



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Finding New Intimacy in Prayer – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Henry and Dr. Norman Blackaby

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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: As Christians, we know that prayer is vital to our relationship with the Lord, but here's a question. How often do we actually pause to listen to what God says back to us? Is prayer a one-sided conversation? Well, today here on Family Talk, you're going to hear a special conversation about the power of prayer, a classic discussion featuring our host, psychologist, and best-selling author, Dr. James Dobson, and a discussion he had on the topic of finding new intimacy in prayer with the father/son duo of Drs. Henry and Norman Blackaby. Now, while he was with us, Dr. Henry Blackaby led Blackaby Ministries International where his pioneering work helped countless of believers experience God in profound new ways. He went home to be with the Lord last February.

Dr. Norman Blackaby, formerly the ministry's vice president, now shapes young minds as a professor of Christian ministry at East Texas Baptist University, continuing his family's legacy of spiritual leadership. And together they authored the book *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus*, which will be the heart of our discussion on today's program. Now during the next half hour, you'll hear the Blackabys share their family's deep connection to prayer, drawing from generations of faithful ministry and personal encounters with God. They'll also offer fresh perspectives on how we can truly connect with God through meaningful prayer. So thanks for listening in for today's special conversation about finding new intimacy in prayer here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Henry, prayer has become the focal point of your life. Why? Why is that what you talk about more than almost anything except what comes out of prayer, which is the experience of knowing God?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: Well, it touched my life very early when I was reading the Life of Jesus and realized that prayer was the essence of His life. That every great movement, every great next step in His life was preceded by prayer. And several times the Father called Him and said, "I need to talk to you." And in that time of prayer, He made some significant decisions. And I knew that God was going to conform me to the image of His son, and I knew that He would not conform me to the image of His son in every area of my life except my prayer life because that was so essential to Jesus. And then I thought, "Well, I don't know that I can have a

prayer life like Jesus." And then I realized in the Scripture, God says, "I've put my son within you." And like the Apostle Paul, it's no longer I who live but Christ living out His life in me. And it just overwhelmed me to realize if Christ is living out His life in me, then I will experience His heart in prayer.

Dr. James Dobson: In preparation for today's program, I've read a little bit about your background and how you came to this moment. And you've got an incredible heritage of Christian service and prayer from your father and grandfather going on back. And then your children, you have five children, four of whom are boys and all have doctorates from seminary. And the fifth is a girl with a master's degree from a seminary. And, of course, Norm, you're one of them. So I mean you all have really put this into practice at home, haven't you?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: No question about that. I've spent hundreds of hours praying for my children and then praying with them. Prayer is really the essence of our home. Many times my children would get up early and find that I was alone with the Bible and in prayer, and most of the time I was praying for them even though they didn't know that. But their lives have come out of our prayer life. And so our home was basically saturated in prayer.

Dr. James Dobson: Norm, you're the recipient of some of those prayers. So what was that like?

Dr. Norman Blackaby: Well, it is something to know when you're going through struggles in life and you have parents that pray for you. And the example that dad just shared, that we would get up early in the morning, and it doesn't matter what time you get up, and even to this day when I visit their home, I know no matter how early I get up, dad's already up praying.

And I'll just give one example. This last year my daughter's been very ill, and we had to rush her into the hospital. About 1:00 in the morning we finally took her to the hospital, and she had to go and have an IV put in and was very sick. At 1:00 in the morning there's not many people up, but I knew that my dad was two hours ahead in a different time zone. And by the time they put the IV in and I got to a phone and I called my dad at I think 4:30 or 5:00, he was already up praying. And I don't know about your heart, but my heart was that when I was in emergency in my family, my dad was already up praying, and I knew that I could count on him to pray for my little girl.

And so our life has been impacted by watching, but also my life we make sure that our kids know when they get up mom and dad have already been up praying, and I want that same example for them.

Dr. James Dobson: I've had that same heritage as some of our listeners know. My dad is buried alongside my mother in Olathe, Kansas, and there's a little plaque as his footstone that said he prayed. And he asked for that because that was the hallmark of his life. And I knew he was out there praying for me. And I knew that he was praying for my kids and my mother too. So I've grown up with that, and

my grandfather was a deeply committed man of prayer, and my great-grandfather who died a year before I was born, prayed every day between 11:00 and 12:00 for future generations, for his family, for those not yet born. He was praying for me. And toward the end of his life he announced that the Lord had promised him that every one of us would be deeply committed Christians. Henry, are you praying for your future generations?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: And Psalm 78 commands us to pray for our children and their children and those not yet born. That's the command of God, and I've taken that one very seriously. And, of course, we now have 14 grandchildren, and we're praying for each one of them. And the oldest two have already sensed the call of God into ministry in their life. They're 20 and 18. And someone said, "You don't expect all of them to respond to God's call, do you?" And I said, "I do indeed." That's what the Scripture says, that if one generation walks with the Lord, it automatically creates the opportunity for all the descendants to experience the same blessing of God. That's the promise of God, and I don't take that one lightly. So I live my life very intensely, and I know it's going to affect my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren if God gives us the time to see that.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I want to go right to the heart of what I know we're going to talk about today because it is of such import, and I just pray. We had prayer before we came on the air today because what we're going to talk about is of incredible significance, and it has to do with repentance. It is not enough to pray for our nation, which is what we all should do. We're told to pray for our leaders and those that are in authority over us, but it needs to be a personal prayer as well, praying for ourselves that we would be acceptable to the Lord.

I know you can't earn your salvation. I'm clear about that, but it does give me great satisfaction when I think I've pleased Him, when I think He looks at me and smiles. It isn't always the case, but there are times when you feel His pleasure, and I think we ought to ask the Lord to show us what He wants of us, speak to that in terms of where we are as a nation because you're very concerned about the shallowness of our prayer life.

Dr. Henry Blackaby: Boy, you're absolutely right. It begins with a personal encounter with God, and I've been impacted with what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:9 and following where he says, "I always seek to please the Lord because I know that we all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in the body, whether they're good or bad, and then he adds, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." And that has hit me because I believe if every believer stood before the holiness of God and allowed God to cleanse their life personally, their life would have an increasing impact because the kingdom of Heaven is like leaven. If God has one life wholly yielded to Him, then the impact of God's presence in their life will have an ever-increasing impact in family, friends, community, church. And so I have always sensed I need to have my life thoroughly cleansed before God. Then I'll watch to see how God wants to use my cleansed life to touch others.

Dr. James Dobson: Norm, do you agree that we're often entirely too casual in our attitude toward God? He is the king of the universe. Everything that exists does so at His pleasure. He is not just the man upstairs, He is a holy God. And the angels said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God." There's a reverence that is demanded there. I want to tell you all, and I want to say this of my Christian brothers and sisters, I still do not like and will never, ever feel good about using God's name to punctuate a sentence. Oh, God, you hear it all the time. Of course Hollywood throws it out there, and you can hardly escape it, but I hear Christians doing that, and that is wrong. That's evil. That is not what the Scriptures tell us or even the commandment to honor the Lord thy God know. Speak to that, Henry, you must be hearing it as well.

Dr. Henry Blackaby: I think our prayer life, the way we approach prayer, is an abomination to God. For instance, I think too much of the prayer is on the base of unbelief. Lord, be with us today. And I think be with us? He has promised already He's going to be with us. Why don't you say, "Father, thank you that you are with me. Help me to recognize and respond to Your presence." Or oh, Lord, come in power. And God says, "I never come any other way. Why are you asking me for what I've already given you?" And so when I listen to God's people pray, it is very careless, very casual, and basically it is slinging together religious clichés that people have heard, and I don't have a sense that they know the awesome intimacy and fear of a holy God.

Dr. James Dobson: Even Jesus said that we know not how to pray as we ought and that He prays for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Dr. Henry Blackaby: Yeah. See, I think, Jim, that many who may be listening are concerned about their children, and I'd say, "Do you know that God is far more concerned about your children than you are?" And do you know that He is deeply involved in every one of your children right now? And that you need to be saying, "Father, thank you for your deep involvement in the life of my children. Help me to recognize when you're at work. Help me to respond to what you're doing." And when you know that God is deeply involved in the life of your children, then you look to see for his activity. And I believe that with every one of my children.

And I saw some moments when I knew clearly God was at work in their life, and I've made some changes in my life immediately to respond to what I saw happening in the life. It may be when you're praying with them at night and you hear certain prayer from your eight-year-old. That prayer could never have come with that kind of an intensity unless God was at work in their heart. So when you hear that prayer, you immediately become a partner with God. And I think that's why all of our children have followed the Lord in part because my wife and I were very sensitive to the deep involvement that God has in our life, so we tread with a trembling knowing that God is working in the life of our children.

I do this with businessmen. They can see God at work in the business community, but we do take it too casually and too carelessly just in the way we talk.

Dr. Norman Blackaby: I think too with that in Hebrews 5 it says Jesus was heard because of His reverent submission or godly fear. And looking at His prayers, He knew that the heavenly Father would hear an answer. But a lot of times we pray, but we have no intention of that reverent submission when we pray. And like Dad was sharing, when God makes something aware or an adjustment for your kids, are you willing to reverently submit to what God has showed and adjust your life immediately? And it seems that as we pray, God looks, and He knows our heart when we pray, and if we're praying with no intent on following what He showed us when we pray, then we shouldn't expect God to be bringing the answers. But if He knows in our heart that when we start to pray, we come with that fear that you were mentioning, that awe and wonder of God, but our heart is Lord, whatever you show us in this prayer time, the answer is yes. Then we can come with confidence and boldness knowing that He'll hear and He'll answer.

Dr. James Dobson: That's a little intimidating, isn't it? Because we are approaching the throne of God, and do we know how to pray? Offer us some instruction in how the Lord would want us to speak to Him. Frequently, it's just a list of things we need Him to do. I need a job, and I've got this health problem and a number of things. I don't know that that's wrong, but that's not the essence of prayer.

Dr. Henry Blackaby: No. The essence of prayer is God making a provision for us to stand in the throne room and let Him lay over our heart His mind and His heart. And when I approach God that way, whatever I have brought to God is immediately altered when He lays His heart and mind over mine, and I pray totally different. The first encounter with God in prayer is for God to talk to me, not for me to talk to God. If we start with the focus on God and what's on His heart, then our whole prayer for our life is totally changed. And I pray different for my children when I know the mind and heart of God for my children. And I'll go through the night praying for one of them, and the Lord will lay on my heart what's on His heart for that child. And He does. He does give us guidance.

Dr. James Dobson: You mean that literally?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: I do.

Dr. James Dobson: You pray through the night?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: I do. I've done that many a time and especially if I knew one of my children was going through some difficult time, certainly when our daughter at 16 had cancer, and we didn't know what the outcome-

Dr. James Dobson: Was that Carrie?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: Carrie. We didn't know what the outcome would be. A couple of her girlfriends same age with the same cancer died, and I was praying very much that God would help me as a parent to see what God was doing in her heart. And so I was listening to hear what was on her heart, and she had a huge sense of stewardship. She honestly believed that God let her live for a purpose. Well, how then should I behave as a father? God just showed me what He was doing in her life, and that set the agenda for what I do. And so I've walked with her ever since. And now she's a career missionary in Germany with two little children and a husband there. And so prayer is for God to lay on our heart what's on His mind and His heart.

I think of a Scripture that has impacted me from first Samuel 2:35 where God says, "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to what's on my mind and my heart." And prayer is God's provision for me to stand in His presence and know what's on His mind and heart.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we've been talking about having a Christian heritage, which I was blessed to have, and Dr. Blackaby, you obviously have been blessed, and that means Norm that you have as well.

Dr. Norman Blackaby: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you say to the people out there who have found the Lord as a first-generation Christian and did not have that kind of Godly heritage? Are they missing something that God can't provide for them? Are they limited in some way?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: No. I would say to them immediately, God may have saved you on purpose to be the first generation so that your life can begin a whole series of generations that do walk with the Lord. Because you didn't have it doesn't mean you couldn't be the one who could start that. And just say, "Lord, with all humility, You have saved me even though I didn't have this kind of heritage that I'm aware of, but, oh, Lord helped me to be the very first to begin a series of generational things that will honor You."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, what do you say to the person who does not yet know the Lord? And there are a lot of them listening to us right now who say, "You just don't know the life I've lived. You do not know the sexual things I've done. You don't know the dishonesty in my life. I've cheated many people, cheated on my taxes. I've done many wicked evil things." And you're talking about a holy God. I don't think a holy God could forgive me or accept me because I'm not worthy of Him. There's no way I can undo all the things that I've done. I am hopeless, and I am likely to just continue in the life that I've lived. Well, is there anything I've got to do? Do I have to go out and do a bunch of good things? There's a lot of penance. Or am I required to earn this in some way?

Dr. Henry Blackaby: The Holy Spirit always is present by God's assignment to draw a person who has never known what it means to be forgiven, to draw them to Christ. And when God teaches them, he opens their mind to believe that what God did when He made His son sin for us who knew no sin, that we could be made the righteousness of God in Him. Somehow the wonderful Holy Spirit of God opens the mind and suddenly they understand it, and they respond and believe. And with brokenness they say, "You mean that with all of my sin he put all of that on his son so that if I wanted to repent, all of my sin has already been taken care of and that I could be cleansed and made free?" And they'll sob and weep and believe and say well, the key is, do you believe God that He did for you what He said He did when His son died? Do you believe that? Well, yes. Well, then ask Him to forgive you not on the basis of your goodness or your works, but on the basis of His pure love for you.

Dr. James Dobson: That's why they call it the Good News. The gospel means good news.

Dr. Henry Blackaby: God's good news.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I am keenly aware that there's somebody out there who has never really understood what it was like to enter into this relationship with Jesus Christ to be clean again. And there are people who are broken now who recognize their own wickedness and their own disgust with themselves who are saying, "You mean I could really be clean?"

Dr. Henry Blackaby: I've said to many a person, you're just one prayer away from being totally transformed. Just one prayer away. But if suddenly it makes sense and you feel you're being drawn to Christ as your savior, you are experiencing the activity of God drawing you.

Dr. James Dobson: Pull off the road at the next off-ramp, find a parking lot and bow your head and pray a simple little prayer. It doesn't have to be eloquent. Or if you're at home in a kitchen or you are even at work, bow your head and say, "Lord, forgive me. I'm a sinner. I have nothing to bring to You. There's nothing I have that You need. Nothing that you couldn't do for Yourself, but You want a relationship with me. You care about me. You know me. You have known me since before I was born, and Your promise says You will do this for me. I believe, and I accept it." Wouldn't it be incredible to know there were hundreds or thousands of people listening to us right now who have accepted that invitation?

Roger Marsh: No matter who you are or what you have done, remember, you are always just one prayer away from a new life in Jesus Christ, and if you prayed with Dr. Dobson just now to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior or if you'd simply like to learn more about having a relationship with him, we would love to connect with you here at Family Talk. Give us a call at 877-732-6825. A member of our Constituent Care Team will be happy to talk with you and to pray with you. Again, that number is 877-732-6825. Or keep in mind, you can also contact us through the contact page on our website. Send us an email there at drjamesdobson.org. Now, if you've been moved by our conversation with Drs.

Henry and Norman Blackaby today here on Family Talk, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, and you can hear the program again.

You can also learn more about Blackaby Ministries and the book that shaped today's discussion, *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus*. Again, you'll find that information and more when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. You can also hear that program again on the Family Talk app. And keep in mind, we have two new apps to share with you here in 2025. The first, of course, is our family app where you find the Dobson Marriage Podcast and the Dobson Parenting Podcast along with the Dr. Dobson Minute in English and in Spanish. You can find those in the App Store. Soon you'll find them in Google Play as well.

And also, if you like to use the YouVersion Bible app, remember, you can now follow JDFI on that YouVersion Bible app and join the more than 75,000 people who have subscribed to three-day devotional plans with practical biblical insights to strengthen marriages and equip parents. You'll find more information about that app as well when you go to Dr. James dobson.org.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here as we continue the conversation featuring Dr. Henry Blackaby and Dr. Norman Blackaby and our own Dr. James Dobson, talking once again about experiencing prayer with Jesus. That's coming up next time right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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