



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Fit Over 50: Make Simple Choices Today for a Healthier You– Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Walt Larimore

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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.

Roger Marsh: Hello, and welcome to Family Talk, the listener supported broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Roger Marsh here, and I feel so blessed that every day I have the privilege of greeting you and introducing the latest edition of Family Talk. Dr. Dobson's guest on today's program is Dr. Walt Larimore. After serving for 41 years as family physician and delivering over 1500 babies, Dr. Larimore retired from direct patient care in December of 2021. Walt is an award-winning medical journalist and a best-selling author. He is also married to his childhood sweetheart, Barb. They literally did meet when they were little kids and together they have two grown children and two grandchildren together. Today our guest is going to unpack his book called *Fit after 50*, which details how you can do a lot of simple things after the age of 50 to improve your health, live longer, and have a more productive life for yourself, your spouse, and your kids.

This is so important given that we are just coming out of the pandemic and the CDC has just released sobering news that once again, the average life expectancy in the US has gone down. This is a reversal from the steady life expectancy increase that we achieved as a society over the past several decades. That alone should make everyone lean in and listen more closely today. Now, Dr. Walt Larimore is a very good friend and former colleague of Dr. Dobson's, Dr. Larimore and Dr. Dobson served together while they were both at Focus. Walt was asked by Dr. Dobson to lead a medical ministry that he designed to minister to doctors, nurses, and all medical professionals. Well then, with that said, I will let Dr. Dobson continue introducing his good friend and today's topic right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to start with this, the Apostle Paul challenged believers in Corinth to honor God by taking care of their bodies. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19, he said, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" Did you get that, folks? I mean, that's pretty straightforward and it's what we're going to talk about today. And we're going to address this concept through a conversation with my dear, dear friend, Dr. Walt Larimore. My

goodness. We've been working together for a long time. Walt, you said as we were coming in here, that you counted, you actually have records that we've done 80 radio programs together here and at Focus on the Family?

Dr. Walt Larimore: I don't remember because our memories start to go as we age, but Jim, it's been a lot of them, hadn't it?

Dr. James Dobson: It has been. And it's been a lot of fun. Dr. Larimore is a well-respected family doctor with over five decades of medical experience. Dr. Larimore also hosted over 800 videoed episodes of "Ask the Family Doctor" on *Fox Health Network*. He's an award-winning author and he's made many appearances on the *Today Show*, *CBS Morning News* and *CNN*. What were you doing on *CNN*? Come on, brother.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Well, last time it was actually, I was at Focus and it was Anderson Cooper was doing a program on discipline and parenting. And he had a psychiatrist saying that one parent could do as well as two, and that corporal punishment was damaging eternally for children. It was just a wonderful debate. And to his credit Anderson Cooper, I think leaned our way.

Dr. James Dobson: He's not my favorite person either.

Dr. Walt Larimore: I understand, but, boy, the studies I think convinced him.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've written a new book called *Fit Over 50*. I think I am over 50 now.

Dr. Walt Larimore: I resemble that remark.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to play a game with you, okay?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Okay. I'm ready.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's suppose you and I walked into your examining room and you had a patient there and you were trying to get acquainted with him. As it turns out he's 55 years old. He's a man, he's 40 pounds overweight. He has blood pressure about 160/90. He doesn't exercise except when he is getting out of bed in the morning, his LDL, bad cholesterol, is about 250. And his total cholesterol's 350. He's a borderline diabetic. He eats hot dogs and pizza frequently. He works too hard and his father died at 57. Have you ever met this man?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Almost every day. And his wife who brought him. That's the reason he's there, typically. Because-

Dr. James Dobson: And he didn't want to come.

Dr. Walt Larimore: No, somebody that loved him was concerned about where he was at and where he was going.

Dr. James Dobson: What in the world do you do with a patient like that?

Dr. Walt Larimore: I find out, first of all, where they are and second of all, where they feel they're being led to be. Because one of the baselines, at least for me, is I want to know where a person is not just physically, but relationally in their family, emotionally, and spiritually. And so a little assessment that we take includes a spiritual assessment.

Dr. James Dobson: You don't start with the fact that he's got a beer belly and all of the indices say he's in trouble and probably heading over a cliff?

Dr. Walt Larimore: I want to know which of those wheels of health is the most likely to blow. We try through history and physical and testing to find out what are all the issues that are going on with the person, not just physically, but emotionally, relationally, spiritually.

Dr. James Dobson: So, there's some reason he's in the mess he's in.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Exactly. And then prioritize those based upon his needs and his desires, because there may be something that's a higher priority to take care of, but he's more interested in taking care of something else. Jim, you've been a counselor for a long time. And you know that you need to find where someone's willing to go to work with you, right?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Dr. Walt Larimore: To take those first steps. And then as they have fruit in that area and they see that they can change, then it's a little easier to go to the second one. Don't you find the same thing emotionally?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, I do. But it's rare to see somebody in that kind of trouble who is willing to pay the price to get himself straightened out. Have you ever seen it happen?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Oh, changing? Absolutely. But one of my favorite questions, kind of at the end of the interview is a question that Jesus asked the man at Bethesda. And that is, "do you want to be healed?" And people really look at you kind of funny thinking, "Well, do I have to buy one of those handkerchiefs or something?" And I say, "No, but if you're willing to improve your health, I'm here to help you. If you're just looking for a pill, it may be better for you to see someone else." But I'm interested in helping people that are interested in helping themselves, who are willing to take positive steps and I'll hold you accountable to them. But I've got to be sure that's a direction that you want to go.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm going to brag a little bit. Okay. I don't do this very often, but I'm going to. I'm going to tell it like it is, I am a physician's dream because I find out what I have to do to stay alive and I do it. I had a heart attack, a totally blocked LAD, the main artery. You remember those days.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Well, you remember our friend, Pete Marivich who had that. Died in your arms and had that one artery clogged up. And then here you go, not too many years after that.

Dr. James Dobson: Two years later on the same floor.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: But I found out what I needed to do. And that was to exercise. I changed my diet, which is very hard for me to do. A little over a year ago Walt, I went in for a routine physical and found that my A1C was up. That's indication of a prediabetic condition. It was 71, which is the beginning of diabetes. And diabetes is a bad disease. You don't mess around with that. And I said, "Okay, tell me what I have to do." And my A1C, which was 71 dropped to 66, 65, 61, 56. And it's now in the normal range at 55.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Well, even 56 would be normal. But Jim Dobson, after your heart attack, you decided to take care of yourself physically. And I'm convinced that one of the reasons you did so well with that stroke, you remember the stroke?

Dr. James Dobson: Yep.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Where you couldn't speak. And yeah, there was medical intervention, but Jim, you were in pretty good shape when you had the stroke. And you remember when you had prostate cancer?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Remember how, I mean it wasn't-

Dr. James Dobson: I've had it all, really.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Yeah. And I'm convinced that your ability to have done so well with those, is that you were in better shape because of the heart attack, that God was able to use those opportunities to convict you to begin to care for yourself. And I'm convinced there's people listening today that God's brought to this program because He wants to convince them that He's got something in store for them that involves not just spiritual.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. This is not just a suggestion-

Dr. Walt Larimore: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: ... that's being made. This comes right out of Scripture. Let me read the reference that I made during my introduction, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?" That's quite a concept. When you think about it, the God of the universe lives in me, "who is in

you, whom you have received from God. You are not your own. You were bought with a price, therefore honor God with your bodies." Let's ask that question of all the people out there who are listening to us. Are you living up to that Scripture? Are you honoring God with your bodies?

Dr. Walt Larimore: And you know, Jesus did. The physician, the only physician who wrote Scripture, wrote two books, Dr. Luke. He wrote that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, in relationship with God and relationship with men. And so I kind of interpret that to say, Jesus grew in wisdom. He grew emotionally and His mind and intellectually. He grew in stature. He grew physically, healthy physically. He grew in relationship with God, His spiritual relationship with His Father. And then He grew in relationship with men, socially, with family and friends. What the medical research shows that those four areas are in balance, and if those wheels we've talked about these in the past, those health wheels are inflated, your life will be a lot smoother and will actually run longer and more efficiently and more effectively. But just like your car, if one of those wheels starts to go flat, or starts to get out of alignment, or starts to wobble, it affects the whole car.

And what medical science shows is, you can be in great shape, spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. But if you're not physically, it will affect those other three in any combination that you think of. And so this book isn't just about being physically fit. It's about how can you be fit with your family? How can you be fit emotionally? How can you be fit spiritually? In fact-

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you're talking about the wheels. Let's talk specifically about the four wheels. Your book *Fit Over 50* is based on those four wheels. The first one, this is surprise to me, I would've thought you would've put the physical body being tops, most important, but you said it is spiritual rightness with God.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: That that is the first thing you do in getting in shape.

Dr. Walt Larimore: To me if you're using the car analogy with the four wheels of health being physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual, the spiritual's what's connected to the power steering. That's connected to the motor. It's connected to the drive. If you don't have it right spiritually, it negatively affects every single area. And so that's why there's several chapters emphasizing the spiritual relationship. I love the chapter that we have on the gospel. Reduce the entire gospel down to 32 words, because my belief is that people over 50 are going to look at this. They're beginning to think about their health. And I want them to realize that there's that spiritual health that's the most important, that relationship with God that'll not only affect the rest of this life, but eternity itself.

And so there is hidden in this an opportunity. I think we have listeners today that are under 50, but they know people over 50, coaches, parents, friends,

neighbors, and maybe they want to have an impact upon them spiritually. This may be a book that can do that because yes, it talks about the physical. It talks about four things you can do to live 10 years longer and five numbers you need to concentrate on and all of those important physical facts, but Jim, you're right. Without the spiritual, everything else is going to end. But with the spiritual, everything will go on forever.

Dr. James Dobson: Forever.

Dr. Walt Larimore: And how can you not want that?

Dr. James Dobson: What a promise that is.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Can you believe it?

Dr. James Dobson: Can you imagine it? In my life, I have a lot of friends who are dying. A lot of them who are really going through difficulty. And that promise of eternal life becomes the pearl of great price. I mean that, you hold that more tightly as the years go on.

Dr. Walt Larimore: And the witness is this, that they that have Jesus have eternal life. And they that don't, do not have eternal life. John said, "I wrote this, that you may know that you have eternal life," and Jesus defined eternal life. Our friend Del Tackett asked us once, "What is eternal life?" And I was thinking, "Well, I guess it's pie in the sky when you die by and by." Remember Del said-

Dr. James Dobson: Karl Marx beat you to that one.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Exactly. And Del said, "No, Jesus defined eternal life in the great high priestly prayer of John 17." John 17:3, "And Jesus said, 'And this is eternal life.'" You think that'd be pretty clear, right? "Jesus said, 'This is eternal life that they might know thee, oh my Father, and your son, Jesus Christ.'" So eternal life begins the moment we know Jesus, the moment we confess Him as Lord, the moment we trust Him, the moment we turn our life over to Him. That's when eternal life begins. It's not later. So we can infuse that into our relational, physical, emotional, and spiritual health now. But Jim, as you said, the benefit is that will be forever and ever and ever life. And I've just not met anybody that doesn't want that. I've not met anyone sick that doesn't begin to think about God.

I was just with the residents in Tulsa, I teach at a Christian residency several times a year, and we were rounding in the intensive care unit. And there was a 32 year old man who had just come off a ventilator. He had a severe infection, a septic infection. And I saw in the resident's notes, because they all do spiritual histories, that this guy was an atheist. And so the chief resident said, "Dr. Larimore, he's off the ventilator. He's recovering from his sepsis, he's doing well. You don't need to see him as the attending physician." And I said, "I'd love to see him." And he said, "Why?" And I said, "I think we can publish an article

about this guy." I love to publish articles. You know that. And he looked at me and he said, "Well, you come from Colorado Springs. I know it's not that big, but we see this type of sepsis all the time and you're not going to be able to publish an article with this."

And I said, "No, no, no, it's not the sepsis, but you've got an atheist in the ICU. I've never seen one. And if he's an atheist in the ICU, I want to write a case report about him." So we walked in, I introduced myself to him, asked him a few questions about how he was doing. And I said, "By the way the residents have in the spiritual history that you're an atheist. Can I ask you a question?" He said, "Sure." I said, "Have you even once thought about God since you got sick?" And he said, "I talk to him every day."

Dr. James Dobson: Oh.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Because once you get sick, you think eternal things.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. There are no atheists in foxholes.

Dr. Walt Larimore: They're sure not in ICUs. And so for folks over 50 many, most are beginning to think about health. They're beginning to think about the end, and my prayer is that they'll be able to think about the totality of their health, their spiritual health, their family health, their physical health.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. Let's go to the second wheel. The time's moving. It always does. Let's talk about the physical body. Let's go back to the train wreck in your examining room. His body is just a mess. Where would you start?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Well, I tell him there's four numbers that you can focus on that can increase life expectancy 10 years. They're real simple, Jim. It's A, B, C, D. A is the A1C. You mentioned that earlier. That's that simple blood test that tells your doctor your average blood sugar for the previous three months. It's now recommended for every adult every three to five years. If you're at risk, if you're overweight, have a family history of diabetes, then you should have it more often, but be sure that you don't aren't in a pre-diabetic state or a diabetic state. Because if you're in that pre-diabetic state, Jim, just like you were, you can make some changes. And we talk about what those changes are to prevent diabetes. So A is A1C.

The B of A, B, C, D is your BMI. It's your body mass index. It's your weight. And BMI is the number we use to determine if you're morbidly obese or obese or severely overweight or overweight. And the studies show that if you can make some changes, if your weight is abnormal and the vast majority of Americans, they are now unfortunately, there's some simple steps you can take and even reducing your weight as much as 10%, finding a way to do that works for you and your family increases your life expectancy, reduces your risk of disease. So A was A1C, B is the BMI, C is your...

Dr. James Dobson: Before you leave that, in this instance, it's really fun because when I cut sugar out of my life, I start are losing weight. I didn't even try. I've lost 30 pounds in that 13 months. And without even dieting, I have not been hungry. It's amazing.

Dr. Walt Larimore: We don't even talk about dieting in this book. We talk about what are the nutrition plans that you can do that fit your personality, your temperament, your lifestyle, your schedule, your family, and how do you do that with your family? But I just had a patient who I saw back who had lost 37 pounds. And I said, "What worked for you?" And he said, "Sugar. Took out all the processed sugar." And thank the Lord-

Dr. James Dobson: That's hard to do, by the way.

Dr. Walt Larimore: ... that the FDA is now requiring, labeling saying how much added sugar there is in each product that we have. In fact, we were talking about my daughter, Kate, who you have enjoyed having a relationship with and Kate cut sugar out of her diet and began losing weight. And then she decided to take a Dr Pepper, take a sip of it. And the sugar was repulsive to her because she wasn't taking it anymore. So the A, B, C, Ds. A is the A1C, B is the BMI. C's the cholesterol, particularly the bad cholesterol, the lethal cholesterol, which is the LDL cholesterol. And you focused on that. So that's the third number that we go after. And then the last one is the diastolic blood pressure, the high and low blood pressure. Be sure your blood pressure's normal. And many of our listeners may not know that the blood pressure normal has changed. It used to be 140/90. It's now considered less than 120/80 and over 60% of Americans have an elevated blood pressure based upon that number. It doesn't mean you need a medicine.

Dr. James Dobson: And losing weight affects that, doesn't it?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Absolutely. Losing weight affects that, taking that sugar and that fat away can that affect that. Exercise, the more we learn about just moving. In fact, the US government, which was saying 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise five days a week was what you needed to really institute life changes, now says you can do that 30 minutes in one minute increments. How many of our listeners, when they go to the mall will spend 15 minutes driving around to park closer to the door? Just park out at the edge of the parking lot. Get that extra five minutes. Those will add up. You and I write a lot. So we're at the computer and I've got this little program and every 10 minutes it beeps, I have to get up and move. That adds up. That's good news.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right? You actually have a mechanical or electronic device.

Dr. Walt Larimore: There's a little thing on the computer and it'll go beep. Now the kids gave me-

Dr. James Dobson: So, you get up and walk.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Yeah. Kate and Scott gave me a Fitbit. I said I'd never wear one of those. And now I've got one and it'll do the same thing. Simple.

Dr. James Dobson: We're talking about the body and the physical aspect of it. Let's talk about aging. This is *Fit Over 50*, which is the title of your book. The subtitle is *Make Simple Choices Today For A Healthier, Happier You*. What about the aging process? I mean, it's inevitable. Things start breaking. Things start happening.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Oh, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Things don't look as good. How can a person remain confident and happy and enjoy life when everything is sort of changing for the worse?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Well, Jim, we all, both have friends and a lot of our listeners have friends that are going through that. The fact is that the wheels over time will begin to wear a little bit and begin to rust a little bit. And we have an entire chapter on aging and things that people can begin to think about, a whole bunch of steps they can maybe think about to turn that aging into a really positive experience. One that I like to teach is just, I call it telling your story, is figuring how you can with your children and your grandchildren, tell and leave your story. Most people are interested in what sort of legacy they're going to leave. I just had a friend whose mother suddenly died and she said, "I don't even know what her favorite ice cream was. And I'd like to know that I'd like my kids to know that." It sounds insignificant, but it's very, very significant to her. Try new things. The research is fairly clear that as we begin to age, we get a little bit more time perhaps, especially after retirement. Try some new things because it will youthen you.

Dr. James Dobson: Here's the important question. Can you slow down that aging process? We can't stop it. Can you affect it?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Well, the whole book is about that. Because *Fit Over 50* is how do you do that? The aging process can be slowed. It's not going to be through this or that supplement. It's not going to be through this or that pill. Research is fairly clear on that. But the things that we talk about, which is how can you get moving? How can you exercise? How do you pick the right nutrition plan? How do you pick the right non-toxic relationships? How do you pick the right activities? How do you invest in others through volunteering or ministering or mentoring? And I tell people, if you are 50 or over, you not only have the opportunity to mentor those coming behind you, I believe biblically you have the obligation.

And Jim, I told you before the broadcast that Barb and I are working with a marriage ministry and we'll have couples who come in and say, "Well, we'd be interested, but we have failed." We were talking to a couple the other day. He said, "I have failed. This is my third marriage." And she said, "I have failed. This is my second marriage." And Barb looked at him and said, "You are more qualified than most people because you know the pain, you know the mistakes. You are ready." We can give you a few simple tools, but those behind you need to know

that marriage isn't perfect. It's not two people getting into a perfect relationship. Jim, you've taught this for 50 years. It's two people getting into a relationship and committing to it, despite their imperfections, to love each other, in spite of each other. To love God enough, that as they grow to love Him more, they grow to love each other more.

Roger Marsh:

Well, that is a profound statement to end this Family Talk broadcast. And I'm Roger Marsh. We hate to cut into this informative conversation at just this moment, but we have run out of time for today. Be sure to go to drjamesdobson.org and click on the tab that says Today's Broadcast to learn more about how you can get a copy of Dr. Walt Larimore's 2019 book called *Fit Over 50*. And while you're there, you can also read more about his organization and his extensive medical background. That's drjamesdobson.org. Once you're there, hit the button that says "Today's Broadcast" and be sure to be with us again tomorrow for the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's riveting conversation with Dr. Walt Larimore. They'll continue to discuss how you can maintain wellness in all aspects of life especially after the age of 50. That's coming up right here next time, on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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