

2/18/25

Week eight: WFL

James Robison

Carlos Whittaker

Studio Discussion:

JAMES: I'm really -- by the way, I'm not excited that Betty is not here. It just happened that I had two guests available that were here and I was like I've got to talk to these guys. This is Carlos Whittaker, *Re-disconnected*. Do you know what? He doesn't even have a title of a ministry even though he was a musician in Andy Stanley's church; he's the son of Charles Stanley, probably now more famous than his daddy.

But Carlos just found himself being led by God in a very supernatural way. One thing that happened to him was he was literally separated from, I don't want to use the word *divorced* but he was separated from the phone and the tech world beginning to control his world. I'll let him tell us about it.

Carlos Whittaker has a book called *Re-disconnected*. Okay, Carlos, let's just cut to the chase. What do you mean by *Re-disconnected*?

CARLOS: Well, let's look at this. Disconnected is what a lot of people said, "Oh, you weren't on your phone for eight weeks? You must have been disconnected." I thought I guess that was true but do you know what? Actually, I feel like I got reconnected with God. That's why I scratched out the *dis* and it says, *Reconnected* on there. So it is a little play on words.

JAMES: So the "connected" is far more important than the "dis." But if the "dis" hadn't happened the "re" might not have happened.

CARLOS: Oh, now you're -- this is why you're so good at your job. That's so good! It is true.

JAMES: I'm not a tech person. I'm the lowest-level tech person on the planet. I have to call somebody to help me with anything connected with technical. I had to ask some of my staff a while ago how to hang up my iPhone. Can you believe that? What's with this?

I'm not a tech person. But I do live let's say in a tech world because I do use the iPhone. Thank God! It's a lot easier to use than a lot of other ways we had to go. But I can easily see how distracted people become by the tech world and by the phone. Was the phone in some ways just consuming your time?

CARLOS: It absolutely was. One of the things that you've taught many of us your entire career in ministry is how to hear the voice of God. I would say that you are a conduit of that. And I would say that my ability to hear the voice of God was getting muted and muted and muted. The one correlation I could find was that the more time I was looking at my phone, the harder it was to hear the voice of God.

So I started to think, I wonder what my actual screen time is? Now as a 51-year-old man who runs a Solarpreneur company, I'm on my phone a lot. I realized I was on my phone seven and a half hours a day; that's how long I was on my phone.

Now, before the rest of your viewing audience judges me, the average American is on their phone six hours a day. James, I did the math. Seven hours a day is 49 hours a week; that's two entire cycles of the sun, I was looking at my phone. That equals 100 days a year, so three months a year. If I live to be your glorious age of 81 years old, I will lose 12 years of my life looking at my phone.

That was the moment of definition for me. I said, Lord, I don't know what I was created to do but I know it wasn't this. What can I do? So I decided to experiment. The experiment was could I live for two months, seven and a half weeks, and never look at a single screen? So I didn't look at an iPhone, an Apple watch, a TV, a laptop, or an iPad; I never consumed any information...

JAMES: How did you let everybody know you weren't dead?

CARLOS: That's a great question! So I moved to a monastery for the first half of it, a Benedictine monastery. And then I moved to an Amish farm for the second half of it. My wife would have to call me on a pay phone like it was 1985. I'd walk to a pay phone at 3:00 every other day and I was like and I'd wait for it to ring, and my wife would call me. And so --

JAMES: The Amish didn't have any phones.

CARLOS: The Amish didn't have any phones so she just had to wait until I was done there.

So the kicker is I wanted to not only know what happened in my soul, I think a lot of us would say gosh, maybe these devices are muting the voice of God in our soul, but I wanted to see what it was doing in my brain. So I went and got my brain scanned by a neuroscientist before and after this experiment.

Yes, I lived with monks, I lived with Amish farmers, and then I lived with my family for a few weeks without a device as well, and got my brain scanned. Let me tell you about the brain scan first, and then I can get into some of the lessons that I learned. When I got my brain scanned before, when I was on my phone seven hours a day, my cognitive memory score -- so my father has dementia. I care for my father, along with my mother, every day so I see the effects of what dementia has on somebody. I just try to do everything I can. Like what can I do in my life in what I eat and how I exercise and things so this may not happen to me.

I was in the 50th percentile of memory for men in America before this experiment. When I finished and did not look at a phone for seven and a half weeks, when I got my brain rescanned and did my cognitive memory score, my brain was at the 99th percentile of memory for men in America. Only one percent of men had a better memory than me.

I thought to myself, these are not smartphones, they're dumb phones. They're making us dumb. And so it's pretty mind-blowing the effects. The big part of my brain healed about five years in those seven weeks. So just the data, scientifically itself, is proof in the pudding that we need to

spend a little less time.

So I spent those seven weeks with the monks and the Amish and I had an incredible time. And lots of great lessons from the monks, lots of great lessons from the Amish.

JAMES: Did they act like they learned anything from you?

CARLOS: They did! [Laughing]

JAMES: I'm serious.

CARLOS: No, absolutely they did.

JAMES: What did they think about you telling them what you had separated yourself from?

CARLOS: Oh, gosh! I love that question because the monks, you'd never know it, but monks have phones. So when I'm sitting there with Father Francis in his study and he has all these books around him and he is in this big brown robe with this big black belt and I'm talking about life in God, I'll never forget I'm sharing my deepest heartaches and his phone goes [bzz bzz] on his desk right in front of him. I thought, did this monk just leave this conversation?

He picked up his phone and said, "I'm sorry, Carlos." He's like, "Hold on, it's my brother." He types and puts it back down. I was like, this is actually what I'm trying to get. He goes, "Oh, Carlos, I'm so sorry. Maybe I need to read your book when you're done writing it." Because even monks, even the Amish were all going through this season of life where technology might just get in the way of us hearing the voice of God and being present with other people. So yeah, they learned a lot from me as well.

JAMES: Have you felt in your own spiritual life what has come to you as a very significant difference?

CARLOS: Oh, my goodness! It's a gigantic difference. Let me tell you this. One of the first things I learned when I was with the monks was the difference in who I was before and who I was after, is I think God created us with a certain capacity to know what we know. But these devices have given us the ability to, I honestly believe, know more than God ever intended us to know. I don't think we were supposed to know every answer to everything in the universe. But Google, I call it "the wonder killer."

Do you remember those days when people used to say, "Well, I wonder what happened in 1934?" And you'd just have to *wonder*. Well, now, people don't wonder anymore. What happens? They pick it up and they find the answer. So something I've done that I've started to do with all my friends is if we're at a dinner party or something and someone says, "I wonder," if someone picks up their phone I say, "Nope! Put it down. We're just going to wonder. We're just going to sit here and sit in the beauty of who God created us to be and wonder."

So there are all these practices, James, that I've been able to reconnect with. The practice of savoring, of silence. "Be still and know that I am God." Well, I was not being still before I went to the monastery or the Amish. I was moving at 100 miles an hour. But I looked at the ministry of Jesus, and Jesus and his disciples walked everywhere. They didn't get in a car. It doesn't say they were riding horses. Maybe they were, I don't think so. So when a human being walks, they walk at three miles an hour. I thought Jesus's ministry was three miles an hour. How fast is my ministry going? Oh my goodness! Maybe if I'm moving at 100 miles an hour and Jesus moved at three miles an hour, now who is following who?

So I realized that I've got to slow down. I can still do great things with -- you do great things with television and all these amazing things, but I think we have to purposely move at God's speed to truly follow Jesus.

JAMES: All right. What are some of the first things that you saw happening positively in your own life?

CARLOS: Oh, my goodness! I got home and my 16-year-old daughter said, "Dad, Daddy, this is

the purest version of a father I've ever had." Whoo! When she told me that. She said, "You're so present in every single conversation that you have with me." And I was. I had nothing buzzing on me. I had no sounds happening around me. I was completely focused. I was focused on her. My wife said, she even says now, "I miss Amish Carlos." Because I came home and I started fixing things around the house. And I started just being more present even to my family in caring for them.

Some of the things that I initially did when I got home that I think could be helpful for some of your viewers, is I put my phone on a setting called "Do not disturb." It's been on "Do not disturb" for almost two years now and I don't get any notifications anymore. My phone does not tell me when to pick it up. If I pick it up, there are notifications on the screen. I'm like oh, I should call this person back. They called me. But it will never interrupt me in the middle of a conversation.

I bought an alarm clock. Put it next to my bed. Does everybody remember alarm clocks? We used to have these things before the phones. And now, the alarm clock wakes me up in the morning. I don't pick it up and there are not 15 messages from people that I'm swiping through. No. The Lord just wakes me up and I don't look at my phone, and I just have an incredible time with God.

Before I even pick up my phone I make sure that I spend time in the word, I'm spending time praying, and my connection with God has been reconnected in ways that I never thought it would be before.

JAMES: Okay. Have you had people already with just the little bit that you've been sharing, and the people having access to be around you, are you finding them very curious and very excited about it?

CARLOS: Yes! I think we're at a pain point in America right now where everybody is swimming in what I call an ecosystem of rage. Everyone is just -- a lot of anger is happening right now. Most of the time the reason why people are angry, James, is not because of a

conversation they've had with somebody face-to-face. It is because of what they're reading off this seven inches of glass that they pick up in their hand.

What I'm finding is that more and more people are desiring to spend less and less time reading all the news, and constantly bickering with people with their thumbs on a screen. They're desiring this human connection. So I think it is a pain point in America right now where I think it is very important to understand the current cultural context, to understand what's happening in politics, policies, all these things are very important, but I think we spend too much time swimming in it.

What it does is it sets us up to be in a space of constantly being frustrated and mad about things. When I think the Lord wants us to see the beauty that's all around us that we're missing because we're just walking around looking at our phones.

JAMES: I was telling you before we came out here that I do hear God clearly. Louder than out loud. What I heard him just say while you were talking about what's going on, "They're being manipulated." They're being manipulated by others but they're also being manipulated primarily by the deceiver, and the distractor, and that's perhaps what's happening.

So the book is out now and you're telling me it is going quite well.

CARLOS: The book is going really well. It is called *Reconnected*. There is also a documentary that I have based on the book as well. The documentary, people are watching that with their families.

I took a small camera with me on this journey and every single night I would talk to it and kind of pour out my thoughts a little bit. So I think the documentary, the book, it's really helpful not only for individuals to help with their screen time but for families as well.

People are saying that this rising generation behind us, they're just addicted to their phones. They're addicted to their phones. The one caveat I would add there is I don't think people are

addicted to their phones. I liken the phone to a needle. The phone isn't the drug, it is just the needle. What is it that the needle is administering to you that you're addicted to? That, I think is where the deceiver can come in. It is always a lie that you believe about yourself, which is why you're looking at it so much trying to medicate whatever that lie is.

JAMES: Can't another form of unhealthy distraction or attraction also be the television?

CARLOS: Absolutely! Absolutely! The television can just numb us. It can get us to a place where I don't want to face reality. I'm just going to watch this show that is going to take me somewhere else. I think it's okay. We all love different television shows. We love to be entertained. But when it becomes, and I think you can just ask yourself, is this medicating something, a lie that I believe about myself? Television can become a distraction.

The phones and screens, that's just like this current day and age, our needle. There was an article that came out in the New York Times in 1918 where it was on the front page and it said that the kaleidoscope is going to be the downfall of mankind. Kids were walking around New York City looking at these kaleidoscopes and walking into stop signs, stepping into the street. They were addicted to the kaleidoscope.

JAMES: Hard to believe when you have such a kaleidoscope today.

CARLOS: Exactly! So this is just our current kaleidoscope. There will be something else in 100 years. We just have to maintain our connection to the voice of God.

JAMES: If they want to watch you, see your website, say what they go to.

CARLOS: [www.CarlosWhittaker with two T's .com](http://www.CarlosWhittaker.com). The book is there, the documentary is there, and all my ministry is there.

JAMES: And if they go to the book, what do you think and pray they'll come away with?

CARLOS: Yes. I hope that they pick this book up, they read the book, and I honestly believe that you're going to realize that the phone isn't the problem. It's not that screens are bad, it is what is beautiful on the other side of the phone. I think they're going to fall in love with wondering, noticing, savoring, getting lost, and finding their way. All these uniquely human experiences that the screens have just taken away from how we're living day-to-day. I think they're just going to fall back in love with living again.

JAMES: Are you having people, now that you've been doing it long enough, to hear back and see the outcome? Are you having expressions of real gratitude? Like I came alive in some way in a very unique and meaningful way? A way important to God?

CARLOS: Yes! Yes! I'm seeing people sending messages every single day going, "Carlos, not only can I hear the voice of God louder, but my kids are getting more of me." If you just cut two hours a day of your screen time, you'll gain a month back of your life a year. That's how important. People aren't living 12 months a year anymore. They're living like ten months a year. I'm like if you just implement some of the practices that the Amish and the monks taught me, you can live your entire life again.

JAMES: Okay, let me just pause. I want to go directly to you. This is really important. I want to pray. Father, unhealthy attractions, unhealthy distractions are damaging, and deadly, sometimes. Father, free us from those distractions. Let us be captivated by you. Turn off many of the things that have truly damaged us with distraction. And bless Carlos, and bless all who read the book.

I hope you've heard God today because God is talking to him and through him. I'm excited about it. I hope you get this.

You know Carlos, our viewers love to help the overlooked. They love to help the least of these. I always tell my viewers, if you want to know who the Christians are, just remember this, Jesus said, "The ones who feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, care for the suffering, visit those in prison," and he said, "They're ministering to me, as well as to the least of these." But the

significance, "These are my sheep." Do you want to know who his sheep are? They notice the unnoticed, the overlooked, those who appear to be unloved, and they pour out the love of God.

One of the things our viewers tell us is there is not one thing we do to help the overlooked that gives us more excitement than giving clean water to those who have never had clean water, and who are seeing their children die young. Oftentimes, as two- and three-years-old, always in most instances below five. We give them the miracle of life. When I say we, you -- we who notice the overlooked and the least of these. Please listen. Watch, listen, and know you are the needed miracle. You are the miracle.

Transition Roll-in:

ANNOUNCER: *What do you see in this scene captured in a remote area of Africa? There is the obvious. Children collecting and drinking water that does not look clean. Why would they drink that water if they can see it is not clean? If you were to ask them, they would tell you, they have no other choice. This is the only water source they have access to.*

They're temporarily winning the battle against thirst, dehydration, and ultimately, death. But it is an unending struggle that comes with a price. Unfortunately, as they take this unsafe water home, it oftentimes causes sickness and in more severe cases even death from the effects of a waterborne illness.

This cycle of misery caused by unclean water does not have to follow these children into adulthood. We can break that cycle by providing them and their families with a water well in their village.

JOHN: So while we were here in a village evaluating the severe drought that's come to Ganda, Angola, we found one of the water wells that we drilled more than ten years ago. I want you to see just how pure the water is. I put this in the sunlight yesterday and could not tell the difference. I've told you many times before that I'm completely comfortable drinking the water that we provide through our water wells. And it is true. [Drinking water.]

Nothing like life. We need your help to bring Water for LIFE to a village like this so that we can assure that their children will not suffer from waterborne illness anymore.

Studio Appeal:

JAMES: You know, so many times, mothers and the ones old enough to carry water, they'll walk five kilometers, 10 kilometers to get water sometimes daily, but many times a week. But what they're bringing back is water they have to have just to live another day. But they're also bringing back germs and disease. They watch their loved ones and their children, too often, die from a very horrible, terribly painful disease, and it breaks their hearts.

So many have lost at least one child, many have lost as many as three or four. But when you give them a well, you just give them new life. You've given them hope. You've given them joy. You've given them an opportunity. We always tell them through the voices of the missionaries who've planted their lives in the midst of suffering and pain to reveal life, to share life. And in the form of water, it is so transforming.

Do you realize that we win virtually everyone who is touched by the people in that village or in that area, we win them to Christ? I mean they have a conversion experience because love is transforming.

When we talk about giving away the beautiful bronze, this is "The Lion of Judah" and the cross. "The Lion of Judah" was my favorite bronze that we ever gave away because the power of the Lion of Judah is the cross. I think this is beautiful! We want to ask you, could you help us drill a well? Could you possibly drill a well? It is \$4800. Could you do that? Many people say they live every year to have that joy. They make that a goal. But then many people say, "James, I can't do that but I'll give \$1200 and pray three join me." And so often they do. Or "I give \$2400 and pray another joins me."

Well, we're sending "The Lion of Judah," the beautiful bronze to everyone who will give at least

\$1200 toward a water well. Could you do that? But do you know where most of the support comes from? \$48 will give ten people water the rest of their lives. Did you hear what I said? \$48! It's hard to go out and eat with a small family at a very inexpensive restaurant for that price. Can't hardly do it. Would you give that? \$144 will give 30 people water the rest of their lives. There is a level at which you can reach out and give water to someone Jesus gave his life for.

Would you go get your bank card right now and use it like a check, please? Go get it. Dial the number or go online and use that bank card like a check. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE*. But please, call us and tell us you're putting it in the mail. Because if we're going to be able to drill the 350 wells, we've got to know it's coming. You will provide the wells. Please do it now.

Thank you so much for sharing God's love in demonstration. Thank you!

2025 WFL Cause spot:

Announcer: Every day, thousands of lives are lost to waterborne disease, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean, life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it's too late.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you Dr. Don Colbert's new book Spiritual Health Zone. Discover the key to living in divine health as you find a roadmap to adding joy, peace, and years to your life.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "He Restores My Soul" candle set. This decorative candle and match set will inspire you to remember the restoring presence of Jesus, the true light of the world.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people for a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well, and request our new bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah" inspired by Revelation 5:5.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

Studio goodbye:

JAMES: I want to thank you because I believe you're going to help. Dr. Colbert's, the Health Zone, boy, this is the *Spiritual Health Zone*, not just physical. But it's really good!

The beautiful, it's a kind of worship candle, is what it is. But we'll also send you Carlos's book, *Reconnected*. I just feel like you'd like to have it. You help us in any way you can to drill those wells, and if you want the book, you can go online and get it, or you can go to the bookstore and get it. Or you can give to give a drink of water and we'll gladly send it to you.

Carlos, I believe people are going to be visiting your website and reading your book. I just pray God continues to pour his blessings out on you and through you, and then through millions of people because of you who share. Thank you for being with us. God bless you. Thanks for watching. Thanks for sharing life.