



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** The Warfighters Mission – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Brandon Cabalar

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Roger Marsh: While that very chilling and eye-opening description may sound familiar to you if you're a veteran. And today here on this Veterans Day edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're going to meet an infantryman who now has a ministry called The Warfighters Mission, designed to help veterans and their families heal up from the spiritual, physical, and emotional wounds of war. I'm Roger Marsh. Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Today, of course is Veterans Day, and this is a day when we honor the brave men and women who have served in our armed forces bravely, faithfully, and valiantly.

Whether retired or still serving in active duty, these servicemen and women deserve our utmost admiration and respect. And if you fall into that category, we thank you for your service. Now in today's edition of the program, we're going to meet a new member of the JDFI staff here, guy who works behind the scenes but knows what it means to be an infantryman, a fighter, and also one who has recovered from the physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds of war. Let's get to meet this special war fighter right now on this special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everybody. My name is James Dobson and you're going to hear an interview with a man that I have known only several months and I already admire him greatly. He's the father of seven girls, count them, seven girls and they're all here today at Family Talk. And we're going to talk about their lives and about this man and especially his faith and a lot of other things. So you're going to enjoy what we're going to talk about today. His name is Brandon Cabalar, a wonderful father and husband, and he has been in the military for a

long time, and we're going to talk about that. Brandon, let's go back to your childhood. Your teen years. 9/11 attack occurred and completely destroyed the World Trade Center. Do you remember that?

Brandon Cabalar: Yes, sir. Actually, I was 15 in 2001 when 9/11 was happening and the attack on the two towers. I remember specifically I was heading to our homeroom class and the TV was never-

Dr. James Dobson: So you were in high school?

Brandon Cabalar: I was still in high school, yes. And the TV was never on. And for some reason today, during 9/11 our teacher had it on to show us what was going on. We all thought it was just a movie, didn't know what was going on. I had dreams of going to USC, which is funny-

Dr. James Dobson: University of Southern California-

Brandon Cabalar: Yes sir.

Dr. James Dobson: ...which is where I went. And why would you ever go place else?

Brandon Cabalar: Well, doctor, I was trying, I was wrestling, I was playing sports, I was doing marching band and you name it, and I was trying to get my way to USC as fast as possible.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you want to play football?

Brandon Cabalar: I did.

Dr. James Dobson: I kinda thought it.

Brandon Cabalar: But God definitely had a plan. And I didn't know back then that He had this plan for me. But as soon as that happened, I was ready to go. I actually wanted to contact the Marine Corps recruiter and go in there first.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, it was the Marines you were after, wasn't it?

Brandon Cabalar: Yes sir, it was.

Dr. James Dobson: Why did you want to go to the Marines?

Brandon Cabalar: I wanted combat. As crazy it sounds is I wanted combat. I saw what was happening to our country. My stepdad and my real dad were both in the Navy and I didn't want to do that because I thought that Navy was going to be boring, but I had to wait. And so when I graduated in 2003, I actually called a Marine Corps recruiter to come to the house and he came and my mom was not happy about that.

Dr. James Dobson: Wow. Why would she be? You were 15. By then you were 17.

Brandon Cabalar: By then I was 17. Yes, correct.

Dr. James Dobson: Right. And mama said, "No."

Brandon Cabalar: No, he came and he was talking to me about I can go into the infantry or I can be a pilot, or whatever it was. And I looked at my mom, we were sitting out on the front porch in the Navy housing, and I looked at my mom and she said, "No, you can go somewhere else." And so she-

Dr. James Dobson: Do you understand that now why a mother wouldn't want her 17-year-old son going into combat?

Brandon Cabalar: Yes, actually I do. I see it now and I look at my kids and if they ever had the aspiration to go to the military, I don't think I could heart it. I don't think I could take them going into the military. I mean, after everything that I've seen and I've done, I just wouldn't want that on any-

Dr. James Dobson: So did you look for an alternative? Didn't you decide maybe the Air Force would be a place where you could go?

Brandon Cabalar: Well, actually as soon as she said no, I tried calling an Army recruiter and she said, "No." And then she said, "The ultimatum is Navy or the Air Force." And I said, "Well, Navy's pretty cool. I guess I can be a Navy SEAL." And she said, "All right, Air Force it is." And so she had my uncle take me down to an Air Force recruiter because my uncle, who actually lives out here in Peyton, took me to the Air Force recruiter that day and took me in.

Dr. James Dobson: And you signed up?

Brandon Cabalar: I signed up right away. They asked me what I wanted to do and I said, "Well, I don't know. Whatever's combat organized." And it was a cop, basically a military police, and shipped off a few months later.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you nervous?

Brandon Cabalar: Not really. I was excited more than anything because I wanted to do something for my country.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, Brandon, that really was your motive above all else, you wanted to do something for America?

Brandon Cabalar: I did. I've told this during our morning devotionals. I actually had the privilege here to do a devotional on 9/11, and I spoke about my story about what happened. And I kept telling everybody I missed 9/12, because that's when the

whole country came together in the biggest way possible. And we were united for once. In our whole entire history of America we were united as a country.

Dr. James Dobson: How soon did you ship out?

Brandon Cabalar: It was about, I want to say three months.

Dr. James Dobson: So you went to basic training?

Brandon Cabalar: Basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

Dr. James Dobson: And what is your memory of that?

Brandon Cabalar: It was horrible. Not going to lie.

Dr. James Dobson: I've been there, I've done that. So I know what you're talking about.

Brandon Cabalar: Yeah, I enjoyed it so much. I did it twice. But no, the Air Force, it was a lot of knowledge based stuff, so we had to learn a lot. I made it through basic, just fine, but it was when I went to, they call it an A school, which is your specialty. So the MP's specialty course, when I got there, I don't know, it's just maybe I wasn't ready or I know now it was actually God stopping me from doing this. And so about four months later, they discharged me because I just couldn't get through the classes. So they discharged me and I shipped back all the way to Hawaii. And then-

Dr. James Dobson: Did that break your heart or did you want to get released?

Brandon Cabalar: I wanted to get released at that point. I said the Air Force wasn't... I wasn't cut out for the Air Force. I keep telling everybody I wasn't smart enough for the Air Force and that was the truth. And so I shipped back home to Hawaii, waited six months, and then I found an Army recruiter and asked him to-

Dr. James Dobson: Did you go home and talk to Mama about that one?

Brandon Cabalar: No, I was 18 at that point.

Dr. James Dobson: You could make up your own mind.

Brandon Cabalar: I could make up my own mind, and I'm glad I did because-

Dr. James Dobson: What'd she say when you came home and said, "Guess what, mom, I'm in the army now?"

Brandon Cabalar: Yeah, she was not thrilled about that, but she understood that was my goal and that's what I wanted.

Dr. James Dobson: She didn't fight you this time?

Brandon Cabalar: No, she didn't because I was 18. I was technically an adult, even though I don't think I... I look back at it and I'm like, "I don't think I was a responsible adult at that point."

Dr. James Dobson: And what specialty did you have? Was it-

Brandon Cabalar: That was an infantry. That was-

Dr. James Dobson: You were really after that weren't you?

Brandon Cabalar: Yep. I was a grunt.

Dr. James Dobson: Looking back on it, what are your thoughts? Did you do the right thing?

Brandon Cabalar: You know, Doctor, I've been asked that more than once, and I think I did the right thing. God had a plan. I didn't know it at the time, but God had this plan. And if I would've done this all over again, if God said, "Here's a chance for you to do it all over again, go make different decisions or make it the way you have it," I would've chose to same way.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Brandon, we can certainly admire your desire to serve your country. Nothing wrong with that. And that really was why you wanted to get into a combat situation.

Brandon Cabalar: Yes, it was.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you know you could lose your life?

Brandon Cabalar: Every day.

Dr. James Dobson: And did they deploy you soon? What'd they do with you?

Brandon Cabalar: In 2007 was my first deployment. So I went to Army Basic Training in 2005, got to my first unit 2006 and deployed in 2007.

Dr. James Dobson: To where?

Brandon Cabalar: Iraq. Baghdad, and that one was supposed to be a 12-month deployment, and they came back and said it was a 15-month deployment. And then they said, "All right, we're sticking here for a couple more months." So it turned out to be an 18-month deployment.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you having any second thoughts at that time?

Brandon Cabalar: Partially because I left shortly after our oldest daughter was born. She was born in September and we shipped out in December.

Dr. James Dobson: Now wait a minute, we haven't talked about a marriage in there. There's something missing here.

Brandon Cabalar: There is. So Tanya and I actually got together between my transition of Air Force and Army. I found all my best friends again, and we were hanging out and my best friend was dating his girlfriend at the time, and he said, "My girlfriend has a friend that she'd really love to meet you." And I said, "Okay." And so we pulled up to Tanya's house and as soon as I saw her, because she was standing outside the gate waiting, and as soon as I saw her, I locked the door and I said, "Nope, I ain't doing this." It wasn't because it was her, it was just because I was so nervous. I don't think I've ever been so nervous in my entire life to talk to somebody because she was just so gorgeous, doctor, you have no idea. To me she was like, "Wow."

Dr. James Dobson: I've felt those feelings.

Brandon Cabalar: Yeah, it was wild. And then after we got together, this was in April, our first date was actually at a Starbucks. I don't know, I just couldn't talk to her as much. I tried. Every single time I would try to say something, I would turn to my friend and be like, "Oh, so you catch this or you seen this?" And I don't know, she must've liked it because we ended up talking a little bit to the point where the night was over. I didn't want the night to be over, but we got back to her house and dropped her off. And I got out of the car trying to be a gentleman and walked over and I said, "You know, I really enjoyed this time." And in my head, what I was thinking is, "Hey, would you like to go out one more time?" And the words that came out of my mouth were, "Do you want to give me a try?" So obviously she loved me so much that she'd stuck with me.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you in the army by then?

Brandon Cabalar: No, I wasn't, but I was getting ready to go. We ended up getting married, so this was 2005. We got married in 2006. Shortly after that I shipped out.

Dr. James Dobson: Brandon, did you know the Lord at that time?

Brandon Cabalar: So Tanya and I both grew up Catholic, and so like I tell everybody else I knew of the Lord, but I didn't know Him.

Dr. James Dobson: Know about it.

Brandon Cabalar: No. And when I was 17, I actually branched off and tried. This was when I was still living with my parents. I tried going to different churches, trying to... I guess it's like window shopping for churches as some people say. And I wanted to just try something else out and see where I fit in because there were things that I

didn't really agree with in the Catholic Church that at the time I didn't know who to turn to. And so I would go to a Baptist church, I would go to a non-denominational Christian churches, stuck with the Catholic background for a while. But it wasn't until about two years ago when we left the Catholic Church and became born again, as everybody says.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm told, I think in reading about church story is that you were influenced by some neighbors.

Brandon Cabalar: Yes, sir. That is correct.

Dr. James Dobson: Knew a different God than you had been acquainted with.

Brandon Cabalar: Yes, and that is the truth. My neighbor, Brad French, is the one that actually really brought the Lord to us. It was funny because the whole time throughout my military career and throughout my whole life, I look back at it and I see myself as that lost sheep that Luke talks about in Luke 15 verse four through seven. The Lord was just constantly trying to find me and trying to grab a hold of me. And-

Dr. James Dobson: You were looking for Him and you hadn't found Him?

Brandon Cabalar: I haven't found Him.

Dr. James Dobson: But He knew you.

Brandon Cabalar: Exactly. And he would put people on our lives at the time didn't make sense to us, but when we were in Washington, he put a pastor right next door and the pastor would always come and be like, "Hey, do you guys need any help with anything?" And we'd be like, "Stop. We're Catholic. We don't need you." But he would always do that stuff. And it wasn't until about 2020 when He put somebody in our lives that changed the course for good.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Now let's see. You have now joined the Army and it was certain that you were going to be deployed. Did you think about the implications of that with a wife and now a child?

Brandon Cabalar: Well, we were planning on trying to be independent, growing with our family. I wasn't really thinking about anything else other than I wanted to serve my country and I loved my family. I think at times, and Tanya can attest for this, I loved my country a lot more than I loved my family at points. And I look back at that and that hurts because I did. I see it and I've seen how much I loved the army more than I loved them. I loved my brothers and sisters in arms more than I did at times with them.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you get injured?

Brandon Cabalar: I did. The first time I got blown up was in 2008.

Dr. James Dobson: Blown up as in blown up?

Brandon Cabalar: Yes. As in explosives, as the enemy likes to use things called IEDs, which is improvised explosive devices. When you see it on TV, when you hear about firefights or getting blown up and you see it on movies, it's a lot different than when that's actually happening to you in real life.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you hospitalized?

Brandon Cabalar: No, not for that. That was just our vehicle got hit and it wasn't a big one. Before that, one of our friends actually did get hit and he lost his leg from the shin. He basically lost his whole foot from the shin down was gone.

Dr. James Dobson: At that point, were you beginning to think I may have made a mistake?

Brandon Cabalar: Yeah, every day. At that point, I realized that combat was a real thing. People die, people get hurt. I was still at that point where I enjoyed it a little too much to the point where I was looking forward to going out. It wasn't until we lost a lot more that I realized that life is short.

Dr. James Dobson: And you can die that way.

Brandon Cabalar: Yep.

Dr. James Dobson: Where's the Lord in all this?

Brandon Cabalar: He was everywhere. I just didn't know it at that point. We were at that point praying to whoever we could to protect us. Part of it was an addiction to fighting the combat. Part of it was because we didn't know any better. Another part was because we were trained to do this. And so it was a routine for us. We knew what to do. But when things happen, especially to your friends that you just talk to, it does change quite a bit. And I'll tell you, the first time that I shed a tear for anybody, even when my grandfather passed away, I didn't shed a tear. It wasn't a sad day for me, but when I lost one of my best friends, that was the hardest part. We had to go to his memorial while we were still in Iraq. They did a memorial for him, for the four guys that were killed in this. It was hard because-

Dr. James Dobson: It's still hard today, isn't it?

Brandon Cabalar: It is because I can hear it when the First Sergeant calls roll call for everybody and everybody standing up and saying, "Present, present." And then when he calls your friend's name and he doesn't say anything because he's gone. That is the hardest thing. And I had to struggle with that for quite some time after hearing it constantly from different deployments of people, "Oh, we lost more. We lost



more." That is the hardest thing that I had to go through at that time. And the chaplain would come up and he would say words and he's a chaplain, so you would think that he knows God. And there came a point where all this was happening and I decided I needed to go to Bible study. I just needed to try it. And things were good for a while. And then I said, "Well, I think I got this again. And you can take a step back. God, whoever you are, I'm going to continue doing my job."

Dr. James Dobson: What role is your wife playing at this time?

Brandon Cabalar: She's taking care of the kids. She was taking care of the home, the house, everything by herself.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you lonely?

Brandon Cabalar: That's a hard question because yeah, I was lonely in a sense that I missed my wife and my family, but I wasn't lonely because I had my brothers and my sisters on my left or my right. They were there to take care of me. I was there to take care of them, my soldiers, my friends. I mean, we lived in tight tents and so it was just like we, anytime we needed to talk to anybody, we had each other.

Dr. James Dobson: Talk to each other.

Brandon Cabalar: And I mean, I was able to talk to her almost on a daily basis other than when somebody was injured or killed, they would shut down the internet and the phones for a few days because they needed to notify their families of the loss. So they would shut that down. And so she knew if I didn't call for a couple days, something happened.

Dr. James Dobson: So people were dying all around you?

Brandon Cabalar: They did.

Dr. James Dobson: And somehow you could cope with that.

Brandon Cabalar: We knew it was our job. What scares me the most, doctor, was I got used to it.

Dr. James Dobson: To killing people?

Brandon Cabalar: Killing. I got used to the fact that I could die at any moment and I was ready to accept it and I was waiting for death.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell me more.

Brandon Cabalar: I just got used to... I don't want to say used to, but I want to say numb. Things were happening all around us. We would get mortared. The enemy would try to hit us while we're sleeping. And so you get used to the sound of explosions. You

get used to the sound of gunfire and you get used to the sound of people that you knew-

Dr. James Dobson: You would do that. I don't think I could.

Brandon Cabalar: I did, yes. But when you're in the Army, especially in my career field, that's what you get used to because that's our job. That's what we know, that's what we're trained for.

Dr. James Dobson: How long were you there on the first deployment?

Brandon Cabalar: 18 months.

Dr. James Dobson: Before you got chance to see your family?

Brandon Cabalar: I came home at about a year for leave for two weeks. I was there for a year. They sent me home for two weeks just so I could decompress. And then I was right back in the fight.

Dr. James Dobson: When you had to go back, were you ready to do so?

Brandon Cabalar: I was looking forward to it.

Dr. James Dobson: You are the kind of guy the Army's looking for.

Brandon Cabalar: I was. I was. I just didn't know it at the time. And Doctor, this is why I do what I do now with our ministry with The Warfighters Mission. It's because of my family. I look back at everything that I did and I see that my family was there the whole time. My family was the one that was suffering. My wife had to pick up everything and do everything on her own. Yeah, she had her parents, but she had to play the role of me and her at the same time. That's why I keep telling you, she's the strongest woman I've ever met, and I'm so glad and happy that God chose her for me.

Dr. James Dobson: It's obvious that He did.

Brandon Cabalar: I don't think anybody else could have stood by my side and do the same thing.

Roger Marsh: Well, Tanya certainly is a very, very special woman, not only in Brandon's life, but for the ministry. And today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we've just concluded part one of what will be a three-part conversation with Brandon Cabalar, who's a member of our JDFI team behind the scenes, but he's also the founder of a brand new ministry called The Warfighters Mission. This is a ministry that is dedicated to helping veterans and their families with a more holistic approach to healing after war wounds. And we encourage you to go to [thewarfightersmission.com](http://thewarfightersmission.com). The new mission, of course, that warfighters have once they come out of the theater of war is dealing with the war within, and of

course, the high incidence of veteran suicide, the physical and emotional and spiritual challenges that veterans and their families face.

The Warfighters Mission is an outstanding ministry to provide resources, online counseling, and more for you and your family if this is your story, or perhaps if you know somebody who is a veteran and is wrestling with these issues right now. We've got a link up at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk) for the new ministry, [thewarfightersmission.com](http://thewarfightersmission.com) and we encourage you to check it out. Also, as we talk about Brandon Cabalar and his wife Tanya, and the fact that they're raising not one, not two, not three, four, five, or six but seven daughters, you know how challenging it can be in the modern culture to bring up girls. Dr. Dobson wrote a classic book on this subject a few decades ago, and now Dr. Owen Strachan has teamed up with Dr. Dobson to combine on a brand new 10-day email series on bringing up girls. Each of these email entries comes your way absolutely free. And to sign up to start receiving yours today, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and click on the link for bringing up girls.

It's a 10-day email series that features a word of encouragement from God's Word, some classic timeless truths from Dr. Dobson's landmark book and more. And by the way, if you'd like information on how to receive a copy of that book *Bringing Up Girls*, you can ask for that as well when you go to [drjamesdobbson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobbson.org/familytalk). Also call our resource center toll-free at 877-732-6825. Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for joining us today for Family Talk, and be sure to join us again tomorrow when Dr. James Dobson continues his conversation with Brandon Cabalar of [thewarfightersmission.com](http://thewarfightersmission.com). That's coming your way next time, right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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