



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Nurturing a Child's Prayer Life – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Jerry Kirk, Candy Marballi and Rick Schatz

Air Date: July 19, 2024

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

- 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 back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Nurturing a child's prayer life is essential for parents and grandparents alike to instill into the lives of their kids or grandkids. Today's program is going to continue on yesterday's conversation about how to do just that. Now, the program you're about to hear was recorded several years ago, and during that session, Dr. Dobson welcomed three very special guests for this discussion. They are Dr. Jerry Kirk, former pastor who served as senior pastor of College Hill Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati. Dr. Kirk is the founder of the Prayer Covenant, a movement designed to inspire and encourage Christ-centered prayer partnerships among adults as well as children. The organization also encourages the development of discipleship and evangelism. Also joining us today on the program is the current President Emeritus of the Prayer Covenant, Candy Marballi, and you'll hear from the late Rick Schatz as well. Rick served as President of the Prayer Covenant for many, many years. Now let's join our guests and Dr. James Dobson for today's edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: Jerry, many people feel like children are simply too young to enter into a prayer covenant or a relationship with God. We may be talking about four, five, six, seven year olds or maybe junior highers or those in high school. Do they have the capacity to get ahold of that concept that the all-seeing, all-caring, all-loving God who made everything that there is interested in them as a human being and will hear those little cries that occur from these little boys and girls? Straighten us out on that.
- Dr. Jerry Kirk: Well, to be honest, I thought they were too young. I really did. And then Candy came along, and she not only came along, but she was training children. I have seen what happens between parents, through parents, when their child really comes alive in Christ. And this Children's Prayer Covenant is so simple but so clear and so liberating and so demanding. It's all of that wrapped into one and thousands and thousands of children have responded to the Children's Prayer Covenant and they're teaching me. The reality is God is at work in them and can

transform them, and when they start praying for each other, something powerful happens. And the incredible thing is some people have the gift of working with children, teaching children, discipling children, loving children, and that choir that Candy led, it was amazing how the children revealed the love of Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Candy. Tell us about that choir and how you began. How in the world do you start by telling children that they can talk to the creator of the universe?

Candy Marballi: I love the passage in Matthew 18 where Jesus made children the standard for greatness. And children have a boundless faith, and I believe that's why they experience answer to prayer so quickly. But God gave me a passion to reach children. Even when we're living in Japan, in the Philippines, what God laid on my heart was children need to experience the joy that comes from serving Him, and we need to spend time nurturing their relationship with their heavenly Father. I used to tell my children, "It is more important that you obey God first and love God even more than you love us as your parents. He must be the one our children run to." As parents, we try to protect our children from the difficulties of life, but we can't do that. We can't protect them from everything, but we can nurture the relationship with the one who will sustain them through those difficulties.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, did you model it for them?

Candy Marballi: What we did was we would take time to pray together before every class. We would say, "You're on mission. When we sing for the congregation, you're engaging in ministry. When you're going to the nursing homes and when you're loving on these seniors, you're showing the love of Jesus. You're engaging in ministry." And so, we would pray for them. And when I started teaching them the prayer covenant, the focus was making Jesus the Lord of their life. Every day the focus was praying to become more like Jesus.

Dr. James Dobson: Now you're holding up a prayer card. People can't see that. You need to describe it because both of you have mentioned the prayer card. Explain it.

Candy Marballi: The prayer card, the children's prayer card covers the same 10 themes as the adult prayer card, but it's written in simple language that speaks to the heart of the child. It's centered around who Jesus is. Again, so the importance of praying Christ-centered prayers, every line of this prayer that children pray is in accordance with the will of God. And when children or adults pray prayers that are in alignment with His will, we know that He answers them. When children experience answer to prayer, their faith grows.

Dr. James Dobson: How do you explain prayer covenant to a child?

Candy Marballi: I explain it like a prayer pact, like a promise. A child will commit, will invite someone into a prayer covenant with them, and it means they're going to pray

over this person for 40 days and that child will pray for them for 40 days. The fruit that's coming from this is that I receive testimonies from some children that are praying for their friends who don't even know Jesus, but this prayer imprints the gospel on a child's heart.

And so, the more they pray this over their friends or the more their friends that don't even know Jesus, pray through this prayer, they begin to be transformed. They experience Jesus in a very close and personal way. And I believe the way we are going to raise a generation of faithful Jesus followers, a generation of overcomers, is connecting them to the one who has more power in Heaven on earth than anyone else. And one of the greatest passages we can share with our children is right before the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18, which says, "All power and in Heaven and on earth has been given to me." So this prayer empowers boys and girls and it empowers moms and dads and it's something that we celebrate.

Dr. James Dobson: Why don't you read some of those islands?

Candy Marballi: I would love to read.

Dr. James Dobson: You were waiting for me to ask.

Candy Marballi: Yes, exactly. You read my mind. It all begins with grace.

"Dear heavenly Father, thank you for loving me and making me one of your children. When children understand God's grace, they are able to share that grace with others. Love, help me love and obey you. Compassion. Help me love others the way you love me. So you're praying through the two greatest commandments. Love God, love people, and we want to teach children that we serve a holy God. If we have sin in our hearts, he will not hear or answer our prayer. And so, we pray, I am sorry for my sins. Wash me clean."

We want children to understand that prayer is worship, that loving others is worship, that telling other children about Jesus or telling their parents about Jesus is worship. And then commitment, the crux of the prayer covenant. "Jesus, I want to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want." God can use children in amazing ways. So we pray, "make me an instrument of your grace, your truth, and your justice." And I will add quickly in here that there are so many children in the Old Testament that God used to accomplish His purposes. One being Samuel, he was the catalyst. God used to restore the priesthood in Israel. And as a young boy, Samuel learned to hear God's voice.

Even more important, Samuel learned to obey God's voice and by teaching children to pray through a Christ-centered prayer, we want them to do the same. We want them to become sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We want them to hear His voice and we want them to obey. And the discipleship,

use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. All prayed in the power and in the authority of the name of Jesus

Dr. James Dobson: And those prayer cards are available to people.

Candy Marballi: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You have also published a book that I hold in my hand. It's called *The Power of the Prayer Covenant for Kids*. And it's artistically done. And this book is being very successfully received, isn't it?

Candy Marballi: Yes. Praise the Lord. Mostly international. We are in 25 countries, mainly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. And so, we have it translated now into many languages. We've created a booklet as well.

Dr. James Dobson: And what a thrill. My wife, Shirley and I lived in a neighborhood where there were a lot of children who were not churched. And the Lord laid that on her heart in much the same way that He has with you, Candy. And Shirley felt like that she really ought to do what she could to tell these children. So she went to the parents first and told them they were not going to try to convert them to a particular church or a theology, we're just going to tell them about Jesus in a nonthreatening way.

And so, she began inviting these little kids over, and she had the flannelgraph. Anybody remember what those were?

Candy Marballi: Of course.

Dr. James Dobson: And there are many people listening to us who've never heard of a flannelgraph, but there were figures that had been prepared. And then you stick the figures on the flannelgraph and then tell a story that comes out of the Bible. Those kids absolutely loved that. Low tech. It was not computerized. They didn't even have computers. But the kids got captured by it. And then Shirley made it so much fun.

She put pennies in a glass or a jar, and those that memorized the verses got a chance to put their hand down and bring out pennies. They could keep everything. Well, you can't keep many pennies. 15, 18 cents, something like that. And the kids got so excited about that and then she served them fun things to eat. And do you know that, I don't want to be too graphic at this because I don't want to identify anybody, but Shirley ran into some woman just the other day who said, "I found Jesus in your little Bible study. I didn't know a thing about Him and I'm bringing my kids up to know Him."

Candy Marballi: That's wonderful.

Dr. James Dobson: My goodness. You know what? The Lord's presence is here today?

Dr. Jerry Kirk: Oh, I know.

Dr. James Dobson: I don't remember four people sitting crying together like this a long time. How about it, Rick? You've got something else that's available for parents.

Rick Schatz: Yeah. The book that Candy and Steven I are from, our staff wrote, won a wonderful award as a wonderful book for kids from a Christian perspective. But printing that book any place in the world, even in large quantities, costs about \$2.50 Or \$3, then you have to ship it somewhere. And we ran into a wonderful brother by the name of Mike King through some other connections that the Lord opened. He looked at the book and said we ought to take the content of that book and produce it through a booklet. And he has done that with us. We used a wonderful graphic designer, a wonderful artist, and it's a 24-page booklet. It's entitled *The Prayer Covenant for Kids*. The colors of, the style are so engaging for kids, and this booklet can be produced for about 10 cents apiece.

Dr. James Dobson: But it's got most of the content.

Rick Schatz: Oh, it has all the content and it's got the Prayer Covenant card content on the back. And so, this is being used all over the world in just amazing ways. When we shared this booklet with our partners all over the world, the request came through Candy to us, and the initial level of request was 1,900,000 of these.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my goodness. Candy that must thrill you.

Candy Marballi: It does.

Rick Schatz: That in some ways, Doctor, is overwhelming, but the fact is, in many countries in the world, 50% of the population is under the age of 15. So if we ignore the kids of the world and bringing them to Jesus and making them disciples of the king, we will lose another entire generation to the world. And this booklet combined with the prayer card and teachers having the book is a tool, it is a tool that God is using all over the world to bring people, young kids into the ministry, not just to lead them to Jesus, but to give them the ministry of prayer. Another quick one, Candy just got back recently from the Dominican Republic. This booklet and the prayer cards were used and distributed to 6,000 kids. 2,000 of them made an initial commitment to Jesus. I mean, how good can it get? This is being used in ways way beyond we could ask or imagine. We are privileged to be part of it.

Dr. James Dobson: Jerry, this must thrill you today.

Dr. Jerry Kirk: Oh, no, no. I am having the time of my life, Jim. And you asked about what do we mean by Covenant. 2 Chronicles 15:12 says they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers with all their heart and all their soul.

A business leader challenged me 50 years ago saying, "Do you want to follow Jesus that way?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you want to follow Jesus that way with me?" And I said, "Yes." And then he said, "Are you willing to hold me accountable and are you willing to be held accountable to that commitment?" The focus of the Prayer Covenant Ministry is Christ centered covenant prayer partnerships among adults and children that empower discipleship, transformation and evangelism. We believe this is the heart of Jesus. We believe it's the heart of the church and we believe God's going to pull it off. We do.

Dr. James Dobson: Somebody said at lunch the other day that we've lost a large percentage of the millennials. We dare not lose the next generation. We do everything we can to evangelize those who are approaching adulthood, but don't forget those kids.

Dr. Jerry Kirk: Amen. God has used Candy to touch our hearts to have this be a major focus.

Dr. James Dobson: Candy, let's get specific now. There are people who have been touched by what they've heard and would like to begin a prayer covenant with regard to children. How do they get these materials? Describe, if you will, the age ranges that you are talking about and how they can make use of these booklets.

Candy Marballi: I want to explain the book a little bit. It's divided into two sections. The first half of the book is just for kids, and I would say it would be grade school. The targeted age is four to 14, because the second half of the book is strictly a 10-week curriculum that takes pastors, leaders, teachers, moms, and dads through the 10 themes of the prayer. It is fully packed with worksheets, Q&A, action points, even a wrap that allows children to express their selves creatively, and the booklet is a condensed version, 24 pages, very complete also, all the themes, all the Bible stories written out, and then there are prayer cards.

Dr. James Dobson: Anything else about this? We're really coming to the end of the program. Anything else?

Rick Schatz: One other thought. I think one of the tragedies is that we, in the church, we don't believe Jesus' words when he says, "You must come as a child." We don't believe that and I think that's an important point to make.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Why do you suppose Jesus said that, Jerry? What is there about me as an adult that needs to think like a child? That's not intuitive, I mean, but there's great meaning to it. Explain it.

Dr. Jerry Kirk: Yeah. I really believe that the key there is humility. The key there is realizing our own need for forgiveness, our own need for God's love and grace toward us. That's what brings them into the family, and then coming into the family means to really join the family. It means to really love and care about each other. And what thrills me, Jim, so much about today is that the mothers, when they see this tool and how it can help them bring their kids to know Jesus and to love Him and to then serve Him and begin to influence other people.

Dr. James Dobson: I, in my book, *Legacy the Greatest Gift*, I call that job one. Regardless of all the other things you're trying to do with your children, what you're trying to teach them and the way you're trying to teach them manners and all the other things, but job one is what you just said, introducing them to Christ. We're out of time. Jerry, you have very good reason to care about this message. You've got 80 grandchildren, great-children. And what, I mean, 80. Describe that.

Dr. Jerry Kirk: Yes. We had five children and they're all married. We had 28 grandchildren, one by adoption from Ethiopia. We have 27 great-grandchildren, and there's your 80, but we've got two more on the way and we've got a few couples believing God wants to give them a child.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, life is not fair. I've got two and you got 80.

Dr. Jerry Kirk: I would like to have a hundred. Of course, I love kids.

Dr. James Dobson: You have helped train our whole family.

Dr. Jerry Kirk: Oh, my.

Dr. James Dobson: Rick, as a place to end, what is the guiding principle behind this entire concept of a prayer covenant and in this case a prayer covenant for kids? What drives it? There's got to be a foundational power behind it. What is it?

Rick Schatz: We believe very strongly, it is the words on both the children's card and the adult's card, and it says, following Jesus together. When we engage in prayer with one another, when we engage in ministry with one another, the Holy Spirit is with us. Too many of us believe that the gospel is just about Jesus and me, and it isn't. The gospel is about Jesus and the community of the body of Christ following Jesus together, like Jerry and I have done together for almost 50 years now, you and Jerry have done for years and years. That is the key to releasing the power in ministry one unto another. It is following Jesus together.

Dr. James Dobson: I don't think I can say it better or end the program better than that. Dr. Jerry Kirk, my great friend. Rick Schatz known not quite as long, but I love him like a brother and Candy Marballi, thanks for being with us and we will do it again.

Roger Marsh: In Philippians chapter four, verse six, the apostle Paul writes some words that are usually very familiar to most of us. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition with Thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

If we can teach our children how to pray in good times as well as times of need, they will be much better equipped to live a Christian life once they reach adulthood. Ultimately, we strive to join the Lord when our time on Earth is through, and having a robust prayer life here on Earth is one of the keys to making that dream a reality.

Now, you've just heard the conclusion of a two-part conversation with Dr. James Dobson and his guests, Dr. Jerry Kirk, Candy Marballi, and the late Rick Schatz. If you'd like to learn more about the Prayer Covenant or to listen to any part of the program you might've missed, simply visit our website at [drjamesdobson.org/family talk](http://drjamesdobson.org/family-talk). As we conclude today's edition of The Family Talk, I'd like to welcome back a very special guest to the studio. He's the newest member of the team here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, Dr. Owen Strachan. Dr. Strachan is our new senior director of the Dobson Culture Center. And Dr. Strachan, it's good to have you with us here on the team, but also here on the Family Talk Program today.

Dr. Owen Strachan: Thank you so much, Roger. My joy to be here.

Roger Marsh: Now, you are a parent, you're a husband, a father. You've also got three teenagers at home. I mean, you know, you are right in the thick of this. Why is it so important for us as parents and grandparents to understand what exactly our kids are going through in the world today?

Dr. Owen Strachan: Yeah. You could call me a survivor if you wanted, a survivor of teenagers. I'm being silly. I love my teens and they're great kids, and we're having a blast in these years. And honestly, that's a part of what we need to articulate in this day and age is that you don't need to fear the family. There's going to be ups and downs. There's going to be trials, but fundamentally, God has brought you into a pathway that has so much joy and gladness and fulfillment on it, powered by his grace.

Roger Marsh: Amen to that. Well, we look forward to hearing more from Dr. Owen Strachan in the coming weeks here on The Family Talk broadcast, talking about the Dobson Culture Center. If you'd like to learn more about the work that's already being done in this exciting new initiative, go to drjamesdobson.org/culture-center. And while you're there, you can sign up for Dr. Owen Strand's free weekly newsletter, Lighting Up Culture. Get the process rolling when you go to drjamesdobson.org and click on the link for the new Dobson Culture Center.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for being a faithful listener of Family Talk. Thanks so much for your prayers and financial support as well. Feel free to make a donation online to support this ongoing ministry during these lean summer months when you go to drjamesdobson.org or call 877-732-6825. From all of us here at the JDFI, hope you have a blessed weekend, and be sure to join us again Monday for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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