



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Fathers and Sons: Getting Back to the Basics - Part 1

Guest(s) Dr. Tim Clinton

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome, everyone, to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and Family Talk has been producing great biblical content for 12 years now. And it's all thanks to the support of you, our listeners. To find out how you can support us financially, the ministry of Family Talk and the JDFI, simply go to our website at drjamesdobson.org. Today we're going to be featuring the first half of a conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and his cohost, Dr. Tim Clinton, as they discuss the importance of the father-son relationship.

Dr. Dobson and Dr. Clinton have both had successful careers in various fields, but both of them at one point in their lives came to a moment where they had to decide whether their vocation or their family was going to take priority for their time. They both ultimately chose their families, and they have been blessed because of it. This conversation between Dr. Dobson and Dr. Clinton was recorded back in 2018, so you will hear a couple of dated references, of course. However, the core of their message is still extremely relevant even today. Let's go now to today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson, and you're listening to James Dobson Family Institute. Today we're going to go back and talk about fundamentals, one of the basics. We're going to talk about the crucial relationship between fathers and their sons. We'll talk about wives and daughters later, and in fact we have many, many times, but today we're focusing primarily on that critical relationship again, between dads and boys and later dads and grown sons. All the way through life, that relationship is extremely important.

Now with us today is my colleague, Dr. Tim Clinton. He is part of us here at JDFI, and it's always good to have him here. We share so much in common. In fact, I don't think I've ever come across any of the basic things that I believe that do not burn within Tim Clinton as well. So Tim, glad to have you back. This has been an interesting summer for you, hasn't it?

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's been a fun summer, and it's always great to be back in studio with you. There's so much energy and excitement around here. I marvel at the work of God in and through this organization. And doctor, thank you for your faithfulness.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, I saw a letter from a ministry just last week, where they were literally begging for money and threatening to go off the air if they couldn't get the money. And I understand there are times of great need for a ministry, and sometimes you have to express them, but there is such energy here at JDFI, we don't have time to wring our hands and think about things. We're going a hundred miles an hour in all directions and you're part of what's taking place here.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, I think it's a special season. I really believe that there's a message that's resonating with our listeners. I think people of faith across the country, they're finding their voice again. There's a stirring, maybe even a little bit of an uprising.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, I believe that. I really think after the depression of the last eight or 10 years, people are starting to say, maybe this country's going to survive and maybe Christianity has a future. I'm hearing things I didn't hear five years ago.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I couldn't agree more. I think the Lord has heard the cry and the prayers of the people.

Dr. James Dobson: That's it exactly. Well, we promised to talk about fathers and sons today. We better get at it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let's do it.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to go to Father's Day, because you and I both received a gift on Father's Day from our children. Both my children gave me a gift, but let me talk about Danae. She sent me a candy dish. Now that doesn't sound too thrilling, a candy dish, but it was a porcelain candy dish and on it was painted a drawing, a very touching drawing of a man, it looked like me, who was looking down. You didn't see his face, but you saw the structure of his body. And in his arms wrapped around him was his little girl. It said so much about what I remember and what my daughter Danae remembers from her childhood, those moments when I took her in my arms. That, I will always treasure. What did you get? Now, you can't beat that I know, but let's hear what your kids did for you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, my son Zach was so excited to give me a Father's Day present. He had come up with this idea on his own, and doctor, what he did was he took his college baseball glove and his college baseball hat and the baseball from the last game he pitched.

Dr. James Dobson: He just graduated from college, didn't he?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes, he did. And put it in a glass case and wrote a note to me and said this: "Dad, you gave me my first glove. I want to give you my last."

Dr. James Dobson: No kidding.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, it's beautiful.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you cry?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Are you kidding me?

Dr. James Dobson: I see it. I see a picture of it there.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I've got a picture of it. Yeah, I'm just showing Dr. Dobson a picture on my phone.

Dr. James Dobson: He was really very successful as a pitcher, wasn't he, at Liberty?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, he had an absolutely fabulous year. But in his heart, it was really a statement about the memories that we had together and what that game gave to the two of us as a father and a son together. You used to make a statement, and you still do. It's called "be there." I know the implication is really about heaven, but I take it, be there, be present with your son. He needs you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you and I have had similar thoughts, really kind of independently arrived at. Two years ago, I took my son, who's well grown now, and his son, my grandson, who is now 11 years old, took him to the Iliamna River in Alaska to fish together for seven days. That was a highlight of my life, to be there. Some other men came with us. It was an all-male thing. Our effort was to show an 11-year-old how men think and what men do, and it was a bonding time for us. You've done the same thing, going to the same river.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes, we did, as a gift to my son. And I'll talk about my daughter, Megan, whom I love dearly. There's so much about her I want to tell. But Zach, as a gift for graduating from college and for his work ethic in baseball. It was a joy. I coached him. We started when he was four years old. Zach's 22, soon to be 23 years old, but we had the journey together. And so I said, "This is going to be one of those father-son experiences."

Dr. James Dobson: How long were you up there together?

Dr. Tim Clinton: We were together. We got into Anchorage on Sunday and flew down to the lodge, and we flew out on Friday.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you catch any fish?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Are you kidding? We had a blast.

Dr. James Dobson: There were 15 million salmon in the river when I was up there.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They were just starting to run when we got there this year. The Arctic char were just, it was ridiculous how many fish were in those glacier-fed crystal streams up there. And then we had a chance to get over onto the ocean and fish for some halibut together. But doctor, you're so right. This was an epic experience, I think culminating. It wasn't about just Alaska. It was about the journey together as a dad and son.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you have devotions while you were up there?

Dr. Tim Clinton: It was a beautiful part of the day. Let me take you back for a moment. When we landed in Anchorage, we had to jump on a twin engine plane.

Dr. James Dobson: I flew in it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And we packed, there were four of us together on that plane, and the young pilot. I'm thinking, Lord, help us.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope he knows what he's doing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I had no idea. I didn't know we were flying 250 miles south-southwest of Anchorage, and that we were going to fly through this pass to get there.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. There are mountains on both sides.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I thought we were flying above the mountains. We were flying through the mountains, and it was stunning, just stunning. And we laughed, and they said, "Literally, we're going to nowhere. I mean, we're going to fly into the bush." And this Iliamna River Lodge was on the Iliamna River, and pretty much there's no people. There's no McDonald's, I know that. There's no medical facilities or anything.

Dr. James Dobson: The nearest road is about a hundred miles away.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know. You only can get there by boat or plane. And so here we go. And we landed, and some people picked us up on a boat and took us up the river to the lodge. And it was like, there's nothing. But what we learned was that we really weren't alone. The bears, they ruled the forest.

Dr. James Dobson: There was a big brown bear that was right across the river from us. It was so much. And we ought to tell people what we're talking about, because that is a great lodge to go to, the Iliamna River Lodge. And they don't take very many people. There were eight in our group, and I guess 12 is the maximum.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Up to 12, is what Bill Betts, who is the guy who owns and runs that lodge, says. But yeah, we were in there with only eight of us.

Dr. James Dobson: I asked you about devotions. What happened?

Dr. Tim Clinton: The devotions, this one in particular, but we had devotions in the morning together. You begin to really covet time together, eating meals, et cetera. And our devotions, the one morning I remember, we were talking a little bit about Psalm 19:1, where the heavens declare the glory of God. And then we moved to a verse, it talked about the presence of God, that I am with you. And really, it could be better interpreted this way: I am with you all the day. And as I reflected on that verse, Zach and I talked a lot about it, what was amazing to me was when you get into the bush and you unplug from all this social media insanity and more, you begin to connect in a unique way. And truly the heavens declare the majesty or the glory of God. I began to see and reflect on God in a completely different way. He was around us all the day.

Dr. James Dobson: How did Zach respond?

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, he put his arms around me as we went to jump on the plane and take off, and he said, "Dad, I will never-"

Dr. James Dobson: Never forget.

Dr. Tim Clinton: "... never forget this experience."

Dr. James Dobson: You and I not only see a lot of things the same, but our dads were very similar. They never met each other, but my dad started taking me hunting when I had a BB gun. I was eight years old. And the most precious times of my life were with him. He made me feel like a man. And then when I was 13 and he gave me a .410, I knew I was grown and I seemed to know what it meant to be a man. Did your dad do the same for you?

Dr. Tim Clinton: My dad pastored for nearly 60 years in the hills of Central Pennsylvania, but getting outdoors was something that was wired into him, and he gave it to us as a gift. We went hunting and fishing. Matter of fact, my dad, one of my last memories was, he was 81 years old. We were still going out trying to chase those deer around the hills in Pennsylvania. And you know what I realized too? It wasn't about hunting. There were gifts from hunting and fishing and all that. For Dad, it was about us.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. My dad was focused on me when we were hunting. Every other time, he had cares. Like every other father, was thinking about other things. But I'm telling, when we were out there in what I call the big woods, because the trees were so big, and hunting quail or squirrel or whatever it was, we talked, we bonded together, and that's why I love this memory today.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Something happens. I remember an incident. My dad took me turkey hunting. I was 12 years old. I had a double barrel shotgun, 16 gauge, and I had gone through hunter safety. I remember walking behind my dad, and he was calling,

and he had a gobbler answering him. And he said, "Let's go up this hill." And so I'm behind him, and as we started up the hill, my gun, bang, went off. My dad was dancing all over the place, rolling up his pant legs and everything.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you hit him?

Dr. Tim Clinton: No, I had my gun pointed away and shot into the ground.

Dr. James Dobson: You scared him half to death.

Dr. Tim Clinton: After he collected himself, he looked at me and said, "Tim, son, I am so glad you had that gun pointed away like you were supposed to." He said, "I don't think we're going to get this turkey, but--"

Dr. James Dobson: He didn't get mad at you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: He didn't get mad at me. He said, "I'm so glad." And hunter safety is so important to me. I am obsessed with it with the kids when we go hunting. But it was such a gift to me. He put his arm on me and he said, "I'm so glad you... " And I don't even know how the thing went off.

Dr. James Dobson: My cousin H.B. London, that many of our listeners will know, we were about the same age and my dad took the two of us hunting. We were both carrying .22s, and he was the third in line. He couldn't remember whether the safety was this way or that way, so he decided to test it by pulling the trigger. A .22 caliber shell went by my dad's ear. And I'm telling you, I've never seen my dad mad before, but he was really burned up, because he nearly lost his life. So you really do have to take the time if you're going to do this to build into the kids.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Those experiences out there, and the stories that get told and get passed generationally and more, are gifts that we give to each other. The lessons you learn about being a man from men, it's a special thing. How do you even really talk about it?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we're about to go again. Ryan and Lincoln and I are going to Northern Canada to fish and to hunt. And I can't wait to get up there, because it's a reconnection. It is a bonding that occurs that can't happen among the cares of life. When your phone is ringing, your computer's going off, and you're doing all this stuff, it's very difficult to look a boy in the eye and say, "Son, this is what it means to be a man."

Dr. Tim Clinton: I like the word "attunement." I've learned that in these moments, you begin to dial in closer. You begin to see into each other's eyes, into each other's hearts, things that resonate together, things that begin to connect together as father and son. I know when we were up in Alaska, the conversations that Zach and I would have, even while we're on the stream, just the two of us, that would take place, and the fun, we'd be laughing and catching a fish and then telling a story.

"Hey Dad, do you remember?" "Yes, I remember." And that bonding piece, and I'm going to use this word, I want parents to hear us, being attuned to your son or daughter takes deliberate intention. And when you're able to give unadulterated time, when you're able to give pure, "I'm here for you, I'm in this moment, I hear you, you matter to me," it screams volumes to that child.

Dr. James Dobson: I said many, many years ago, during my film series, that was 1978, that values are not taught to children, they're caught by them. And they can't catch them if you're never with them and you're not talking to them and tuned into them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I've often said that when the boys get together again, there's something that happens. You know, for us, when we get up to our camp, we go to a restaurant and have a little breakfast together, have a breakfast-eating contest. They're crazy young guys. They're insane, trying to throw down these pancakes. But that starts the journey. And we get out and ride four wheelers, Dr. Dobson. We get in the woods and do work, put up tree stands, different things. We start talking about the game that we're going to hunt or the fish that we're going after in the streams. You get out there around a campfire at night and begin to talk, you're out throwing a football around, and you're disconnected, because where we're at, you can't use your phone. You know that? And what begins to take place, you're right, is this generational flow. And the stories and the activities together and the work, the industry that you have to do to take place, it begins to speak into our hearts.

Dr. James Dobson: You've been a very busy father. Not only have you been a professor for about 30 years at Liberty University, you've written more than 30 books and you speak, you write, you do all these things, but you found time to do this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, let me tell you about-

Dr. James Dobson: How in the world do you? You had that. I did it too. We need to tell our listeners how you get that done.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I had a moment, and it was back to a broadcast that you had done. I was way beyond my limits. I was out of control. I was a young maverick trying to prove my worth and find my way. I listened to this broadcast on my way home one afternoon, and it so moved me. It was about kids and the outdoors and I kept thinking about my daughter Megan and my young son Zach, at the time. I'll never forget coming home, and Zach was like two at the time, and his very first sentence, he put a couple of words together as I walked in the door that day. Zach comes running over to me, wide open. I mean, wide open. He's like two or three years old. "Dad." And he looked at me and he looked down at my shoes and he says, "Shoes off. Shoes off." But it so moved me, because I thought-

Dr. James Dobson: He wanted you to sit down and talk to him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That meant, Dad, you come here with me. And I remember later going outside in the sun. It was bright, but there were leaves everywhere. And I thought about as a boy, how we used to rake those leaves together and we would jump in them. We had such a time doing that. And I said, "Tim, you're missing all this. You're missing your kids. You're missing everything. What are you doing? And I mean, it doesn't make any sense. And that statement, 'what does it gain a man if he wins the whole world and loses his own kids?' And Tim, are you going to do that? Is that what you're going to do? And you're going to defend it, because you're quote doing Christian things, or are you going to be a dad?"

And I remember tears started coming down my face and I said, "I don't want to do that. I don't want to lose my kids. I'm going to do everything I can to not be at the game, I'm going to coach the game." I made decisions where I said, "I'm not going to travel and speak. I'm going to cut everything. I'm going to start changing the way I do my life." And it was a broadcast that God used that said, "Get your tail home."

Dr. James Dobson: And how early was that?

Dr. Tim Clinton: That was when I was a young father. And I'll tell you, I never forgot that moment, because it was really about the outdoors. You were talking about kids and get your kids outside. It was one of those kind of broadcasts. And I'll never forget this. I reflected on the gifts that were given to me through my own dad. My dad would take us to the crick. We grew up in Pennsylvania. You don't call them creeks. We called them cricks. We went there swimming. My dad used to pile everybody in the van, all the kids in the neighborhood, and he would take us swimming. My dad was the one who took us to Young People's and we would play softball. He took us roller skating. My dad showed up at the games, you know that? He taught us how to play ball.

Dr. James Dobson: You and I are very blessed, you know that? We're out of time. Didn't that go by fast? We're out of time, Tim, but let's stay right where we are right now and let's ask our broadcast team to air what we are going to say as we continue this discussion. That okay with you?

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm for it.

Dr. James Dobson: I love you, brother. It's fun working with you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Roger Marsh: Psalm 127:3 reads, "Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring, a reward from Him." The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is dedicated to helping parents leave a legacy for their children. And like Dr. Dobson just said, "character isn't taught, it's caught." Dads, you are so important in the lives of your kids. If you're looking for resources or advice on how to connect with your son or your daughter and what it means to parent well, be sure to give us a call.

We're here for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to answer your questions about Family Talk, to suggest a resource for your parenting journey, even to pray with you. Our number is 877-732-6825. Again, that number is 877-732-6825.

You can also find lots of great biblical content and resources on our website at drjamesdobson.org. And that includes Dr. Dobson's bestselling book on the topic of manhood, called *Straight Talk to Men*. Find that book and more at drjamesdobson.org. And if you missed any part of today's broadcast, you can always listen to it once again by visiting our broadcast page on our website, drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

Now before we leave for today, I want to remind you about another resource that is now available from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. It's our weekly public policy emails. Our public policy team breaks down the policy issues in our nation that affect the family, then wraps them in a biblical worldview just for you, our listeners. We want to equip you to think critically and biblically about what's going on in our nation, so that you can understand the truth and get involved. To sign up for policy emails, go to drjamesdobson.org/policy. That's drjamesdobson.org/policy.

Well, we're out of time for today. Be sure to join us again tomorrow when you'll hear the conclusion of Dr. Dobson and Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation on the topic of "Fathers and Sons, Getting Back to Basics." I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening today to Family Talk. This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.