



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: God is at Work – Part 2

Guest(s): Ken Eldred

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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 please that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and today we are once again joined by Ken Eldred, a successful entrepreneur and businessman. Ken founded numerous successful companies over the years including Ariba Technologies and Inmac which went public in 1987 and later merged with MicroWarehouse. But on our last Family Talk broadcast, Ken shared how climbing the corporate ladder felt meaningless until he discovered his true purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ken Eldred: We talk about the word integrity. Typically, people think integrity is a sense of being righteous and that is a definition of integrity, but that's not the meaning of integrity and the Word of God. It's wholeness and the thing that He loved about Job, and He said it twice, is he was a man of integrity. And in Proverbs it says, "a righteous man walks in his integrity." There is a righteousness, but there's also a purpose for every man and every woman. And when we discover what that purpose is, it says that our children will be blessed. Too many people, and I was one of them who was neither walking in truth or integrity in the sense of where I was supposed to be.

Roger Marsh: Well today here on Family Talk, Dr. Dobson has invited Ken Eldred to join us once again to tackle several more important topics that affect millions of hardworking Americans. They'll be discussing alcoholism, and the dangers of technology in our increasingly connected world. Ken will also share how he maintained a 40 hour workweek despite running very, very successful companies. Now perhaps most powerfully, Ken will reveal how God has remained faithful to him during times of financial desperation and uncertainty. He'll be sharing the remarkable story of how his entire net worth was wiped out in a period of only 24 hours and how God's faithfulness carried him through that season. So let's get into it now, part two of this insightful conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and Ken Eldred on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: For over 20 years, Ken Eldred has served as CEO of Inmac, and that's a public company that he founded. And he's also assisted in the founding of several

other successful companies. He's even written a number of books on the topic, including *God is At Work* and another book that has just been released called *The Integrated Life*. Ken, I'm so glad that you could be with us for another day because I think what you have to say about priorities is vitally important to families.

Ken Eldred: Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Ken we heard last time some amazing stories of things that the Lord did for you. And when you founded your first company and you were on the edge of a cliff and you just received one miracle after another. And then how you had an awakening to the fact that you needed to commit to a 40-hour workweek and not because it was a magical number, but because that was the amount of time that you could give to your work and still have sufficient time leftover for your family and for your friends and for other responsibilities and activities. But that was a real test of your faith. You told us privately that you even had quite a struggle with this issue for a while. Where you really had to trust the Lord because he wanted you to do it his way and you had your own ideas about it.

Ken Eldred: Absolutely. I mean, we went through some really interesting times. I went through a lot of tests and we all go through tests. Back when we were doing a few hundred dollars a day back in the beginning I, we had a little bit of an inventory. We didn't have much, we didn't have a lot of money. We had these tear proof envelopes. So, I opened this box of these envelopes with one of these X-acto knives. And as I was doing that, I ripped, I cut a third of this inventory. Well this was 5% of our money and I just didn't have the courage to take them out of the inventory. So I left them there. Started getting some orders and one day, got an order for envelopes and you can imagine what I sent to the customer. And I didn't think, I didn't even notice.

I didn't even think about it. I just send them off. And then the following Monday, normally, which was our strongest day, we had a couple of phone calls and no orders. And the next day, as a direct mail company, we didn't even get any junk mail. I mean, I was really disappointed. And then the following day there was no calls at all. I mean, nothing. And I went home that night, and I said, "Roberta, there's something wrong. I think God's trying to get my attention. I don't know what it is." And she said, "Well, let's pray about it." And we got in bed, we started praying about it and I put my head on the pillow and the minute, second I lay my head down, I sat up and it's those envelopes. I cheated my customer and I was wrong before God. And so I vowed right then the first thing I do in the morning was go back to my office and apologize to my employees. Well they had never seen anything like that before.

But went right to the office, pulled out those bad envelopes, threw them in a pile where I could use them, pulled out some new ones, wrote the letter to the customer apologizing for my error, said "Keep the old ones and take these new ones." I hadn't put that in the box and set it out for shipment that day when the phones began to ring. Thursday was normally our worst day. We made up the

entire week that day. And God said to me, "If I can't trust you, Ken, in the little things, how can I trust you with big things?" As He says in the parable of the talents.

Dr. James Dobson: What does burnout in business look like?

Ken Eldred: Oh, it's a horrible thing. When people get burned out, they lose their will. They lose their desires, they lose their ability to focus on the task. Oftentimes they get to a point where they're incapable of actually doing the day to day work they're supposed to do. And I used to tell them that that was the biggest danger of working way too many hours, because about the time they're really valuable and capable of making good decisions, they burn themselves out. We need the time to relax. We need the time to get away. We need the time to be. I mean, even Jesus, he had three years to accomplish the outrageous, and yet even He went off by Himself to be with God every day. He found the time because He said, the work is one thing, but the adoration of the father, the relationship with Him, the relationship with my immediate family, if you wish, those were important to me.

You know, when somebody says 70 hours a week so how much of the time is wasted reading emails that are irrelevant? I look at things and I look at everything that's on my list and I say, "Is this really advancing what my responsibility is? Does this really do what needs to be done"? I've never seen a manager in an organization that I've been involved with who was not delighted with the results regardless of the hours. It's not about hours. It's about what they accomplish.

Dr. James Dobson: Ken, you would have no way of knowing how relevant what you're talking about here is to the whole team of Family Talk. We started this ministry on a shoestring with too few people and too little money and everybody working too hard. But this conversation today emphasizes it even more. We have to find a way to do it in a reasonable way.

Ken Eldred: You come back to this 40 hours a week, if I may. And the point is, once that's set and it may be, I mean it may not be 40 hours for you, it maybe something else. My youngest was born the month I started the company. So the needs are always a little bit different, but for the most part the process is the same. And whether your work life is for a ministry or for its business, it has to be limited based on the other areas that have to be important. And it's hard to keep that. It's not just a balance, but it's a total integration. So what that meant was that if it's going to be 40 hours, then what do I have to do and what can I ignore? The image I had, and I just want to be quick with this, is that: when God found Abraham, where was he? He was relaxing under the terebinth tree. He was one of the most successful business guys in the world and he had time to stop. And if he could stop, we can too.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, Ken is not a legalist thing though, is it? I mean there's nothing in the Scripture that says 40 hours and not 40 hours and 30 minutes. You want to find

God's will for you. We're talking to people right now that we're frustrating. We're talking to physicians who have patients and they have to make rounds in the morning and make rounds at night and they're doing the best they can to keep up with all this, or dentists or lawyers or others who are very oppressed. And until the Lord opens the door for changing that, it is going to be very difficult. But you're not trying to dump guilt on them.

Ken Eldred: Not at all.

Dr. James Dobson: There's a principle here that that says "Work is not everything, and your family and your relationship with the Lord and your church and other things have to be taken into consideration too."

Ken Eldred: Absolutely. What the 40 hours for me, and it may be 50 for somebody else, may be some other number for someone else because the Lord says we walk in our own integrity. In the integrity that He has given to us and the work that we've been given. But the danger is deluding ourselves and saying, "This is work that we're doing for God so we can go beyond the limits." And that's when we get in trouble. That's when we burn ourselves out. That's when we lose the joy of the Lord. That's where we lose our focus. And what I'm suggesting though, is that by limiting our time, we have to get really creative on how we use our time and what we don't do.

Dr. James Dobson: Ken, what about retirement? How do you see retirement? That word's not used in the Scripture?

Ken Eldred: Yeah. How do you spell that?

Dr. James Dobson: I don't know, but I've had to deal with it recently when I left Focus on the Family, everybody thought I was going to retire. And as long as I'm healthy and I'm motivated and the Lord is talking to me about what's next. I just didn't feel good about doing that and I haven't done it and don't plan to do it until something changes.

Ken Eldred: I don't either. I don't see where that's in the Scripture. I don't see where we have a 65 year old mandate, or anything else. I mean, Moses went to work at the age of 80, that's when he started. So, it's not about age. And in fact, the wonderful thing about God is that most people want to retire because they tend to get into a rut and life tends to be normalized and we do this because it's easier, it's more predictable. We like tradition. We like comfort. Dealing with God is not comfortable. Doing the things that God calls us to is not always comfortable and learning because He chastens those who He love is not always comfortable. I mean, I don't enjoy it all the time. And yet He does the outrageous with us if we just give Him half a chance. How could anybody retire from the outrageous?

Dr. James Dobson: Ken explain what it is: the compartmentalized life.

Ken Eldred: That's a great question. I talk about it in this new book that's called *The Integrated Life*. People look at life in compartments. It's much easier that way because, I have my business life over here or my work life, whatever that is. And then I've got my family life and then I've got my church life. And I need to have inputs into every one of these. And the problem is that people live these disintegrated lives and end up having putting 100% over here, 100% here, 100% here. Well, you add it up, it's 300%. I mean it's the key to burnout. When we realize that what we do is for God and that it's not about accomplishing this objective, but God's objectives, in every area of our lives, all of this stuff starts coming back together again into one simple hole.

Dr. James Dobson: What is new technology doing to the workplace and to the people who are employed there?

Ken Eldred: That's a great question. It's invading our lives and is in danger of taking over our lives. Technology is neutral. It's not a good thing or a bad thing. It does help us do everything, but it seeps into our lives. I mean, I find myself doing emails at times that I need to be focusing on other things because it's easy. It's available. We have to learn to shut it off. We have to learn to operate in a new environment because things have significantly changed. And with God and with an integrated life, it's constantly a battle of integration and removal of things that are irrelevant. Technology is great. We can find things that we'd never seen before. We can do things we've never done before, but it also has the danger of completely impacting our lives in negative ways. So we have to watch it very carefully.

Dr. James Dobson: In a conversation, you and I had, Ken, you referred to something you called the outrageousness of God. Explain what you were talking about.

Ken Eldred: In 1980s, we originally started this company on a shoestring if you remember the story, we had very few dollars.

Dr. James Dobson: I know the feeling.

Ken Eldred: And we didn't ... I said, "Lord, I don't know how we're going to fund this because growth takes funding." "Well, we got going, we got busy and 10 years past and in 1986 we decided that we were going to take our company public. And ultimately the date was set. And we're in New York. My wife, my partner and his wife, and we're waiting for the first, that morning, we're going to see at the bell, they're going to start trading our stock. And we're very, very excited. 9 o'clock comes rolling around and I asked one of the managers of our trading activities, "What's happening?" And he said, "Well, nothing's happened yet." I said "Well, why not?" And he said, "Well, I don't know." About 9:30 in the morning in New York my lawyer calls me out of California, he says, "I've just been on the phone with the SEC. They say they need a letter on my stationary explaining why you need the money, because you're so well-funded." And not only does he need that, but he said in those days, he would accept a fax, but they had a centralized

fax machine. And of course, you didn't have letterhead on your computer, you didn't even have computers at home. They were at work.

And he said, "I'm going to get into my office. I'm going to try to get this letter out by 8:30 in the morning," which would be 11:30 east coast time. Well, that's not a problem, except in those days the government was shutting down at noon on certain Fridays. And this was Friday, October 10th and they were closing at noon. And the SEC said to our lawyers, "Look, if you send that thing off to me," he says, "go ahead but it takes more than 15 minutes for the mail boy to deliver the fax up to my office. It's going to be noon and I'm going home. You'll have to do it another week." Well, the people that were managing our public offering are saying the market is really choppy things don't look good if we don't get out today, it's going to be at least 12 weeks. And basically, that means starting over. All the expense, all of that.

So it's now a quarter of 12. And I asked, I said to the manager, "Is there a room or a conference room or something where Roberta and I can go and sit down and pray?" And we were laying out before God this problem and we hadn't been at it more than five minutes when the loudspeaker comes on and it says the United States government has decided to stay open one more hour. Our public offering was approved by the SEC at 12:03 on October 10th, 1986. God did the outrageous.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my goodness.

Ken Eldred: So we'd asked Him to solve this problem for us. And why is He willing to do that with, I mean, He did this for me. Why is God interested in doing the outrageous? And why does He want you to take your faith to work? Well, there are two answers. Number one, God wants to do the outrageous in your life because He's already done the most outrageous thing He could ever do for you. He died on the cross. Jesus died for you. And if He's done that, why would He stop there? He wants to do more. That's the most outrageous thing. All the things that have happened in my life that seem like miracles, they're nothing compared to what He has done-

Dr. James Dobson: And now you are talking to people right now as you know in this down economy who have gone bankrupt. Who have prayed, and the Lord allowed that financial disaster to occur. How do you deal with that? Not everybody has experienced the kind of thing you're talking about.

Ken Eldred: We sold the company in 1996. I was asked by the buying company if I wouldn't be willing to hold onto my shares for a period of some months in order to facilitate the transition because I had a lot of shares that would end up in this company. And told them, "Absolutely, I'll do that. No hurry." Even though it was my net worth was tied up here. During the period that this took place, that company announced \$100 million inventory write down. Their stock went from 48, which is what we exchanged our shares on, to four. My entire net worth wiped out in a 24 hour period. I was in a catatonic state. I mean, really, I

thought, here I am, I'm going to have to start over. And I just, I could not get out of this funk. My wife was worried about me. Roberta was, she went outside and she began to pray and she said, "Lord, I'm really worried about Ken. He just doesn't seem to be, he's just, I mean, like many of these people who have just lost everything: 'Where's God? What's happening here?'"

And as she prayed on that hillside, the Lord said to her, He said, "Ken has inquired of me. I know his heart and I will fill in the voids." She said "what?" She didn't talk that way. I mean, this is not her speaking. She doesn't use those words. And she came in the house, ran upstairs, and she said, "Ken, I just got a word from the Lord." And she told me this word. And nothing had changed. But all of a sudden my countenance was different. I knew God was still there. I knew God still loved me and it didn't matter what happened after that. Well, it wasn't long after that that I started a new company that went from zero to a valuation of 40 billion. I actually made more money in that period than I did in the 20 years previous. And it wasn't about making money. I mean, I'm not ... I want to give this to God's work. That's what I've been doing with my money. That's what God has in mind.

It's about God's faithfulness. If I can encourage people to go back to His Word, to read the promises that He gives us. Isaiah, I'm thinking of Isaiah 32:17 and 18. Where God promises in times like this where the city is torn apart, where the fires burn. He said, "I will bless your seed and I will make sure that your flocks graze peacefully and you will be at rest." We have to buy these, we have to understand these promises.

Dr. James Dobson: Well that's very encouraging to me and I'm sure to my colleagues here. You and are I blessed by having praying wives. And you talk about a gift, and Shirley has been on her knees for us. And I am just so grateful for that. Ken, this has been such an uplifting discussion about business, about turning it over to the Lord and depending on him and letting him lead, even when he sometimes gives answers that you hadn't anticipated and didn't really want. He's in it anyway and you just remain faithful.

Ken Eldred: Amen. Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. You've written three books. I have one of them in front of me called *God Is at Work*. Tell me the other two.

Ken Eldred: The first one is *On Kingdom Business* and this last one is, it's *The Integrated Life* experiencing the power of God in our work and our business.

Dr. James Dobson: You love the Lord, don't you?

Ken Eldred: I do. Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: With all your heart.

Ken Eldred: He has been my savior, my direction, my peace, my joy.

Dr. James Dobson: Well it's a pleasure to get better acquainted with you and, let's continue the relationship. And is there a last thing you want to say to the businessman or businesswoman out there who has it all out of control and has been feeling that, but doesn't have any idea how to deal with it?

Ken Eldred: My experience is when I feel that way, it's because I'm not walking with my eyes on Jesus. And I encourage anyone who is going through these kinds of experiences to grab your partner and begin to pray and ask God to show you what He has in mind for you. He will, He will. Get into the Word and take those promises and read them every day. He'll encourage you. He'll build you up. He'll provide you with the outrageous in your life.

Dr. James Dobson: Ken Eldred, hanks for being our guests. Let's do it again.

Ken Eldred: Thank you, Dr. Dobson. I've enjoyed this.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to Family Talk and a classic conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and his good friend, Ken Eldred. Ken's story reminds us that even when our carefully laid plans collapse. God remains present, working behind the scenes to accomplish something greater than we could ever hope or imagine. Now if today's program has sparked a desire to integrate your faith and work more intentionally, or if you're struggling to find meaning in your career, I encourage you to go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk where you can hear this program again, parts one and two. Again that's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, or just use the Family Talk app.

Well with Easter less than two weeks away, many of us, parents and grandparents, are thinking about how to share the essential message of Christ's resurrection with our kids and grandkids. And that's why here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute we've created a beautiful guide called "Sharing Jesus with Your Children." Now this digital resource features practical wisdom for nurturing your child's faith from Dr. James Dobson and other trusted experts. The Easter season is the perfect time to focus on building your family's spiritual foundation. You can download this free resource at drjamesdobson.org. It's right there on the landing page. Just click the link, enter your name and an email address and then we'll send you the guide. This guide provides simple actionable steps to help your children and grandchildren better understand the true meaning of Easter and to build a faith that will sustain them throughout their lives. Again it's called "Sharing Jesus with Your Children" and it's available as a digital download at drjamesdobson.org.

You know Ken Eldred reminded us today that sometimes God asks us to act in faith before we can see the results. And when you support Family Talk, you're taking that same step of faith. You're investing in families you may never meet and helping plant seeds of truth that may bear fruit for generations to come.

Every day we hear from listeners like you who's marriages have been saved, who's parenting has been transformed, who's faith has been renewed through these daily broadcasts. Your tax-deductible donation becomes part of that ripple effect, touching lives far beyond what we can see. Now if you've been blessed by the ministry here at the JDFI, consider becoming a blessing to others when you give a gift online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or you can give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825.

Well I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at the James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening. Join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

Announcer:

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