



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: National Day of Grandparents Day of Prayer – Part 1

Guest(s): Cavin Harper

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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: Well, welcome to Family Talk by Roger Marsh. You know, being a grandparent brings a real joy. Lisa and I have six wonderful grandchildren, and we love them all equally. But have you ever thought about the spiritual legacy you're passing down to those grandkids of yours? It's one of the most important roles God gives to us, and it's the heart of today's Family Talk broadcast. On today's program, we'll hear a conversation Dr. James Dobson had with Cavin Harper, founder of the Christian Grandparenting Network and the man behind the GrandCamp program. With nine grandchildren of his own, Cavin knows this subject inside and out. So here now is Dr. Dobson to introduce his guest on today's edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson, and this is Family Talk that you're listening to, and we're delighted to have you tune in today. We're going to talk about a subject that I think is of relevance to every family because today we're going to be talking about grandparenting. And it's different to be a grandparent than a parent. In some ways, it's not as taxing, and in other ways, it's maybe more so because you usually don't have a large number of kids to take care of when you're a parent, but you frequently do as grandparents. And we have a man with us today who knows where off he speaks.
- His name is Cavin Harper, and he has dedicated his life to the subject of grandparenting, has made such a contribution. He's written books on the subject and graduated from Baylor University and has been responsible for starting a number of organizations and one of them is called the GrandCamp Program. Cavin, describe that as a place to start.
- Cavin Harper: You know, it kind of started 18 years ago when, interestingly, the Christian Association of Christian Camps and Conferences here in Colorado Springs had asked me if we'd ever thought about doing something for grandparents and grandkids. And at the time, we were running a lodge, a Christian retreat center up west of here. And we thought, no, I hadn't. But since I'm a grandfather, it makes sense. We'd love to be able to think about doing something like that. And so we thought to ourselves, what would we do with grandparents, because we ourselves were new grandparents at the time, and we didn't even know what

this grandparenting thing was all about. So we said, you know, we want to learn this as well, so let's bring some grandparents together with their grandkids and see if we can begin figuring out some things that we need to be talking about and experiencing together and dig into God's Word together about this. So that started 18 years ago. We've had 17 years of actual GrandCamps that we've done.

Dr. James Dobson: And you've got nine grandkids.

Cavin Harper: I have nine grandkids.

Dr. James Dobson: And you have been the executive director of the Christian Grandparenting Network.

Cavin Harper: Correct.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that still in existence?

Cavin Harper: It is still in existence.

Dr. James Dobson: And how does it function?

Cavin Harper: Well, our mission is really to build or champion a movement of Christian grandparents who are really intentional about their role as God has given to us in His Word and are equipped with the tools necessary to do that and fulfill those roles, which means nurturing their grandchildren to walk in the truth, to wholeheartedly follow Christ, and to be able then to replicate that for the generation after them. So it's really all about teaching the next generations, Psalm 78.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've written a book now called *Courageous Grandparenting: Unshakeable Faith in a Broken World*. I'd like to start with your title here. Why does it take courage to be a good grandparent?

Cavin Harper: You know, when we think about grandparenting, I run into grandparents all the time who say, well, I'm a good grandparent. You know, why do I need to come to your website or go to one of your seminars or your GrandCamp? I'm a good grandparent. I'm doing a good job. And by that, they usually mean, well, I'm having a good time with my grandkids.

Dr. James Dobson: And they love me and they like me.

Cavin Harper: They love me. They like coming to my house. I can fill them up with sugar. I can send them home. And everything's good in the world.

Dr. James Dobson: Spoil them.

Cavin Harper: Yep, spoil them. And there's a time for that, isn't there? But when we start talking about, but do you understand that we have a responsibility to do more than that, to tell the next generations the praiseworthy deeds of God, to make sure that they understand who He is, they know what He's done in your life, and in the generations previous to that, and are committed to walking in faith. It requires courage because the world we live in today says, that's all a bunch of hooey. It requires courage to stand up and to say, this is the truth. Walk in it. And grandparents need courage also to own up to the responsibilities that we have had and the world being where it is today and the condition of this culture in which we live today that our grandkids now have to navigate. And all the voices that are screaming out, no, this is what truth is. Oh, no, it doesn't matter what you believe. Just believe something. It takes courage to stand up in the face of all that.

Dr. James Dobson: It does. And, you know, I don't think there's ever been a time when the role of grandparenting was more important than it is today because of the pace at which we live. You know, parents are exhausted. Frequently you have two breadwinners and they're running 100 miles an hour and they get home at night and they're tired and exhausted. And it's very easy to let the years go by and the children God has given you really don't know what it means to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ. And parents desperately need help with not only the raising of the kids, if they can be close enough to do that, but also to teach them.

My mother and father were deeply committed to Christ. My dad was a minister, and they knew what it meant to teach me, I was an only child, but to teach me the things of Scripture and who Christ was. In fact, I learned to pray before I learned to talk because I heard my parents in their prayer life and I tried to imitate it before I knew the meaning of the words. So they did a good job. But my point is that my grandmother on my father's side, we called her Little Mother. And my great-grandmother, Nanny, had an even greater impact on me spiritually because they talked about the Lord all the time and took me through the training that was necessary. And I feel sorry for parents out there who have parents of their own, you know, the grandparents, who don't understand that they have that responsibility to help with that most important task. And you're trying to encourage them to do that.

Cavin Harper: I think it's what God has asked us to do from the beginning of time. I mean, even in Deuteronomy 4, as Moses was delivering that final sermon before they went into the promised land, he said to them, "Only watch yourselves very closely and be careful to not forget the things that you have seen and heard, or let them slip from your heart, but teach them to your children's children." So there's a partnership, there's an alliance that God has always intended, I believe, to exist between parent and grandparent.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Cavin Harper: Because as you say, a parent can't do them by themselves. It's an overwhelming task to be out there by yourself as a parent and raise these kids. God didn't intend that to be. Unfortunately, the idea of a village raising your children has been grossly misstated by some people. But the fact of the matter is that it's true, isn't it, that it takes the family village to raise a child. And so that's what we're committed to, not only to say to grandparents, come alongside, but do everything you possibly can to make your adult children the greatest, most successful parents they could possibly be. You be the instrument for helping them succeed as parents because they can't do it alone.

Dr. James Dobson: And your responsibility and what you're trying to do is to teach grandparents to be good grandparents.

Cavin Harper: To be courageous grandparents. That's right. And to be able to say, it starts with, number one, coming to that place. I always think of Nehemiah, who here he was in a foreign land. He had never known his homeland except by the stories that had been told. And yet when the report came back on the condition of his homeland, he fell on his face and he wept. I mean, he was just broken about what was going on there. But he didn't stop there. He fasted and he prayed and then he repented and said, Lord, forgive my sin as well as the sins of my fathers. He accepted ownership. And then after he had done all of that, he was able to stand up and say, okay, Lord, whatever you have laid on my heart, you know, that's what I'm going to do. As he later says in some of the later chapters, I did everything that the Lord laid on my heart.

That's what we're saying to grandparents. Let's start at the place of humility and repentance where we say we're acknowledging that we messed up along the way. That's our responsibility. But you know what? We're not going to stay there. Because God has a plan for us. So, Lord, whatever you lay on our heart, that's what we are going to do. That takes courage.

Dr. James Dobson: You referred earlier to the word intentional. What do you mean by that when you say you want to teach grandparents to be intentional in their approach to their grandchildren?

Cavin Harper: I think we're intentional about what's important to us in life. And unfortunately, we have a lot of grandparents today who are more intentional about going to leisureville and spending the rest of their lives fulfilling their bucket lists that they've made than in helping their grandchildren gain the kingdom. And so when I speak of intentionality, I'm talking about an intentionality that says, I have a responsibility to tell my grandchildren who the Lord is and what He has done. That's my responsibility along with the parents, is to reinforce, hopefully, what the parents are teaching. But if they're not teaching it, I am.

So intentionality says it's not just about having a good time with my grandchildren. I'm going to be intentional about being the voice of one crying in the wilderness and says, I'm preparing the way for you to know the Lord and to walk in His truth.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, give me an example of this. Suppose that you have a five-year-old grandchild. They don't hold still very well. And you can't really sit them down and read the Word to them. You can share verses with them and explain it, but they're fidgety and they're yawning and they're wanting to play. How do you begin to get the gospel, the good news, into the heart of that little boy or girl?

Cavin Harper: It's little things, I think, isn't it? I mean, Deuteronomy 6 applies to grandparents as much as it does to parents.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you know, you're singing my song. I wrote a book called *Legacy, Your Legacy*, which is the greatest gift that you can give. And it comes right out of that sixth chapter of Deuteronomy.

Cavin Harper: And I don't think it's any different for grandparenting than it is for parenting. Do you, Doctor? I mean, after all, it's taking those moments of life, you know, whether we're walking in the way or, you know, we're sitting at home or we're rising up or we're lying down. We look at those moments as opportunities to speak into our children's lives. And so as a grandparent, for example, I say often to grandparents who come to our GrandCamp, one of the most powerful things that you can do for your children of any age is to speak blessing into their lives. So use those Deuteronomy 6 moments to find ways to speak words of blessing to them.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me say to our listeners, get that chapter and read it. You made reference to it a minute ago, but Moses gives this last speech, and that's the book of Deuteronomy. And that sixth chapter, he says what is important.

Cavin Harper: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: He talks about when you get up in the morning, when you go for a walk, when you write it on your forehead, put it on your wrist, and write it on the doorpost of your house.

Cavin Harper: Impress it.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. In other words, it's not just "now I lay me down to sleep." It is talking about the Lord all day long.

Cavin Harper: It is. It is. And little things. I mean, even a child sitting in your lap, you know, and to be able to, you know, they're struggling with something that maybe they've had their feelings hurt and to be able to speak to them. You know, I know that you're feeling hurt right now, but do you know I love you? And did you know that Jesus loves you too? Sing a little song to them or read a Bible story from a children's Bible story book to them. Little things. Or, you know, Moses was given instructions by God to tell Aaron that he was to speak this blessing over the people of Israel so they would remember whose name they were associated with, their identity. You know, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May he

make his face to shine upon you. May he be gracious unto you.” That whole Aaronic blessing is so full of important little truths that I think we can begin communicating. But you see, if I’m not intentional, then I’m not looking for ways to communicate that truth. It’s just, okay, oh, I missed that opportunity. Shucks.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, when I was a little boy, I must have been, I was being tutored in what we’re talking about here. And one day I was with my mother. As a matter of fact, let me tell you, we found a box of memorabilia. My daughter went through it and she found something my mother wrote about a day when I was three years old and I fell and I hurt my hand. I was wailing and my mother said, “Have you talked to Jesus about it? And ask Him to take the pain away.” And I did. I got down and I prayed. I was really, talk about intentional. I wanted Jesus to heal my hurting hand. And when I finished, I went back to crying again. And she said, “Well, what did Jesus say?” And I said, “He said, ‘I’m busy watering the flowers right now, but I’ll help you when I can.’” That was my, my theology was a little weird, but I got the message.

Cavin Harper: You got the message clearly, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: But you can do it through everyday events like that.

Cavin Harper: Well, what else have we got, really? I mean, those are the things God has given to us, those moments in time. But if I’m not intentional about that, I’m going to be intentional about lesser things. So as a grandfather, especially, I think it’s harder for us as men sometimes to be intentional about those kinds of things. We think oh, well, that’s grandma’s job, or mom’s job. And I believe that grandfathers out there need to hear this. If you are not intentional about speaking these truths into your kids’ lives, looking for those small moments of life that turn out to be so big sometimes, you know, like Jesus watering the flowers, you know, but He’ll get to it. We miss out on those opportunities. And down the road, we’ll look back with regret instead of being able to look back and say, wow, look what the Lord did and things I never even imagined He would do through me.

Dr. James Dobson: Another illustration from my experience. I was five years old, and I was with my great-grandmother, and I told you she took advantage of every opportunity. And we were in the backyard, and World War II was coming. I didn’t know that. But she did. And the two of us were in the backyard and a plane, a fighter plane, went over. And she looked up at that plane and she said, oh, my. She said, “We need to pray for that pilot up there.” And I said, “Why is the plane going to crash?” And she said, “No, but there’s a man up there that Jesus knows and He loves, and he probably has a family, and we need to pray for his safety.” She was thinking about combat. But she used that opportunity to tell me I need to be sensitive to pray for a man flying a plane. And it was one of those Deuteronomy 6 moments where she took advantage of that time, that moment, to tell me something about what we believe. And I wish that I had remembered to thank her before she died. I remembered it.

Cavin Harper: I'm sure she's looking down from Heaven today saying, thank you, Lord, for letting me be part of that life.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, because she lived it every day. And that's what we need to do.

Cavin Harper: You know, Dr. Dobson, you mentioned something I think is very important. That's this issue of prayer. We want to talk about intentionality. I don't think there's anything I can think of that we need to be more intentional about than that. We sometimes think that it's all about doing all of these little things with our kids and taking them on special events and such like that. And those are important. But I remember when my grandparents were still alive, and I remember many times being over at their home, mom and dad and my siblings, and we were out playing in the yard. But we would come around, and I'd peer in the front door, and here's grandma and grandpa on their knees praying. And I remember those things sticking in my mind. And my grandmother many times saying to me, you know, just like your grandmother did, you know, Cavin, we need to talk to Jesus about this. Let's not let this go as just, well, we'll have to see what happens. But let's talk to Jesus about this and to kneel right there with Grandma and have her pray over whatever this particular situation was.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you were a blessed child.

Cavin Harper: I was totally blessed by that. And those are the images that I have and I realize they may not have been thinking intentionality, but their lives were so intentional about Jesus and their devotion to Him and their relationship with Him that prayer was just a part of their lives. I think there's a lot of opportunities for us as grandparents to impact our children's lives, even in those difficult circumstances where we've got children who may be hostile to the faith, who may not even want us to be around our grandchildren. But it's amazing what God can do through prayer. And I would really say that if there's anything that we were going to be intentional about, that would be number one.

Dr. James Dobson: Your book is really a how-to book, isn't it?

Cavin Harper: It's a challenge, first of all, to understand who we are and our responsibility, and then it's a how-to.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of it again, is *Courageous Grandparenting: Unshakable Faith in a Broken World*. Boy, that's beautifully said. And the author is Cavin Harper, who's here with us today. And if there is one message that you want to convey to parents, we've only got about a minute left. What rises to the top?

Cavin Harper: I suppose it would be this. We must understand that we all leave a legacy. The question before us is, are we going to leave one that matters? Are we going to leave a legacy, as Max Lucado says, that outlives you for eternity, not just a legacy? And so I would say to grandparents, you will leave a legacy. Now it's your choice to decide what kind of a legacy are you going to leave. Are you going to leave a legacy that points a child to Christ and to what it means to walk

in the truth and the joy and delight of that? Or are you going to point them to it's all about barn building? You know, I'm just building my barns and I'm getting my stuff and it's all about what's here on earth. There's too much at stake, grandparents, for us to risk leaving the wrong legacy.

Dr. James Dobson: That is beautifully said. Our time is gone. There is more in this book for us to talk about. Let's do it again next time.

Cavin Harper: I'd love to.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and we've been enjoying a warm conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and Cavin Harper of the Christian Grandparenting Network. They've been discussing about the calling of grandparenting. As Cavin put it, every one of us leaves a legacy. The only question is, what kind of legacy will we leave? There is no greater gift you can hand to your grandchildren than pointing them toward Jesus Christ.

Now, if you missed any part of today's program, or if you'd like to share it with a grandparent that you love, you can visit us at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. And while you're online with us, make sure you check out the special resources we have available for grandparenting, including our grandparenting survey. We found recently some interesting statistics about grandparenting and Dr. Dobson has a powerful blog about it back from the archives from 10 years ago that has recently resurfaced on social media. You can read that article and take our survey as well when you go to drjamesdobson.org and keep in mind, Grandparents Day is coming up this Sunday.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for joining us today. Be sure to tune in again next time for part two of our conversation on the National Grandparents Day of Prayer. It's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Some years ago, a nine-year-old girl wrote a wonderful essay called, "What is a Grandmother?"

Roger Marsh: Here's today's Dr. Dobson Minute with Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: This is what the child said. "Grandmothers don't have to do anything except to be there. They're old, so they shouldn't play hard or run. It is enough if they drive us to the market where the pretend horse is and to have lots of dimes ready. Or if they take us for walks, they should slow down past things like pretty leaves and caterpillars. Everybody should try to have a grandmother because they are the only grown-ups who have time." How's that for sheer wisdom from

the pen of a child? Not only has this young author given us a marvelous picture of a loving grandmother, but she tells us in a few short words what children are really looking for. An adult who fully recognizes the finer things of life.

Roger Marsh:

For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.