



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Ramsteads Revisited: Life After the Valley – Part 2

Guest(s): John Ramstead

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Dr. Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: When an unforeseen accident happens or a loved one suddenly dies, how do you respond? Where do you turn when your life literally gets flipped upside down? Well, on this edition of Family Talk, we'll explore those answers through the remainder of a classic broadcast. Dr Dobson's guest once again is his dear friend John Ramstead. Now, on our last program, John shared the horrific details of his horseback riding accident that should have taken his life. If you missed part one of the story by the way, you can go to drjamesdobson.org and get all caught up. In the aftermath of this accident, John Ramstead chose to put God at the center of his life. In just a moment, he'll reiterate the ways he experienced God's faithfulness following this experience.

Now, before we hear the wonderful conclusion to this testimony, let me tell you just a little bit about John Ramstead. He is the founder and CEO of Beyond Influence and works as a certified Christian leadership coach. John also started the Eternal Leadership Podcast, which is currently heard in 160 countries. Their mission is to equip and inspire leaders to work in God's kingdom. John Ramstead has been married to his wife Donna for over 30 years and together they have three children. Here now is the conclusion of his conversation with Dr. James Dobson here on Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: We have to come to the point where we're willing to release our hands and say, "Lord I don't get this. I don't understand why my child died. I don't understand why we went through that accident. But You said to lean not on our own understanding." I'm not going to lean on it. I'm going to take His word for it and let Him lead. That's essentially what you did, isn't it?

John Ramstead: It is. And you're asking the question kind of almost from this point of view, looking back over- You have this context because I think it's only looking backwards that you really can connect these dots. I think as you have these events, these processes that happen in our lives, they're preparing you for what's next that God is emerging. There's work that He's prepared for us to do in this season. But if I go back in those periods of time recovering and not being myself, needing a caregiver, having such uncertainty about whether I could even be a man, take care of my family, even, I couldn't be around my kids. I had to be in a quiet room or I would start screaming at you early on.

I was angry. The pain that I had to go through. God said at the accident, He said, "I'm going to heal you and use this for my glory." And I'm thinking to myself, this is what you call healing? I mean there was times where literally I'd take these very strong pain medications and you only can take them every four hours and they would wear off in less than two hours, and I couldn't take anything again for another two hours. So I'm just trying to get through five minutes at a time. You know what though? In that moment I had to hang on to the promises of Christ that He would heal me. He said, "this world is going to bring you tribulation.

Dr. Dobson: "But be of good cheer."

John Ramstead: "But be of good cheer, I've overcome the world." And He also said to me at the accident, "All things work together for those that love the Lord, for those that are called according to His purpose." And the other thing too, going through Craig Hospital, you have people from all walks of life, all faiths, all backgrounds. And I was scared to death though, if I looked at Christ from this perspective and this relationship with God that it was like this... that I'm going to get what I ask for every time. I think that was a very immature view that I had before this accident, that I won't go through problems and trials and tribulations if I have this relationship. Because how does God shape who we are going to be? There's no way that I could be doing what I'm doing today, working with the leaders that I get to work with, have the impact that I'm having today, have this platform that God's given me without having gone through the last four years.

Dr. Dobson: And that's what you meant when you said to me that if you had to live it over again, you wouldn't change it.

John Ramstead: Absolutely.

Dr. Dobson: That's maturity, man. That is Christian maturity and being able to say that, that "all that I've gone through was for a purpose. I understand some of it, I don't understand all of it, but I have a different relationship with not only the Lord, but with my family, my wife." I wanted to ask you about Donna.

John Ramstead: Yeah.

Dr. Dobson: She's a strong lady, isn't she?

John Ramstead: She's amazing.

Dr. Dobson: She stood by you like a rock.

John Ramstead: For five weeks in the ICU, she only went back to her room when she was so exhausted she couldn't sleep in the chair anymore. That whole five weeks I was in ICU, I have very few memories during that period of time. And man, this was hard for her. This was scary. I realized how hard it was when we came down to do the first interview, and I'm like, "Donna, there's a lot of things about that period of time I don't remember. Can you help fill in some blanks for me?" And she was like, "I don't want to talk about it." And I kind of pressed, and Doctor she's, this is going to make me tear up, but she just started weeping, sobbing because that was so painful for her to be not only a caregiver but to have to go through that.

Dr. Dobson: I watched her during that time, John, and that's love, man. Because she didn't know if you were going to come out of this.

John Ramstead: No, nobody did. I mean I knew what God told me, so I always had kind of this positive look on thing, this confidence that it would get better. Honestly, that was that little flicker, that hope that I held onto in those really dark moments. And there was times I finally got to the point, I was afraid to, but to admit to God that I am angry. Why did you leave this thorn in my flesh? Why is this taking so long? Today, why can't I work full time? Why am I always in pain? And I don't have the answers to those. I can't tell you why. God hasn't answered those questions.

Dr. Dobson: That's what I tried to say in the last program. I was talking about the fact that these intense whys that we send upward to the Lord, He will not be accountable to men. He just won't. I mean, He says, "Trust me." That's what it comes down to. He says, "Trust me."

John Ramstead: He does. For me it was this very intense personal internal process. In John 10:10 Christ says, "I've come to give you life so that you live it to the full." So how do you live a full life when you have tragedy, when you're struggling financially? And what I've found is that joy, there's a big difference between joy and happiness. Joy comes internally from this relationship that you have with this wonderful man and this God who created us, who wants this relationship with us. So you can actually go through these peaks and valleys with joy in your heart. Happiness is something that comes externally and I think that's also where a lot of people get stuck, their identity, their happiness, they've abdicated that to what the world is giving them, what the world is saying. And that was what I went through. I shifted that to this internal relationship with me and the Lord so I could go through all of this from a very different... Same person, different perspective. And that for me has made all the difference.

Dr. Dobson: John, I have some scriptures here I want to share with you. Tell me if these were meaningful to you. 2nd Corinthians 1:10 and 11, "He delivered us from such a deadly peril, He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again, you also must help us by prayer so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many." There were a lot of people praying for you, John. Were you aware of it?

John Ramstead: You know, I've got to tell you something. It was so humbling. We had I think almost 400 people come and bring us meals. And for me it was really humbling. I'm like, up to this point have I really lived a life that I'm receiving this from so many amazing people? I got to tell you this community that came around me, this Christian community that came around me, because I was... I just felt this deep desire, not an obligation, not like this need, but like this desire to live a life that served people like that back in a way that really made a difference in their lives the way that they did with me.

Dr. Dobson: See, John, that's what I've appreciated about your experience and what you've gone through because you turned disability, you turned it to opportunities to tell people about Christ. That really impressed me, my brother.

John Ramstead: Having been in God's presence, you couldn't shut me up.

Dr. Dobson: And you're still using it for that purpose, aren't you?

John Ramstead: I still am, absolutely.

Dr. Dobson: Finally, 2nd Corinthians 4:16 to 18, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all compassion. As we look not to the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." John, do you look forward to the promise of eternal life?

John Ramstead: Oh my goodness. Well, you picked one of my favorite verses. As I was recovering, God led me to that verse and that's probably one of my go-to verses in my dark times.

Dr. Dobson: I thought it might be.

John Ramstead: That I found that I would read and just meditate on. Having been in God's presence and just feeling this love that was so beautiful, so personal, so intense, I can't wait for that day that I am in that presence all the time and this little life that we're in this life, this little slice of life compared to eternity, this is just a snap of the fingers.

Dr. Dobson: John, I want to spend a little bit of time here talking about what you're doing now, because you could not do the work you were doing before. You were a

principal at Financial Designs Limited and you were working with people who are making \$600,000 or \$700,000 and you had the potential of doing that. You were making a good living, but you couldn't do it after your accident and you didn't know even if you were going to be able to take care of your family.

John Ramstead: That's true.

Dr. Dobson: How did you handle that? There's an emasculating aspect of that for a man when he's unable to work for his family.

John Ramstead: It's very challenging. First of all, the partners I had at that firm were some of my best friends. I couldn't ask for people that were more benevolent just trying to help me get back to work. I could only work when I started going back to work about eight hours a week. I mean they were basically paying me, hopefully this would work out. And after trying to get back to work for two years, it was pretty clear that I would not be able to put in the kind of hours that it took in a firm like this to really contribute. It was January 2014, so this is just over two years after the accident. The founder of the firm sat down and just said, "You know this isn't going to work out and we need to figure out what's next for you." And I'd also been feeling on my heart, I don't think, with everything that I've gone through and the second chance at life, that this is what I wanted to be doing. But I had no idea what it was, and at the time-

Dr. Dobson: They let you go John, is that right?

John Ramstead: They did. They let me go. So, here's what happened is- it was interesting because I'd been working on answering those two questions we talked about before, looking at my gifts, my strengths, writing out my own, what's my personal why. I had an experience in the hospital I'll never forget. I was laying... It was one of the few memories I had, and this links to what happened next. But I was laying- the doctor came in, the neurosurgeon, this is before the first brain surgery and he's on my right side and here's Donna and he's explaining that they have to do the surgery and why. My impression was I'm not going to survive this surgery, because then he asked Donna if we had a will and we'd actually just redone our estate plan. We were supposed to sign it when I got back from this trip. He said, "Listen. We can wait till the morning. Can you have the will and the living will FedExed up here? I'd be much more comfortable if John signs this before we go into surgery." Which is what they did the next morning.

Dr. Dobson: That's scary.

John Ramstead: But I'm lying in bed thinking, "You know what? It's my funeral next weekend. It is going to be my funeral next week and what are they going to be saying about me? What are they going to say at the front of the church for the eulogy, which is going to be all the nice stuff, but what are they going to really be saying in the back of the church? And the people that really knew me in the pews and before they're looking for the potato salad and the roast beef sandwiches?" I've got to

tell you, I started thinking of this concept of from an inheritance standpoint what I was leaving to my wife and my kids, they were going to be fine with what I'd saved and insurance. But I started thinking about a legacy perspective and what have I left in my wife and in my kids and in my colleagues and in this world? And I've got to tell you, I was not, when I... The sum total of 45 years of life at that point I was not proud of, I wasn't excited about.

So those two years of recovery I started really thinking I'm able to rewrite this legacy, to actively and intentionally create this legacy that is tied into the work that God wants me to do building His kingdom. I wanted to raise my hand and say, "God, you kept me here. I want to get on the field. I want to play your game." And I didn't know what this looked like and I honestly didn't know how I was going to possibly support my family with the pain that I was in. I could only work at that time, maybe 15 to 20 hours a week. I was about to be let go from a position that paid our bills, covered our healthcare, everything.

John Ramstead: Donna was a physical therapist. She'd been home with the kids for 15 years, so she couldn't just go back to work. For her to go back to work, she had to retake the medical boards. So we were guessing it would be at least a year and a half, two year process before she could actually go earn income at the level she used to.

Dr. Dobson: It's a dark moment.

John Ramstead: It was very dark. So, I'm sitting in my prayer time, and this is why it's become my passion to work with the leaders and the people I get to work with to connect to what they've been called to do, what their purpose is, what their personal 'why.' Because I started working with a coach. I got to that point and I'll never forget, I was in my prayer time and I heard God speak to me again. This was on a Saturday. This was after I'd been told I was going to be let go. And what God said to me, "I want you to use this life I've given you to equip and inspire leaders to work in my kingdom." And I'm like, "All right. What do I do with that? How do I create a business out of that?"

Dr. Dobson: You really got a vision for where God was taking you.

John Ramstead: Yeah, that's what He said to me. And this was on a Saturday. So here's what happened is that that next Monday morning I was meeting with a friend of mine and he's a CEO of a company and he says, "You know what? I'm really struggling and I'm so glad that this worked out." He goes, "I feel like I have these three pillars. My business, my family, and my faith, and the work I want to do in the community. And whatever I focus on does well and the other two really suffer." He goes, "I feel like there's a way to pull all three of these pillars together and just have an extraordinary life in all these areas, but I don't know how to do it." He goes, "I've decided to hire a coach to help me do that." He goes, "I think you'd be a great coach, and if you decide to become a coach, I'll be your first client." And I'm like, "Okay. Interesting."

Well, I didn't know, I'd never been a coach. I'd only worked with one coach in the past. So, I called a friend of mine who was an executive coach, he'd been 20 years in the industry, he's a believer, and we spent three hours together and he looked at everything: who I am and what I'm doing. He says, "You know what, you were meant to do this. I believe God has called you and equipped you and created you to do this and serve people in this capacity." He goes, "I would encourage you to just step out on faith, create a practice, and I think God's going to open doors for you."

Dr. Dobson: So it was an affirmation of God's plan revealed to you.

John Ramstead: Big time. And you know what? I reached out, I found – this is something I've always done - I found some people that are Christians that are just some of the leaders in the coaching world that have practices that understand the business side, the heart side of building a coaching practice and started working with them, pulled them into my world. They mentored me.

It was a hard, long journey, starting a company with everything I was limited to. But within six months I had my first four clients and then six months later my coaching calendar was completely full, and it's been full ever since. I only wanted to work with, initially with 12 clients, I'm actually only working with 10 right now because I spend so much time with the clients that I work with. And now we're doing some things because the demand has been greater than that to actually work with groups of people and do things on a larger platform. It's been amazing. The process was to really connect with that calling and that purpose and then find people around you to help you and equip you and encourage you to move into that, and that was the scary part.

Dr. Dobson: Yet you're touching thousands and thousands of lives through the internet. Give me the name of the company that you have now established.

John Ramstead: We have the Eternal Leadership is the podcast and people can go look that up on iTunes. And then Beyond Influence grew out of everything that we're doing with Eternal Leadership, which is really how we are serving leaders forward to create that life that God meant for them. So we're working with individuals, companies, groups, and I could tell you story after story after story, it is just a joy for me every day to be just a small part of other people's story, to get that there is a plan. Whether the people are believers or not, I get to talk to crowds that are kind of faith-based crowds and not faith-based crowds. And especially the crowds that are not Christian based, this whole concept of calling or purpose, but if people can really understand who they are and what they were meant to do, what is that unique value that's in them that's really desiring to be brought out into the world and people that are willing to do that?

I could tell you so many stories about when you connect to that point every single time, it's this inflection point of what happens in people's lives, starting to develop extraordinary relationships, their wife, their kids, a business, philanthropy, their spiritual journey, whatever it happens to be, and being part

of that journey with all these people and being part of these stories, that's why I wouldn't give it up, Doctor, because there's just-

Dr. Dobson: And you have an opportunity through that to lead a lot of them to the Lord.

John Ramstead: Yes. I've just had some amazing conversations. There's a lot of people that hire me because they know what I've gone through, but they don't share my faith and I don't make that a big part of the coaching that I do. But where I'm coming from and the results that people start getting, because I really feel like the Holy Spirit is part of the conversations I have with people, gives me some insight and questions to ask and some intuition that's at a different level. I think a lot of it's from what I've gone through. But we always get to a point where people say, "Where are these results coming from? Where's this material coming from that you're sharing with me?" And I'll tell them, "You know, I don't think you want to know. I'm not going to tell you." And they'll insist. I'll say, "Well listen, everything is from the Bible. Everything's from my relationship with Jesus Christ and I would be happy to share that with you if you're interested."

And when we get to that point, I've never ever had anybody say, "Well, no, that's all right. I didn't know that's where it was coming from." They want hear more because it's all about relationships.

Dr. Dobson: Our time's almost gone, John. I want to make sure people know how to get in touch with you. How do they locate you? How do they get your podcast?

John Ramstead: The podcast is Eternal Leadership. So my website is eternalleadership.com. You can go to iTunes or Stitcher or other podcast platforms, just type in Eternal Leadership. A big part of the work that I do with people too is just to really help them connect to that unique value, that calling and that purpose. I think that really starts with self-awareness and I've gotten some great feedback. I think it's just a first step for people to really start getting some clarity on what's the direction they really need to be going in.

Dr. Dobson: John, this is I think the fourth broadcast we've done together.

John Ramstead: I think so.

Dr. Dobson: Maybe the fifth, and the reason that I have appreciated you coming here from Denver to be on the program is because there's so many people listening to us who are struggling in their own way. Many of them have disabilities and illnesses from which they will not recover or feel like they've hit the wall and they need encouragement and they need somebody who's been there, and you have something to share that I want more and more people to know about. I do hope that those who have heard us today and yesterday will take advantage of the opportunity to find you and to hear what you've got to say because God has taught you some things through this experience. You're a brother in Christ and I appreciate you more than you know. I was there at your low point and I've seen

you when you gave it to the Lord and have turned a corner. You're looking good, man. You're looking good. Let's see where the Lord's going to lead.

Dr. Dobson: I would like our listeners to pray for you and for Donna and your three sons who are all doing good. This was a shock to their lives.

John Ramstead: This was very hard for them. I know we didn't dig into that, but that's part of the journey. Whether it's an injury from the war, a loss of a loved one, it affects everybody. It's not just what we go through. I think part of the hope going through this is, like you said before, God does not always promise us an explanation or even give us answers, but what He does promise, and He has lived this out so faithfully in every aspect of my life, is He does promise to walk with us through it.

Dr. Dobson: He will not leave you.

John Ramstead: He will not leave me. And I've got to tell you, even in my darkest times, my most angry times, my most confused times, knowing that I had a friend who is also the God of the universe there with me to go through this.

Dr. Dobson: And He loves you and me.

John Ramstead: And He loves us. Loves you as a person.

Dr. Dobson: Thank you, John. It's been so good to have you here again. Stay in touch with us, will you?

John Ramstead: I sure will. Absolutely.

Roger Marsh: And what an encouraging end to this edition of Family Talk. Our only hope in difficult times is definitely Jesus Christ. To quote Dr. Dobson, "We have to trust in God even when we can't track him. Our Heavenly Father has never and will never leave our side." What a hopeful reminder. However, if you're still in that valley season, I know that sentiment might seem too good to be true. If that describes your situation right now, please know we would love to pray for you. You can reach Family Talk by calling us at (877) 732-6825, and please know that a member of our team is standing by to take your request, to talk with you, and to pray with and over you. Again, our number is (877) 732-6825 and please know that even in spite of these challenging times that we're in right now, a member of our Family Talk team is waiting to hear from you.

Now before we wrap up this Friday edition of Family Talk, I have some exciting news to share. As you might be aware, this year marks Family Talk's 10th anniversary. Boy, it is so humbling to reflect back on how gracious God has been to Dr. Dobson and this ministry. This month in fact was the first time Family Talk was ever heard on airwaves all over the country. Now to celebrate this milestone, we are revisiting some of our most popular shows over the past

decade. So over the next four weeks, you'll hear Dr. Dobson's interviews with Eric Metaxas, Shaunti Feldhahn and many, many more. We are so excited to replay a few of these timeless Family Talk broadcasts for you. Now the celebration begins on Monday, so be sure to tune in then. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening to this edition of Family Talk. I hope you have a blessed weekend.

Announcer:

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