



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Be Still and Know God: Get Your Life Back – Part 2

Guest(s): John Eldredge

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- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Now here's something to think about, since the turn of the century, technological innovation and social media have profoundly changed our world. You can stay connected with loved ones or learn about current events right from your smartphone anywhere you are. But you know, many of us have become so immersed in our fast-paced digital world that we really don't know how to unplug and just relax anymore. Well, on today's edition of Family Talk, we're going to hear from our guest John Eldredge and his response to this increasing issue. John is a bestselling author, a speaker, a lecturer and counselor. He's also president of Wild at Heart Ministries. And now let's join John Eldredge and our own Dr. James Dobson on this classic edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: How, in what way has the world gone mad?
- John Eldredge: We're spending four to nine hours a day on our mobile devices, three hours a day using our apps. We are consuming 10 hours a day of media. That's enough data in one week to crash a laptop. It's the pace of life. It's the tsunami of media coming at us, and then in the midst of that madness you have what was, in the New Testament they go back to Lot and they say, "He was tormented in his righteous soul by all that he saw happening around him."
- Dr. James Dobson: Another translation says, "Vexed."
- John Eldredge: Yes.
- Dr. James Dobson: He was vexed in his righteous soul. Have you ever been vexed?
- John Eldredge: Frequently.
- Dr. James Dobson: That's different than being angry. It just means frustrated to your ears.
- John Eldredge: Yeah, that's right. All of that collectively. The basic premise of the book is this, to survive an hour like the one we live in, you have to have a life that's just saturated with God, but the hour we live in is perfectly designed to keep you

from having that life because of the distraction and the cell phones and the media and... Right?

Dr. James Dobson: Television, cable, computers, my goodness.

John Eldredge: My goodness. Here's where it began for me. I'm a grandfather now and loving it, but I found myself trying to play with my grandchildren and being distracted. I could give them my attention for about five minutes, and then I wanted to check my phone. I wanted to check the news. I wanted to see what was going on. I was a distracted grandfather and I didn't like it. And I started looking at all of my other habits and realized, oh my goodness, somewhere along the way I got trapped in this madness, that I came to like it. I liked the distraction.

Dr. James Dobson: You said that distraction is something we get obsessed with.

John Eldredge: Yeah, we do. For two reasons. One, because all the stuff that comes into your inbox every week, this fantastic video of this person jumping off a building or this amazing thing, it gets your attention, but also because the distraction keeps us from facing our lives. We'd rather be distracted than spend 10 minutes quiet with ourselves because we don't like what we find there, so we go back to the distraction.

Dr. James Dobson: What do we find there?

John Eldredge: Anger, depression, cynicism, fear, anxiety. The whole panoply of human brokenness is right there. And then I just realized instead of looking to God in a moment of quiet, one moment of quiet, I'm talking 30 seconds, I'd grab my phone again. And it was Nicholas Carr's book, he almost won the Pulitzer Prize for this book. It's called *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. And Carr did this immense-

Dr. James Dobson: Physiologically?

John Eldredge: Physiological changing the structure of the human brain to shorten our attention span, among other things, and get us addicted to the dopamine cycle of seeking the next thing on whose Facebook post of their cat reading a book while sitting on the toilet or some silly thing like that and we're absolutely captured by it. We are unable to get out of the madness because it's literally changing the way human beings think and our ability to pay attention to things, which was what was happening to me with my grandkids.

Dr. James Dobson: John, when I was at Focus on the Family a number of years ago, the director, or president of the organization called K-Love came to see me and we sat and talked. And he said, "Our audience will not hold still for a speaker, and there is only one speaker out there that they will listen to and it's you, for five minutes." Five minutes. How sad that I can't talk for 30 minutes about an intellectual subject or teach anything.

John Eldredge: It's not just a cultural crisis, it's a spiritual crisis because down through the ages, serious followers of Christ have believed that true discipleship and real transformation of our lives requires being able to give God our attention. And if we can't listen to a speaker for more than five minutes, you're going to have a really hard time praying, for example.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it explains why churches are diminishing in the number of people that come.

John Eldredge: And how the pressure on churches, by the way, to put on amazing services.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, entertain.

John Eldredge: Oh, you have to have a worship thing going on that rivals professional musicians. I mean, the pastor has to be brilliant or he doesn't have a chance. It's a spiritual crisis at its root, and I just want to help folks learn some very simple ways to get out of the madness.

Dr. James Dobson: At the beginning of the program we did yesterday, I thought we were going to be talking about this book and we talked about *Wild at Heart*, but I started it by quoting a very familiar verse, Psalm 46:10, which instructs us to, "Be still and know that I am God." Boy, if there's anything that contradicts the American or the worldwide phenomenon of busy, busy, frantic lifestyles, that's it. People can't hold still long enough to listen to the voice of God. I want to admit to you it's a problem for me too because I'm trapped in the same culture to some degree.

John Eldredge: Yeah, and it's coming into our phones and into our inbox every hour, the distraction's there. But here's the beautiful thing, the research that's coming out now that shows if you will be still for even a few moments, the cortisol levels in your body go down, you actually do begin to quiet down. It heals the frenetic brain, that way of life. If you'll just do that once a day, be still, before God-

Dr. James Dobson: It makes a difference.

John Eldredge: ... it will heal your soul.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's go back to what you said about the brain. How is the human brain affected by all this noise?

John Eldredge: For years, brain researchers thought the human brain was a fairly fixed reality, that after childhood... It's immensely pliable in childhood, but the previous consensus was after childhood it's a fairly fixed system. The good news is it's not. It's immensely pliable through most of your life.

Dr. James Dobson: You are absolutely accurate on that. I've read the same research.

John Eldredge: Right. The hopefulness on that has to do with healing trauma and also healing addictive behaviors because the brain can learn new ways, it actually forms new connections and you can get out of those things. So the way the internet works and the way people use their cell phones is training the brain to only pay attention for very short periods of time without something new being presented to it.

Dr. James Dobson: How does one go about getting out of this mad, mad, mad, mad world we live in?

John Eldredge: In chapter one, I set the bar very low. It's called the One Minute Pause, because I want people to realize it's accessible, it's doable, and we're teaching people to pause a couple of times a day, maybe when you pull into work in the morning before you walk in the door, maybe when you get home at night, pause. And we're teaching people 1 Peter 5 where it says, "Give all your worries and cares to God because he cares for you." Learning to turn it all over to the Lord. The desert fathers called it, benevolent detachment. I can do it for 60 seconds. That's all I'm asking. Okay? 60 seconds, you pause, you give Christ your attention and you say, "Jesus, I give all the madness to you. For right now, I release it to you."

Dr. James Dobson: My field is child development and I am very interested in how you protect kids from the madness that you're talking about. If you watch videos for children, cartoons included, it is flash, flash, flash. We're teaching children to be addicted to that kind of speed.

John Eldredge: Exactly. So here's the fun answer, the answer for kids, is the same as adults, by the way, it is nature, get outside. Your soul was literally, including your brain, was designed to live in the world God created and things like sunlight and the actual sounds of nature, birds chirping, a stream, rain, snowfall-

Dr. James Dobson: Wind.

John Eldredge: Yes, that is what heals the human soul. The big request is, get kids back outside, the World Health Organization announced 10 years ago now, so you know it's worse. We spend 93% of our lives indoors, and including childhood, so that if you live to be 100, you will have spent 93 of those years.

Dr. James Dobson: And most of them in an urban environment where they don't get outside. Last weekend I told you I had a chance to go to Texas, I was on a ranch there. Man, I experienced what you're talking about just being there. Shirley and I were there for four days and I absolutely loved it because there was something healing about it.

John Eldredge: Isn't it?

Dr. James Dobson: But most people don't have a chance to do that.

John Eldredge: But even, the research shows, even a 20-minute walk outside lowers the cortisol levels in your body. I work in an office building, but what I do is I go outside every day and walk around the building. I just take a walk outside, pay attention to what the weather's doing, let the wind kiss your cheek. One of the rescues is in the world God made, nature heals the human soul.

Dr. James Dobson: Cortisol is the hormone that affects the brain and puts you on an alarm reaction state. You're not able to relax when you're under the pressure of that hormone. You're telling me that just being outside reduces that level-

John Eldredge: It does significantly

Dr. James Dobson: ... of hormonal activity?

John Eldredge: So does pausing, so does practicing the psalm that you read. Just being still, our whole world right now triggers the fight or flight mechanism all day long. It's just that it's got everybody on hyper vigilance. Well, we can make choices to get out of that. We're not locked up. We're not in concentration camps. We could actually make choices about this madness and you can get your life back really rather easily.

Dr. James Dobson: One of them that I've done very successfully is I have refused to text. I'm the only person I know that will not do it. I see people clanking away on their cell phones, texting each other. It's slow and it absorbs them. I mean, it absolutely absorbs them. And I just will not do it. I got big hands and I don't like to hit keys anyway, so I just decided, I'm not going there. It frustrates people because they try to get to me that way, and I don't even know that they have texted me.

John Eldredge: But C. S. Lewis also considered himself to be a dinosaur and he was a man who changed his time. So you hold fast to that. Hold fast to that.

Dr. James Dobson: I do. I'm on the emails, so that's just another form. When you've got it in your pocket and your phone rings all the time, it consumes you.

John Eldredge: Mm-hmm. So here's another simple step, just turn off notifications, folks. You can check your phone at reasonable times during the day. You can go from a meeting to lunch and check your phone. You don't need notifications on 24/7 pushing things at you, "Here's the latest weather alert. Here's what your mom just posted on Facebook." You don't need that stuff. It's really quite simple.

Dr. James Dobson: And going back to children, how in the world do you control that? Because everybody they know is carrying a cell phone.

John Eldredge: Get them a flip phone. Don't give them a smartphone, folks. The technology actually is starting to swing the other direction. People are recognizing, I think smart businessmen and entrepreneurs are recognizing there are parents that

want an alternative route, and so there are phones that will give you access to some things, but not everything.

Dr. James Dobson: Great idea.

John Eldredge: Right, it's brilliant. Okay, you can still get ahold of mom and dad, but you do not need access to the internet.

Dr. James Dobson: And yet the Apple 9, 10, 11 all get more complicated and offer you more things to suck you in.

John Eldredge: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: I've got an ancient phone. I won't give it up.

John Eldredge: Yeah. But Apple's been pressured into your screen time report now. Due to pressure they give you every week, my iPhone gives me my screen time report to let me know, "Here's how you're doing." So here's one of the things we did, we actually developed an app, because we know people live on their phones, this is it. I can't change the world in the snap of my fingers, so we developed an app called the One Minute Pause. It's free, I'm not making a nickel off of it, and it guides people through 60 seconds of prayer and turning their attention to God.

Dr. James Dobson: How do they get it?

John Eldredge: Get on the App Store, it's for iPhones and Android. It's absolutely free. It's called One Minute Pause. And we made the sponsor of it my ministry, so it's not even connected to me, Ransomed Heart, it's our ministry. So it's just One Minute Pause by Ransomed Heart, and it is this beautiful time of prayer, of turning our attention to Jesus.

Dr. James Dobson: John, where does this lead if we go faster and faster and faster? Is it like an automobile engine where if you keep the pedal all the way to the floor, you'll eventually burn that engine out? Will there come a point of mass chaos if we don't get control of it?

John Eldredge: I don't think it will be chaos, I think it will be breakdown. I think human beings are finite. We were made immensely dependent by God. And I love this, you have to sleep every day. You have to drink water, you have to breathe there. All of our creation was intended to show us how dependent we are on our creator so that we would turn to him and walk with him. I think what's happening already in the incidences of depression and anxiety and the suicide rates, and you're just watching humanity saying, "I can't take it. I can't keep up. I just can't do it." And I actually think that's a good thing for people to get to the place that they say, "I can't keep up."

Dr. James Dobson: Think of Jesus as our model, frequently, he left the crowds, he left his disciples, he went up into the hills to pray. The first 40 days of his ministry were spent alone, absolutely alone where he prayed and studied the scripture. We don't know what else he did out there, but we do know that it shaped his entire ministry and Satan came after him at that time.

There's one illustration that means a lot to me. Jesus came down from the hill where he'd been praying and he came to the seashore and there were masses of people there to be healed. Who knows what diseases they had. Do you remember what he did? He walked past them and got in a boat and rode off, all these people that needed him, some were dying. He had had enough. He knew he had come to a point where he needed to regenerate and to be alone.

I've thought a lot about that. There was the illustration, the story of the woman who had an issue of blood and Jesus was walking by and she reached out and took hold of his garment and he turned around and said, "Someone touched me," and he healed her. And then I realized that the reason he knew she had touched him, his energy went out of his body. It cost him something to heal. We don't know the divine nature of that, but you can imagine having people follow you all day, every day begging for healing, and he knew that his body had to be maintained and he walked away from them. Have you ever heard that illustration before?

John Eldredge: Oh, I love it. I love it. I use it in my book. Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Christ knows what madness is like. I mean, there's thousands of people trying to get his attention, the constant crowds. It said at one point he could not go into the villages anymore, he had to sleep out in the woods. So he knows what it means to be hard-pressed. And he says, "Come to me and learn from me, take my yoke upon you. My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Dr. James Dobson: Since we read that there in the scriptures and we know it and believe it, God knows that we need rest too, doesn't he?

John Eldredge: Yes, he does.

Dr. James Dobson: Many ministers absolutely break their health because they can't slow down. Mrs. Jones is always in the hospital. My dad did that at 39 years of age, he was an evangelist and he did 20, 22 revivals per year and he got so worn out and tired... In those days, the evangelists lived with the pastor and he had kids who stood at the doorway while he was getting ready for bed. I mean, his life was really very difficult. And then he had to travel and he traveled in a car. And at 39 his health broke. It was an emotional breakdown, but it was actually a neurological thing. It took him two years to get out of it. I've seen up close and personal what happens when you abuse a human body, even with good things.

John Eldredge: Right, which is why chapter two in the book is called, "Benevolent Detachment: Learning To Let It Go." We get caught up in people's drama, we get caught up in the cultural drama, and at some point we have to recognize, we are not God. We can't save the world. We can't even carry it. And learning, good people with tender hearts and good consciousness carrying way too much and learning to truly, 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all their cares upon the Lord."

Dr. James Dobson: Have you tried to do that, John?

John Eldredge: Every day.

Dr. James Dobson: You have been a well-known speaker and writer, and there's no end to what you could be doing and people are calling you and asking you to come and speak and asking you to hold conferences, I know a little bit about that world because I've been there. Have you ever just sat down with your wife and said, "Wait a minute, let's talk this thing through. This is not right. We're going too fast. We're working too hard. Let's see what we can change." Have you ever done that?

John Eldredge: Last May.

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

John Eldredge: And we took June off. And we said to our team, "We're not well, we're actually burnt out. And we can't keep running at this pace. We've got to get away and rest and recover and realign. And then when we come back, we have to re-look at our schedule." Because again, I'm the one saying yes to most of this stuff, most of it is choices we can make. That's the hopeful part of this.

Dr. James Dobson: Once you get it under control, guess what happens? It creeps up on you again. You have to do it again, and again and again.

John Eldredge: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: We've been talking to John Eldredge, New York Times best-selling author. His book is called *Get Your Life Back*, that's what we've been discussing, *Everyday Practices for a World Gone Mad*. John, this is good stuff. Thanks for being with us for two days. I love talking to you. Let's do it again.

John Eldredge: I'd love to. Thanks for having me.

Dr. James Dobson: God bless you, my friend.

John Eldredge: God bless you all here.

Roger Marsh: Well, John Eldredge's story is a great reminder that we all can take control over our busy lives and elevate how we spend our time each and every day. By the way, if you missed any part of John Eldredge's conversation with Dr. Dobson

over the past couple of days here on Family Talk, remember you can easily listen again simply by visiting our website, drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And if you'd like to learn more about John Eldredge, his ministry or his books, like *Wild at Heart*, you can find more information on our website as well. Again, that's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, Easter of course is coming up this Sunday. What kind of memories do you have about celebrating Easter with your family? It's always so important to share Jesus with your children and what better time than the day of the Lord's resurrection, Easter Sunday. Now, if you'd like some great ideas about how to introduce your child to the Lord or how to encourage your kids to get closer to God and their relationship with him, we have a helpful resource for you and it's free. It's entitled, "Share Jesus with Your Children." It's a PDF that you can download right from our website. All you have to do is sign up and have it sent right to your email box. To get yours, go to drjamesdobson.org. You'll see the "Share Jesus with your Children" PDF link, click right there on our homepage and you'll be set. It's that easy.

Also, I want to share with you a brand new resource from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute that is designed to help reach the next generation for Christ. JDFI has remastered Dr. Dobson's biblically based transforming truths into one minute audio messages. Imagine how the new Dr. Dobson Minute will encourage young families and give them practical insights to strengthen marriages and foster better parenting skills. Nearly a thousand radio stations nationwide have picked up the Dr. Dobson minute, and you need to find out what they're so excited about. So to listen in or to send one to a friend or family member, simply visit drdobsonminute.org. These are timeless messages indeed that the whole family will enjoy. Well, I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

Announcer:

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