he has just said, should I have said this or not? And oftentimes I'll say, "Oh, should I have said that? Maybe I shouldn't have." And Paul's not saying whether it should or shouldn't. He just said, if we are out of our mind, it's for the sake of God. What that means is God will just say, "Look, leave it with me."

You've said things you wish you hadn't said. You messed up and you think, oh, if I could turn the clock back one minute or one hour or 10 years. Paul says, leave it with God. Here's the greatest word, "All things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to His purpose." God will make our mistakes even look good. The fact that it works together for good doesn't mean it was right. But God can do that even when we mess up in what we say. And now you might like to know, both of our children living for the Lord. My son, TR, works full time with me. Melissa, she just lives down the road from us. God restores the years which the locusts have eaten. For those of us who have messed up and haven't been perfect parents. Now, you probably haven't been an imperfect parent like me, but-

Dr. James Dobson: Are you kidding?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: But it's wonderful. Paul says, if we've messed up, God will say, "Leave it with me."

Dr. James Dobson: Can I answer my own question that I ask you about the relationship between a husband and wife? I like the simple guide of using I-messages versus you-messages. When I say to you, "you just like your mother, you irritate me so much. You haven't got a brain in your head." Those are you-messages. But let me tell you about I-messages. "You know, it hurts me when you say things like that. And I was wounded when you said it and I probably overreact." Those are I-messages. Keep the focus on your feelings and not an attack and something that assaults the self-worth of the other. We're out of time. You know what-

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Where has the time gone?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I don't know, but it's gone. And I appreciate your flying to be here today.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, God must think a lot of me to let me have you as a friend.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you R.T.

Roger Marsh: In Psalm 141:3 we read, "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord. Keep watch over the door of my lips." What an appropriate prayer for all of us. Because careless words can cause so much damage. But as Dr. RT, Kendall has emphasized today here on Family Talk, God has grace and forgiveness for even our most hurtful words. All we have to do is ask Him for it. Now sometimes too, we also might need to ask forgiveness from the people whom we've wronged, reaching out and saying, I'm sorry for a careless comment or an angry outburst, might not take the words back, but it can be a great step toward healing in a relationship. Now to learn more about Dr. R.T. Kendall, his ministry and his books, please visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. Again, that web address is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

Remember, you can also give us a call anytime at (877) 732-6825. We are here to answer your questions about the James Dobson family Institute and the broadcast ministry of Family Talk. We can recommend resources for you, even pray with you. Again, that number is (877) 732-6825. Finally, we hope you had a great Mother's Day this past Sunday. We are celebrating moms all month long here on Family Talk. Be sure to go to drjamesdobson.org to sign up for our Empowering Moms Series and to order our special Celebrating Moms CD as well. Thanks so much for making Family Talk a part of your day. We've been producing biblical family focused programs for over a decade now, and it's all thanks to listeners just like you. From Dr. and Mrs. Dobson and all of the staff here at Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a great weekend.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi everyone. This is Dr. Tim Clinton here for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. The news comes in all kinds of shapes, sizes and formats these days. But how do you cut through the noise and get to the heart of the matters that affect your family? Come to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and sign up for Dr. Dobson's monthly newsletter. You'll find clarity on tough issues, encouragement for your everyday life and trusted principles to help you build strong, healthy, connected families. Go to drjamesdobson.org. Sign up today. That's drjamesdobson.org.