



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Chad Robichaux: Still in the Fight, a Veteran's Journey – Part 3

Guest(s): Chad Robichaux

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: The following program is intended for mature audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

Well, welcome to today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. For the past couple of days here on the program, our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton, has been talking with Chad Robichaux. On this third and final installment of their conversation, Chad will be sharing the rest of his testimony, his experience of having PTSD, and his ministry through the Mighty Oaks Foundation.

Chad Robichaux is a highly decorated former U.S. Marine and Department of Defense contractor, with eight deployments to Afghanistan. He is a Medal of Valor recipient for his bravery beyond the call of duty in law enforcement. Chad has also earned an MBA from New York Institute of Technology, and is a board-certified pastoral counselor with a focus on PTSD. Chad Robichaux is married to his lovely wife, Kathy.

They have one daughter, two sons, and two granddaughters. Here now is the final installment of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Chad Robichaux on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, welcome back to Family Talk. It's been an amazing conversation over the last couple of days, and I couldn't wait for today's broadcast. I want to talk a little bit more about PTSD and the amazing work that God's doing in and through your ministries. But Chad, again, so appreciate you joining us.

Chad Robichaux: Yeah. No, thanks for having me back on. I'm really enjoying getting to share all the different components of this story and just hopefully praying it's encouraging people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, when you were in Afghanistan and you were talking about your eight deployments, there was a time when you began to ask yourself, "Am I becoming

a monster?" Chad, you come home and you've got a couple of horrific scenes that happen in your own life. Maybe you could take us there and begin to help us understand PTSD a little better.

Chad Robichaux: Yeah. The lack of empathy I had, the coldness, just not being emotionally moved by things. When you start recognizing that it makes you feel like, "Am I monster? Why don't I feel anymore?" This maybe feels like it works in Afghanistan, but now I'm home in an argument with my wife. I'm berating her and I don't even feel bad. My wife's crying, I don't even feel bad. What's wrong with me that you can't feel that emotion anymore?

It was one time, my little girl was so excited. I was going to be home for her birthday party and to her, she's like the birthday party's everything. She even has her half birthday, which I didn't know was a thing until I had a daughter. And she's like a self-proclaimed princess and it was a special day. She's having her birthday party and she's very opinionated. That's just who my daughter is. She didn't like the icing on her cake, something super simple.

I just lost my mind and I flipped out. Grabbed a handful of my little girl's birthday cake, and picked it up and threw it against the wall, and destroyed my little girl's birthday. There was just so many moments like that. I remember being at a traffic light with my wife. My wife said something and my three kids are in the backseat. And we were arguing at this red light and my kids are scared. I start kicking in the dashboard and my wife tries to drive off. I tried to kick the gear shift off the car so she couldn't drive off.

I was just so out of control. I think when I started recognizing those behaviors of being out of control, the response for me was instead of it correcting my behavior, I needed to distance myself from my family, because in my mind I was justified. I need to be this way right now. I need to be mean, I need to be violent. I need to be able to not have emotion to do my job and I can fix this later on. There is no later on. Those things, that anger and frustration, and lack of empathy and those physiologic responses, they only grow and get worse.

For me, that's when I started feeling this numbness in my arms and face, and my throat would feel like it was swelling shut. I feel like I had 1,000 pounds on my chest. These things started to manifest in me early on, but I thought if I would speak up about it, people would think I was weak and push me out of my community, and lose my top secret clearance for going to a psychologist. I just kept it to myself and never got well. Obviously, those things manifested in the way that it did, and almost cost me everything by not addressing it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The mind can be a very free, beautiful place, Chad, or it can become a very dark, turbulent place. When this thing starts spinning away from you, you can even go to a place where you think the world would be better off without you.

I know you talked yesterday a little bit about going to that place, pretty horrific journey. Chad, in the midst of it, God used your wife. Showed up on the scene and basically challenged you in a way that you hurt her. She said, "Are you a quitter?"

Chad Robichaux: Yeah. I'm pretty kind of all in or all out person. I make radical decisions. When she made that challenge to me and I responded to that challenge and saying, "Yeah, she's right. I've been successful in professional things in my life. But when it came to the most important things, I quit." In that moment, I made that radical decision to get well. Then there was the mentorship of Steve, the surrendering my life to Christ. But beyond the decision, I think it's important to say that I didn't just surrender my life to Christ.

I went in this very intentional discipleship period with Steve for about a year. Through that process, what I discovered was that all these bad things that happened to me, in my childhood, in Afghanistan. All these bad things, as bad as those things were, those things didn't lead me to be in that closet with my pistol in my hand. What led me there were the choices that I made in response to those things. It may sound cliché to some people to hear, but it was very profound to me to realize I didn't have to let my past define my future.

I could choose a different future moving forward. The decisions that I made, really produced a result that I got in my life. I came to this conclusion that I needed to make better choices to fix my situation, which sounds simple, but to me it was profound. I didn't have a good set of choices. I just had bad habits that I was doing. What the Bible became to me, was a way to pause and go to the Bible for an answer to each behavior. Did I still get angry? Did I still get frustrated? Did I still have panic attacks? Of course, I did.

But instead of choosing the old behaviors, I went to the Bible for a new behavior, and was very intentional about putting these new behaviors in my life. That resulted in a profound change in my life, which brought restoration, which brought hope again. Ultimately, it manifested in me finding that new purpose that we talked about with Mark Twain. That the very purpose that I believe God created me to live in, and the reason why God allowed me to go through some of these things that He allowed me to go through, was to have that purpose.

That purpose manifested for me in a deep burden that God put in my heart to pay forward to others, what Steve Toth had did for me. The challenge that Kathy gave me, the mentorship that Steve gave me, and the second chance that God gives us all, I had to share that with others. It was like I was dying of cancer and Steve gave me the cure. I didn't want to share it, I felt obligated to share it. That manifested in the founding of Mighty Oaks Foundation and where my life has been committed to since for the last 12 years.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, I want to go back to your son, Hunter, just for a moment too, because I found this really interesting. You heard that one in three children who lost a parent to suicide, do what?

Chad Robichaux: Take their lives as well. I heard that statistic and I remember thinking like, "Man, I have three children. If I take my life, statistically, one of them will as well. I'm teaching him that's the solution when life gets too hard." My kids did everything that I did. They've been wrestling since they could walk. They've been doing jujitsu since they could walk. Now they're adults and they want to do that, I'm a skydiver and now they want to skydive, which drives me crazy.

I'm like, "Why do you guys want to do that? It's dangerous." I have 500 jumps and so my kids do everything I do. The thought of them facing hardships in their life, which they will, and seeing me take my life as a solution and teaching them that, is something that thankfully I struggle with. But now, they get to see someone that faced hardship. I get to talk to them about my failures and tell them how it was difficult, but we worked through them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, what's amazing is we've learned that when you experience trauma in your life, it can destroy your sense of safety. It's like you're waiting for the next proverbial shoe to drop. It's like the next bomb to go off. It only makes sense when you start thinking the atrocities of war. And you again, experience or witness things that the human mind just doesn't assimilate in there.

Your natural response is to fight or to flight. You come back and speak a little bit about the reintegration process too. Because again, I'm trying to make sure people understand why this is such an important issue for us to discuss, to move towards, so we can help people like you guys are doing through Mighty Oaks Foundation.

Chad Robichaux: Yeah. Well, the reintegration process, for people to do it on their own, I don't know that people can really do it on their own. We weren't meant to do it on our own. God didn't design us to do it on our own. We were meant to do it in community with others. That's why I went through this situation. Now, I'm able to pay it forward those lessons to others. But to reintegrate like that, you're still feeling these emotional and physiological impacts, it's very difficult without the guidance and education. That's why I love what you guys do so much.

It's very difficult without the guidance and education, to be able to understand how to reintegrate, how to navigate. What's normal, what's not normal? What's a right response in behavior? What's okay, what's not okay? It's very difficult to understand that when you're doing it by yourself and all you can relate to is your own emotions and impulses. You have to have that outside education. The Bible does that very well, but gives us that. But the context of counseling and biblical counseling, and biblical mentorship really brings that into practical reality.

I can tell you, this is something I'm very proud of and I'm not boasting on myself. Apostle Paul talks about it. If you're going to boast, boast on God, and this is a God boast. I found myself there on these evacuations when we went back to rescue these people from Afghanistan. We rescued the 17,000 people, but

myself and a guy named Dennis Price were going to fly into Tajikistan. Spend 10 days on the border, swim across the Panj River every night in Afghanistan.

The Taliban control, past Taliban scouts and everything. This was months ago. I'm flying over there thinking, "What if I get out in these mountains, if something triggers me? The last time I was in Afghanistan, I have a panic attack. What if my blood pressure goes 200/1130? What if I have a stroke? What if I'm a liability to my partner, Dennis, in the middle of this, going to sneak back in Afghanistan to help evacuate these people? God, what do you have me going here for?"

As I'm thinking about this and the enemy is speaking these lies in me that I'm still broken, I remember the last 12 years, and I've spoken to 300,000 active duty troops on spiritual resiliency based around the world. One of the things I teach them is the mind, body, spirit, social, the four pillars of resiliency. How, when I went to Afghanistan the first time, I was mentally tough, physically tough. Socially I was with the best team, but I didn't have that spiritual pillar.

I talk about a four-legged stool. All four of those legs represent one of those pillars. If one of them is weak, you sit in that chair, it's going to break and you're going to come falling down. I didn't have that spiritual pillar and because of that, I broke. But now I had that faith and resiliency through Christ. I could understand that going to a place like Afghanistan again, because God burdened my heart to be there, I need to put that faith on Him.

I remember having this conversation with God on a flight to Tajikistan saying, "God, you called me to be here. I need you to take away any physiological responses that my body's going to have." I remember having that prayer and this peace came over me. I told Dennis on our layover and he's a Christian as well, as we prayed together. We spent 10 days in Tajikistan. Every night, we swam across the Panj River into Afghanistan. It's like ice melt water. Taliban's at some points like 30 yards away from us.

I say this, complete humility, I never felt fear, anxiety, stress come into me. There was one moment I knew we were going to do something pretty crazy. I sat down and prayed Psalm 23. I have it memorized because it brings a lot of peace to me. I remember praying that prayer and this peace just came over to me. And we ended up swimming across that river and right between a Chinese checkpoint and a Taliban checkpoint, and this peace was over me. I remember thinking I was in this river where I was years ago.

Moments to where I was going to the emergency room with blood pressure over 200/130. Moments to where my wife would talk too loud and I couldn't take the stress of my wife talking too loud. Moments to where I couldn't even get in a car by myself and go to a gas station because I was in fear of being alone, in fear of just dying at any moment. Now I'm in Afghanistan, swimming past the Taliban. Again, I say that not to brag about that operation at all. I say

that to say God could heal the souls of people. PTSD, you want to know what PTSD really is. PTSD is a spiritual wound.

It's a wound to the soul. I'm not speaking against doctors and counselors, and psychologists and medicine. There's a place for it all, but you can heal the mind and you can heal the body. But until you heal a person's soul, they are never truly going to be well. There's only one prescriptive way to heal someone's soul, and that's through a relationship with Christ. I believe God allows me to still be here today to be a living testimony of that, and why He allowed this 46-year-old washed-up special operations guy to go to Afghanistan and do that. Maybe it's to come back and tell that story.

Because four days after the river, I found myself at Marine Corps Bootcamp, San Diego. I flew straight there, spoke to 4,000 recruits that same speech I gave for 12 years on spiritual resiliency and it wasn't being taught from theory anymore. I'm like, "I was just in this river, 30 yards away from the Taliban. And because of my spiritual pillar, my mind might not be where used to be, my body certainly isn't. And socially, I didn't have a big team. I had Dennis, I love the guy, but he was just one person. But that spiritual pillar is the one I had to do this operation. I'm walking away a lot different than the first time I went to Afghanistan."

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Chad, I think you're speaking to a lot of people. I'm thinking about those who are listening, who may have been hurt as a child. Maybe they were physically abused or sexually abused. Maybe they witnessed stuff that they shouldn't have witnessed or maybe they had some other trauma that they don't even speak about, and it tends to isolate them. It's natural to pull away into your own world, but that's where it turns on us and devours us. Chad, I've heard people say the antidote to PTSD is relationship. You've got to move in a different direction.

A lot of what you've talked about is that healing relationship with God in Christ, you moved into that. And then you, by the way, began to go on a journey in your discipleship and take a look at biblical stories. You loved the story of David and Jonathan and how meaningful it was. Chad, talk to us and speak to the people who are hurting. Maybe they know someone right now who is in a spin. What do you say to them? How do you strengthen their heart? What can they do? Where do they go? Goodness, there's so much help that's needed out there.

Chad Robichaux:

There is. One, I think the most important thing is to the people, if you're struggling, you know someone's struggling, first thing is there is hope. It feels hopeless in that moment. You're like, "It's going to be this way forever." You're convinced in your mind this is how it's always going to be. That's not true. That's a lie of the enemy. It will not be that way forever. There is hope. Hope, I think God brings the first form of hope in the form of relationships.

You are not meant to do this alone. You don't have to do this alone. Even if you're alone right now in your house listening to this, and you feel like there's

no family or friends around, go to a church. Go to a good church in your community and just be open with someone. The things you're struggling with, you think you're the only one, no one feels this way. No one's ever felt so hopeless that they want to take their lives. The truth is many people feel that way.

Speak it out. No matter how bad it is, no matter how embarrassing it is, speak it out to someone. It frees that captive thought that the devil wants to keep you isolated in. You have to speak it out to community and to others. I went through a couple of things you could list. One is medication, right? I speak a lot against medication because I believe people are overmedicated. The average person that comes to Mighty Oaks is on 15 to 20 pills a day for PTSD, with no other diagnosis.

You can't heal, if you can't feel. You have to be able to feel. But I will say, there is a time and place for medications.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sure.

Chad Robichaux: God created doctors.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The right medications at the right time, Chad. The right amounts, you got it. Med management, it's important.

Chad Robichaux: It should be a pit stop in your road to recovery and not a destination. If medication's the only part of your plan, then it's a bad plan. Second is counseling. Another thing is speaking about it, whether it's publicly or one-on-one, you need to speak about your issues with someone and get connected with a group that you can speak about it.

Then one of the other things you could do is get engaged in activity that stimulates your mind and body. For me, it's jujitsu. I like some physical activities to stimulate your mind and body. We call this replacement conditioning, replacing negative behaviors with something positive that you have in the queue to do. Then lastly, I'll say this, educate yourself on the physiological effects of trauma.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, we're basically out of time, but you wrote a book that I think is really the theme of the last three days, *An Unfair Advantage*. Chad, in the middle of it, it's just all about our relationship with God in Christ, that He is the ultimate source of our strength.

He's the one who brings healing in the midst of the most insane chaos that we may experience in this life. Chad, I want you to close out by just sharing that piece and how you're doing, how your family is, as we wrap up this three-part series with you.

Chad Robichaux: Yeah. *An Unfair Advantage* is one of my favorite books to write. I go back and read it now and I'm like, "I can't believe I wrote that." God just really spoke to me through writing that book. It's just stories of my time in Afghanistan, and life and biblical stories that really inspired me. The truth is when we're in a relationship with Christ and we're living life the way He created us to live, we have an unfair advantage over everything that we're going to face.

We would come out on this side in the right place. Today, my family's doing amazing. I've been married 27 years. All three of my children are married. Two of them went to Bible college. Two of them went in the Marines. Two of them work for our ministry. I have a grandbaby and one grandbaby on the way. Mighty Oaks is doing amazing. We've had 4,500 graduates from our program. I've spoken to over 300,000 active duty troops.

Given away about 200,000 copies of our books. We're over in Ukraine right now working. Save Our Allies is doing amazing as well. Then I have another book coming out in January called *Saving Aziz*, which is a story of the Afghanistan rescues, and going to get Aziz as well as those 17,000 others. It's on presale available now. Savingaziz.org is the website for that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, I know as we wrap up, you want to see a generation of men who are strong, who are courageous for such a time as this. As a matter of fact, your son, Hunter, joined the Marine Corps, just like his daddy, all the way through that family system. As a matter of fact, I love this story where your dad said when he was at boot camp, he said, "Ah, they're going to make a man out of him." Your response was?

Chad Robichaux: Yeah, he's already a man. Hunter is a man. I think that's a big question in people's lives, in men's lives is like, "When did you become a man?" I think most men try to attribute it to a moment, like the first time I had sex, or the first time I had a job.

The first time I did a certain thing, or got married. I think but being a man is when you realize that life's not about you, it's about others and that's being a man.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, we're so honored that you'd spend this precious time with us and to share your story. I know people again are going to want to know how they can learn more about you. How maybe they can sponsor the Mighty Oaks Foundation, the work you're doing with veterans and more. Could you share that with them?

Chad Robichaux: Yeah. Mightyoaksprograms.org is the website for all things Mighty Oaks. You could support our efforts with the US service members here, our efforts internationally in places like Ukraine. We're putting 1,000 people through our program a year and we do that all for free. We pay for everything, about \$4 million a year in programming that is paid for by a grateful nation of supporters that get these guys through a program.

We pay for their flights and everything. It helps me go to the bases around the world and speak to our troops, as well as give them out books and things like that and resources, so you can support there. *An Unfair Advantage* is available on our websites or on anywhere books are sold. Again, *Saving Aziz* is coming out in January. It's up for presales and we'd love the support of people to get a copy of that book.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chad, I can't wait for you to join us at the Ignite Men's Impact Weekend in March of 2023 in Lynchburg, Virginia. It's going to be hey, we're going to have a lot of fun there, Chad.

Chad Robichaux: I'm looking forward to it. I obviously missed last year for Ukraine. I know you guys are praying for me when we went out there, but I'm looking forward to it this year. It's going to be amazing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Can't wait. Our special guest again has been Chad Robichaux. Chad's a former force recon marine and Department of Defense contractor with eight deployments into Afghanistan, as a part of a Joint Special Operations Command Task Force. He's the founder of the Mighty Oaks Foundation, a leading, amazing nonprofit serving active duty military, veteran, and first responder communities around the world with highly successful, faith-based combat trauma and resiliency programs.

He's also the co-founder of Save Our Allies. That's a nonprofit mission focused on the evacuation and recovery of Americans, allies and vulnerable people trapped in Afghanistan. Try to think, probably a beautiful way to close would be to share a verse that's in your heart and that's Proverbs 31:8, 9. "We need to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. For the rights of all those who are destitute, speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and the needy, the broken." Chad, it's been a delight. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, their family, the entire Family Talk crew, we thank you and we salute you. God be with you, give you strength.

Chad Robichaux: Thank you. God bless.

Roger Marsh: An incredible conversation between Dr. Tim Clinton and his guest, former US Marine and Medal of Valor recipient, Chad Robichaux, here on Family Talk. Today's program was the third and final installment of Dr. Clinton's conversation with Chad. He had so many incredible stories in a heartfelt testimony of surviving PTSD, and then thriving on the other side. Remember, if you missed any part of this three-part program, just visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Or you can send us an email at constituentcare@drjamesdobson.org.

Don't forget, if you haven't signed up for Dr. Dobson's newsletter, I'd like to encourage you to do that today. In that newsletter, Dr. Dobson tackles newsworthy topics, and offers advice and encouragement for families in every

stage of life. To sign up to receive Dr. Dobson's newsletter via email or through the U.S. mail, visit drjamesdobson.org, or give us a call at (877)732-6825. Finally, September is National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month. Here at Family Talk, we know that sometimes life can seem too dark to bear, but the fact is there is help and there is hope.

If you or someone you know is in a mental health crisis, you can call this number, 988. Again, that number is 988, and it connects you directly with the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The lifeline provides free and confidential support for people in distress 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Again, that national toll-free number is 988 to reach a trained crisis worker who will listen to you, understand how your problem is affecting you and provide support. Then help you to get the help that you need. Well, thanks for listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk today.

If you've been blessed by what you've heard and would like to support our ministry, remember you can always make a donation online at drjamesdobson.org, or give us a call at (877)732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening to Family Talk. Until next time, may God continue to richly bless you and your family.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, everyone. Did you know that radio is more popular now than ever? A new feature here at Family Talk we're excited to announce. It's called the Station Finder Feature. This is Dr. Tim Clinton for Family Talk. I'm going to tell you how you can listen to our daily broadcast on a station near you. Go to the broadcast menu at drjamesdobson.org, then click on the Family Talk radio stations button. Once you're there, you're going to see an interactive map of radio affiliates, which by the way is growing every day. Simply click on your home state and then you'll see where our broadcast is airing in your town. Stop randomly spinning around the dial, hoping to find Dr. Dobson and Family Talk. Go to drjamesdobson.org and take advantage of this brand new station finder feature.