Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Giving Thanks for God's Blessings – Part 1
Guest(s): Dr. R.T. Kendall
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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, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, wishing you a happy Thanksgiving from all of us here at the JDFI. We're so grateful that you've joined us for this special broadcast. You know, today as families gather to celebrate God's blessings, we're remembering that gratitude isn't reserved for the easy seasons of life. Sometimes giving thanks requires trusting God when nothing else really makes sense. Dr. Dobson welcomes his longtime friend, Dr. R.T. Kendall. Today, they will consider what Scripture means when it calls us to give thanks in every circumstance, not necessarily for every circumstance. This is an encouraging message for anyone, especially those carrying a burden this holiday. So let's listen in now as Dr. James Dobson talks with Dr. R.T. Kendall on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. R.T. Kendall is back with us. He is the author of the best-selling book, *Total Forgiveness*. Came here and did two days of broadcasting with us on forgiveness. That was the number one program of the year in that year. And I think you lost out in the last month of that year. Somebody else nudged you out. You wound up number two for that year.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, I totally forgive them.

Dr. James Dobson: Out of 260 broadcasts, that's quite impressive. But he's been here for other purposes and other programs, and we have one today that we're going to really enjoy and that people are going to find very, very helpful. I need to introduce him. He was the senior pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, which is just a block or two away. Buckingham Palace. That's where I met him. I went there on a Sunday morning at the invitation of Lyndon and Celia Bowering, who have now also become great friends in this triangle. And we instantly fell in love with this man. I think you called me up to the front of the church that night and kind of interviewed me about the family. Do you remember that?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: That's right. Well, it was one of the greatest honors of my 25 years having you in the congregation. And so I couldn't resist doing that.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's a historic pulpit there in London. You are an American and yet you were for 25 years in that position. He also greatly influenced my book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, and I dedicated that book to him because he gave me the concept of the betrayal barrier, those moments when you hit the wall. When God doesn't make sense, when you can think about it the rest of your life and you can't figure out what God's done. The notion that you can get Him kind of down to a formula and then from that point on, you know, he is not the sovereign Lord. He is sort of a tool. Maybe that's an overstatement, but there are moments when you can't track Him, but you can trust Him when you can't track Him. And that concept came largely from Dr. Kendall. And I was writing that book in London at that time. But he's here again now. He's retired from the ministry directly, or at least the pastorate. And he's back here in the United States, lives in Florida, and is busier than ever, right, R.T.?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, you've helped make me known in this country, Dr. Dobson. I don't have words to tell you how thrilled I am to be here again and such an honor to be on this broadcast yet another time. When I was here last, I urged people to pray for you. I received countless letters from people who say, I do.

Dr. James Dobson: You understand why I keep inviting this man back. I don't know what I did to deserve that, R.T., but thank you for that. I see the evidence of what you said on the air because I just got back from a trip to Washington, D.C., and everywhere I turned, somebody said, I'm praying for you every day. And I could get choked up thinking about that. People out there who don't really know me, are on their knees praying for this ministry and praying for us. I don't understand that, but thank you for that gift.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: It's my privilege.

Dr. James Dobson: As a matter of fact, prayer is very, very central to your life, I know, and your relationship with the Lord. And you shared with me a little book that you have written on prayer and that's not what we're here to talk about today. We want to talk about one of your other books, but what's the title of this book?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, it's something I casually mentioned to you. It's called *Strength for Your Day.* Louise really did this. She compiled great Christian prayers over the last 2,000 years. A dozen or so are contemporary people. Anyway, there's a prayer for every day of the year. It's a great Christmas present, if I could say so.

Dr. James Dobson: Let’s make that available to people. Again, that isn't what I planned to focus on today. But, R.T., we want to talk to you about another book that you have written that will be so relevant to many, many people, and especially to those who are hurting today. I'm always mindful of the fact that we come before these microphones talking to people in every aspect of the human condition. Some are dying. Some have lost spouses and they're alone. Some have children who are on drugs, some of them are just despondent and depressed. Some are going through great financial difficulties. Some of them are hurting in any way you can describe. And we know that because they write to us. Now, you know,

with a couple hundred thousand letters and phone calls and forms of communication per month, we hear everything. People can tell us things they can't tell anybody. Sometimes they can't even tell a spouse. And they write us to talk about the gambling addiction of their husband or wife or the pornography addiction. They're going through hard times. And you have written a book that I think will speak to those folks, but it doesn't make much sense, frankly. The title says, *Just Say Thanks!*

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, I'll tell you, I write books to change lives. This book parallels *Total Forgiveness*. You kindly mentioned that. That book changes lives. I have found wherever I offer this book to friends or when I preach on it, people come up to me by the dozens, and they had not thought of this. It is one of the most extraordinary things, but I can understand because I hadn't. Here's how it started. When I was at Westminster Chapel, we were going through Philippians. And when we got to chapter 4, verse 6, and I preached on this great verse, “Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your request to God.” When I was preaching, and that phrase “with thanksgiving” leaped at me, I had never been so convicted over anything in years how the most fundamental things I just took for granted. And I began to see that I hadn't really thanked God as I should, and I felt so ashamed.

And as a result of that, the very next day, I made a vow. that I would be a thankful person. I would make up for the years that I had just taken for granted God's goodness to me. Now, I keep a journal. What I do now at the beginning of every day, I go through the journal that I write and thank Him for every single thing for the day before. It only takes a minute or two. It has changed my life. And when I tell that to people, they start doing it. And they come to me and say, I never dreamed it would make such a difference. And so it's just a matter of saying thank you to the Lord. And so I've written this book to encourage people to do it, and we all need to be taught and to show how you can thank God.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, the apostle Paul, in writing the Scripture that you just read, made a little mistake there. He didn't really mean to be thankful in everything. That's a typo or something.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: No, no, no.

Dr. James Dobson: He didn't really. He couldn't have meant that, right?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Well, you need to know that in 1 Thessalonians 5, he says, “in everything give thanks.” He didn't say for everything. give thanks. This is very important. He says, give thanks in all circumstances. So that means that in the worst condition, you remain a thankful person because there are still things you can thank him for. And I say to anybody who is in the depth of despair, one day you're going to see that this too, not only will it pass, but it will work together for good then you will be thankful. And, you know, we say when it comes to giving to the Lord, you cannot out-give the Lord. I've found you cannot out-thank the Lord because

there's a sense in which God cannot stand praise. You start praising Him and thanking Him, He's going to bless you more than ever.

Dr. James Dobson: In my introduction, I described some of the terribly difficult circumstances, just a few of the troubles that people are dealing with who are listening to us today. Do you really mean to be thankful in each of those people who are dying of cancer, people who are going for chemotherapy, people whose little children are in the hospitals around your city who don't even know why they hurt? Are you really saying in everything? Is Paul saying in everything?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: In everything, give thanks, not for everything. Big difference. In the circumstance, you still remain a thankful person. And you talk about something that honors God. This does it. He loves it when we are not complaining, we're not shaking our fists at Him and saying, how could You do this to me? But it's like Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” And that is what is honoring to God and the person who can learn to do that. And there's always things we can be thankful for. It's like the old hymn, “count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.” Just start thanking Him and you'll be amazed. And it is a life-changing operation.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you say to those who say that's somewhat hypocritical? I am depressed. I am struggling. I am losing it. And I get on my knees and say, thank you, Lord, for this terrible thing that's befallen.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: No, I didn't say you thank Him for it.

Dr. James Dobson: You know I'm pushing you, don't you?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Here is what Paul said. It's 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 18. “Give thanks in all circumstances.” So that in the worst situation, there's still things you can thank Him for. And that shows faith. What makes faith faith is when you're thankful without all the evidence, when you don't have the answered prayer. And you just say, Lord, I don't understand it, but I know You love me. I know that this too will work together for good because Your Word says it. And when we can thank Him in a situation like that, then we come forth as gold. Or to quote the book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, “When he doesn't make sense, He is testing us. It's like with Hezekiah. The Lord left him to test him to see what was in his heart. And the day will come that we will thank Him for that moment.”

I remember when Louise and I were in our worst situation in Westminster Chapel, our hardest and deepest hour. And that's when my friend Joseph Zohn said, “R.T., you must totally forgive them.” Who would have thought that that turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me? It turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me. And I would say to anyone who's hurting right now, I do understand what you're going through, and I'm not pointing the finger, and I'm not moralizing. I'm saying this, the degree to which you can show God that you love Him though you don't understand it. The day

will come. He will honor you for that. You will come forth as gold, all because you were a grateful person in a situation like that.

Dr. James Dobson: We were very privileged to have Chuck Colson, another great friend, here on the broadcast. And he talked about having been a young hotshot attorney, a constitutional lawyer who, after he got his law degree, rose to the top and found himself shortly thereafter as the primary advisor to President Nixon. He was 10 or 15 feet away from the president. His office was right there in the West Wing. And he had the whole world at his feet. He was one of the most powerful people in Washington. And of course, all of that came crashing down and President Nixon had to resign and many of those assistants to the president were prosecuted and went to prison and Chuck Colson was one of them.

So here he had reached this lofty height, didn't know the Lord. And found himself shortly thereafter in a jail cell, unable to even see his family. And he talked about that and said incredibly, “I thank God for Watergate. That was a turning point in my life. God used that in my life, and He was able to get a hold of me there where He wouldn't have under any other circumstances.” There is an example of hard, hard times and experiences working together to accomplish his purposes.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: What honors God is when we do it in bad circumstances. You see, here's what I maintain. This too will pass. And if you will trace the rainbow through the rain. You will see that this works together for good, just like Chuck Colson. He is thankful for a Watergate. He wasn't thankful at the time, but he's thankful now. This is why Paul says, in every circumstance give thanks, because the day will come, this too will work together for good to such a degree you'll even thank him for it. I don't expect you to thank him for it now, but one day you will, but you can do it in it.

Dr. James Dobson: What's the difference between the two?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: The difference is this. In the situation at the time, we look at the Lord and say, “Lord, I don't know why You let this happen, but I know You're there. I know that you sent Your son into the world to die on the cross for my sins. I know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. And though I don't understand this, I know that this is going to work together for my good, so I want to praise You now. I want to praise You now. If Job could say, ‘though he slay me, yet will I trust him,’ I want to do that like Job did. He came forth as gold, and at the end of the day, he was the most thankful person of all. And so the purpose of this book, *Just Say Thanks*, is to encourage us to start thanking Him now, and the day will come. We'll be glad we did. It develops an intimacy with God. This is the way you get to know the Lord. This is the reason for the betrayal barrier. This is the reason God allows Himself to be misunderstood. Martin Luther used to say you must know God as an enemy before you can know Him as a friend. And when He

hides His face and you still trust Him and say, I know there's a purpose in this. He smiles, and one day He will show that smile, and you'll be so glad you waited.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's powerful stuff because that comes right out of the Word. Let me ask you to talk directly to some of those people that I referred to or at least their circumstances at the top of the program. There are little widows out there. like my mother, whose whole life was her husband. She loved my dad enough to die for him. And they were sitting together at a table, a birthday party for his sister. And he first held the baby, and then he prayed, and then he leaned into my mother's arms and into her plate and off on the floor, and he was gone. Just like that. No warning. Just he's suddenly in Heaven. And she was absolutely lost because she built her whole life around him. And she was lonely. She said, my house has lost its soul. There's so many people out there, so many widows that we hear from who are right there. And the world they knew and the friends that they knew as a couple and the experiences they had in having babies and raising them and in the early church work and all those things, that's gone. And there are fewer and fewer people that remember their early days. You got anything to say to them?

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Yes. God understands that. When Jesus showed up at the tomb of Lazarus, Both Mary and Martha said, Lord, if you'd been here, our brother wouldn't have died. And you know what He did? He just wept. He didn't moralize them. He didn't say, what's the matter with you people? Don't you know I'm going to raise Lazarus from the dead in a few minutes? No, He was right where they were. And I would weep with any person right now. I would understand that to the hilt. I would say as lovingly and gently as I could, that God loves gratitude. And if somehow you can keep from saying anything that registers unbelief or accusing God, but just say, Lord, I don't understand this, but I know you let it happen for a purpose. And I'm willing to give You the benefit of the doubt that one day this too will work together for good. And I would say, Jesus does understand what you are going through. And even He Himself on the cross cried out, my God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? So I would say I do understand, but God loves a thankful heart. And as best as you can. Find something for which you are thankful and hang on to that. And the list will increase more and more and more. And the day will come that that which hurt you the most will be that for which you are most grateful. I promise.

Dr. James Dobson: And if not in this life, in the next. I mean, some people won't even live long enough to understand or to have the pieces fit together. They don't always fit, but they do always fit.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: It's only a matter of time. Only a matter of time. His word is at stake.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, R.T., this is so good because it is so practical and it affects so many people. It affects me, you know, and my circumstances. I don't know anybody who doesn't go through hard times. And if they haven't, they will. My pastor said there are two kinds of people in the world, those who are hurting and those who will hurt. So it's everybody. What do you do in a moment like that? You get

mad at God? You accuse Him? You walk away from Him. You say, I'm not going to talk to you. You're going to act like this. You own the universe, and you won't help me. And you get bitter, and you let Him kind of slip away from you. He doesn't, but you feel that way. And I think if you do what R.T.'s talking about, you'll find his presence comes in very, very near.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: The reward is worth waiting for, his presence. His very presence, and you realize how real God is, and you will say it was worth everything for this.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I tell you what's also worth waiting for. having you on the program tomorrow.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Because there's a lot more here that I would like to explore. The title of the book is *Just Say Thanks*. Dr. R.T. Kendall, best-selling author *of Total Forgiveness*. And now a new little book on prayer called *Strength for Your Day*: *365 Timeless Prayers and Conversations with God*. It's a great way to start the day. Dr. R.T. Kendall, thank you for being here. Let's talk. some more about thanks or the title of your book, Just Say Thanks.

Dr. R.T. Kendall: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we had a real treat from the archives listening to Dr. Dobson and his dear friend, Dr. R.T. Kendall, reminding us that gratitude isn't pretending that everything is fine. It's choosing to recognize God's goodness even when we're waiting for answers. This message matters on Thanksgiving Day, of course, but for some, there's an empty chair at the table. There's a burden weighing heavily on your heart. Wherever this holiday finds you, remember that God sees you, God loves you, and God welcomes your thanks, even when that thanks is given through tears. By the way, if you'd like to hear today's conversation once again, you can do so at drjamesdobson.org or by going to jdfi.org. And while you're on our website, be sure you also look for a special Thanksgiving message from Mrs. Shirley Dobson. That's the title of a video where Mrs. Dobson reminds us of how family traditions can help us slow down and recognize the blessings that God has placed in our lives. Also here on this Thanksgiving day, please know how grateful we are for everyone who makes the Family Talk broadcast possible and everyone who prays for and supports financially the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Those prayers and gifts help bring biblical encouragement and practical guidance to families all across America, and you can support the ministry with a tax-deductible donation, especially here on Thanksgiving Day. Do it securely through our website at drjamesdobson.org.

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, and happy Thanksgiving. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another 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.

Here's today's Dr. Dobson Minute with Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: I have in front of me George Washington's Thanksgiving Day proclamation from 1789 calling for that day of gratitude and appreciation to God. This is what George Washington said. “Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these states to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be, that we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks for his kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation.”

Roger Marsh: For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.