

**Dr. Robert C. Hamilton and Callie Grant**

Callie Grant: Welcome. You're listening to the Newborn Promise podcast, for building up new families in Christian faith.

Callie Grant: I'm so excited to have Dr. Robert Hamilton with us today. His video, How to Calm a Crying Baby, has amazed more than 31 million viewers around the world, and now he has a new book out to share even more wisdom and practical advice. The title is *The 7 Secrets of Newborns*, and it includes many surprises about the first year. Dr. Hamilton, thank you for being with us. We're so happy to have you.

Robert Hamilton: Well, first of all Callie, let me say, it is such a joy to be on your Newborn Promise Podcast.

Callie Grant: Qh, thank you!

Robert Hamilton: I'm really, really happy to be here, and I wish you all the very best back there in Texas.

Callie Grant: Oh, thank you Dr. Hamilton. Well, listen, after 30 years as a pediatrician, you still have a contagious enthusiasm for what you do, which is evident in your YouTube videos. Tell us what fascinates you most about babies.

Robert Hamilton: You know, when I think about this, I think that really the thing that fascinates me about children is life, that we're living, that we're alive. We're living in this world and I think that when I look at newborn children, babies are fresh human beings. They're newly formed with all the God given potential that we have and there's nothing more evident to me when I look at a child than just raw potential.

Callie Grant: Yeah.

Robert Hamilton: I'm also fascinated by the fact that babies are driven to move forward. They're driven to learn more. They're driven to accomplish more things, silly things, like reaching out and grabbing and grasping and rolling over and ultimately sitting and crawling and standing up and walking. They're manically kind of driven. That DNA that is deep in the soul and the heart of the human being is so evident with children, and I look at that and I kind of go, "Wow. This is fascinating. This is amazing to me." I think that I look at that and I kind of go, "Why?" You know? I wonder why are children driven?

Callie Grant: That's a good question. They seem to have it made, don't they?

Robert Hamilton: Yeah, they do, and I derive inspiration from young children. I really do. So, I think that is the tip of the iceberg of what fascinates me about children, but I'm also fascinated by the fact that they weren't there. Little babies, nine months before they pop out of their little mommies, they weren't in the world. They were a non-entity, and so that to me is equally fascinating and amazing.

Callie Grant: Oh yeah. Well, my daughter is 15 now, but I remember her first year like it was yesterday, so when I read about your book in the Wall Street Journal, I ordered it immediately and it was like a gift to relive that magical time of becoming a mother. But, I love that you included the expecting and new dad's experience. Would you describe how the dad's experience differs from the mom, aside from the obvious, and why those differences are so important?

Robert Hamilton: Well, you know, fathers and men in general, we really are spectators to the event of pregnancy and deliver. This is really a feminine territory, but the beauty is we're intimate spectators. We are engaging in something that guys don't really know much about. I mean, I'm thinking about guys kind of playing basketball together on a Saturday afternoon or playing golf or whatever. They're not thinking about babies. They're not thinking about pregnancy, I guarantee you that. But, we get to involve ourselves in a very intimate way with the changes that are going on with our wife. Well, it turns out too that men who engage that process are also going through incredible changes, things that are not really talked about very much, and not very obvious necessarily. But truth be told, we're going through this beauty of man and woman, engaging life and building a life together happens hormonally too, and I will tell you Callie, this is a little bit of a new understanding, but basically there are hormones which are changing.

Robert Hamilton: I mean, testosterone for example, which is the macho hormone which drives men to conquer and to go get their girl and all that kind of stuff. That actually begins to diminish during the final trimester of pregnancy, and continues to be lower. The serum levels of testosterone in men after their wives have had a baby actually go down, and they maintain that lower level for months after a baby is born. Another hormone, good old fashion oxytocin. Oxytocin in what we call the love hormone, and that is the hormone that drives women and the let down hormone and that hormone too, it goes up in men. Not to the levels it does in women, but it goes up in men, and that hormone actually prods men to bond more profoundly with their children.

Robert Hamilton: Oxytocin, by the way, is elevated in a graded response. Men who are heavily involved with their children, engaging them, you find that the levels of oxytocin are actually a bit higher. Men who are more distant from their children, they don't have that same bump.

Callie Grant: Interesting.

Robert Hamilton: A couple of other hormones, prolactin, which you think about as being a milk producing hormone in a woman, actually there's prolactin in men too, believe it or not.

Callie Grant: Wow.

Robert Hamilton: And that increases their alertness and -

Callie Grant: That opens possibilities.

Robert Hamilton: Yeah, this is kind of crazy, isn't it? And so that actually increases a little bit, and actually causes them to be more responsive to the cries of their children. Finally, the final hormone is called vasopressin, and this hormone is sometimes called the monogamy hormone, and it causes men to bond more fervently with their partner, with their wife, and actually to become more jealous for the mother of the child and the child, and actually causes men to be more apt to defend the mommy and baby should there be danger.

Callie Grant: Well, obviously having a baby is a massive transformation for a couple. How can they "baby proof" their marriage?

Robert Hamilton: You know, I think ... great question. I think that you have to plan. You have to be a little bit deliberate about this, and you plan time together. Go out to dinners together with friends. You have to make sure that you don't divorce yourself from your community. Literally, husbands and wives need to have a babysitter or a mother-in-law or somebody watch the child, take a short walk in the neighborhood, go to a movie. Even as the children get a little bit older you can run away for a night, a short vacation, to where ever you want to go, to the lake or to the river, the ocean. Those are all very, very important.

Callie Grant: They're all great ideas too. Well, what do you say, Dr. Hamilton, to couples who are having a child that everything is not going okay? They have discovered early on that their infant has special needs, or they find out even before the birth. What, in your experience, helps parents the most in those situations?

Robert Hamilton: You know, special needs children are, of course, a challenge. It doesn't fit what we were hoping for, what we were thinking. I mean, we all have these ideas that kind of circulate in our brain about what having a child will be like and if you have a child that is different from that idea, and they're all a little bit different. No child really fills that perfect idea that you think you thought it was going to be.

Callie Grant: That's true.

Robert Hamilton: But, when you have a special needs child, you have to kind of step back and reassess and you have to kind of take a deep breath and go, "Okay, how are we going to deal with this?" I find that my parents who do have special needs children are not necessarily feeling bad for themselves. Many of them kind of go, "This is my reality. I'm going to live with my reality." They're not necessarily depressed about it. But, I think you need to engage other resources. You need to really truly get out there and bring in the troops, if you will. I'm talking about family, friends.

Robert Hamilton: A very important thing that you can do is really engage other people who have been there. There are, fortunately, through the communication abilities we have in our world today, we can actually engage people who do have a child who has the same syndrome or the same problem, or whatever it may be, and listen. There is value. There's benefit. There's encouragement from people who have already been through it, and you have to lean on that. You have to go out and look for it.

Callie Grant: Oh, that's so true. And you know, the Newborn Promise project was created just for that reason, to come around parents and support them during this huge transformation that happens when they have a new child in their life, regardless of the physical condition.

Callie Grant: You write in your book, "The spiritual life of your child is important, even from the very beginning. A clear and unclouded faith in God yields great blessings throughout life, so don't wait to expose this dimension to your child." How have you seen faith influence the families coming to your practice Dr. Hamilton?

Robert Hamilton: Listen, I'm a person of faith. I believe that there is a God in Heaven who loves us. I believe in ... I'm a Christian. I believe that Christ came to Earth to show us really how to live and I think when he departed he left his Holy Spirit to guide and prod us along the way. So, I am a spiritual person. I think that causes you to tap into a deeper level of living, a deeper level of life, and I think that families ... I don't think, I see it. When I see families when they come to my practice and they have that sense of depth, that sense of purpose, if you will, they're stronger. They're more resilient. Their vision is a little bit higher vision and they're not living day by day. They're living in a different reality, if you will. They're living for a higher purpose, and you have to do that when you have children. You have to have a little bit of a bigger purpose. It can't be all about you anymore. It has to be about tomorrow. It has to be about your child.

Robert Hamilton: So, there's no question that I think the foundation of that marriage, that family, is stronger when you have a spiritual undergirding.

Callie Grant: Many of us can attest to that, that's for sure. I don't know how people who don't have faith in God can get through parenting. You know, expecting parents are in active seeking mode on many things, and they want to make sure they make the right choices for everything from a stroller to a pediatrician. If you were a new parent today, what would you look for in a pediatrician?

Robert Hamilton: You know Callie, I actually gave a lecture one time on how to choose a pediatrician, and there are a couple keys. Number one, the pediatrician must be an active pediatrician, someone who's working on a relatively consistent basis, that you know that they're going to be there for you in your time of need. So, you have to find out the availability of that doctor, number one. You could have a phenomenal doctor, famous doctor, whatever, but if they're away giving lectures 50% of the time, or they're never there for you, then even though they may be an amazing individual, access to them is limited. So, that's actually an important question.

Robert Hamilton: I think that the backup, who they have working in their office with them is very important. Doctors are like everybody. They do get a weekend off from time to time, and when you have a child ... I tell people all the time, children don't know the day of the week, and so when they decide to get sick, it isn't usually a Monday through Friday. They usually end up getting sick about 1:00 on a Sunday morning, right? So, you do need to make sure you know who the people who are backing them up.

Robert Hamilton: I think it's important too that you find a doctor who's engaged in the pediatric community, that they're attending lectures and teaching, if they have that option. People who are engaged in the community are all important. It's important too if you can, if the community, the norms of the community, allow parents to come and interview the pediatrician before they actually make that decision, that's a very valuable thing. You can have a person that you have heard about, reputation, whatever, but when you meet them, do you jive? Are you actually in sync with that person? I think people are pretty good at assessing that.

Robert Hamilton: Finally, the real kicker to choose a good pediatrician is don't ask anybody. Don't ask your friends or your family. Go talk to the nurses at the hospital. What I mean by that is you actually call labor and delivery, call the nursery at your local hospital where you're going to deliver, and talk to the charge nurse and say, "By the way, who do you guys recommend over there?" And say, "Don't give me one name, give me two, three, four names." You call the day shift, the night shift, and talk to a couple of the nurses over there independently and say, "Who do you recommend?" And I say this with a little bit of trepidation here, but they know who you are. They know how you act. They know when they ... under duress, what do they do? Do they throw things? Do they swear? Are they people of integrity? Do they call the nurses back? And they also know what you do. They also know are you a good practitioner? Do you make good decisions? So, they're kind of like ... they're really the people who know more than anybody.

Robert Hamilton: So, call them and get two or three names and then focus on those individuals, maybe go meet one or two of them, and you will find yourself a very fine pediatrician.

Callie Grant: That is a great idea, and one that I have never come across before, so thank you for that perspective. Well, you're a pediatrician who's after my own heart because of what you stressed about reading in your book, about reading to babies from birth. Our whole purpose, we were founded for that, so it's a passion of ours. I'm curious what has been your experience with the difference between families who read to their babies and those who don't.

Robert Hamilton: By reading to your children consistently, you really honestly increase their IQ because they hear, and you know this Callie -

Callie Grant: You're speaking my language.

Robert Hamilton: You know it, which is why I touched that nerve. But, because you're engaging them. They're hearing your voice. They're learning new words, and you literally prepare them for school, for sure, but you enlighten them. You enrich them. You are engaging their imagination. So, I will tell you that reading to children ... well first of all too, you're also with them.

Callie Grant: Oh yeah.

Robert Hamilton: And parents need to be with their children. They need to engage them in a very one-on-one way as much as possible because it is through that interaction that the children really grow, and become social and become human really. But, the reading time is really critical, and that should not end, by the way, when a child goes to kindergarten. That should continue even beyond that.

Callie Grant: Oh yeah, definitely.

Robert Hamilton: But, there are homes which are impoverished word-wise, to where the TV's on and there's very little interaction between parent and child. Those are families, those are homes, that really I will tell you they're putting their children at a disadvantage by keeping the television on all the time and not engaging their children. So, we want to, as parents, we want to be with them. We want to read to them. We want to talk to them. We want to really ... when you're not reading to them, you're narrating your life, is what I tell people to do.

Callie Grant: Yeah. Well, one surprising piece of advice in your book related to that for me, is that Parentese, or the way parents talk differently to their baby, is actually what babies need to hear. Explain that for us.

Robert Hamilton: Sure. Yeah, Parentese is how we draw out our words. Like when we're looking at a book, for example, and we are reading to our child or in my case my grandchildren now, I go "Look at the moon. Look at the sky." And you basically are articulating every part of that word and you're drawing it out. By doing that, you're teaching children correct articulation, number one, but you're also drawing them into what you're looking at. Okay? Parentese ... that's called Parentese, and it's really a universal phenomenon. It's different than baby talk. Baby talk is, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, la, la, la." It's kind of nonsensical. But, Parentese is actually more of an elongation, if you will, of the vowels and the words that you're trying to share with your child.

Robert Hamilton: If you do that, and you do that and children like that, they like the sing-song nature of that. That draws them in. So, that is what Parentese is all about and I will tell you, it's almost ... it's a phenomenon that happens almost without you even knowing it. People kind of do that naturally.

Callie Grant: Well, that's very interesting, how we're wired that way. Dr. Hamilton, you have a great vantage point from the span of your career, what is the most important thing that you want expecting and new parents to hear from you today?

Robert Hamilton: Well, here's what I think. Having a child is going to grow you up. It's going to change you in the most profound way that you could possibly imagine, all of which is good. You'll be a better person after you have a child. You're going to find yourself that you're more patient, more thoughtful, better able to multitask because you have to. You have to learn how to do that. You become more adaptable. I think you're more fun. I think you become a little more ... you laugh a little bit easier. You're more giving. You're less selfish. It changes you, because children, by their nature, require that you are in the moment with them and you have to divorce yourself from you. That is a profound and deep thing. There are very few things that can actually cause that to happen in your life.

Callie Grant: That's very true. Wow.

Robert Hamilton: So, marriage is another one of those wonderful moments.

Callie Grant: True.

Robert Hamilton: Same thing, kind of, but children are really there, and they're very needy people. You look at a ... I was with a mother a day or so ago, and she had like a two week old child. I looked at this child and I said, "This kid is just pathetic, isn't he? He can't do anything?" She smiled at me. She got my humor. But I go, "Really, human beings really are." We kind of lay there like we're fish on the table there, these little naked babies I look at. I go, "This kid can't do a bloody thing. He can't lift his head. He can't do anything." And it's so true that neediness of children causes us to invest in them and grow with them.

Robert Hamilton: So, the thing I think, for people who are about to have a child, you know what? Wonderful. It's a wonderful time of your life. I'm jealous. I wouldn't mind ... my wife and I have six kids, and I tell people we blew it. We should have had more.

Callie Grant: Wow. I know, it is a very special thing, and I remember being sort of gripped by that fact, that my daughter couldn't take care of herself. She was completely, utterly helpless. And I felt that way as a parent too. But, anyway, I knew ... that's when my faith grew then, I tell you what.

Robert Hamilton: Yeah.

Callie Grant: Well, I imagine you need to get on your way to patient appointments this morning, but we've enjoyed having you so much, and is there anything else that you would like to add before we close?

Robert Hamilton: No, other than thank you Callie for having me on. It's been a pleasure.

Callie Grant: You're wonderful. Thank you so much for your time and God bless you, your wife, and your children and grandchildren, and we pray that your great work continues for a long, long time.

Robert Hamilton: Thank you Callie, appreciate it.

Callie Grant: Thank you for listening to the Newborn Promise podcast. Learn more at grahamblanchard.com.