



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Warfighters Mission – Part 2

Guest(s): Brandon Cabalar

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and on today's program, part two of our special conversation with Brandon Cabalar, the founder of the brand new ministry called the Warfighters Mission. You can find the link for their website, thewarfightersmission.com, up at our website, drjamesdobson.org. During the next half hour, Dr. Dobson will continue his fascinating conversation with Brandon about how he got into the military. Here's a hint, he wanted to join when he was 15-years-old right after 9/11, how he met his wife Tanya and how God blessed their family with not one, not two, but all the way up to seven beautiful daughters who are also here in studio with us. Now, without further ado, let's continue with Dr. James Dobson talking with Brandon Cabalar about his tours of duty on the Warfighters Mission here on this special edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: When did you get to go home for any period of time?

Brandon Cabalar: After that first deployment, I came home for a few months and I got to take 30 days of leave, so I got spend time with her and we had two kids at the time. But I'm not going to lie, I was dealing with a lot of my PTSD, so I wasn't really there.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell the audience what that is.

Brandon Cabalar: PTSD is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. It's when you're in stressful environments and it's constantly your life-

Dr. James Dobson: It changes you, doesn't it?

Brandon Cabalar: ... it changes the way that your mental state is. I was dealing with a lot to the point where I ended up drinking heavily and I kicked her and the kids out, the two kids, because I wasn't always there.

Dr. James Dobson: You weren't a really nice guy during that time.

Brandon Cabalar: No, I was not a nice guy. I was a bad person to her, to my kids, to anybody that I met. I didn't know it at the time, but I was struggling and I needed a way out and it was a hard point in my life, but we got to the point where we separated and we were on the verge of getting divorced because of the fact that I wasn't who I was before and she didn't like that and I was okay with it. But something that changed was I came to come visit the kids one day, and she saw me and she looked at me in the eyes and said, "Your eyes are so yellow. You're killing yourself. I don't want you to die. I need you." And God was there. Again, I didn't know at the time, but He changed that and I said, "Okay, I need to work on this." And-

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I'm really interested in your telling us more about that, but did you get badly wounded? Was there any point where you really took one?

Brandon Cabalar: It was just my nerves, Doctor. After my last deployment in Afghanistan, my nerves started getting really, really compressed and to the point where I was stuck in a wheelchair after they medically retired me and I couldn't feel the bottom of my feet. I couldn't feel my legs. I couldn't feel anything.

Dr. James Dobson: Was that the end of the military for you?

Brandon Cabalar: That was the end. And I'll tell you Doctor, that was the hardest part of the transition was when I became useless to the Army. It felt like they were done with me and I was letting everybody down. I was letting all my friends down. I was letting my country down. I was letting my family down.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you go home?

Brandon Cabalar: I did. We stayed in Washington State. They retired me out of Washington State and the VA, as much as they try to care for others, all they did was pump me with a bunch of medication. Tell me, "Oh, this will help your nerves, but this has this side effect and here's this medication to stop those side effects, but this has this side effect." I think at one point I was on 20 or 30 pills. A lot of it was painkillers and stuff that they were trying to figure out what was going on with my body and nobody could figure it out. There's a point in that part where I don't remember a whole week because I was on so much medication that the VA was trying to do on top of trying to fix my PTSD.

Dr. James Dobson: You know what the amazing thing is? I look at you today and I don't see that man you're describing. I see a guy who's very disciplined, a guy who loves the Lord, a guy who would not recognize himself today.

Brandon Cabalar: You know, Tanya said that.

Dr. James Dobson: I love working with you and you and I have developed a real friendship here, and you are not that man.

Brandon Cabalar: I wish I wasn't always like that, but God puts us through those trials. It's just like the trials of Job, the trials of Samson, trials of David. God puts us all through those. And like I said, that wasn't an easy part of my life. I almost lost my family for the second time during that time, Doctor.

Dr. James Dobson: When did the Lord come into the picture?

Brandon Cabalar: Officially, it was two years ago for us. But Tanya and I, we were dealing with a lot of things, mostly me dealing with me and Tanya dealing with me. And it got to the point where I told them to go do stuff and she was getting ready to leave and I remember hearing the garage door open and close and she was gone and I was getting ready to take my own life because I was waiting for them to leave and for some reason, she popped right back into the room with the kids and that is the point where I knew God-

Dr. James Dobson: That's quite a woman. This is the good time to tell them you are the father of seven girls.

Brandon Cabalar: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: No boys.

Brandon Cabalar: Seven girls. The Lord blessed me with seven girls. My running joke is when I was younger I wanted to be surrounded by beautiful women. And when you ask that kind of stuff, God has a sense of humor and says, "All right, here it is." But yeah, our sixth daughter was born at 28 weeks premature, and that was hard because it was right between COVID. We didn't know if she was going to live. And so that's when I started relying on the Lord. And this is before I met our friends. We were on that verge of leaving the Catholic Church. We didn't know how to do it. We didn't know what to do because we just weren't agreeing with a lot of things.

But she came, like I said, 28 weeks. Just seeing her the size of my forearm was hard and then seeing her in this little chamber was even harder, and so I broke down and we had to take turns going and visiting the baby. We couldn't go in at the same time, which was the weirdest thing for us. But I remember every night, I just kept praying. I stood there and I said, "Lord, if you're real, take care of this child. If you're real, just take me. I'll take the spot of her. I don't care. Just let her live." And I just kept praying these... At the time, I thought they were dumb prayers. I knew that the Lord was listening and I just kept praying, and praying, and praying.

And finally three months later, she came home to us and she got to finally meet her sisters. I think that was another big hard part was her sisters couldn't come in and see her and meet her like all the others did. But yeah, that was when I started trying to make deals, I guess, with God saying, "If you do this, I'll follow you anywhere. I'll follow you. As long as you let her come home, I'll follow you

to the end of the Earth." In 2021, our good neighbors, Brad French and Sam French, they sent us a gift card for Starbucks saying, "We're new to the neighborhood." And I said, "Who does that?" Usually, when somebody moves into the neighborhood, you give them a welcome gift, but they sent us one. Out of the blue, I saw him spraying down the weeds out in front trying to kill them, and I looked at Tanya and I said, "Hey, we need to go say thank you." And she looked at me like, "Who are you? I haven't seen this guy before." And I said-

Dr. James Dobson: You were really a mess, weren't you?

Brandon Cabalar: I was. You can ask her every single day, I was definitely a mess. At this point, I wheeled over there because I was in the wheelchair and went over there and I talked to him and I said, "Hey, I just wanted to say thank you for that card. It really means a lot to us." And got to know him, and instantly as soon as we started talking, it was like I met my brother. I didn't know at the time that he was a pastor, but...

Dr. James Dobson: The Lord sent him to you, didn't He?

Brandon Cabalar: Again, just like in Washington, He put a pastor right next door to us. This time, He was like, "Okay, you're going to listen. You said you're going to listen to me. Fine, let's do this." And so He did that. It was like my heart started softening a lot more for people because before then, I just didn't want to talk to anybody. I didn't care who you were unless you were a Veteran, specifically if you went to combat and understood what I dealt with, I didn't want to talk to you. And that day, God did something and He said, "You're going to go talk to him," and we did. And ever since then, we've been best friends.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you and I have worked pretty closely together and I see a guy that's very different than you've been describing.

Brandon Cabalar: You've heard my story and it wasn't an easy journey. I keep going back to Luke 15, the parable of lost sheep and God has always been looking for me. I've always been looking for Him. Every single time he found me, I would go and graze somewhere else. And I love the Lord so much that I like talking about it to anybody, and that's why we started our nonprofit here for veterans.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's talk about that. You really do want to win people for the Lord.

Brandon Cabalar: I do.

Dr. James Dobson: You want them to get what you got.

Brandon Cabalar: I wish everybody in the whole world would have what I have. Through my whole journey, there was always two constants. One was the Lord, I just didn't know Him at the time. And two was my family. It's funny how God puts people on our paths that we would not even imagine meeting. I mean, I only heard about you

through... I think my mom had one book growing up. I didn't know who you were. Brad French actually, on a whim, told me to come and apply for the security position working for you. And at the time, I said, "Security? I don't want to be a security guard." And he said, "Well, you should talk to Joe," who is my counterpart. He said, "You should just talk to him and see what it's like." And so I did and I said, "Well, Lord-"

Dr. James Dobson: Came to my house.

Brandon Cabalar: Yeah. It was funny because I was like, "Lord, if you really think that I should do this job, if you think this is in my path, then I'll go do it. I'll entertain it." And He said, "Go and interview." And I said, "Okay." So I interviewed and within a week, I was talking to you at your house. You were celebrating your 63rd anniversary at the time. And that was truly an experience that I never imagined, but I'm just grateful for that. And you're a big inspiration on, again, the Lord puts people in our paths and family is the biggest part of our ministry. Everybody talks about healing veterans. There's big non-profits that'll go out there and take veterans on nice trips, or they'll try to heal the combat veteran that's wounded with all these things, or they'll focus on family and just that family aspect of trying to heal the family by taking them to trips or giving them gifts and all that stuff. And that's great. It works for some people, but the one thing that they're missing is the Lord. There's a handful of ministries out there that do focus on bringing God back into veterans' lives, and our main focus is trying to heal both at the same time by bringing them together. Because I told you, Doctor, my family has been there since day one and they're the ones that healed me. They're the reason I'm here. Other than the Lord, they're the reason that I am alive and working with you.

Dr. James Dobson: Brandon, help us understand not only who you were, but who those other guys are out there. They're committing suicide on an alarming scale. They are desperate for exactly what you needed. How do we get to them? How do we get an arm around them? What do we say that makes them want what you got and how in the world do you teach it to them or introduce them to them?

Brandon Cabalar: Well, the problem is with these veterans that are committing suicide is they don't have an outlet. They don't have somebody to talk to. The number one thing that a lot of veterans that I've talked to before and now, all they want is to be heard. They want to be able to not be judged, so they want to be heard. They want to not to be judged. Who's the one person that will hear you and not judge you?

Dr. James Dobson: Only the Lord.

Brandon Cabalar: Only the Lord. And so if I can be that mediator of, "Hey, this is what helped me, why don't you come and spend some time with me?"

Dr. James Dobson: Your marriage is healed.

Brandon Cabalar: My marriage is healed. I'm not going to say that I'm 100%. I still deal with my PTSD, but I'm to the point where I can talk about it and I can try to heal others. I joined a peer support group when I was dealing with my stuff. Actually, Tanya was the reason I started that. The Wounded Warrior project had a peer support group that they were doing, and she kind of forced me. I didn't want to go. And she said, "Well, you're in a wheelchair and I can drive you, so I'm going to take you over there anyway." And I'll tell you, that's one of the biggest things. And we met in a church, and again, God was right there. I just didn't know it. Just having somebody hear my story and hear me out and not tell me that everything's going to be okay or tell me this and that. It was just listening.

And then the leader of this thing, he actually prayed with me. That really helped, and that's what these veterans need. They just need to know that no matter how lonely you are, no matter how lonely you feel, or that you think that you're worthless or you're not good enough for this world anymore, if the enemy can't kill you down range, why are you going to lose to the enemy here? The Warfighters Mission is to play on words because yes, we're warfighters as veterans who fought in Iraq or Afghanistan. We are fighting this physical battle, but for us now, we're fighting a spiritual battle that nobody other than God can help us with. And so when we start fighting for what's right and fighting for the kingdom, like Ephesians, we put on our armor. Once we start doing that and we start walking with God, I've learned that it's been a lot easier and the way that we're doing it and like I said, is with our families because they hurt. They dealt with a lot of stress that we dealt with, we just didn't know it.

Dr. James Dobson: What's really interesting, Brandon, is that you're in a position now to really deal with those guys and to help them. I have learned what they go through talking with you and your great passion is to reach them before they do something terrible. And they're out there by the millions, it seems, at least hundreds of thousands. If I understood them and their plight from you, what I have seen is guys in the military who have either gotten wounded or for some reason, they've gotten booted out of the military and when they got out there, they didn't even know who they were and they didn't know what they wanted or what they was going to do. They just felt out in the sea of confusion and the only thing they know to do is kill themselves. That doesn't seem very reasonable or logical, but they're doing it and they're doing it by the hundreds, and more than hundreds. Describe what you know about them.

Brandon Cabalar: They keep saying that 22 veterans a day commit suicide.

Dr. James Dobson: Unbelievable.

Brandon Cabalar: I think that number is well over that. I think that's 23 or 24 veterans that do. We lost a lot of guys during combat, but my units that I was part of, the number of guys that we lost back home to their own demons, to their own hands has surpassed that by double and triple of what happened. The reason that they're doing it, and I'll tell you from my experience, is because of sense of purpose. They lose that sense of purpose of life. They don't know how to cope.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, military's gone.

Brandon Cabalar: You live your life being told what to do in the military. The whole time that you're in the military, somebody's over you telling you exactly what to do, how to fold your covers, how to brush your teeth, do everything, where to go and what time to do things. And when you come out of that and you have no purpose, or you think that you have no purpose is when your mind starts wandering.

Dr. James Dobson: Does the military have no answer for that?

Brandon Cabalar: They send us a psychiatrist and psychologists and all them, and all they do is pump you with medication and say, "Hey, things are going to get better. Here, write this down. You're going to relive it. Just write it down five times." There's not really a way to cope with it. It's when they start learning that there is a way. The biggest part of it is they don't feel like they have anybody. They feel like they're alone. I've had friends that they had wives, they have kids, they have their parents, that family bond that they have, they don't rely on them. And the family doesn't understand how to properly do it, and so that's what we were trying to help with.

Dr. James Dobson: Your greatest passion now is to win people for Jesus Christ.

Brandon Cabalar: Yes, it is. That is my number one.

Dr. James Dobson: That brings the meaning with it that you never had before.

Brandon Cabalar: No.

Dr. James Dobson: And if you can save one of them and bring them to the Lord and give them meaning and purpose and love them and help them to know what to do next and give them a reason for living, you develop your own sense of purpose and meaning, and so you've started this ministry for this purpose. You have a name for it. You call it-

Brandon Cabalar: The Warfighters Mission. So again, it's a play on words with the mission concept because we are warfighters, we fight combat, but we are also warfighters for God. Our mission while you're in combat is to do whatever is right for the country. And our mission is, again, going on mission and trying to save as many families as we can. When I first started this thing, I thought it was just going to try to save the veterans, but it's also their families because when a family can heal together, it's so much better.

Dr. James Dobson: That is what motivated me with Focus on the Family and Family Talk because I wanted to save those guys too and women too, and I wanted to provide an answer because there is one, and His name is Jesus.

Brandon Cabalar: He is, and that's why we're just so happy.

Dr. James Dobson: That's why I started radio, to introduce people to Christ, to help them save their families, keep them from committing suicide or whatever it is they're chasing. And I have the same passion that you have because those answers are there, and I think of these poor guys that are out there. I knew them in the Army too. I saw them all around there lost, and I looked at it and I just said, "Man, there's something wrong here." And there's really only one answer, only one.

Brandon Cabalar: Indeed.

Dr. James Dobson: The Lord wanted you, Brandon. He wanted you before you wanted Him, and He spoke to you and you accepted it, and your life has been totally different. You got a sweet wife. You've got seven beautiful girls, maybe more to come.

Brandon Cabalar: Lord willing.

Roger Marsh: Well, we'll have to see what the Lord has in store regarding more children for Brandon and Tanya Cabalar, but today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we've just concluded part two of a three-part discussion, a very, very powerful and poignant conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and Brandon Cabalar about the plight of those men and women who are serving in the military right now and why the incidences of suicide, alcoholism, and chemical dependency has grown so great in military circles and what is being done to combat this problem. Brandon Cabalar, of course, talks very freely about his faith. He blogs about it at his website, the warfightersmission.com. There are also other resources available there too, an online blog. Right now, it's for people exclusively in the state of Colorado, but the plan is to expand in 2025.

There's a special Christmas outreach that the Warfighters Mission hosts every year, and you're encouraged to read more about that online. Go to drjamesdobson.org and click the link for the warfightersmission.com, the special ministry started by our guest today here on the program, Brandon Cabalar.

Now, as Dr. Dobson has mentioned, and they were just referring to Brandon and his wife, Tanya Cabalar have seven beautiful daughters who are all in studio with us today, and they'll be with us again tomorrow as well. Raising daughters is a huge challenge even in today's culture with all the resources that are available, and Dr. Dobson has written a powerful book, of course, the landmark book, *Bringing Up Girls*, which when it was first released, sold well over a million copies. We've taken that classic material and added a couple of updates courtesy of Dr. Owen Strachan, who is the senior director of the new Dobson Culture Center, and put together a special 10-day email series on how to most effectively bring up girls, helping girls grow into adult women who can serve the Lord with gladness and joy, and face the challenges that life has to bring to them.

If you would like to start receiving this special 10-day email series, it's easy to do. Just go to drjamesdobson.org and click on the button there on the landing page, or go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and click the link at the bottom of our broadcast page. Give us your name and email address, and we'll be happy to start sending you one of these special entries each and every day for the next 10 days. Again, the free Bringing Up Girls email series with additional material by Dr. Owen Strachan as yours absolutely free when you go to drjamesdobson.org and click on the Bringing Up Girls tab or go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and click the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening. Be sure to join us again next time right here for the conclusion of our powerful three-part conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and Brandon Cabalar of thewarfightersmission.com. That's coming up next time right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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