



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Everyday Hero Stepping Out in Faith to Further God's Kingdom – Part 1

Guest(s): John Roise

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're going to be introducing you to a remarkable man whose passion for sharing the gospel is both powerful as well as contagious. John Roise's journey began with a career in the financial sector where he worked for 20 years in the banking industry before God led him to take a bold step of faith. In 1989, John and his wife, Sue, purchased Lindsay Window and Door Company in Minnesota, launching him into a new dimension of ministry and entrepreneurship. Though you may not recognize John's name, you've likely felt the impact of his commitment to spreading the good news. His testimony demonstrates how God can use business as a platform for kingdom work, and how one step of obedience can lead to extraordinary opportunities for impact. We hope you will be inspired by John Royce's story of transformation and generosity on today's edition of Family Talk. And now here's our host for today's program, Gary Bauer.
- Gary Bauer: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy here at the Dobson Policy Center, and I'm sitting in the co-host chair today to introduce you to a remarkable man. Someone that we consider here to be an everyday hero in the faith and a man that I truly admire. The more I got to know him, the more I admired him and Washington, D.C. it actually works the other way around. The more I got to know some of those folks, the more I found they had feet of clay. But this is the real thing today. His name is John Roise. You may not be familiar with the name and you may even think you don't know about his work, but his passion for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ is so driven and contagious.
- I guarantee you; you'll be inspired by what we're about to share today on this Family Talk broadcast. John's a businessman and an entrepreneur and an evangelist. After graduating from the University of Minnesota followed by a three year stint in the U.S. Army, John began what would become a 20 year career with Wells Fargo Bank. That's a pretty big deal that would be for a lot of people, the apex to be working for a big financial institution like that. But God had been pulling on John's heartstrings to take a more entrepreneurial approach to walking with Him. And so in 1989, John and his wife, Sue, decided

to purchase the Lindsey Window and Door Company in Mankato, Minnesota. And that launched him into a whole new dimension of life and ministry and in its own way led him to be with us for this Family Talk broadcast. Now again, you may not be familiar yet with John. You're going to remember him after today. You may never have heard of the company that he took over, but I'll guarantee you, you have definitely felt the impact of John's desire to share the good news with as many people as possible before he leaves this world. So I want to get into the conversation. I've been looking forward to this. John, welcome to Family Talk. Dr. Dobson and Shirley send you their best regards.

John Roise: Thank you, Gary. It's an honor to be here and Dr. And Shirley have been heroes of my wife and I, our family for many years, and I'm just real honored to be sitting in this chair.

Gary Bauer: We've spent some time together and every time we do, I learn a little bit more about you. And I often find this, the best stories are the unconventional stories rather than the ones that fit a pattern about doing everything you're supposed to do and staying in your lane and so forth. You've got a great story about your education, which began at the University of Minnesota. And God may even have been moving there because you have a story about getting into Minnesota, but also something happened there that changed your life. Share that with us.

John Roise: Thank you, Gary. Well, I'm one of those for some of you parents out there whose students probably aren't doing so in high school, take heart. There's hope because I started out very well in education. I was a top of my classroom one and two of my class for the first six years, but there were only two of us in the class. I went to a one room school and things changed after that. I went to high school and I was a farm boy and nobody went to college in our family, so I had no interest in school whatsoever. I didn't take a book home, I didn't read a book. I hardly read the test. I just was there to have a good time and get through school because I thought a farmer doesn't need this stuff. But then when I graduated in 1964, Vietnam War was still going really strong. And so if you didn't go to college, you got drafted right away. So what was I going to do? I was probably in the bottom fourth of my class, I'm not sure, but thankfully the ACT or SAT scores wherever they were, and I did very well in those. So I was able to get in the University of Minnesota on probation and that was a God gift right there because my grades weren't good at all. So I was happy to go to University of Minnesota.

Gary Bauer: That's a great story and that will be an encouragement, John, although I have to say maybe you weren't doing well on grades, but to do that well on that test, I mean all of your success, you're obviously a bright guy. I think a lot of us know people that they're so bright, they find the classroom to be kind of boring, but when they get a chance to shine in the real world, they do. And that's exactly what happened. Now, I don't know if you remember any of your professors, but I bet you remember a certain young lady that you met at the University of Minnesota. Share that story with us and how that played a big role in molding the rest of your life.

John Roise: It did. It is how God works in those things. I went to the University of Minnesota, I was a freshman there and I went through and I grew very well in school. I studied a bit and I did very well, but I just had no peace, no satisfaction in college. I couldn't have peace. I'd go out and I'd party some weekends and come back and say, is this all there is? It just was so meaningless to me. I went home that first summer to farm with my dad. I came back, I was a sophomore at University of Minnesota. I was 18 years old and I saw a girl on campus with tight blue jeans and a tight yellow top, and she was probably about 30 feet from me. And I said, "God, you give me that woman. I'll do anything for you."

Gary Bauer: Were you thinking of a particular Bible verse at the time, John?

John Roise: Yeah, and so I met her and the first thing she asked me was, "John, are you a Christian?" And I said, "Yes I am." And she said, "What makes you a Christian?" I said, "Well, I'm baptized. I'm confirmed. I haven't killed anybody yet." She said, "You think that makes you a Christian?" I said, "Yes, it does." She says, it does not. And she pointed out to me the Bible verses where it says that you have to confess your sins as Jesus, spend your life, be Lord of your life and things like that. And I said, what? I said, "I read through the Bible and all these things I've never seen that." She said, "Well, it's in the Bible. That's what you have to do." She said, "Tell me this. If you died tonight, now Vietnam's coming up ahead for you, probably if you died, would you go to Heaven?"

I thought a little bit, and I said, "Yes, I will." And she said, "Why?" I said, "Because I told you I'm baptized, confirmed hadn't killed anybody yet." She said, "I told you that doesn't work. You need to do this." She explained the plan of salvation to me again and I said, "Well, nobody can know for sure if they're good enough to get to Heaven." She said, "It isn't being good enough. It's what Jesus has done on the cross for us." She said, "You know what? I know for sure I'm going to Heaven. I see you're not a Christian. Goodbye." And with that, she left. Now, what I did not know, and I would never approach her, was that she was a Queen of the Earth, Minnesota. And I never would approach her for that because I was a nobody of a, a nobody. And here I was talking to her and I was totally embarrassed after that.

Gary Bauer: How did you eventually convince her? I'm assuming you fulfilled her concern, right?

John Roise: I did. The Holy Spirit really... I was living in a sleeping room. I was very poor living in a sleeping room in a basement of a house and there was a TV on there and I was watching a movie, *A Man Called Peter*, the story of Peter Marshall, the Senate chaplain. And I don't know what it was in that movie, I've watched it since. But anyhow, in that movie, the Holy Spirit caught me. I got on my knees in that little dumpy room and I did just what this lady told me to do. I confessed my sins. I asked Jesus to come into my life, be Lord of my life and all those things. And I was probably on my knees for 15 minutes or something, cause I had a lot of sins to confess. But when I stood up, I knew I had peace. There was no bells went off, nothing like that, but emotion.

But inside I had peace and I knew that if I got killed then I would go to Heaven. So I found her a few months later or something and I said, "Hey, remember me?" And she said, "I do remember you." And so we talked and she grilled me up and down thinking you just wanted get with her, but I was genuine. So we dated a couple years and we got married and we were married for 52 years. So God once again took care of me. But the lesson there is that for any of you single people out there, make sure that the person you're thinking about marrying or even dating is a Christian and they're a solid Christian. Because if Sue hadn't been firm, I don't know what would've happened. It wouldn't have been a good marriage for sure.

Gary Bauer: But you said you were raised in a Christian home, right? So would you say you had been a cultural Christian because you really hadn't been exposed to the actual...

John Roise: I was like lots of people. I went to church every Sunday. I was a good guy. I was a really good guy because in my eyes, default was Heaven. And now I realize default is not, default is Hell. And unless you make that decision for Jesus, you're on your way to Hell. So I thought I was, but I didn't have the peace, but I thought I was good because I was better than most people and I thought that's how God graded based on works and better than. But I found out totally differently and that's been a theme of my life is to tell people about Jesus because I thought I was okay and yet I wasn't. And so there's a lot of people out there who think they're okay, but you're really not until you've received Jesus as your personal savior. And you'll know it; you will know it. I knew it at the time when I did it, and I have the assurance and that's what gives me peace to go forward with my life.

Gary Bauer: John, as an aside here, we're happy that this has been basically broadly speaking, a Christian country. Christianity has always thrived and so forth, but we've had so much liberty over the years. We really became sort of a cultural Christianity and there were a lot of people sitting in churches, unfortunately that weren't the real thing.

I went through those 19, 20 years like that thinking I was and sitting in church and like everybody else. But I probably heard the message before, I don't know, but I was blind to it. But that's why I'm very clear when I talk with people, I want to make sure that they do know Jesus as their personal savior. Have they done that?

Gary Bauer: Yes.

John Roise: And not just gone through the baptism confirmation like I had.

Gary Bauer: So, did you and Sue marry while you were both still in school or after you graduated?

John Roise: Okay, after I graduated, Vietnam was still going. So I was actually going the Peace Corps. So I was on my way to Berkeley, California to go to graduate school. I was going to go in the Peace Corps and then all the deferments were gone. They were gone. They got rid of all those deferments. So I thought I was going to get drafted in six, nine months with that was because we were getting married and I got my draft notice a week after I went to the draft board. I found how long I'd be there, and they said it was six to nine months or even a year, one week from the day I was drafted. So we got married and I left for the military a few weeks after we were married, and I was gone there for three years, but I believe in blooming your planet, I didn't want to do that. If I could have avoided the military, I would've. I tried to get in, reserving it like a lot of my friends did and be a draft dodger, but I wasn't that successful. So I ended up getting drafted and I spent three years in military. I was an infantry officer, went through ranger school and all that good stuff that you do. But I bloomed. I tried to be the best soldier I could be.

Gary Bauer: But there was something missing, right? Because I know in other times that we've talked, so here you are, you're married, you've put in a 20 year career at a pretty good place to work. You're getting paid well, but you're feeling this tug on your heart that God has something else in mind for you. So that had to be a big tug because you're in a pretty safe place doing really well and paying the bills, but God's asking you to do something. It must have sounded a little risky.

John Roise: I was more of an entrepreneur than I was a public employee for a public corporation, although I loved it. I mean, I'm all for the public corporations. They're a great place to work, and those of you who are working with them, stay with them. Do the best you can be. But at that time, God laid on my heart four things that I really wanted to do. I wanted to share my faith in Jesus whenever I wanted to. I wanted to go on short-term mission trips. I wanted to speak on social issues such as abortion, pornography, and if I owned the bank, I could do the first three, but I didn't own the bank. But the fourth one, I couldn't be in the banking business for because I wanted to give people who needed a second, third, and fourth chance. I saw people who, I was on a board of Teen Challenge and I saw people who were good people, they made bad decisions and they went to prison. They were in drug rehabilitation, whatever it may be, and they needed a job when they got out and not a lot of employers were willing to hire them. Well, that was the first people I wanted to hire. So in the banking business, I couldn't do that. And so I thought, God, "What do You have for me outside the banking business where I can fulfill these four things that You've laid in my heart?"

Gary Bauer: So God brings you Sue at the University of Minnesota, and then as you're going through this process of listening to him in the middle of this successful career, He brings you an opportunity and you understood why you had to take that opportunity. Tell us about that.

John Roise: Yeah, so I was in a bank and I was running some banks and there was a business I was going to buy in the business and it was a banking business, but I hadn't put

the deal together yet, but we kind of made an agreement on it. Then a customer of mine came in and said, "You heard that business works for sale?" And I said, Yes, it is." So I introduced the buyer and the seller together and then he ended up buying the business, the one I was going to get. But that was only ethical. That's the way you do things when you're in the bank. You do what's best for your customers and not what's best for yourself. So that one went down the road. And so then this other window of business came up and I tried, I'd called on Lindsay Windows for a couple three years. I was in banking business. Didn't get a thing out of him because every time we made him a deal, he'd go to his own bank and they'd match it. So I got nothing out of the deal. I wasn't a very good banker, I guess.

But then he passed away unfortunately, and he was only 56 years old, and I knew his widow from the church. And so I said, let's try and keep that business going for their son who was a junior at Northwestern at that time. I said, "We'll, just get a manager and get it going." She didn't agree with me on that. And so one day the son asked me if I'd be willing to buy the business, and I was totally, I knew nothing about the business like others, I didn't. But that's how it came about. So that's when God really put my heart what to do, and I was up many hours. The middle of the night, God would get me up and wake me and give me verses and it was basically, will you trust Me? Are you going to trust Me? Are you going to be like Abraham?

And I've got the verses on, two little notebook cards in a frame in my office, the ones God gave me these verses and there were lots of 'em on there. And it was a test of "John, I've put you in this position, the banking business, I've given you more than you have deserved," which He did. I had more response, like I said, I had it made, I'd had a business before that as well. So I'd sold that. I got permission from the CEO of the bank at that time to buy it. I bought it and God prospered the business in spite of me. He prospered it and I'd sold that business. So, I had a bunch of cash and had a great earning bank and had it really had it made, but that still had that restlessness within me to do something on my own.

Gary Bauer: So did the window business, did that grow under your tutelage or was it meeting your economic expectations?

John Roise: Yeah, so I'm kind of a business plan guy trying to plan things out. So that's kind of what we did in the banking business. And so I had a business plan after I bought this company, but when I got into the first day, I threw my business plan totally in the trashcan because I was 100% wrong. The guy who owned it was Superman. He did everything. He told everybody what to do, how to do it, and he was just Superman. And here I was, millions of dollars in debt. I think my interest was like a thousand dollars a day.

Gary Bauer: Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. What? How much a day?

John Roise: It was like a thousand dollars a day. Interest rates were high at that time in 1989, they were like 13%. And that was a good rate, really. And so I got out there and I didn't know what to do and unfortunately, neither did anybody else. And so I said, "Lord, what did You get me into?" And before I could kind of figure things out, I work hard. I'm not real bright, but I work real hard and I'd figure things out, but this I could not figure out. He did everything, this guy. And so nobody knew anything, and I don't think the business would last another 60 days had somebody not come out there. But so what I had to do is I did what everybody else did, a good farm boy, I dug in, I worked in the shop during the day and at night, I did the books. I even had a truck driver's license. I had a CDL. I would deliver windows, I'd sell windows. I even maintained the trucks. I worked very hard to try and keep this business going.

Gary Bauer: One of the things I think we all worry about is that a lot of young Americans today think this sort of thing should be easy or think that your own business, you don't have to worry about doing what the boss wants and you'll have a lot more spare time, but you're working harder than ever when you're an entrepreneur. So you're doing that, you're trying to save this business. You've left a great career to do this. I'm assuming all along the way, Sue is standing next to you and saying, "I trust you, honey. I know this is going to work out." But then you start getting some opportunities from the standpoint of spreading the gospel. And some would say you're not in the greatest position right now to fulfill that. You're just trying to save your business. But tell us about the extraordinary challenge that you heard and how in the world you found the courage, even with a trying economic situation to answer that challenge in the way the Lord would want you to.

John Roise: I really got in this business because of Sue. My wife, Sue, not only was she the cause of me being saved for persuasion with Jesus, but she was also the start of how we got in business because going back, we lived in Morton, Minnesota, and she worked in migrant school. She earned \$2,000. With that \$2,000 I started buying some dumpy apartment complexes. They were houses and turn apartments so that's how I did that. We sold those and I got \$50,000. I used that \$50,000 to buy another business while I was still in the bank. I got permission from the CEO to do that. And that business prospered, like I said, in spite of me, I sold that and then I had a bunch of cash. And so that's how we could get into the Lindsey Window business because of Sue once again earned that money.

And then God opened up doors for me to advance that cause. What happened, Gary was in 1991, we got an invite to go to Northern Minnesota at a very nice resort. And it was free. That was a big word to us because I was so hard up, I was so scared and so free weekend up there. So we decided to go. We went up there and who was there? But Dr. Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, and he had a plan to reach the whole world for Jesus by the year 2000. I had never seen something like that before. What a great goal that was, but he not only had the plan, he had strategies on how to do it. Here's how we're going to do it. He had these million population target areas either adopt them around the world and that's how he was going to do it.

There was more strategies than that, but it was something else. So for a business guy, I was on the edge of my seat thinking, how can, this is really something, how can we be involved with this? And Dr. Bright as only he could do, he said, "No, it's going to take some money. It's going to take a billion dollars, but that's not much." He said, "It's only a thousand people each giving a million." He says, "I want you to sign up." And wow, that was closing the deal. Being a sales guy like me, I always like to close the deal, right?

Gary Bauer: You got to ask, right? Because so many salesmen make the pitch, but they never tried.

John Roise: They never ask. It's the same as sharing our faith with Jesus. We tell how great God is, but we don't say about, "How about you? Have you done this?" And so he did that, and I was so excited. I thought, man, we got to sign up. Well, my wife thought... she married a crazy guy, she knew that. But she said, how can that be? And so she didn't sleep all night, but God spoke to her. And so the next day we were in agreement on that. And so we made that commitment. Now, it's easy to make a commitment when you have nothing. When you're millions of dollars in debt, it's easy to make a commitment. But it was that I said, "Well, Lord, if You're going to do this, it's only through You." And that gave us a purpose for business. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

So if any you out there listening and you get a challenge to do something for the Lord, step on it. Step on it in faith. It takes faith. Now I must say I didn't have anything. So what I have to give up, it was a pledge with nothing behind it. But I made that pledge to God and then I watched how business could be developed and how things could be so you could use the funds that God generated to give to His kingdom. And so it was the best thing that ever happened in our life. It was called History Handful. We joined a group of other people in that who had made that same commitment, and we watched how God provided.

Gary Bauer: Do you remember how long it took to actually fulfill the \$1 million dollar pledge?

John Roise: I think the first one we did. We did several of them with that, but I think the first one, maybe two or three years probably, it took us to do that. And what I learned, I always think that if you learn something from someone, you need to pass it on to someone else. So don't just keep it to yourself. So I was on board of Bethel University. I think I was on board then. I was on board for like 12, 15 years, but I think I was on the board then. But Dr. Brush was the president that time. I kept talking about this thing with Dr. Bright and the faith movement. So he got me aside when he said, tell me about that. I told him about that. And he said, "Well, John, in the Bethels history, we've only had one gift of \$1 million. We got this big campaign coming up, and so we're going to have to redo something." I said, "Well, here's what Dr. Bright did." "Thank you very much." He said. A couple weeks later, he called me up. He said, "Hey, stop up my office." I went up to see him and he said, "Don't open this up." He said, "I got a notebook for you."

He says, "I know you're leaving for Vietnam or Thailand," wherever I was going the next day. And he said, "But just open this up when you get home." So I got home. I opened up the notebook and I just started laughing. I said, he gets it. He gets it because he said his proposal is 13 who dared campaign. He says, and I want 13 to give a million dollars. He says, "I want you to pledge the first million dollars." And I just laughed. And I said, he gets it. He gets it. And I laughed and I said, "George, count us in." Well, because of the faith in there and how George worked, Dr. Brush that is, he worked on that within, I think two weeks. He had the other 12 people signed up. And in that campaign, I think there were 32 that gave \$1 million or more. But that was all inspired by Dr. Bill Bright, sharing with Dr. Brusher and then on how you can look to God to provide what you pledge in faith. Then you work hard with strategies strategically to achieve that goal.

Gary Bauer: John, there is so much more to talk about. I don't know where the time went to, man, you've got a great story and I asked maybe too long of questions or whatever, but any chance you could be back on Family Talk with us for another episode to share with our audience?

John Roise: Anything I can do to help this ministry in advance of kingdom, I'm willing to do.

Gary Bauer: Fantastic.

Roger Marsh: Well, from a big bank job to a company on the brink, John Roise shows us that taking risks for God can lead to opportunities we could never have imagined. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and an inspiring conversation with entrepreneur and evangelist John Roise. Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or if you'd like to share it with a friend, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, and be sure to join us again next time for part two of John's remarkable testimony.

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are dedicated to preserving and promoting the institution of the family through biblical principles. And when you support our ministry, you help us introduce more people to the gospel of Jesus Christ while defending the sanctity of human life, religious freedom and righteousness in our culture, and you can make a secure donation to help us in that pursuit by going to drjamesdobson.org. You can also call us with your tax deductible donation at 877-732-6825.

And friends, we have exciting news to share with you this year. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute celebrates our 15th anniversary, and we want to hear from you. Maybe a word of wisdom on the radio changed your perspective, and you owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Dobson for that. Or maybe one of Dr.'s books helped you become a better parent, or maybe you received a word of encouragement when you needed it most from the JDFI and the Family Talk platform. Well, whatever your story, we would love to hear it. Go to drjamesdobson.org to share your personal memory of how Dr. Dobson has impacted your family. You can do so in print, using audio, or video as well.

That's drjamesdobson.org. And together, let's celebrate God's faithfulness through these remarkable 15 years.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and all of us here at Family Talk, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time as we continue our conversation with John Roise about faith, business and kingdom impact right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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