



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Kyle West: Look What God Has Done – Part 2

Guest(s): Bob and Kyle West

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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, hello everyone. I'm Roger Marsh and welcome back to Family Talk. Now, today we're going to hear a classic episode that includes the balance of a conversation Dr. Dobson had with a young boy named Kyle West. Dr met him in 1999 at a focus on the family staff picnic. He recorded a conversation with Kyle when the sweet little boy was only seven years old. They then recorded another conversation for Family Talk before Kyle went off to college, that was back in 2010. And that discussion will be the core of the program that you hear today.

But you should know that since going away to attend college, Kyle, who has cerebral palsy, flourished in graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, which is an Ivy League college by the way. And now we are happy to announce that Kyle has earned his PhD in the classics, Greek and Roman history, and he will soon be teaching as a professor back at his alma mater, Patrick Henry College. What a testament he is to God's providence and faithfulness in us. We'll hear him talk about his battle with cerebral palsy, but you know there is no question that despite that physical challenge, Kyle is headed toward great things. Currently, Bob West, Kyle's dad serves as Executive Director of Need Project, which supports parents of children with special needs. Let's listen now to part two of this classic conversation right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: When you consider all the forms of disabilities, physical, emotional, and intellectual, and then all the disorders, the medical disorders that can occur with a child, there are just millions and millions of people in this country and around the world who are struggling one way or another. And the wonderful thing is that the Lord caress for every one of those individuals in every family, and He understands the unique challenges and they matter to Him and that's why they should matter to us. And we're going to talk about that today and we have two wonderful men, friends of ours in the studio today to help us offer some resources and some advice to these folks.

Bob and Kyle West, father and son are with us again today. They were with us yesterday. We aired a conversation that I had with Kyle when he was seven

years old, but it is wonderful to see what God has done with this young man. I invited these gentlemen to be with us again today to get an update on you, Kyle, and talk about your dad, Bob, and it's a pleasure to have you both here. Bob, you started a ministry called The Need Project that you and I started talking about a couple of years ago and I told you then I would really like to have you describe this ministry to listeners because it's designed to be of specific help to people. We're going to talk about it, but explain just what you had in mind.

Bob West: Well, doctor, when I did talk to you, it was 2005 actually when I had that moment to talk to you. And really what was on my heart was really that in the same way when you talked with Kyle and he said, how could God use a boy with cerebral palsy? That moment there were a lot of parents around the country and around the world who heard that and had the same question about their child. Those types of things are what parents are struggling with when they get a diagnosis, when a doctor tells them your child has a diagnosis of whatever it is, that moment for those parents is a moment that really is critical in their lives to get a great understanding of who God is.

Dr. James Dobson: What that moment meant to me when we were interacting Kyle, is that it revealed a little self-doubt in your mind over your worth, over your ability, over whether even God could use you, and for you to ask that question, to actually verbalize it. And then I had an opportunity to react to it and to assure you that God had a plan for you, that reverberated with all those people out there who are asking the same question and many of them are still children.

Kyle West: Right, and I think what a lot of families really struggle with too, Dr. Dobson, and something that my dad identified with when he was starting The Need Project was just even beyond just looking for a sense of purpose and why this happened and how God can use that situation. It's also a lot of parents, especially who face raising a child with more severe disabilities wonder, where's the joy?

Dr. James Dobson: And why would God do this to me? There's a theological dimension to this that I wrote about it and when God doesn't make sense.

Bob West: And it is really important, understanding that the divorce rate of parents with special needs children is over 80%.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that terrible?

Bob West: The problem is people are not getting that. They're not getting past the question of where is God? Is he there? How can he use us? And for our family, that question was answered in a mighty, mighty way.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's look at how it's been answered even at 18 years of age. I read this list of accomplishments yesterday, but let me read them again because it answers the question you asked when you were seven years old. He participated just beautifully articulately in the Truth Project. He's a member of the Colorado

Springs Mayor's 100 teens. That was actually 2007, 2008. He's a member of the Colorado Springs Gazette's Top 20 best and brightest. Talk about accomplishments. He is the speech and debate team captain, and he is a national tournament qualifier in speech. He was the school newspaper copy editor. He received the... Now get this one, he received the Liberty High School Distinguished Scholar Award. That's quite an accomplishment. He was a four H club president and he participated in high school theater. And I'll bet you there's a bunch more that's not listed here. Kyle, congratulations to you.

Kyle West: Thanks.

Dr. James Dobson: You just graduated from high school and you're off to college. Tell us where you're going.

Kyle West: Actually, I'm going somewhere that you have had some past connections to doctor. It's a place called Patrick Henry College.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, that's a great school.

Kyle West: Virginia. It's near DC, about 45 minutes from the metro area. And they have a really passionate focus in raising up the next generation of Christ following, God-fearing conservative leaders who are going to just work in our nation in journalism and teaching and government, to just affect the culture in mighty ways. And I'm really excited to get involved with that and kind of get in on the ground floor as they get started.

Dr. James Dobson: Now I've heard that you have the goal of getting a PhD.

Kyle West: Yeah, I'm actually looking at pursuing that just because it was actually an idea that my uncle gave me because he said, Kyle, you love to talk so much. If you became a college prof, you'd have a captive audience. And I think that a passion that God has really cultivated in me is just a passion for history and understanding our heritage both as a civilization and as a nation. So I really want to inculcate that in a generation of young people because the understanding of our history is so vital, because we can have no idea where we're going unless we know where we've been. Sounds a little cliché, but I really want to instill that in the next generation.

Dr. James Dobson: Kyle, I need to ask you about your medical condition. You have had 12 surgeries, haven't you?

Kyle West: Yeah, it's been a journey, but I have really been blessed to have a lot of growth and also some really great final results come out of that.

Dr. James Dobson: You were in a wheelchair the day I met you, it was at a picnic and I knelt down and talked to you, but you are now walking without crutches and without sitting

in a wheelchair. I mean, you are able to get around. That's quite an accomplishment in itself, isn't it?

Kyle West: Well, it's really been such a blessing because there were moments, especially when I was going through a lot of the surgery and the work that they were doing, that I kind of got to some places where I struggled because there were some bumps in the road as things happened. But I really feel like I've been blessed to see God kind of say in my life, there will be times when there will be struggles, but I will always come alongside you and I will always take your hand. And there's always something that we're working to get to.

Dr. James Dobson: Kyle, have you really felt His presence in the dark moments? Bob, I remember you telling me, and I may not have the details right, but he had surgery on one of his knees and they had to turn his leg. Well, it was a terrible surgery. It was really very difficult and it didn't work and they had to go do it again. Do I have that right?

Bob West: I affectionately call it swing set hardware. They did rearrange his legs. He's had his legs rotated 20 degrees, the lower portions of his legs rotated 20 degrees. He's had his bones in his feet fused together. He had this hardware that was put into his knees to rearrange his knees, his kneecaps were in the wrong place and all this. And they did all this rearranging and they screwed all these things in. And by the way, this was at the Shriners Hospital in Utah. Then we had to put him on a plane and fly him back to Colorado Springs after that. And somehow one of the hardware pieces actually came free of the bone. And so what they had to do was actually go in, do surgery to pull all that out, let it heal, then go back in and put it back in.

Dr. James Dobson: All of that pain, all of that rehab, all of those things had to be done over.

Bob West: And he spent his whole summer basically on our couch with ice bags on his knees.

Dr. James Dobson: Going back to my question, was the Lord there in that moment?

Kyle West: And there were times that honestly, I felt like I fell short because I came to a place where I was just frustrated and I asked God, where are you in all this? And where is this going? And I think he used that moment as a moment for me to grab hold of the lesson that sometimes things happen in life that we can't predict, but that doesn't mean they weren't part of God's plan and that He is always going to be there to help us get through those kinds of moments. And then ultimately, when those kinds of things happen, it serves a greater end in our lives. And I've read somewhere, something like over 50% of the Psalms are laments and basically just David kind of beating on God's chest and saying, why this and why that? And God isn't afraid of those questions.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, though, David never showed a lack of faith in the way he said it. The children of Israel were complaining and moaning and asking God why. And God rejected their response. But when David said those things, it was in faith, even though it was reflecting frustration. Bob, we've got to get to your ministry because I really want people to understand what Need Project is all about. Having had this experience with Kyle and seeing so many other people struggle out there, what are you trying to accomplish with them and why?

Bob West: Some of the key things that we really feel in our heart, doctor, because of what our family has been through and that we've been able to make it when so many families are not making it. We really felt passionate that God has told us that there is something for every single family. God does not make mistakes. We know that. And God has used us in a mighty way and other families as well that we know that God has used so amazing to affect their family, their neighbors, and others for God's purposes.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, I hate to admit this, but you and I have talked about it together. There are many churches that really don't seem to want disabled people and especially those that are intellectually impaired, they don't want them there and they let it be known. And the parents of those children desperately need God's love expressed through other people and you're trying to fill the gap there, aren't you?

Bob West: And really, doctor, we work locally with our church, but then we started to see these families and how they're struggling. We really wanted to step up and start affecting their lives in a way really at that moment. And I've talked about this and sometimes I call it the shock and awe moment. When the doctors told us that Kyle had a disability, when we got that diagnosis, it was a moment that an explosion went off in my head. And I really spent probably the next couple of years numb just trying to get through the daily things that we had to do, the twice a week therapies, the surgeries that Kyle needed, the things that he had to have, and my wife and I had to provide these things for him.

And so our goal is really to do that. We want to give those practical things we can to parents, that they can move forward in their lives and get through that shock and awe moment and understand there's really two things they need to understand. Number one, God has a plan. And boy has our family specifically know that God has a plan for every single special needs child. If they have a question, they can go listen to yesterday's broadcast and they will know that God has a plan for their family as well, and they need to know that God is with them and it's okay to struggle in that time, but they do need to move through that and question what's going on in their lives and how God is using them.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, with you, Kyle, God not only used your disability in your life to shape you into the person you are now, but from that has come this Need Project, so good has come out of that too. I'm sure if we go back 15 years, you would have been likely to say, why me? And yet God doesn't answer that question. He just does what he will do and it all comes together for his purposes.

Bob West: I really think as a young man who was having a child, I had expectations of that child, just like any parent does. Is my child going to be the football star? Is my child going to be the lawyer, the doctor? And when you get a diagnosis, you really have to let go of those dreams. The funny thing is that why any parent expects their dreams are going to happen is beyond me. It is God's purposes that we're here.

Dr. James Dobson: It is.

Bob West: And so to understand that I would've never started a ministry for other families, I would've never had this heart if it hadn't been that God affected me in a way that made me go through, thinking through, how can God use our family?

Dr. James Dobson: And I know it because I was a professor of pediatrics in the divisions of medical genetics and child development. I saw all of this every day and it got a hold of my heart, I'll tell you. And that's why I believe strongly in what you're doing. And Kyle, earlier today before we went on the air, you said with a smile that your dad's a little paranoid about you going off to college. He's worried about that, isn't he?

Kyle West: I very much appreciate that he is because it's just that natural parental instinct that he wants to make...

Dr. James Dobson: He loves you, Kyle.

Kyle West: He wants to make sure that his boy doesn't get swallowed up by the big bad world, which to me is just evidence that he loves me a lot. But it's also a challenge too in a lot of ways for families who face the fact that their child has a disability, especially for families whose child with a disability has certain limitations, but also has the possibility of getting out more and going out on their own. That there are certain obstacles that they're going to face at certain points in life where if your parents aren't there, they're not sure how you're going to deal with that.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you a little worried about it too?

Kyle West: Well, I think I'm slightly nervous, but I'm also really excited about the whole opportunity of college and adventure.

Dr. James Dobson: You're a go get it guy, I'll tell you. You'll make it.

Bob West: And doctor, there are what I call two critical times for parents with a special needs child, that early diagnosis and getting the things that their child needs. But the second one is that transition to adulthood. Kyle's going off to college. He's right, we're scared, not because of his education. I mean, you read his list of accomplishments. We know he can do this coursework. What we're concerned about is how he will survive without some of the skills that... And of

course every parent worries about that their child's not going to be able to survive without them. But we have a little added extra incentive there to make sure he's able to make that transition to adulthood. And parents who have a child who's going to need assistance their whole entire life, have a very interesting time of finding resources for their child in being able to transition then to adulthood.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're going to be on your knees, aren't you?

Bob West: You know it. On our knees. We've also made sure that he's got Skype. I want to be able to check around his room and make sure that he's not laying under the laundry or anything like that.

Kyle West: They're worried they're going to get that phone call a couple of weeks in, help, can't open peanut butter, but we'll...

Bob West: We'll send him with the crackers with cheese inside or something.

Kyle West: But I will definitely be on my knees too and appreciating all the love and support that I'm getting from back home and just embarking on the new adventure, but also making sure I don't do anything that worries my parents too much.

Dr. James Dobson: Kyle, I want to tell you, we started when you were seven and now, you're 18. As long as I am at this table in this studio, you will have a place and our listeners will want to know about you and be kept informed about how you're doing. Many of them have not met you, but in a strange kind of way, they love you. Can you understand that?

Kyle West: Oh, I don't want to sound like I'm tooting my own horn, but yeah, I guess in a way, I really appreciate so much of the support that's come from some of the amazing opportunities that I've had both in our broadcasts and with the Truth Project. And again, just the amazing way that God has enabled me to see that He can use our most frustrating and some of our weakest circumstances, but also just the way that people have just lavished love and support on me. I want to let everyone out there know that I appreciate that incredibly and that I'm keeping all of you in my prayers and I appreciate the prayers that are going out.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I do have to admit to you that I'm humbled by what you say because on occasions in my life I have whined and moaned about far less than you've had to deal with, and you've done it with confidence and done it as a role model for a lot of others. I think of the children out there. You know what, Bob? Right now, I'm sure that there are teenagers out there who are disabled and they're hearing this either by CD or hearing it live, are hearing it on the radio, and they will draw courage and stamina from what they hear coming from your son.

Bob West: And I know that for a fact because of the responses that have come to our family, that God has used Kyle. We don't have any idea... People have said to us,

you guys must be wonderful parents. And I've said, you don't understand, this is a God thing. This is not us. We're doing the best we can just like every other parent out there.

Dr. James Dobson: I would like you in closing to talk to the parent out there that is really discouraged today. Maybe their youngster is still very young. Maybe that child has autism and is disrupting the class or the Sunday School, and it's clear that they're not wanted out there. The child who is a slow learner and just having trouble, one who is dyslexic, one who has a very obvious physical deformity that other kids are making fun of. I haven't left you much time, but please speak to that person from our hearts.

Bob West: Well, doctor, it really takes me to John 9, where Jesus is walking with his disciples and the disciples ask him, "Who sinned? This man's father or him?" Now, this was an adult now who had been disabled his whole life, and Jesus answers them, "Nobody sinned. This was for my purposes." And if you read the rest of the story, we don't have time to go through it. But the things that God does with that young man, he takes him to his neighbors. He takes him to the leaders. He takes him to everybody in his town to say, I know nothing but Christ. And that is the encouragement I have for parents today. God has a plan for your life. It is not in doubt, and we need to understand that. It may be that we don't see it, but I know it's there.

Kyle West: And sometimes we feel that we are coming from such a place of weakness. But what I want both children and young men and women and parents of those young men and women with disabilities to know is that God is the Heavenly Father who is above and watches over each and every one of us. And He is willing and able to give us the strength to see that He has a purpose for each and every one of our lives.

Dr. James Dobson: Kyle, I told you that a lot of people love you, and I know that to be true, and I'm one of them. I appreciate you, my friend.

Kyle West: Oh, thank you, doctor. I appreciate you too.

Dr. James Dobson: That was an instant friendship when we met at the picnic, and it continues to this day. What a fine young man Kyle is. As we wrap up this two-part classic interview, I'd like to give you just a quick update on Kyle and tell you what he's been doing with his life. After graduating from high school, he went on to Patrick Henry College and earned a Degree in classics, after which he earned a Master's degree in Greek and Roman history at the University of Colorado Boulder, but he still wasn't through with his education. He went to the University of Pennsylvania, which is an Ivy League school. And there he earned a PhD in the classics. And now he's teaching Greek mythology at Patrick Henry College. So we're very proud of this man. He's dedicated his life to the Lord. So we congratulate Kyle for what he's done with his life. And if you would like to have a copy of this recording, just write me and I'll be happy to send it to you.

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

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