



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Be Still and Know God: Discerning Wild at Heart – Part 1

**Guest(s):** John Eldredge

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**Roger Marsh:** Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. In just a moment, we're going to get into part one of a classic conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and John Eldredge talking about what it means to be a man. First, though, hope you had a wonderful Palm Sunday celebration at church yesterday. We are now in the season known as Holy Week. Easter of course, is a great time to remember God's promise of eternal life, and you definitely want to read what Dr. Dobson has written about Easter in this month's Dr. James Dobson Family Talk monthly newsletter. To receive yours, it's absolutely free. To sign up for a subscription, go to [drjamesdobson.org/newsletters](http://drjamesdobson.org/newsletters). And now here is Dr. Dobson and his guest John Eldredge, to talk about what it means to be a man. Let's join them right now, here on Family Talk.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello everyone. This is Family Talk, a radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I want to welcome you today. It's always good to have you join us. I want to start with Psalm 46:10, which instructs us to be still and know that I am God. What a powerful one sentence verse that we should all live by. Be still, shut up and listen sometime and know that I am God. That important concept is largely lost on this society. Rush, rush, rush, hurry, hurry, hurry lifestyle that takes its toll on us. Young people are glued to their phones or their devices. Just go out to lunch with them someday and while you're busily talking to their parents, they will be working on their cell phone. I mean, they never seem to put it away. They want to stay in touch with friends and loved ones and they want to keep up with the latest news or sports or play mindless games.

Our guest today says in his book that it's no wonder that stress and anxiety and hopelessness are at an all-time high, and we're going to find out why we have become so trapped in this cycle of intellectual overload that we don't seem to know how to find peace and how to relax and unplug. He's a best-selling author and he's written immensely popular books including *Wild at Heart*. I'm going to start by asking him about that one. *Captivating, Beautiful Outlaw*, I think I counted 13 books that he's written. There's probably more. He's also a prominent Christian speaker, counselor, and lecturer. John, it is a pleasure. You've never been to this microphone and I wonder how come.

**John Eldredge:** Oh, and we're right down the street.

Dr. James Dobson: It's about time.

John Eldredge: It is. Thanks for having me.

Dr. James Dobson: You have a ministry right here in town.

John Eldredge: We do. Yeah. It grew out of *Wild at Heart*.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that amazing? I mean, it hit the ground right from the beginning and it has never... You've never looked back, have you?

John Eldredge: No.

Dr. James Dobson: It's changed your whole life.

John Eldredge: It has has. It has has.

Dr. James Dobson: For those who don't know, tell us about *Wild at Heart* before we get to today's book.

John Eldredge: So *Wild at Heart* is a book for men that women love to read because it's a look inside men. How are we wired? What makes well, bringing up boys, what makes boys tick and how differently they need to be raised than little girls, differently they need to be educated. And it's-

Dr. James Dobson: That's almost heresy in today's world, isn't it?

John Eldredge: I know. I know, I know. Because here's the fascinating thing. When I wrote *Wild at Heart*, we were at the end of the feminist revolution, right? It was the '60s and '70s and there was gender confusion, but now it's gender collapse. 20 years later, we just had no idea what we were tapping into at the time. And now, I mean gender is a spectrum, right?

Dr. James Dobson: John, doesn't it break your heart to see public schools telling little kids that you can choose your gender and if you don't like it, you can change it and here's how to do it. You don't have boys and girls lining up separately. You don't acknowledge that there are two sexes, not one. It doesn't matter what the Bible says about it. It's a whole new world and it's crazy.

John Eldredge: It's the core attack on humanity because in Genesis 1, it says that we are created in the image of God. The first thing it says about us is male and female. He made them. So when you come after gender, when you deconstruct gender, you are actually at the core of how men and women bear the image of God and that, it's devastating.

Dr. James Dobson: The Scripture you just quoted, Jesus quoted, there aren't very many that He quotes word for word in the New Testament, but He quoted that male and female, created He them.

John Eldredge: Yes. Yeah. Gender was crucial.

Dr. James Dobson: We might have learned something from that. I mean, He created the universe. What in the world is going on, John?

John Eldredge: Yeah. Well, as you and I know, it's a combination of the evil one trying to come in and do all the harm he can to humanity. And then you have a society that has abandoned everything it was built on, which is why my daily prayers now are for revival, and we just need a massive turning to Christ to rescue where we're at.

Dr. James Dobson: And if we don't do that, everything the founding fathers laid down for us, what we have been for 230 years is essentially gone. This nation will be unrecognizable if we don't pull back from this crazy notion that everything we've thought and believed about masculinity and femininity is wrong. It's over. You said we were at the end of the feminist movement. I'm not so sure. I think this is part of it.

John Eldredge: Yes. But-

Dr. James Dobson: It started with women being angry at men. I remember in the late '60s, there was this terrible hostility, not men for women, but women for men. And some of that is still being manifested in how we see the sexes today. Do you agree with that?

John Eldredge: Oh, yes. Now here's the irony, is that I was raised in that home. My mother and sisters hated men.

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

John Eldredge: Yes. I was not raised in a Christian home. And to think that *Wild at Heart* came out of that upbringing, is-

Dr. James Dobson: What about your dad?

John Eldredge: My dad was a really good country man, really good country values. I believe that he knew Christ, but he married a very strong woman. And again, when the '60s came around, she put the pants on in the family and he had a drinking problem and lost a number of jobs and he lost respect in our household.

Dr. James Dobson: How did you survive that so well? To be able to teach men everywhere what it means to be a man?

John Eldredge: Yes. Jesus Christ is the only answer to that question. I was 19 and I was looking for truth. I was a wild kid. I got kicked out of high school. I was looking for answers.

Dr. James Dobson: What'd you do to get kicked out?

John Eldredge: Well, here's the thing. I had a 4.0, but I never went to class. They couldn't give... I was bored to death. And so they kicked me out for not coming. Someone gave me Francis Schaeffer's collected works, remember? *How Shall We Then Live?*

Dr. James Dobson: What a great man he was.

John Eldredge: Right? I had a radical conversion to Jesus Christ when I was 19 and it completely changed my life.

Dr. James Dobson: Who led you to Christ?

John Eldredge: Well, this is why I said radical. I was literally by myself in my bedroom one night. No one had shared the gospel with me and I had an overwhelming sense of the presence of God, and I knew I was not a good person. I was a lying and deceitful person. And here was my salvation prayer. I said, "Jesus, I think you can change my life. If you would, please come." And that was it. And I mean it was lock, stock, and barrel.

Dr. James Dobson: You're talking to people right now who are just as lost as you were then.

John Eldredge: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You want to talk to them?

John Eldredge: Yeah.

We try so hard to put our lives back together. We try so hard to find the way, but the One who made you, knows you better than you know yourself. And He is the one. "I've come to heal the broken-hearted," He said, "And set the captive free." He can put your life back together and He can get you on the right track if you will give your life to Him. It's all it takes. Just open your life to the rule of Jesus and He will do fabulous things with your life.

Dr. James Dobson: Was it an instantaneous change in your case or did you have to grow into an understanding of what God meant?

John Eldredge: Both. I got off drugs immediately. I was off alcohol immediately. So that was pretty stunning.

Dr. James Dobson: You were into both?

John Eldredge: Oh, yeah. It was a massive intervention in that regard. But then, and here's the beautiful thing, that our across the street neighbors had been praying for our family for years.

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

John Eldredge: Yeah. I was the last person that they thought would come to Christ. They thought it would be one of my sisters. And she was talking to me one day and she was sharing something of her faith with me. And I said, "Well, I know Jesus." And she said, "Well, come to church with us." So I went to Sierra Madre Congregational Church.

Dr. James Dobson: Man.

John Eldredge: Remember?

Dr. James Dobson: My church was just two blocks from there.

John Eldredge: It was right down the road from you. And so then I needed the Bible instruction. I needed discipleship. I needed people to come around me and show me how to walk with God.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you go to a Christian college?

John Eldredge: I did not. I went to Cal Poly for my undergrad, but then I did my graduate work with Larry Crabb at Colorado Christian.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, yeah.

John Eldredge: Yeah. And got my counseling degree there.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's go to the book *Wild at Heart* again. We're not here to talk about that today, but who cares? That is a great book that ought to be read by every man out there and every woman. Women need it as much as men, especially today where men are not only confused, but their wives are too. What's wild about men?

John Eldredge: Look at boys, they don't like to sit down. They don't like to stay down. They want to climb. They want to run. They want to go and they want to go, go, go, go, go. And you have to bless that and say, "I have a different creature on my hands here." Right? And for example, in public education, the educational model fits young girls perfectly.

Dr. James Dobson: It just doesn't work very well with boys.

John Eldredge: No. And so what we do is drug them then, right? Because we think something's wrong with them. And I'm trying to say there's nothing wrong with them.

They're just wired differently. They learn differently. They learn by doing, right? And you got to get them involved in things. And so there's a wildness there, not in terms of morality or that sort of thing, but there's a fierceness. Let's try that word. There's a fierceness in men, we want to bless. We want valiant men. We want brave men. And if you want those qualities in men, you've got to nurture them in boys. You've got to bless his desire to ride his bike with no hands. You've got to let him jump off the balcony onto the trampoline. You have to encourage that risk taking.

Dr. James Dobson: That's a lot of fun in looking at the comparison between girls and boys. If a girl falls on a bicycle and hurts herself, she will never make that mistake again. She's only going to do that once, she finds out that doesn't work and she doesn't do it twice. The boys will say, "It was bad luck."

John Eldredge: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: They go back and do it again.

John Eldredge: Yeah. Over and over. And those scars for a boy, those are badges of honor.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

John Eldredge: You get little boys together and they'll start showing, "This one I got when I fell off the tree for it, and this one I got..."

There's a pride to it.

Dr. James Dobson: You still have gatherings to bring men together to learn about what it means to be a man, to understand what *Wild at Heart* really means. But the federal government also has a program based on your book.

John Eldredge: Yeah. We are in so many prisons, Jim. It's incredible. So many correctional facilities use *Wild at Heart* with their men because it works. Because one of the things about *Wild at Heart*... And this goes back to my alcoholic dad. I had a very deep father wound and I needed God to come into that woundedness and help me forgive him and to father me when I was relatively fatherless. That is to a person... You know the stats, the majority of young men incarcerated in any sort of facility are fatherless.

Dr. James Dobson: They don't even talk about them.

John Eldredge: That's the issue. And so they'll use *Wild at Heart* in those programs because it brings healing to that father wound. It helps them forgive and it helps them find God as a good father who loves them, won't yell at them, won't beat them, won't turn them out, and they get hooked up to that. That'll change your life.

Dr. James Dobson: John, you write often and continue to speak often on that father wound. Put flesh on those bones. Explain what is that father wound.

John Eldredge: This is an amazing thing. Gender identity is actually bestowed by the father for both boys and girls. So mother bestows things like value and unconditional love, but the little boy looks to the dad with one question, "Do I have what it takes? Will I be a man? Am I strong? Am I brave? Am I true, dad? Did you see that, dad? Were you there when I hit the home run, right? Did you come to my practice? Were you there at choir when I won the award?" He looks to his dad for what we call validation.

I love you and I'm proud of you. And if he does not get that, he grows up seeking it in places he shouldn't look for it. And the next place he typically takes it is to the woman. He looks to the woman to tell him who he is, make him feel like a man. I mean, this is actually the secret to pornography. Pornography has very little to do with sex. It's a search for validation. I want to feel like a man, but that father wound, that'll drive him for the rest of his life, if he does not get that healed. And the same thing's true for little girls.

Dr. James Dobson: What's the source of the healing?

John Eldredge: Isaiah 61. Jesus quoted that verse to announce His ministry in Luke 4. That was the passage. He says, "Do you want to know why I'm here? I'm here to heal the brokenhearted, set the captives free." He says, "I want to get into those broken places in you, and I want to heal your soul and follow Me." And so it's an encounter with the love of God.

Dr. James Dobson: John, you told me that when you hold these conventions for men, that so many want to come, that you've had to have a lottery to determine who gets to come. That's unheard of.

John Eldredge: I know. I know. It's a phenomenon. *Wild at Heart* is a phenomenon. It's a 20-year-old book, and we have more people trying to get into our retreats than we have room for. And they come from all over the world, from Ecuador and Brazil, from South Africa, Australia, from Germany and France, all over the planet.

Dr. James Dobson: Are there tears on that occasion? They ball, don't they?

John Eldredge: Yeah, they do. It's a beautiful-

Dr. James Dobson: Because they see that lack of whatever they should have received from their father. Do some men have a father wound who didn't get it at home, but they were wounded in the culture?

John Eldredge: Oh, yes. Yes. In a variety of ways. It may have been a coach, right? It may have been a teacher they look up to and the words like, "You'll never amount to

anything. You're such an idiot." Not making the team when all the other guys are-

Dr. James Dobson: Being cut.

John Eldredge: Being cut.

Dr. James Dobson: That's a wound.

John Eldredge: It can be devastating to some men. And here's a fascinating thing. You remember this back in World War II, the most shameful thing was not to serve.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

John Eldredge: And the majority of men who were turned down, committed suicide.

Dr. James Dobson: Majority?

John Eldredge: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

John Eldredge: That's right. Because of the shame that you are not man enough to take part.

Dr. James Dobson: That's sad.

John Eldredge: They couldn't go back to their communities and face themselves, right? You see how core that search for validation is for a man? Absolutely core.

Dr. James Dobson: Do men find it in athletics frequently?

John Eldredge: Athletics is one of the places... And here's where it's really important, because people thought *Wild at Heart* was a book about be a lumberjack, be a Navy SEAL and then you'll be a man. But a young boy's gifting may be his intellect. Well, you have to bless that. It may be his sensitivity. He may end up being a... Well, a child psychologist. You have to bless that. You have to bless, "train up a child in the way he should go," the uniqueness to that boy. And that's where a lot of the wounding takes place. If you know what I mean. He's got a blue collar dad and he's a musical kid, he's not going to get validation.

Dr. James Dobson: John is this father wound, this phenomenon you're talking about where men don't know what it means to be a man, is it worse there than it was 20 years ago when you began writing?

John Eldredge: It is. It is, because the long-term effects of fatherlessness continue to play out in the culture and you can't pass on what you didn't get, right? And so their dads were very broken men. A lot of them grew up in mother led homes, single



parent homes. And so they didn't have a guy around, and it doesn't have to be dad. Here's the good news. It could be a scoutmaster, it could be an uncle, it could be a grandfather. For me, my grandfather was my rescue. He was a rancher. And when I was at my wildest stage, my parents sent me to his ranch in Eastern Oregon and he loved me and he taught me how to ride horses and drive tractors. And it can be a good man in your life. It doesn't have to be Dad, can step in and provide that fathering that we need.

Dr. James Dobson: In my case, it was my father and he fished with me and hunted with me, and he did men things, male things with me. And I loved those times. I longed for them. And when we were alone out in the woods and we were hunting, started out with squirrel and went to quail, and then the other things. When we were together, he was different. He was mine. He was for me. He was focused on me and he was teaching me men things, masculine things. And I built my self-worth. I built my self-concept on those conversations with my father.

John Eldredge: How powerful for a father to give you his time just to say, "You are worth my time."

Dr. James Dobson: Taught me to play tennis at eight years of age, when I didn't even want to.

John Eldredge: Yeah. Yeah. Right. And then blessed your education too, though.

Dr. James Dobson: He did.

John Eldredge: He blessed that route for you.

Dr. James Dobson: When I was first getting started after graduate school and I was writing and I was speaking, he would go to the library for me and in a weekend, he would read 8 or 10 books and come back and summarize them for me and tell me which ones I needed to read. I mean, I can't tell you what that man did in my life, and people are probably tired of hearing me talk about it, but it was a quintessential masculine son relationship that shaped my life.

John Eldredge: Right. And you credit your impact to him.

Dr. James Dobson: I do. I do. A lot of what I say today is quoting him.

John Eldredge: And in my case, I was able to forgive my dad and lead him to Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you?

John Eldredge: Yeah. And I remember the day he called, he had lost all contact with my sisters. They didn't want anything to do with him. He called me one day and he said, "I just want to say I'm sorry." And then I was able to say, "Oh, dad, I forgave you years ago."

Dr. James Dobson: Was he still drinking then?

John Eldredge: Let's talk. He was, he was.

Dr. James Dobson: All his life.

John Eldredge: Most, yeah. And then the Alzheimer's kicked in and all that hard story, but he trusted Christ with his life and I know he's well now.

Dr. James Dobson: You going to see him again.

John Eldredge: Yeah, we are.

Dr. James Dobson: What kind of mother did you have, John?

John Eldredge: Well, she was the feminist. She actually-

Dr. James Dobson: With all what that means?

John Eldredge: Every bit of it. I was a latchkey kid. She went back to work when I was a very young child and I have no memories of playing with my mother, of being read a book by my mother. She disappeared. She went back to school and got her graduate degree at the same time, and then she worked. She retired when she was 85.

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

John Eldredge: So I didn't have a mother.

Dr. James Dobson: And you didn't have a father either.

John Eldredge: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: John, how'd you make it?

John Eldredge: No. I've tried to tell folks, the gospel is true. The gospel is true. Jesus really does rescue lives.

Dr. James Dobson: John, we're out of time and we haven't even talked about your book. Let's take another run at that next time.

John Eldredge: I'd love to.

Dr. James Dobson: I love this conversation and I know our listeners will love it too. There are so many men out there who still do not know at 30 or 40 or 50 years of age what in the world it means to be a man. What am I supposed to do if I assert myself? If I become the leader of my family or try to, I get slapped down for it and I'm called

a chauvinist or whatever they used to call men. There are all kinds of ways to denigrate them. They're out there. I hope that this program today and your book, that one particularly will be a continued blessing in a world that desperately needs it. It's called *Wild at Heart*, and I urge our listeners to read it and let's pick it up right here, John, next time. And we're going to talk about *Get Your Life Back*.

John Eldredge: I'd love to.

Dr. James Dobson: And I look forward to talking to you about that tomorrow.

John Eldredge: Yeah, me too.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Dr. Dobson's classic conversation with John Eldredge, and we encourage you to join us again tomorrow as Dr. Dobson will be discussing another one of John's books with him. It's called *Get Your Life Back*. They'll be talking about how we need to slow down and experience God, especially in our fast-paced world. By the way, if you'd like to learn more about John Eldredge and his ministry called Wild at Heart, simply visit our website at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). We've talked a lot about what it means to be a man on today's broadcast, but we certainly don't want to forget about the incredible women in our lives as well. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has partnered with Dr. Owen Strachan to create a brand new resource that will encourage moms, wives, sisters and daughters and affirm what God's design for women really is. The PDF is called "What Is a Woman, According to God?" And if you'd like a free download of this resource, simply go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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