



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Awake and Alive: Finding Truth in the Chaos of Today's Culture – Part 2

Guest(s): John Cooper

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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: Well, welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, I think that every one of us enjoys at least some form of music, some style or another, that really kind of gets us going. Reminds me of the words of the psalmist in Psalm 66:1-4. "Shout for joy to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of His name. Make His praise glorious. Say to God, how awesome are your deeds? So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you. They sing praise to you. They sing the praises of your name."

Wow. Now, chances are, you probably have heard those words before. There really is such beauty and power, and a redemptive healing spirit, in singing for and to the Lord, and spelled out right there in the Bible are the words that encourage us to do so. So, if you love music, well, stay tuned.

Returning to Family Talk today for the conclusion of our exclusive two-part interview is John Cooper, the lead vocalist, bassist, and co-founder of the Christian Rock Band called Skillet. That's right, just like a frying pan. John found his calling in singing about Jesus, and co-founded Skillet back in 1996. Skillet is a two-time Grammy Award nominated band. They have gone platinum 12 times, that means the band has sold over 12 million albums worldwide. And on today's program, you're going to hear about how John and his band chose the name Skillet, and also about how he tours on the road with his family. He'll also talk about the book he wrote back in 2020 called Awake and Alive to Truth. John Cooper is married to his wife Korey, who is also a member of the Band Skillet, and together they have two children.

Recently, John Cooper sat down with our own Dr. Tim Clinton at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Orlando, where this interview was recorded. These two men of God really had fun together mixing it up and you'll enjoy their conversation. So let's join them right now, right here, on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey John, welcome back. What a conversation yesterday talking about the seeds that were planted deep inside of you that have emerged in this firm

commitment to truth. I wanted to ask you about your wife, Korey, and your children. Korey actually plays in the band, is that right?

John Cooper: Yeah, that's right. My wife plays in the band.

Dr. Tim Clinton: How'd you guys meet? Yeah, put the dots together for us.

John Cooper: Sure, I'd love to. I've been married, we just celebrated 27 years, or excuse me, 26 years of marriage, 27 years of Skillet. I got it backwards, my bad. We have been on the road the whole time. We have two kids. My kids are now 20 and 17.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

John Cooper: My son's almost 18, and both passionate followers of Jesus, and God has blessed us so much, and we lived our whole lives on the road. My kids have traveled the world, my kids have played with, I mean, you name the metal band, my kids have been on the road with them and played a gig. Metallica, Iron Maiden, Alice Cooper, there's nobody we haven't played with, all right? And my kids have been with us doing that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: John, life on the road is, it's tough. You're up against everything. A lot of challenge, push back, craziness, but staying anchored spiritually, what do you do? How do you keep yourself, how do you keep your family there?

John Cooper: Yeah. One of the best things about our life, as I've said, my kids are on the road, they grew up on the road. I do need to say we do, we have a local church that we've been a part of since the beginning. I've always said to people, I think that's one of the biggest reasons that Skillet has been so grounded. We've always been considered sort of an outreach of my church. We're not just alone doing our own thing, but we sort of implemented on the road that we would worship with our kids, and sometimes that would be the whole band would worship with our kids, or just me and my kids, or just my wife and my kids. We taught our kids what the worship songs mean. At times it created a thing when other bands would sometimes join us.

A funny thing, we were doing a secular tour called Carnival of Madness, and years ago we were one of the bands, there's bigger bands than us. There was a guy on that tour, that I had toured with years before, that I had a role in him coming to Christ because we had toured together, and he's in a heathen rock band and we talked about the Lord. I prayed with him about receiving the Lord as his Savior. It didn't quite take, but three years later it did take, and he came to the Lord. We toured together again and he said, "Hey, I am living for Christ now." And he said, "But I need church. I don't know if I can make it out here." So we started holding these little services and inviting people.

We've done those sort of things, and taught our kids how to worship, and taught our kids that actually in the presence of the Lord, people might not understand what's going on, but they might recognize that something truly wonderful is happening, they might want to know the truth. It was great because then my kids got to eat lunch with people that would never go to church, don't like Jesus, and they got to see that we love those people. They would say "can we go watch Mr. So-and-So play?" And I'd say, no, you can't because they say things that I don't want you to see, but we have dinner with them. You know what I mean? They're our friends. That was a really wonderful opportunity.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You probably get this question a million times over Skillet. Where'd the name come from? Seriously?

John Cooper: Yeah, I've never been asked that. No kidding. No, yeah, yeah, everybody. Why do you call it Skillet? And every time I say it's the dumbest name. You have to understand that it was the 90s, and 90s, the dumber your name was the cooler you were because it showed you just don't care. I'm so cool, I don't have to think of a good name. That was the 90s.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're Skillet.

John Cooper: Yeah, yeah, but there was a reason. When we got together, we were all from different bands, and so it was actually my pastor said, "Hey, you guys are all from different bands. It's almost like cooking, taking all these different ingredients and throwing it in a skillet." And then somebody goes, "Dude, you should call it Skillet, that'd be funny. It's the 90s. That'd be awesome." And I said, okay.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's a true story.

John Cooper: That's a true story. I was like, it won't last very long, so who cares? That's a lesson to-

Dr. Tim Clinton: It stuck like glue,

John Cooper: ... children, make sure you make good decisions. It might last you your lifetime.

Dr. Tim Clinton: John, talk to us about the industry. No doubt you've seen a lot. By the way, you've had probably some amazing moments, anything stick out in your mind? Something that was just like, this is unbelievable and you sense the power of God all in one?

John Cooper: I've got too many stories to tell. They're amazing, and I love to tell them. I always tell people, I want to make sure everybody understands that you don't know me, I would never brag on myself, I love to boast on Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, the Bible says. I love to boast about the amazing work

the Holy Spirit does when you are just being faithful in your daily life, and I think that's something that everybody listening can relate to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I can imagine people just turning it up right now saying, "This is counterintuitive, doesn't make sense." It's like, click this thing up here for a moment.

John Cooper: Yes. I mean, this is what God does, He does amazing things in our daily lives. There's a story that I've only told a few times when people ask me this question. This is a crazy one. Now, it's not as much in the moment as you said, but we received an email in 2015, and it said, okay, "In 2010," this email said, "Me and my husband were watching TV. There was an NFL commercial, and it had a song on it that we loved. We were like, who is this band? This song is so good." And they said, "We looked it up and it was a song called "Hero" from your band, Skillet. We didn't know anything about Skillet, me and my husband both were in the pornography film industry. We made pornographic films, and we loved this song." We're like, "Who is this band Skillet? I want to listen to this music. We found your music, and began listening, became huge Skillet fans, had no idea that you were a Christian band, didn't know anything about it."

And eventually I said, "I wonder what that song "Hero" is actually about, and I found an interview with you talking about it. You said that your hero is Jesus Christ. And I said, Jesus Christ is, I wonder what that means. And I decided I would go to church to find out what Jesus was all about. I got born again, and I led my husband to the Lord. We got out of the porn industry, into a church, and three years later we felt the Lord calling us to create a ministry ministering to people in the pornographic film industry." All from a TV commercial. You can't make this up. There's nothing you could do to say you could make this happen. This is about a sovereign God that creates these amazing opportunities to accomplish His will when you're just obedient to your calling.

Now, I have had moments when I've been playing live, and I have said something on stage that I just knew was, I don't know the language, different Christians like different language, prompted by the Holy Spirit to say, whatever your particular language is, it's something I might not normally say, but I said it at that time. And for whatever particular thing was happening, you can experience the power of the truth of God. I mean, the Word of God is alive. So when you speak the Word of God, as the theologian John Frame says, when you speak, read aloud, quote, the Word of God, the attributes of God are in the Word, it's absolutely inseparable from His power.

I have seen that happen, and I have seen people come to tears in a moment that I absolutely would not expect. I've met people after those things that say, "I would bizz on drugs for 10 years, and I went to your concert, and all that you said was is that Jesus Christ wants to set people free. And in that moment, I never, ever wanted to do meth again." I can't explain it, that's what they said to me. That's just power of the Lord.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Years ago, I interviewed a gentleman, Randall Wallace wrote Braveheart.

John Cooper: Braveheart, my favorite movie of all time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You think of some of the screenplays that he had done, and I asked him, "What prompts those kind of stories? Where does it come from?" And he was explaining to me, "I really try to press into what I hear the scream of culture saying, and try to give life to that." When I think of lyrics, and writing, and I'm thinking about a lot of what we hear, John, what happens? My son Zach told me about this guy, NF, okay?

John Cooper: Mm-hmm, yep.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And he said, "Dad, listen to some of his stuff because he's writing about mental health related themes."

John Cooper: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You've got to hear this, people are listening to this stuff because they resonate with this kind of storyline, it's like the scream of their heart. John, take us into your world and what you're trying to get done, or what do you think God's doing in and through you, that voice you're giving to this industry?

John Cooper: Yes. Well, I think that rock music has always lended itself to those kind of people that you just mentioned. NF is definitely, that's sort of like his bag, if you will, that's his lane, and he's really good at it. Rock music has always spoken to those kind of people because people that listen to rock music always, they feel on the margins, they feel like they don't quite belong, they're the outcast. And so I've always sung about those things because I can relate to loneliness. As we shared on the other program, my mom passed away, I didn't share about my angst and fighting, and if I could say it, hatred for my own dad after that, that God did save me from an incredible way, but I had several years of very hard times.

I write a lot about those same topics because everybody can relate to them. In fact, we have a song called "The Last Night," and it's a duet between me and my wife, and in the song, I am talking her out of suicide. And that song, if you Google top 100 songs about suicide, that song is on that list. That's from 2006. Everybody can relate to that, and we were playing that song one time on a club tour down in Atlanta. We were opening up for another band, sold out show, 800 people, small club, and there's a lot of people there that didn't know me. I was signing autographs afterwards, and the other band we were playing with was a much darker, heavier band than us.

I saw this guy who's six foot three, dreadlocks, piercings on his face, staring at me, and I thought that he wanted to fight me. He had this-

Dr. Tim Clinton: This dude is going to come and hammer me.

John Cooper: Yeah, because I'm Christian, and I said this thing about this song, "The Last Night," I said, this is a song, here's what it's about, it's about mental health, people who want to commit suicide, but I want you to know that you matter to Jesus, you matter to God. That's all I said.

And after I signed autographs, this guy walked up to me. I honestly thought he was going to start trying to get me to fight him or something. And he says, "Hey, I don't know your band. I came to see other band." But he said, "You played this song. I don't remember the name of it, but you said that God cares about me. Do you actually mean that?" And I said, "Yes, I do mean that." And he said, "Why? Why should God care about me?" And I explained a little bit why God cared about him. I said, "Hey, would you let me pray for you?" And he's like, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Would you let me pray to God for you? We'll pray together now." And he said, "I've never had anybody pray for me before." So, "Well, maybe I'll do it now in the middle of this club." He's like, "Okay." And I said, "Well, all we got to do, it's easy. All you do is close your eyes, we'll pray." And I start praying for him, and this six foot three giant that I thought was going to tear my head off, just, his head falls into my chest, and he just starts weeping. It's a moment I will never forget.

Dr. Tim Clinton: John. I know that in your life, and in what you represent to the greater world community, you want to stand for truth. You wrote this book, *Awake & Alive to Truth*. Again, I know you had a song along the same theme, but in it you talk about this woke world that we're living in, that's lost itself, that is confused about what truth is.

I have a good friend, Christian psychiatrist friend, Karl Benzio, he says, "Truth is dying, Tim. That's what the problem is." Well, truth doesn't die, but we all know what he's saying there.

John Cooper: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You push, and you challenge people to think critically. I love that. As I read your book and gone through the pages of it, you talk openly about this post-modernism that we're in. Relativism, Marxism, atheism, new age movement, so much more, and the challenge of diversity, inclusion, and the social justice, CRT and so much more. All this stuff and the confluence of it, and what it's doing, and it's muzzling people. People are getting lost and they're angry, they're confused, they're silent, they're shame by what they think they believe, they're just all over the map. You take us then into the awe of God. You take us into the authority of scripture. You push. John, you're a rebel. That doesn't even make sense when you really look at the world that you, quote, in, if you will.

John Cooper: Right. That's true.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In but not of.

John Cooper: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's the piece. Speak to that.

John Cooper: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, let's just say wokeness, in general. Wokeness, it is not simply a culture war issue. Wokeness depends, I shouldn't say depends, relies, on the death of God. And this is why it's not a culture war issue, this is a spiritual issue. Wokeness is angry that there is no justice in the world. Wokeness is angry at the human condition. Wokeness is angry that there is a created order. It's mad at a God for the fact that there is a created order and it doesn't want a created order. It says angry at God that you made me a boy when I think I'm actually really a girl. It's angry at God for whatever else. It is an atheistic worldview. When you're living in that it, you're angry that there's never going to be justice. The wrong things will never be made right. You are looking to try to make the world right by pointing your finger at everyone else and yelling and screaming and all sorts of other things.

The gospel comes in and says, you've pinpointed something true. There isn't justice in this world. You've pinpointed something true. Life is hard, it stings, it's not fair. Some people's moms die when they're teenagers. Other people's dads leave them. Other people are treated terribly because of the color of their skin. Other people are, fill in the blank. You've pinpointed something absolutely true, but you are giving the wrong answer. The right answer is that Jesus says, I will make the wrong things right. I will, in my time, I will bring justice. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. There is a time when Christ will come back and he will judge the living and the dead sort of thing.

There is an answer here that will bring you peace. Wokeness, the critical theory stuff, the Marxist stuff, the sexual revolution, or just atheistic progressivism, all of those things do nothing more than pinpoint a reason to have grievance and hatred. It just stokes it until you're so angry that you hate everything and everybody, and you even just hate the fact that you're alive. It's no wonder that suicide rates are just, I mean they're skyrocketing with young people because we have told young people, you're a cosmic accident. It's nothing but Darwin anyway. There is no transcendent meaning. There is no transcendent order. Nothing is true, everything is relativized. The only thing that matters is the way you feel on the inside. We've told them that they are supposed to be nihilist. And then we said, but, we also want you to know there's nobody better than you in the whole world. So they've tried to synthesize nihilism and self-help, and there's-

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's no hooks, there's no hooks.

John Cooper: There's no hope.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. There's no hope.

John Cooper: There is no hope, so no wonder they're killing themselves, that that is a wrong view of the world. I believe, yes, we are being rebels because we have an answer that is so glorious and will bring you so much peace, because peace is going to be found when you find your place in God's good world, and it's so peaceful and so wonderful.

Dr. Tim Clinton: John, when I think of audiences out there, the CDC came out with a study, this year shared the results, in 2021, 30% of our daughters, they said, our daughters, seriously contemplated suicide.

John Cooper: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In 2021.

John Cooper: Yep.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's not a problem. That's an absolute disaster.

John Cooper: An epidemic.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It is. And it's this searching. Here's the upside on it. There's a searching going on. Something's not okay. There's this discontent that's deep down inside.

John Cooper: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And you see it, I'm sure, every night, every concert you go to, these people are crying out. They're saying something. They're trying desperately to find something. That old statement, the man knocking on the door of the harlot is simply looking for God.

John Cooper: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let's close this piece up for us, overcoming.

John Cooper: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Breaking free. I know you quoted Galatians 5:1, it's for freedom, not bondage, it's for freedom that Christ has come to set us free.

John Cooper: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kiss the Son and you'll be free indeed.

John Cooper: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Bring us home.

John Cooper: Well, I think that the great way to tie it up is to explain the differences in the world views. I would say, again, you can insert a lot of words here. You could call it wokeness. You could call it atheist secularism. Okay? You can call it a lot of different things, we all know the secular revolution that's happening. It believes that Christianity is responsible for putting everyone in slavery, and that if we kill God, or if we break free from Christianity, if we break free from traditional sexual morays, that we are going to lead to liberation. That's a lie. The Christian world, he says, no, no, no, you are actually in slavery now. You are in bondage to sin. It's the reason that you are so angry and so sad and so lonely and unredeemed, and it is Christ who wants to set you free from that slavery.

It really matters because we're talking about two very different lies. Christianity is either the one that enslaves you, or Christianity is the thing that sets you free. But the Bible has a great twist on it, actually, to confuse even more, but it's wonderful. Actually, the Bible says it more like this, you were a slave to sin and now you are a slave to righteousness. Now you're a bond servant to righteousness, which is where true freedom is. It's the definition of freedom here that we can't get confused on, because the woke think that freedom just means absolute freedom to do anything in the entire world that you want to do and it leads us into moral anarchy and the chaos we see in the 2020s. But Christ wants to set you free by ordering your life. What a wonderful, I hope if anybody's listening that doesn't know Jesus, or doesn't know how to talk to their kids about this sort of thing, I think that it's rooted in this idea of these two different world views. One leads to death, one leads to life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Now, as you were saying those words, my mind went through the Apostle Paul, where he just said, "That I may know Him."

John Cooper: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. It's resonating, that I may know that Jesus.

John Cooper: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And the power of His resurrection.

John Cooper: Amen. Woo!

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's for freedom, that he has come to set us free.

John Cooper: That's it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: *Awake & Alive to Truth* is the book, subtitled *Finding Truth in the Chaos of a Relativistic World*. John Cooper, Skillet, an amazing time together. Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh:

Well, John Cooper truly is a warrior for the Lord, and I hope you enjoyed the stories he shared with our own Dr. Tim Clinton for the two part conversation we've heard over the past couple of days here on Family Talk. Now, to learn more about John Cooper, the band Skillet, or to listen to any part of the conversation you might have missed, you can visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And remember, you can also listen in on the Official Family Talk/JDFI app. You can easily share the program with friends and loved ones, simply visit your app store and you can download it for free.

Now, before we leave the air for today, I want to give you an update about the \$300,000 matching grant that we had in place last month. I am excited to announce that we did, in fact, meet our match. We asked you to partner with us and fight for families and children and pre-born babies everywhere, and your response was so mighty we went well past our goal. From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we sincerely want to thank you. Because of you, we are able to create more programs and materials for moms and dads and people everywhere.

And over the next few weeks, make sure you're listening in as we'll be explaining how you can get involved and come alongside us to support expecting parents, young families, and new mothers in need. We can all change lives for the better when we all stand together.

I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the JDFI, thank you for making us a part of your day. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Until then, 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:

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