



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Lead Me: Fighting for Your Marriage, Children and Faith

**Guest(s):** Matt Hammitt

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- Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Friends, welcome into to Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host of the broadcast here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We're at the 2020 National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, Tennessee. I'm joined right now by Matt Hammitt. Matt is a singer, songwriter and former front man for the band Sanctus Real. I'm sure you've heard of them, and a special song called Lead Me and more. Through his new work, Matt shares the tough lessons God taught him about the importance of family and being a godly and present father. Matt, it's great to have you join us here on Family Talk.
- Matt Hammitt: It's good to be here. Thanks for having me.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: I look at your book *Lead Me: Finding Courage to Fight For Your Marriage, Children and Faith*. And man, I love that title, but hey, let's go back to you just for a moment.
- Matt Hammitt: Yeah, sure.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: And Sanctus Real and getting out on the road and how insane it must have been, traveling and God was, I mean, had His hands all over that.
- Matt Hammitt: Yeah, it was really wild. I mean, 16 years old, meet these guys in high school and little did I know that this band we started and named as sophomores in high school would go on for 20 years. And so as soon as we got out of high school, started-
- Dr. Tim Clinton: That's every kid's fantasy dream, man, I'm going to do a band, we're going to play in the band, we're going to travel.
- Matt Hammitt: I know. It was wild it actually happened. I don't think we really thought it would. I mean, not that we didn't want it to, it was just you figure you go to college and you move on and then now the calls started coming from record labels and we really prayed about it. I mean, we took it very seriously whether or not we

would even go on that path. Of course, certainly us and our parents talking through it like, man, can this really last? Is this a quick flash in the pan kind of thing? But God kept opening the doors and we just kept walking and 20 years later it was...

Dr. Tim Clinton: A lot of songs came out of that group by the way. But one in particular I think that most people listening right now would know is the song Lead Me. Here's a little piece of that song.

Matt Hammitt: (singing) Lead me with strong hands. Stand up when I can't. Don't want to leave my hungry for love, chasing dreams but what about us. Show me you're willing to fight...

Dr. Tim Clinton: Matt, that song I'm telling you, I listen to that song a lot still on my own phone. You know that? And it ministers to me. It does. Where'd it come from?

Matt Hammitt: Well, I mean you can hear that first verse and through even the second verse, it's the voice of wife and kids, but those words were actually from my wife. I almost didn't release that song. The first draft of it was just those first two verses in that chorus about the loneliness that a wife and children can feel. Well, I guess about seven years into my marriage in about 2008, my wife Sarah, who I've been married to for 19 years now, she really was at a place in our marriage where she just felt at the end of something. She couldn't totally verbalize it, but she was struggling.

Dr. Tim Clinton: She was hurting.

Matt Hammitt: She was hurting bad.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What's life really on the road? Because they see the glory side of it, you know?

Matt Hammitt: Yeah. Yeah. It's funny. I was just, every once in a while I'll still be doing these events and I'll see a guy pacing the parking lot having a tough conversation. I can spot it from a mile away because I've been there so many times.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And you know what's going on. Hey, listen.

Matt Hammitt: Of just pacing on the phone.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, when are you coming home?

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, you can't be in person. You can't look your wife in the eye or embrace your kids when they're having a hard day. And so that distance that you already feel emotionally, even some of us, that we feel these emotional distances when we're home sometimes. And so to put a real space between that, thousands of miles, it's very difficult.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sure. People crave emotional closeness. They just want somebody to hold them every now and then, to remind them everything's going to be okay, to show up. There's a new book out called *The Power of Showing Up* by a psychiatrist that I follow, and he just talked about this significance of the agency element there. You can't get people safe, they can't soothe themselves, they can't feel seen or heard if you're not connected.

Matt Hammitt: That's right. Absolutely right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: If you're not showing up.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, that's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I remember when I was traveling a lot, Matt, I wrote an article about being on the road and my son Zach, who was the love language for him was proximity. He likes touch. My boy did. You know what I'm saying?

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, yeah. Of course.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When I'd get on the phone, he'd say, "Dad, when are you coming home?" When are you coming home? And I taught myself a little skill to try to be home with him while I was away and I would create moments over the phone like, "Hey bud, you know what I'd do if I was there with you right now?"

Matt Hammitt: Oh, that's cool.

Dr. Tim Clinton: He'd say, "What?" And I'd say, "Man, I can get you down on a Dutch rub bud." If I'm there right now, and you know what? He would feel it with me and we'd have those moments, but there's nothing that takes the place really of showing up.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, well, I mean honestly, those are the words that my wife spoke to me the day I wrote Leave Me. It was like, you're here but you're not here. I mean, that was what she was saying through tears. And again, like I said, I almost didn't even share that because it's so close to home, but then obviously the guys heard it and then the label heard it and they're like, "You've got to finish this and people need to hear this." Because I think, you know this, man, just like there's this need for emotional validation and closeness from the people we love, we also need that same kind of feeling of validation and understanding from other people in the world to know that we're not alone. And so I think that was really the power of that song was that these are things that everybody's feeling and the beauty of a song is you can put those feelings into a song which tangibly reaches people and lets them know I'm not the only one dealing with this. You know?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. You are on the road, you're ministering, you're torn. There's that divine tension going on and something happens. We're going to come back and talk

about that in just a moment. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. Special in studio guest today, Matt Hammitt, brand new work called *Lead Me: Finding Courage to Fight For Your Marriage, Children and Faith*. He was the former front man for the band Sanctus Real. Forward on the book by Bart Millard. You know Bart Mercy Me and Company, big movie came out about those guys in Bart's life. Hey Matt, let's go to a defining moment. In life, sometimes the plug gets ripped out of the wall and everything comes to a grinding halt.

Matt Hammitt: For me, 2010, Sarah and I, I told you we were already kind of in this season of marriage where it was difficult and I thought we were getting through it. The song Lead Me actually came out on the radio right around that time, but what also happened was we were pregnant with our third child and we went in for an ultrasound and found out we were having a little boy. We already had two little girls, so we were so excited, but we also found out that day that our little boy only had half of a heart, and so our lives really changed as parents trying to figure out, wow, what does this even mean? And you know how it is, you deal with illnesses with family and now you're in this cycle of you're going from doctors and specialists, and I mean everything about life just kind of hits a whole new challenge.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's one of those moments when you just want to throw up. You don't know where to go, you don't know what to do. You're looking around and you're confused, and in your heart you're hurting.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, absolutely. So we definitely felt that. And so from April to September when we found out that our son was going to be born with this disease, hypoplastic left heart was the name of it, only half a heart, we found out he was going to have to have multiple open heart surgeries, and so just preparing for that. Here's the irony of this whole story of Lead Me and a lot of the tension you find in this book. On the very day that lead me went number one on national radio, I was at my son's bedside after he was recovering from his very first open heart surgery. And so you want to talk about a visual of the contrast between what was happening in my professional life and my personal life, number one song on the radio I've always wanted, and then here I am. I really, honestly, I just wanted my son to live that day. So that felt like a very clear picture of what my life had really felt like in a lot of ways over those years.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You through all this began to make some changes.

Matt Hammitt: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's hard to make change.

Matt Hammitt: And it took some time. We had multiple open heart surgeries with our son and a lot of close calls. Because I took four months off to be in the hospital I had to go out and work even harder. You can imagine the agents and everybody is, hey,

man, this song's huge. Everything's blowing up, and what does that do? That even spirals us into even a bigger cycle of touring. And so the crazy thing, the big irony is this is the song I wrote about being more present as a husband and father.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And you're caught in the tension of the whole thing.

Matt Hammitt: And the success of it pulled me away even more. It was about a three and a half year cycle of me coming to the very end of myself. Of singing this message, knowing I wasn't living it until I got to the point where I knew that this restlessness, there was a release in it that God was telling me, "Hey, it's time. It's time to sing it less and live it more." I had to make a decision and I knew that that decision that God was calling me to make was to step away from the only thing I'd known for 20 years and step out of Sanctus Real and really live what I was singing in Lead Me. I write about these moments in this book of standing on stage and hearing literally like Winter Jam tour, 15,000 people singing every word of Lead Me back to me knowing in my heart all these people, they're going home with their kids tonight, I'm going to hop back on the bus again. And I'm not living the very song, so these words are convicting me now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let's talk about the other person in this play that's unfolding. She is the one you said I do to. She's holding them babies. She's a mama. And what was it like for her?

Matt Hammitt: It was so hard, so hard. She felt like she was losing me to the grind of the road, and we shared the most vulnerable raw stories in the book of what was happening during that season that was just tearing us apart, and part of that was the grief of a sick child.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sure. I mean, when a child is hurting, it really puts a unique stress on the marriage.

Matt Hammitt: It does. Yeah. That grief of chronic illness, we began to even resent the way that each other grieved because we'd grieve separately-

Dr. Tim Clinton: You don't understand me, you have no idea what it's like.

Matt Hammitt: I couldn't understand ... Exactly. Why do you do this when you're hurting and well, why don't you do this when you're hurting?

Dr. Tim Clinton: All you get to do is you get to run away from it.

Matt Hammitt: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You get to go do your thing.

Matt Hammitt: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And everybody clapping and cheering you on.

Matt Hammitt: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Here I am sitting at home fighting my way through this, dealing with doctor's appointments, fevers.

Matt Hammitt: Totally.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Colds. Packed lunches.

Matt Hammitt: All of it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Washed dishes.

Matt Hammitt: Yes, exactly. Then I get home and I want to rest, and the diapers hit my chest. Of course it's your turn.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And again you're like, wait a second, I'm exhausted. I just wanted to say hi to everybody.

Matt Hammitt: Like walking in, you walking out in a nuclear bottle looks like the nuclear bomb went off. She's trying to keep up with life and I feel responsible and it's like, but I want to rest, but I can't.

Dr. Tim Clinton: How'd you guys walk through that? That's not easily done.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, you know.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because the anger surges, and by the way, it takes us to a place where it's hard to hear each other.

Matt Hammitt: You know what? That is exactly right. Everything standing in the way of being known in those moments, and so for us, it really was. I mean, it came down to the change for me. It came down to the hard decision of am I going to put my marriage first? I knew that we were at the point where if I kept going the way it was, I didn't know if I'd lose my marriage, but boy, certainly I didn't want to find out.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Do you remember where you were the moment you said, "I'm done."

Matt Hammitt: Man, I absolutely do. Yeah. I remember laying on the bus. I remember trying to figure out how I was going to get one foot out and keep one foot in, and I remember it was after a big conflict that we had the night before.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Fighting.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah. Oh yeah, on the phone. You can read all about it. It's messy, but it's in there. We were honest and people, I had people say, "I cannot believe you put that in the book." I'm like, "Man."

Dr. Tim Clinton: But it's where people live.

Matt Hammitt: You've got to tell the story. You've got to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's where everybody, it's where people are living.

Matt Hammitt: You've got to let people know, it's rough out there.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's rough out there. If your marriage has any potential for God, personally, I believe all hell will come against it, against you.

Matt Hammitt: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know that. I believe that.

Matt Hammitt: Absolutely. That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And it is a fight.

Matt Hammitt: And it's in those moments you decide, are you going to let God use that brokenness to take those pieces and build you back together only by His grace or are you going to try to manage it all yourself? And I knew I heard that voice, that guy was speaking to me. I knew what He was calling me to do and I just had to decide. And making that decision was the first step, but that came with, I love what Dr. Cloud says when he says character is about the ability to meet the demands of reality. We compartmentalize. We tell ourselves all these stories that we want to hear about how we can make things work out the way we want to.

We hear the pieces that we want to hear. We throw away the stuff that's too hard just so we can keep moving forward, and sometimes God just has to stop us and force us to take a hard look at our lives, and who we really are and will we meet the demands of not what we want our life to look like, but what it really looks like, and are we going to stop and hear what He has to say to us? And that's really the story for me is what are the action steps that I have to take? Not just the intentions of who I want to be and keep rolling through, but to stop and take a real hard look at what it is I need to actually be doing to make a difference.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Matt, it reminds me of another group in a song, Casting Crown song, Broken Together.

Matt Hammitt: I love that song.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm listening to you, I've got this thing going in my mind right now and thinking, okay, here's a couple who made a decision to hold on and fight through it. Before we talk about what you're doing now, which is pretty exciting. I want to talk about, I mean, how it's going with Sarah and with the kids.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah. Sarah is trying to get me out of the house a little more now, actually. I'm around so much.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, go fishing, go sing somewhere, go do something.

Matt Hammitt: She's like, "Great, go on. Go do it. Go do it all."

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's something when you start feeling safe and connected again, it creates freedom.

Matt Hammitt: Man, you could not have just said that better, and it's so simple. That it is so true that when you really take the time to understand and listen, especially with our wives, just the need to be understood and heard and come close to me and hear me validate me, just hear my heart. When you create that space to be known and for your wife to be known, you're absolutely right. There's that safety in the relationship where you're not clenching onto everything and choking the dear life out of everything you're coveting because you don't have it, and then it's like, yeah, there's that freedom there, and that is where we're at now. We're just experiencing this freedom in our relationship to be known and know each other and enjoy to love and loved to breathe the love and it's there. It's the margin that we needed, and so of course we still have our fights, of course, like everybody else as we still have difficulties, but man, because of the hard decisions we've made to put each other first, we're experiencing the benefits of family.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What a beautiful gift to us all.

Matt Hammitt: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know that, and that's a great message. Again, the new book is called *Lead Me: Finding Courage to Fight for Your Marriage, Children and Faith*. It's by Matt Hammitt. Matt is the former front man for the band Sanctus Real, an amazing story of hope, really to me. And Matt, let's talk a little bit about what you're doing now. You've teamed up both a good friend of all of ours, Kirk Cameron, and some others, and what's God doing?

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, so when I left, I didn't know what to do. I was like, "Okay, Lord, maybe I'm still writing music and doing a little music." But I wanted to leave my hands open in that season. I feel like when you're trying to promote this thing like a band, you're pushing so hard to try to open doors and opportunity, and I just decided I was going to let God do all that, and it was really neat because he showed up. I



got a call from Bob Lepine at Family Life asked me to be part of the Family Life Speak-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Family Life conferences.

Matt Hammitt: Conferences.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Marriage and men conferences.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, nice. So I do that four times a year, and then Kirk Cameron called and he said, "Hey, man, I'm doing this marriage and parenting event, Living Room Reset. I'd love for you to join me, share your testimony, do little singing."

Dr. Tim Clinton: I've talked with Kirk many times about that.

Matt Hammitt: Yeah, so we're excited about that being part of that. This is my third year going out with Kirk, and then of course, this is my first book, which I've been working on for a long time. I've got a lot more in me, so I'm excited to start writing more, and then I'm just speaking at men's and marriage conferences throughout the country, and so it's a really exciting season. One other thing I'm going to mention that's really exciting is we just finished the final edits on a feature length documentary that we did as a family called Bowen's Heart about what it's like to be a family that lives with chronic illness. Can you give your heart to something that will break it over and over again? By God's grace, we've been able to, but that's what the grace we need, and we're just trying to steward our story and use it to help other people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's the story of your son Bowen, right?

Matt Hammitt: That is, yeah. But you see the story that we just talked about too. You see that at play throughout a year of our lives of how do we work through these hard things as a family? We just want people to know they're not alone. Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The book again, *Lead Me: Finding Courage to Fight For Your Marriage, Children and Faith*. It really comes out of this song as we close today entitled Lead Me by Sanctus Real. Matt, it's been great having you here and may God continue to lead, bless you, your family, and by the way, that ministry.

Matt Hammitt: Thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're touching lives.

Matt Hammitt: Thanks for having me. Really appreciate it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As we close the show today, I want you to know that I'm so grateful you listened to this interview and I pray you were touched and that God blesses you and your family. If you're having a difficult time in your marriage, you're not alone.

You can reach out to the folks at Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk by calling 877-732-6825. Someone there would be happy to pray with you and pull you in the right direction and get you the help you need.

(Singing). I look around and see my wonderful I look around and see my wonderful life. Almost perfect from the outside. In picture frames, I see my beautiful wife, always smiling, but on the inside, oh, I can hear her saying Lead me with strong hands. Stand up when I can't. Don't leave me hungry for love Chasing dreams, but what about us. Show me you're willing to fight. That I'm still the love of your life. I know we call this our home, but I still feel alone.

So Father, give me the strength to be everything I'm called to be. Oh, Father, show me the way to lead them. Won't you lead me? To lead them with strong hands. To stand up when they can't. Don't want to leave them hungry for love. Chasing things that I could give up. I'll show them I'm willing to fight and give them the best of my life. So we can call this a home, lead me, 'cause I can't do this alone. Father, lead me, 'cause I can't do this alone.

Roger Marsh: A beautiful musical ending to this edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I pray that you've been touched by the very profound message behind that popular song. We've been listening to Dr. Tim Clinton's interview with Matt Hammitt, the former lead singer for Sanctus Real. When you visit today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), you can find out information about Matt's book and also the work he's doing today. There you can also request a physical copy of this interview. Simply tap on the order a CD button to have a polished broadcast CD delivered right to your door. Find all of this when you go to the broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

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

Dr. James Dobson: Fatigue and time pressure can undermine even the healthiest of marriages.

Roger Marsh: Dr. James Dobson for Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: How can a man and woman communicate with each other when they're too worn out to even talk? How can they enjoy a sexual relationship when they're exhausted at the end of every day? How can they take walks in the rain or sit by a fire when they face the tyranny of an unfinished to-do list? When asked these kinds of questions, most people will tell you that the pressures they feel today

are the result of temporary circumstances. In other words, they think their future will be less hectic. A slower day is coming.

Unfortunately, their optimism is usually unjustified. It's my observation that the hoped for period of tranquility rarely arrives. Instead, these short-term pressures have a way of becoming sandwiched back to back. We delude ourselves into believing that circumstances have forced us to work too hard for a short period of time, when in fact we're driven from within. We lack the discipline to limit our engagements with the world, choosing instead to be dominated by our work and the materialistic rewards it will bring. In our fast-paced society, what many of us really need is to take more time for the loving relationships with spouses and children and friends that give life meaning.

Roger Marsh:

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