

Disrupt Yourself

Podcast

EPISODE 239: JOHN TESH

Hi, it's Whitney, and I have a favor to ask. We are seeking to better tailor our podcast to meet your needs, so we're conducting a quick audience survey, the first time ever actually, a link to the survey, which takes less than a minute, is in the show notes and as a small gesture of appreciation. When you complete it, you'll get a free PDF listing 10 podcasts that can help with career changes. Thanks so much. And onto the show.

On today's show: "If I hadn't had that toughness in my life, I would have been home eating animal crackers for most. I mean, I wouldn't have tried to break out of his toughness. You can go either way, right? You can become a hopeless alcoholic, I guess. Or you could say, I want to get on the other side of this."

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we provide strategies and advice on how to climb the S-Curve of learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. Our guest today probably needs no introduction, but we'll give him one anyway. John Tesh is a veteran broadcaster, sports commentator, TV host, radio voice, and a touring musician. And even if you don't know his face and voice, you certainly know his musical compositions, many of which have been part of sports media for decades. John hosted Entertainment Tonight for a decade alongside Mary Hart and has a nationally syndicated radio show where he shares life lessons across 355 stations that reach eight million years. He also plays sold-out concerts around the world. That is a lot of S-Curves.

What you may not know is that John has survived cancer, twice. Both were terrifying. One was almost a death sentence, but he survived thanks to modern medicine, also because he made a choice to fight against extraordinary odds. John has written a memoir called Relentless, Unleashing a Life of Purpose, Grit, and Faith. I was thrilled to sit down with him and discuss his career, diagnoses, struggles, and the formative experiences that drove him.

Whitney Johnson: John, I am so excited to be talking to you, and I would love for you to start by sharing a few of your formative experiences.

John Tesh: I'm a Long Island boy who finished in the middle of my class, and so you're going to have to explain what the heck formative experience is, and then I'll take it from there.

Whitney Johnson: All right, so early experiences that left a mark on you. How's that?

John Tesh: Here we go. Ok. All right. Thank you. It was being raised by tough parents. I was born in 1952. My dad was a World War II veteran, really a hero in the Battle of Okinawa. He was the guy with the headsets on who called in the airstrikes on the kamikaze pilots. And also the Japanese zeros were trying to kill him and everybody in the in the fleets, a bloody horrible battle. And he came back and he had, I'm sure he had PTSD before we invented PTSD. And so he was, you know, he was it was like, you know, did his own tax returns, cut his own yard, planted his own garden. When the when the missile crisis came, he dug us a bomb shelter underneath the house, which is great, by the way, when you're a teenager, a great place to hide and then built our basement and all the rest of that stuff. And he was just, he did. My parents didn't know where our school was. You know, it was, you know, I had to I had to draw them a map for a parent-teacher that there was no helicopter parenting or anything. It was get out there and do something. And then when the streetlights come on at night, you come home, all right. And if you're not home by the streetlights, then you go outside in the back. You cut a little branch off the tree and you bend over and I'm going to I'm going to hit you with that branch and then you won't do it again.

John Tesh: We'll just call it a switch because they were from North Carolina. But that combined with the fact that especially in junior high and high school, well in junior high and elementary school, I was a scrawny kid. I mean, I'm I'm six foot six. I weigh 220 now and in junior high, and I think I went through

this in the book as well. I was six six and junior high jeans didn't fit me. Shoes didn't fit me and I was one hundred and fifty-two pounds, so I was very available on Sadie Hawkins Day. If anybody remembers Sadie Hawkins Day, the only guy in school. So what happened was, you know, there are books that are written about this sort of the gift of imperfection, right? So I spent a lot of time in my basement with an eight-millimeter movie camera, a reel-to-reel tape recorder. For some reason, my dad had that and an upright piano. I just sort of naturally tried to emulate the Dave Clark five Band and the Beatles. And later, you know, the Doors, because I had nobody, was paying attention to me in all this time on my hands. I was always trying to get out of that basement and get noticed. And so if you look at that metaphor and overlay that look at my life through that lens, I think you can understand the decisions that I've made.

Whitney Johnson: Hmm. Get out of the basement and get noticed.

John Tesh: Getting noticed meant having a trophy to bring my dad, who was really not, you know, if you've got a B, it was worse to B+. I mean, people who are my age and they understand that. But there was no like, Hey, here's a trophy. You participated. There was never there is never that, you know.

Whitney Johnson: It sounds like your dad was really strict. And reading your book, your mom was a bit gentler. And, a war hero, very serious about you accomplishing things, and I remember in the book you talked briefly about for him, music wasn't really accomplishing something. And so how did that play out?

John Tesh: First of all, everybody in the 1960s was in a garage band. I mean, if you weren't in the garage band, you were in a theater group. So I was in a garage band. It was called the Best of Both Worlds. It was a blood, sweat and tears cover bands. I played trumpet and also Hammond organ in that. But that was always seen by my dad, not as a vocation, but as a hobby. I guess I should have known that early on when he I mean, he came to some of my recitals and things like that, but it was just sort of he always had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth and a glass of a highball glass of scotch. You know, he'd walk by us in the garage playing, Hold On I'm Coming by Sam and Dave, he just sort of shake his head and move on. And so when it came time to go on those college trips, everybody loves, you know where you just get your friends and you get in the car and you go across the country and you and you visit Donnie Holman's college and you visit Paul Abbott's college and visit, you know, Eric Garnett's college and you get the T-shirts and everything. And all the colleges that I picked were all performing arts schools, including Interlochen in Michigan, and I had actually had a scholarship partial scholarship to go to, to go to Kansas, to play brass instruments.

John Tesh: I was also in the marching band. I was in the marching band because I couldn't be a football player because I would break. I was so skinny so I couldn't get insured. But when I mentioned this to my dad that I was going on the trip, he sort of laughed and he said, Well, you know, Johnny, I said, I have a surprise for you, and I said, Well, what's that? He said, Well, I've enrolled you in North Carolina State University, which to me was a whole world, a universe away in Raleigh, North Carolina, in textile chemistry. And when you finish that, when you come out, I'll have a job waiting for you. My dad worked his way up in the Heinz organization. He was vice president of the underwear division of Heinz. So he wanted me to follow in the footsteps of, to quote Young Frankenstein, of being in the underwear making underwear. And so I was like, Oh, you guys? Yeah, you can. You can be in a band all you want, but that's what you're going to do. In fact, I applied early admission for you, and so I was in North Carolina State, early admission and then my parents were even though they aren't Long Island, they're pretty frugal. And my dad was able to transfer and my mom and dad moved back to North Carolina, where they were from.

John Tesh: And so we ended up getting in-state tuition, which was like four hundred dollars a year or something like that. And I'm like, Whoa, wait a second. What? What just happened? But he was a powerful guy, and you know, I would always look, you referenced this earlier, but I always looked at my mom like mom, you know? And but she would not. Betty Friedan wrote a book that I mentioned in my

book, which is called *The Feminine Mystique*, and it's a really interesting book. If you want to go back and look at it, you probably have read it. You go back and look at history. Is that back in those days? 1950s, early sixties in the suburbs of America and the suburbs of New York, right out of New York City, you know, twenty minutes on the Long Island Railroad, we're really just being formed. And what happened was women who got married. It was instantly assumed by everybody, not just the family, that they would quit their job and raise the family. Now my mom was a ranked tennis player and was also a surgical nurse, and she quit her job as a nurse and raised us, us kids. And Betty Friedan described a woman like my mom as quote-unquote being buried alive in the suburbs. And I get chills every time I say that because it helps me understand now why she made the decisions that she did.

John Tesh: She didn't go against my dad. If my dad had been drinking one night, she didn't suggest that he go to a mental institution, which was popular back then. And then she hid all of this stuff from all of her friends, including trying to do it for me as well. You know, when there was all the arguing and when my dad was just really hard on my sisters. When I first started laying this out for HarperCollins, the publisher of the book they gave, they gave a, you know, a rundown of what they wanted the promo and I said and lived in an abusive household. John, did you know I'm like, Whoa, whoa. Whoa, wait. Well, what you describe as an abusive household. I said, No, no, no. It was a confused household. My dad was doing his best. My mom was doing her best. They were living in a society that dictated what they should be doing at the time. But if I hadn't had it and my dad proved this later in my life, if I hadn't had that toughness in my life, I would have been home eating animal crackers for most of my. I mean, I wouldn't have tried to break out of his toughness. So you can go either way, right? You can. You can become a hopeless alcoholic, I guess. Or you could say I might get on the other side of this.

Whitney Johnson: In your book, you reference Angela Duckworth's grit, and one of the things that I thought of as you were talking, having read that book, which is terrific, is that she talks about her parents and how one of her parents was really tough. And one of her parents was very gentle and. As I hear you talk, it makes me think there's interesting alchemy in there of one parent who's like, We're going to do it like this, the other ones like, No, you can do it, you'll figure it out kind of thing. And putting those two together helped make you who you are and all that grit that you've needed throughout your career. It's fascinating.

John Tesh: Yeah, I would agree. I would say amen to that. I think you're absolutely right. And my mom, she would never even speak against my dad. To me, it wouldn't be like, Hey, don't do this, don't do that. It was. But she showed love the way a lot of parents show love, where she would always make sure that if I came home late for soccer practice, it was easier to get insured to be a soccer player. If I can't play soccer practice, she she wouldn't just have cold food waiting for me. She would make a meal for me, that kind of thing. The love of of her husband was, you know, she tried to hide his inequities and they were deep. The alchemy was shown in a different way, you know, but I felt the love. But my sisters and I both and we've talked about this before, like, why didn't you stand up to him? But she couldn't.

Whitney Johnson: You alluded to Brene Brown and give some imperfection. And what I love about is the gifts that come to us because of our own imperfection, but also the gifts that come to us because of the imperfection of our parents and and the people that came before us and the gifts that come along. All right. So let's talk a little bit about another formative experience or an experience that made a mark on your life. You're now at North Carolina State and you meet a fellow by the name of Steve Thomas, and he was a really important figure in your life. Talk about him for just a moment.

John Tesh: Steve was on the same floor as I was in the dormitory room at North Carolina State. And you know, you're just sort of trying to find your way through. And Steve had had a scholarship, a full scholarship as a soccer player, a defender in North Carolina State, which is a Division One school. So you're talking about a big school. He was sort of a big man on big man on the floor of our of our our dorm

room. And we became friends because he was from New Jersey and was from New York. And we bonded over that and we would talk late at night and we would go on double dates and stuff like that. And at one point, Steve said, Hey, why don't you try out? I was having a hard time in school in textile chemistry, as I mentioned earlier, and I was like, I was hovering around like a 2.1 at that point, grade point average.

Whitney Johnson: Well, because you didn't you didn't want to be there, right? I mean, you did not want to be at this college and majoring in what you were majoring in.

John Tesh: Right? Yeah, I was. I mean, talk about being buried alive. Yeah, I was basically, I mean, it was, you know, I wanted to be studying music theory and performance. And Steve said, Hey, you played for a really good soccer team. I want you to try out for the NC State team and I'm like, Are you out of your mind? And he goes, Well, no, come on, I'll introduce you. I mean, you played fullback defender in Garden City. Why don't you come try out for the team? So, Steve, I'm not doing this. We'll just come and watch. And so I came and watched practice, and he was the captain of the team. Steve was and I've used a guy who would like run two miles around the field before they even started practice. I'm looking at this team going, Oh my gosh, this is crazy, you know? And so in the middle of all this, he brings me over to coach Max Rhodes and says, Hey, this is this is John Tesh from from back on Long Island. He was on a great soccer team at Garden City High School, and he's a terrific defender. You should give him a tryout and tryouts, you know, and the And Max loved Steve, so he said, Yeah, OK, fine. And he looks down at my shoes and he sees these white sneakers. He goes, he goes, Do you have any cleats? And I said, No, sir, I'm in this thing. I'm like, Wait, I didn't. I'm not trying out, you know? And he goes, Go see Chester inside and get a pair of cleats and some some shorts and a shirt and your size.

John Tesh: And after after practice, we'll go through some stuff and I'm like, What in the heck is just happened? And so I did. You know, they started firing balls at me at the at the goal, and I was doing a pretty good job, you know? And so they said, you know, come to practice. And so here I am. All of a sudden I'm like, Oh my gosh, I'm not studying chemistry right now, you know, or physics or making underwear. And it was just because Steve, I mean, Steve risked his reputation by saying, Come on, you know, just because you wanted to play soccer with me, you know? And I got to tell you something. I went nuts. I mean, I was Steve, and I ended up at the same fraternity later. But but and I just talked to him yesterday. We say we've been friends forever. And there was another guy that played on the team, Mark Templeton, who was this amazing CEO. And with three of us, they stayed in touch ever since 1970. It's about every hour of the day. If I wasn't practicing piano in one of the practice rooms, I was on that soccer field. I mean, I kick the soccer ball, you know, even as a kid, I kick the soccer ball against a wall. I pretend, what's this player was that player? Steve would work with me and everything. And then, you know, the the the first year of that team on a Division One NC State team, we had a banquet and I got some playing time against the bad teams.

John Tesh: But during the during the end of your banquet, I was presented with the, with the most improved player trophy. I mean, that was like what? I didn't have a scholarship or anything, but I was a walk-on at NC State, on the on the soccer team, and nobody could take that away from me and And. And it was it was just it was an amazing gift that Steve gave me in my life. And then he gave me one more, which changed my life forever. And that was when he knew that that my grade point average was really horrible and that I was probably wasn't going to be able to stay on the soccer team. Because if you're if you hover under 2.0 for a while, you can't play varsity ball at a school that size. And so he said, Listen, I found this course and it's an easy A. And they had my attention, right? And so I said, What is it? He goes television and radio 101. And we took that course together. It was worth three credits and a laugh. So it was four credits and I got bit by the bug. We were making TV shows and radio shows, and we were editing film with razor blades and stuff, and I just I stopped. Going all the rest of my classes and just spend all my time at the campus radio station, and that's when my life flipped forever.

Whitney Johnson: You said you're still friends with him when you tell him what that meant to you, of him just basically bringing you along as a friend? What does he say? What's his reaction to that?

John Tesh: He said I really didn't do anything Tesh, you had it all inside you. He said I just I saw something and thought I wanted to hang out with you. You know, mean, that was really it, you know, I wanted to be. It was just pure friendship. And when I was going through all of my cancer battles, you know, what happens, what happens when you're when you have a terminal diagnosis, which really is what was what mine was in 2015? Some people run for the hills, you know, and no condemnation. But even family members, they don't know how to deal with it, right? And Steve would text me, and he lives all the way on the other coast from Los Angeles, and he would text me every day. He and Mark Templeton both and just checking on me. These were my, these are my buddies. You know, I don't I don't really have that many friends. Believe it or not, I mean, my wife and I are so close that I've sort of blocked out even a room for any close friends other than people that I grew up with like that grew through horrible times because it was a time when I was homeless as well. But but when I wrote about him in the book, he was touched. He was definitely because he's a writer.

Whitney Johnson: So what's Mark Templeton, the CEO of?

John Tesh: He's the CEO was the CEO of Citrix Systems. He just retired and now he's having grandkids. But we talk, we talk on Zoom And, and the two of them would plan Zoom calls when I was sick, you know, and they just weren't afraid of it. And like I said, there's and that's, you know, listen, those of you who are listening to the two of us right now who have a friend who is sick and there's so many people who are sick right now for whatever reason is, you know, don't. This is the number one thing not to do if you want to take it from somebody who has been through it. Don't text somebody or call somebody. Let me know if there's anything I can do. Do not say that ever again, because once you've just done this, you've given me a job. I have to find something for you to do. I have to find if it's going to make me guilty, I got to find it. If you can do it, don't check that box. Just do it.

Whitney Johnson: Ok, we're going to come back to the cancer in a minute, although you're not going to go back to cancer, but we're going to come back to the discussion of cancer in just a minute because you just drop this little bomb in here that we cannot let pass by. And I think we can tie two of these pieces together becoming homeless and how you got your first radio job. So if you want to tie those two stories together.

John Tesh: Sure and boy, are they tied together? Yeah. What happened when I when I took the radio TV job with Steve Thomas, I got bit by that bug. I was, I was, you know what it was again, through the lens of me being in the basement with an eight-millimeter camera and a reel-to-reel tape recorder and Mr. Microphone. And the other thing I left out was that when I was really young, I got it from my uncle, Uncle Charlie. I got a heath kit radio and for people old enough to remember it was a toy, right? But it was a radio broadcasting radio, and I think I think the FCC is like condemned them now. But it comes with the diodes and the and the, you know, the resistors and all the rest of the stuff. And you actually in a plastic container, you build a radio station with an antenna on it and then it has a microphone. And when you're done with your heath kit, it wasn't just right. It was you can build anything and build a an amplifier for your turntable. But when it was done, you could broadcast your own radio show into your dad's car if it was in the driveway. And and, you know, back in the day when there weren't so many radio stations, there was a space between the big ones, whether it's NBC and ABC or whatever it was like, the space between them sounded like this, you know? But if you tuned your if you tuned your radio to that, to that fuzz and then dial in your your heath kit radio, you had a radio station in your dad's car.

Whitney Johnson: That must have been heady as a kid.

John Tesh: It was amazing. It was amazing, you know? And I thought about that because ultimately I went on to announce the Olympic Games. You know, two of those things, you know, years and years later, people are saying, you know, how did you learn how to be an announcer? I said, I just I broadcast into my dad's car. But anyway, so I got bit by that bug, and then I realized that I needed to to change my major to television radio, to communications. They didn't have a television radio major, but it was communication. And so I went around to all my professors. When you mentioned drop ad card, I don't even know if they still exist. But when when you mentioned drop ad card to people who are of of my age, they understand what you're talking about. And so I went around to all my professors and said, This is my passion. This is my mission. This is my purpose. Is communications. I know we're past the drop ad date, but can you please sign my drop bad card? And they were like, Yeah, of course, we want you out of this course anyway. You're terrible. You are bringing down my average. But I got my statistics professor. I can't find this guy. I need to find him to thank him, but I got the my statistics professor and he said, No, no, no, no. We're past the drop ad thing and you have a C-plus. Plus you can probably get a B. You should try harder. I'm not signing this card. And I said, Please everybody else has signed it. He said, No, I'm not doing it. I said, I'm not going be able to change my major for another year.

John Tesh: And he's like, nope, I'm not doing it. He held the line right by the book guy. So I went back to my fraternity house with Steve and everybody else, and I told him a story. And, you know, I won't mention any names, but they were. There were 30 brothers who were like, What are you? What? This guy is crazy. I try. I just drop for classes today and sign my signed his professor's name to it. Just sign his name to the card. He's never going to check. They never check. The other guy said, Oh, I do this all the time, you know? And when I went back to these guys later, they were like, No, we've never done that. So anyway, I signed my professor's. I may have had a beer I don't remember, but I signed my professor's name to the drop add card, turned them all in, and sure enough, everything went great. I was able to change my major, you know, all the courses on my next report card. They were all dropped and I'm at home with my parents, you know, for the summer. And it was time for my report card to come and I was very excited, you know, and what happened was the report card didn't come. It was very late. But a letter came from the chancellor of North Carolina State University. And the letter my father called me into his office with the oak wood table and said, Johnny, sit down. And I said, I think I'll stand. Said he said, OK, let me just read you this letter.

John Tesh: He read me a letter from the chancellor of North Carolina State that basically said I had broken the honor code at NC State by forging a professor's signature that I was being suspended indefinitely from NC State and it an f for the course. And I thought, Oh, well, the cat's cat's out of the bag here. And the blood was draining, but it got worse where my father just said, Listen, you have shamed me, you have shamed your mother, you've shamed her church group and her bridge. He had a whole list and you have. This actually happened. You've shamed the entire underwear division at Hanes. My, my little crazy mind. My dark mind is going, how bad do I have to be to shame and underwear department? You know, but I didn't mention that. And he said, and he said these words, he said. He said You're no longer welcome in this house. In my house, I'm sorry, you're no longer welcome in my house. And he said, I got to get your belongings. I had a Volkswagen said, get in the car and you can go wherever you want, but you can't live here. And my mom was doing the, you know, they buried alive thing, the feminine mystique. I think she was by him and she was sort of sort of like, you know, he couldn't see her, but she was like making those faces that you can't see right now. But but it was, you know, I'd done nothing I could do. Basically, it was a message. But when I got in my car the next morning, it took me a while to pack my Jimi Hendrix records up.

John Tesh: When I got in my car the next morning, there was a whole. I mean, it must have been three pounds of fudge that she had made and put on the passenger seat. You probably think I needed that for energy. Thanks a lot. It's like two pounds of fudge, and I didn't know anything better than I just I drove back to North Carolina State, which is about three hours away from where my parents' home was at that

point. And I had my Boy Scout pup tent. I pulled up at a park and I had a Coleman lantern and I I bed down for the night. I said, Well, I'm going to tough this out and maybe I'll figure something out. But it was really the wrong place to be because here I was in a in a pup tent and I was pumping gas at college. So it was so bad to try and support myself. But everybody was pulling up to get their car filled up that I'd gone to college with, you know, so I had just it was it was brutal. It was like self-immolation or something like that because, oh, what happened to you? You know, my girlfriend broke up with me. It was just I was I was a pariah, you know? And so this went on for months and months, and I was just I went to the library every now and then trying to find books that I could read that would lift me up. And I found some good ones, mostly biographies, but I finally just felt sorry.

Whitney Johnson: Was there a biography in particular?

John Tesh: Well, there was a biography that I reread my first biography that I ever I ever checked out of the library at Garden City Junior High School was the biography of Houdini. Believe it or not, I don't know why, but what better biography to reread than a guy who was escaping from stuff. And so I reread that. I think there was also a Ben Franklin letters of of of Ben Franklin. Eventually, I can't remember when this happened, but I did. One of my favorite books to this day is Victor Frankel's A Man's Search for Meaning. And I just thought I got to do something I have to get. I was praying the Lord's Prayer every night for guidance and I have to do something. So I still had a connection at the campus radio station and I went to my friend who was running the place at the time, the student who was running the place at the time, and I told him what had happened. He said, Man, that's it. That's a bummer. I said, Yeah, it's sort of beyond a bummer at this point. He said he said, Well, what can I do to help? And I said, you can give me the key to the radio lab and let me get in late at night. He goes, You're not a student anymore. And I said, Yeah, right, he goes. That's illegal, and I said it is.

John Tesh: I said, you're my only hope. Mean, all of a sudden I was I was Princess Leia with Obi-Wan Kenobi, and I said, Help me, Bob, you're my only hope, you know? And so he said, OK, but you know, I'm going to put the I'm going to leave the key under the mat. But if you get caught, you don't mention my name and you mentioned that you stole the key. And I was already a criminal. So I said, What the heck? So yeah. So I got in there. I don't know, like three o'clock in the morning, one time I mean, midnight midnight to 3:00 because I had to get out because the cleaning crew was coming in. And in front of me was a reel to reel tape recorder, which I was familiar with, a microphone, which I recognized. There was an upright piano in there, completely out of tune, which I also knew how to deal with. And there was a there was a manual typewriter there and I set about creating a fake radio broadcast because I knew from talking to other people that you can't just get on the radio in Raleigh, North Carolina, you have to have a demo tape. And I hadn't made a dent other than that from just being in that class. I hadn't made a demo tape, so I went in there and with those tools, I created a fake broadcast.

John Tesh: And it was, I mean, I played the NBC theme on the on the out-of-tune piano. I used the typewriter because back in the day there was a teletype that actually was a, you know, was a typewriter that hit keys. You know that I did, you know, I did that turn on and use the microphone in the reel-to-reel tape recorder. And then I imitated all the voices that I had heard on the radio in Raleigh, on a station called WKIX and when their newscast was on. And so it was basically and it was called 20 20 news 20 minutes after the news, 20 minutes before the news on. So I customized it for that station. And you said I did that. Bam, bam, bam. NBC What? And I said This is John Tesh works 20 20 news today. Dr. Henry Kissinger had this to say about the possibility of peace in the Middle East. Let's switch you live now to correspondent Boris Yindi. Now of course Yindi was a correspondent for UPI during the time, we switched your live now to correspondent Boris Yindi with a live report this morning in Cairo today. Dr. Henry Kissinger had this to say about the possibility of peace in the Middle East. I think that there is a possibility of peace in the Middle East. That was Dr. Henry Kissinger on whether or not there's a possibility of peace in the Middle East.

John Tesh: Back to you in the studio, John. Thank you. Correspondent Boris Yindi John Tesh 20-20 News. Let's switch now to sports and then I pull like a pump up on the piano. I gave a couple of scores. The NC State soccer team oh, NC State soccer team today scored and one led by John Tesh. All right. Thank you very much, Bill. We switch you live now to the helicopter traffic report and Jimmy, Jimmy, James, and I with my chest. It was Oh John. Traffic is really heavy on the I-40 today. We've had a couple of really bad crashes and there's a sheriff's office is on the way now, but it looks like they're clearing it out and everything should be fine by about by about two o'clock. Back to you in the studio. Thank you so much. I forgot everybody's name. Thank you so much, Bill. You know John Tesh, WKIX 20 20 news, and then back with the NBC. Bum Bum Bum. And so I had my thing right. This went on forever, by the way. It wasn't just what I did there because it would be too much if I did the whole thing. It's already too much. And so I made a couple of dubs of it, took the reel to reel, showed up at WKIX tried to get a meeting with Scott White's the news director.

John Tesh: And the lady front desk said, No, no, I had hair down on my shoulders, right? And I was I was a homeless person. I said, Can you just please get Scott White this tape? It's my demo tape to be a newscaster here. And she goes, Oh, really? I said, I said, Yeah, I'm homeless right now living. This was this. This was this was it. This was the thing that really sealed it. I'm homeless right now. I got kicked out of school and I'm living in a park in Olmstead Park, and this is my only chance to get out of the text, right? And you know, when you show up at the animal shelter and there's the dog in the back that nobody wants to adopt, that was it. She was like, Oh my gosh, how did that happen? It's a really long story, and I'll tell you about it. When I got hired here, she's like, Oh, it's very funny. I said, No, I'm serious. She goes, OK, OK, OK, I get. I'll get, I'll get on the tape. So about a week later, I left the phone number for for my payphone that was right next to the tent. And about a week later, my phone, my phone rings and I pick it up and I go, hello, and it goes, Is this John Tesh? And I said, yes, and you could hear laughter in the background like it was a conference room or something like that.

John Tesh: And he goes, Hey, where am I calling you now? And I'm like my office? And so he says, Did you make this tape yourself? And I said, Yeah. And he goes, Yeah, it sounds like, are you doing all the voices? And I said, Yeah, everything on this tape. And I said, Yeah, you go. I think I need to meet you. And so we set up a meeting and I want to tell you something. One thing led to another where they gave me a chance on the weekends to I played the religious tapes on Monday mornings at four o'clock in the morning. And I don't even remember if I told this in the book. But I'm going to tell you, because it's it's terrible. And now we're friends. I would play the religious tapes. They had these reel-to-reel tapes because there was a thing. There was a public service requirement from the FCC where you had to play religious tapes in the morning for like three hours on Sunday. So I did that and it was the Billy Graham tape and all the rest of these tapes in their huge giant, reel-to-reel tapes that went on for like two hours. And I was listening to this stuff and it was great, you know, because with great messages and everything.

John Tesh: But I thought, you know, how am I going to get a job as an as an announcer? And so I a couple of times I played razorblade roulette. Again, I was already a criminal, so I just would close my eyes and take the razor blade and make a nick in the tape, like somewhere in like the second hour and about, yeah. So what about like an hour? Forty five? All of a sudden the tape would snap and you'd hear it as a tape rewind on the air. I turn it off and then I would switch on the live microphone that was right there in the studio. Oh my gosh, we've had a technical malfunction. So sorry, we'll get back to Billy Graham again next week. But and I actually have. I've mentioned this to Billy Graham when I interviewed him once and he was like, Oh, I'm just just glad to be of service, John And. And so I did a whole show. I did like another an hour show where I played music and I, I read some of the newscast and everything, so nobody really heard it. I mean, people, I'm sure some people heard, but nobody at the station heard it because they were sleeping. After about three weeks of this, Frank Moorooka, who was a

very scary Italian man, called me into his office and he goes, John John Tesh, right? Because I hadn't even met the general manager of the station.

John Tesh: I go, Yes, sir. And he goes, I know what you're up to. And I said, Sir, and it could have been anything, you know, because I was up to a lot. And I said, he goes, You know what I'm talking about? And I said, Ah, just give me a hint, you know? And he said, Well, you know, the tapes are breaking. For some reason they never broken before, but we have a lot of tapes that are breaking and then you're on the air for an hour. And I said, I said, Yes, sir, I really apologize. I've gone beyond my limits here and I understand if you want to let me go because what? We're barely hiring you now, he said. But I've talked to Scott White and he wants you to do the the news on Sunday evenings and give you a shot because you sound pretty good on the air. And I said, Thank you, sir. He goes fine, but don't ever mention this to anybody, ever. I said, OK, that's how I got my first job. Not everything that has good has happened to me has been at the hands of nefarious circumstances. But yeah, I'm sorry. I talked for so long. It took me a while to get all that out, you

Whitney Johnson: Know, razor blade roulette on the religion channel that gets you the Job,

John Tesh: You always play, but you always pull out the headlines, don't you?

Whitney Johnson: That is hilarious. Ok, and it wasn't in the book, by the way.

John Tesh: So no, because I don't know what these. I don't know what the statute of limitations is on ruining religious tapes, you know? I mean, listen, I'm a God-fearing man, so I don't, you know, I've I've already asked for forgiveness and moved on.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure that the statute of limitations on forgiveness is probably you're probably good.

John Tesh: Ok, thank you.

Whitney Johnson: In our work, we talk about the s curve of learning, which is a model for you to think about what growth looks like. So start at the bottom. You don't know what you're doing. You move into the sweet spot. So like on that radio station, then you get in the sweet spot on the radio station and then you get into mastering. You're really good at something. And can you talk about a time? And I'm thinking of when you were recruited to CBS where you're at the top of an s curve, you're really good at it. You could do it in your sleep, not what. Everybody else is sleeping at four a.m. in the morning, but when you're asleep and you think I've got to do something different. Can you talk about what that looked like?

John Tesh: I didn't figure that out myself. It was figured out for me. So I was about six years into being a correspondent at CBS News. And when you look at that, that happens in your life. At twenty three, I was the youngest correspondent at WCBS TV. In the newsroom was John Stossel. Meredith Vieira was in there. Linda Ellerbee right? Right at the end of my stints. Brian Williams came in, you know, Bill O'Reilly replaced me and then went on to 60 Minutes and everything else that you know about Bill O'Reilly. It was a hotbed of really talented people. And back in those days, you couldn't even get your piece on the air unless you jumped over those people. You know what I mean? I mean, it was only so much time you got paid a stipend, basically, you know, salary for just being there, but you wouldn't get And after a bonus unless you got your piece on the air and then if you got it on the six o'clock and the 11:00 o'clock, then you got paid twice as much, and so you could go from thirty thousand a year to \$200000 a year if you were one of the, you know, back in nineteen seventy-six, if you were one of the top correspondents, And. And so I was the junior guy, you know, and so I was I was hustling and trying to find my place and everything.

John Tesh: And they they did a thing called the the newscaster. Still, my friend Steve Cohen and Ed Joyce, who originally hired me, they came up with thing called the Tesh report, and they wanted me to do it because I was the youngest guy in the team. They wanted me to wear a leather jacket and go and like, just investigate stuff, you know? And before that, I'd been studying. I have been reporting on fires and explosions. I was a great fire and explosives reporter and in New York, in nineteen seventy-six seventy-seven, a lot of that was happening. I was the first reporter to cover what was known as the 44 caliber killer, which became the son of Sam story, which you've seen in the book, which was also a revelation moment for for me of how to deal with people who are going through tragedy. So this tax report thing with me in the leather jacket it was it was that it was at remembering it was at CBS News, right? And this was a time I'd actually go to. I felt like I needed to put this in the book. You know, one of the editors said, you know, it's too much information, but to understand what I was doing and what what was happening in the world of local news, you have to understand what was happening with local news itself.

John Tesh: And that was it became happy talk news and not so much in New York, but every place else where all of a sudden there were news themes and there was there were new sets and there was news, music and themes and all the rest of that stuff, and there was something called participatory journalism. So this all a lot of this happened in in New York City, the participatory journalism part of it, and was led by Geraldo Rivera, who put himself in. In fact, he was so popular in New York as a who out here, I'm competing with him and somebody known as Joan Lunden, as you know, who was a terrific reporter, you know, as well. He put himself inside all the stories, you know, in fact, so much so that when people were in a hostage situation once in New York, all of us reporters are down there in front of this huge building. And the guys, the the the hostage taker, the perp is leaning out of the window going, I want to talk to Geraldo, you know? Ok, now we've gone too far. But but so I would the Tesh report thing. I became a homeless man. I lived there was through a one way mirror in a van, one way glass in the van.

John Tesh: I became a homeless person on the streets of New York in subzero temperatures to to to outline the plight of the homeless back then, which was really as bad as it is now, but cold. And at the same time, so that was really exciting for a while. But then it was just like, I don't know, you know, I was playing piano late at night in jazz clubs and stuff, and I and I thought, I don't know, where am I headed now? And I was also anchoring the news on the on the weekends, and I still was great job. People recognize me. I got tables, you know, in New York City for dinner and I got a phone call in the newsroom and it was a guy named one night. A guy named Terry O'Neill called me and told me it was him and the guy named Vanguard and Solder. And they had just taken the reins over at CBS Sports the network. And as a journalist, you're always like, I'm going, I go to the network. But anyway, they always thought that might be 20 20 for me, or Stossel had gone, you know, moments later. And so on the phone call, he says to me, Terry O'Neill says, Hey, John, we're starting a new division here at CBS Sports and I've seen your work live on camera.

John Tesh: We think you'd be a good fit for what we're doing over here at CBS Sports Network Network. And I said first, I thought it was a prank. I'm looking around to see if there's anybody else on the wall phone, you know? And so I said, Well, Terry, I think you may have the wrong guy. And he goes, Ha ha, why? And I said, Well, because I can't name three NBA teams. I don't even know the rules of baseball, really. And so he goes, Oh no, no, no, where there's kind of stuff we have in mind for you. Most people don't even know the rules to it, and you'd be living pretty much in Europe and reporting on things like the Tour de France bike race, which I don't even know what that was downhill skiing. You'd be going to places like Austria and this whole thing. He was like, Offer stacking for me. You know something. And I was like, Wow, I gosh, I don't know. I still have a year left on my contract because, well, we've already talked to the guys at CBS and they think it'd be a nice move for you. And I'm like, Oh, I just don't.

I mean, I don't know. I don't have to think about it. And then Van Gordon says, You know, John, we've noticed we've been watching your tapes of your broadcast.

John Tesh: We've noticed that you seem really bored on the air. And I'm like, what? Yeah, I mean, you just your delivery, just to be honest. You just seem like you're bored and you need to change. And what he said that he spoke the truth, because I realized that I was showing it was I was really showing I was showing that I was just tired of reading the teleprompter and didn't know what I was doing, what my future held. I really wanted to be a musician, you know? So anyway, so I took this job, and all of my friends in news were like, What are you doing? You don't know anything about sports. But what I what? I ended up taking that job. It was the best thing for my music career. But what I soon discovered was that all these producers, whether it was John Firaxis or David Dinkins or the legendary David Michaels, who produced the Tour de France, all of these guys needed music for their sporting events. And so it was like in return for them teaching me how to be a play by play broadcaster. I actually scored their events. Yeah. And they said, Well, we can't pay you for this. And I said, OK, I'll just keep the publishing. And that's really how my music career got started.

Whitney Johnson: Mm hmm. So good. I do want to talk with you quickly about the feedback, which you've kind of talked about briefly. So maybe we can talk about when they said you weren't being responsive to Mary Hart and then I want to go to talk about cancer and death.

John Tesh: I know that's good. That's good. Thank you, folks. Don't go away. Yeah. So just let me just do the tease for you. Coming up the deadly cancer diagnosis, how did he get through it and why was he so mean to Mary Hart? Details coming up?

Whitney Johnson: Oh, well done. Well done. All right. So what did you learn?

John Tesh: In the Mary Hart thing? Yeah, yeah. Here's a funny. Here's the funniest part. Go ahead. Sorry.

Whitney Johnson: Well, the reason I'm asking is that, as you know, in the workplace, feedback is a big, big deal. And so I thought this story would be helpful for people who are struggling with either giving it or receiving it.

John Tesh: This was not feedback. This was a threat, but it was disguised as feedback. What happened was, and it's really just really funny, is that when when I released this book originally, Mary Hart said, my friend said, I want to do an interview with you on Entertainment Tonight. Neither one of us were still working, but they. They went crazy. Like, you guys either host the whole show, you know, as old people. And so I left that part out. So it was implied. So I was like, fine. I told this story that I'm about to tell you. And she had never she knew nothing about it, and I thought she was in on it, but she wasn't. What happened was I had come from sports, right? I mean, I got the Entertainment Tonight job, which is not a bad audition, and being told that the sports I was doing it at CBS were probably going to be phased out because another another, Terry O'Neill, had left and another group had come in. I was like the original hired guy, you know? So in entertainment that I found an old tape of mine anchoring the news in Nashville, and they contacted me and they said, We're looking for a news, your approach to our show Entertainment Tonight. And I said, What's that? Because I've been living in Europe most of the time, I had no idea what they were talking about and they said, well, twenty five million people a night, watch it.

John Tesh: It's a pretty impressive show. They were mad at me. And so I went for the audition. I showed up at the audition I was was I was just I was dressed. I gained like, I don't know how many pounds since Nashville. So I did this audition with Mary. I was terrible. I was loud and she said, Oh, you're too loud. I was still doing downhill skiing commentary, you know, celebrating a birthday today, you know, like,

whoa. Long story short, I ended up getting the job, but when I got there, I was still the news and sports guy. And in fact, I had been groomed. I had been groomed to be mean. I this sounds terrible. I'm taking the responsibility off of me. But I had so many people from CBS Sports and CBS News, and all this was like, What are you doing? You know, and I know that the people at Paramount probably got the same thing about, why are you doing a half hour of just entertainment news? You know, and it was like nobody. They were caused Entertainment Tonight watchers. People didn't want to admit that they were watching that much entertainment. Nobody was reporting there was no internet or anything, no phones, you know? So I got there and I had I had a little bit of an edge. Also, I mean, I had they signed me to a 13 week contract, which was that was it. It was like, OK, we could renew it if it works out.

John Tesh: But I got there and and you know, Mary was Mary Hart. I mean, she was amazing right at her job. She was the franchise there and nobody's ever been, you know, as popular as she was on that show. And but sometimes she would say this stuff and we laugh about it now. She'd say this stuff. She'd go, she'd go, Oh my gosh, John, these guys, they must be friends. It looks like they're friends off screen as well, you know, talking about actresses. And I just couldn't take it. I'm like, Yeah, I guess. I don't know. How do you know that? You know? I go on to the next story, you know, or or she would she'd say something that I just wasn't like wasn't cruel enough for me. I thought. And so I would sort of I sort of like, Yeah, Mary, like, then I turn my back, you know, and there were just enough of something in my face and certainly in my body language, I have a large body. They were getting bad feedback. I mean, you know, these guys, this is an important show. It was twenty-three to twenty-five million people were watching this. It was making a boatload of money. I mean, remember that back in the day, you couldn't get entertainment news anywhere except for the tabloids. You're like, Well, is this real? And so all of a sudden, all of the all of the TV and movie studios wanted their stuff to be on there.

John Tesh: You couldn't even see back in the day, back in nineteen eighty-six when I started. The only way to see a movie trailer was to see it in a movie theater or on Entertainment Tonight, so we got everybody in there just throwing money. So, Mary, I mean, you're talking about that was a racehorse that nobody should be messing with, right? They just won. You know, what do you call that thing when all three of them, the grand champion, the sea? I know nothing about sports. You win all three and then you got that thing. So something comes trouble. Triple Crown. Oh yeah. Did you get somebody say that in your ear? Did somebody say, No, you're OK? No, I just I just wanted I just wanted to know it's one of those. Yeah. So anyway, I'm doing this thing, and all of a sudden they call me into the office. Lucy Sal Haney, who who I just talked to her recently to who hired me out of an old tape in Nashville, says to me, Hey, listen, we're getting some really bad complaints about you. And I'm like, Oh gosh, what? What did I do? You know? And so she says, you know, last focus group people are saying, you're being mean, you know what a focus group you do and you know what it is, but people don't know, is they? They get a bunch of people, they pay them 50 bucks, they put them into a room with one way glass, and then they play Entertainment Tonight clips for them and they say, What do you think about this guy up? But that guy, what you think about his tie, you never get to see that, but you hear about it.

John Tesh: And so the fact that apparently they were inundated by, well, it doesn't look like John likes Mary very much. So they said, you know, they call me in and said, we've decided to send you to a body language school in Dallas. And like what? They said, Yeah, we've got reports that you're just not you're not being friendly to Mary. I said, Yes, I am. I love Mary. You know, we're good friends. Well, you're not showing it on the air. And we've we've already booked you in to your plane ticket is here. You're going to leave on Friday morning. You'll go Friday, Saturday, Sunday. I think it was Lillian Glass was the body language coach and I said, Well, I'm not doing that. That's that's ridiculous. That's embarrassing. I said, Well, you can't keep your job unless you unless you go. So I went and I get there, and this body language coach has been provided by Paramount, of course. I mean, VHS like stack of VHS tapes with time codes of where I had been mean to Mary. And so we went through and it was it was so painful. We're watching these things and she's pausing it going.

John Tesh: It was almost like she had like a showing a play on football. I see where he came out of there and then got tackled and see what she did right there. You did that and then you did this and then you did that. This was like a day and a half of that. By that time, I was like, All right, well, I'm done. And she goes, OK, now I've got these scripts, I'm going to be Mary. You're going to be John, and we're going to change this. And it was so creepy. It was so ridiculous. But I had I really had a revelation that I later used to be a better husband of really bad body language and really just I needed to come to the end of myself. And it wasn't just because I wanted to keep the job. Yes, it was mostly because I wanted to keep the job, but it was also like, I don't want to be that person. You know, and it changed. And when I told Mary this story, you know, she's like, Oh, they never said anything to me, and I said to their to their credit. And she goes, Yeah, you were. You were. You were a jerk for for a long period of time. And I said you could have gotten me fired. And she goes, Yeah, but I thought you had potential. I mean, that's Mary. She's so sweet.

Whitney Johnson: Wow, what a great story. Ok, now let's talk about the cancer. So.

John Tesh: OK, fine. Sure. I've got to go.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, exactly. All right. So just, you know, the headline is twenty fifteen. You're diagnosed with cancer. You beat it back. You get more in twenty twenty. I would love for you to talk about what meaning you've made of this experience.

John Tesh: It changes. It seems to change about every week or so because I remember I can get back there and I can remember the feeling when Connie and I got the news that I had a rare form of prostate cancer. It didn't make any blood markers, and so it was building while not showing off, you know? And so my doctor, Dr. Steve Galen, who did a digital rectal exam, which a lot of people don't get the hand glove exam, he felt a difference in my prostate. It wasn't smooth anymore. There were some bumps and things. And so that initial diagnosis was then a sonogram and then and then a biopsy and then radical prostatectomy surgery at Johns Hopkins from Dr. Ted Schaefer, And. And then, you know, some lymph nodes got left behind. Those showed up. We had another biopsy. And so it was a when we first got the news in twenty fifteen, it was like, you might imagine, you know, the doctor told us to get our affairs in order. So not Dr. Schaefer, but a doctor in Los Angeles. Dr. Shafer was the one who said. To me, I treat aggressive prostate cancer aggressively, and I can save your life, and he did, but it was a couple. I mean, there's so many things to say, but but it I thought it was gone and then it wasn't, and then I ended up having chemo and then another surgery. And then and then and we'll get to October 2020, which was was really a bad time.

John Tesh: But during that period of time, I became a cancer patient. At one point I became a cancer patient, gave up, got my affairs in order like he told me, know, got my insurance in order. And then I. Then I became a cancer patient with an attitude and thought that people should pity me. And during that period of time, I was drinking too much. I was drinking Scotch and I was I was taking drugs because I could get anything I wanted. I was the terminal cancer patient. I became that person. And so I was I was taking Vicodin for the for the pain I was taking Ativan for, for the nausea and I was chasing it with Scotch. And at that point through all of this, my wife was with me and she was trying to titrate her guidance by not pushing too far. But also show me love. And then in this in this studio right now that I'm in right now, we just she was cleaning up something or I was doing something and I became toe to toe and I think I'd had a drink or something. And she just said to me, You know, that's it. You've got to stop. I'm done. I've invested in you and you're killing yourself, and I'm not going to have it, you know? And we got into a really bad argument and I said things that that that I just in anger that I just shouldn't have said, you know, and and I left I realized that that that I was making this family miserable.

John Tesh: And I thought, it's prettiest thing. I thought back to my days as a as a, as an athlete and as a broadcaster of the Tour de France bike race, I went and bought. I had a bicycle, but I went and bought a new bicycle and like a road bike with saddlebags and, you know, all the stuff on it and everything. And I and I put my radio show in the in the saddle bags and a Bible. And I just headed out on a 140 mile bike ride and I just wanted to get my head together. And I, by the way, I thought I was. I was the victim. I did. I thought I was the victim. I'm about 20 miles up into this bike ride, you know, totally sober and just exhausted. I called my wife on the phone and be begging for forgiveness and crying, you know? And so I just want to come home. I'm so sorry. You know, I'm going to change. You know, this is I don't want to be a cancer patient. And so she said, No, you got to finish, you've got to finish your ride. So it's crap, you know? And that's the Italian way right now. Sorry, you know, I forgive you, but you're not coming back in this house until you And.

John Tesh: And it was what it was, what I needed. She, you know, she knew it. But during that period of time to right after that was when we we started. Somebody handed a friend of ours, Cha Cha Sandoval handed us a CD of this evangelist who was talking about a better way to pray. And in that in that CD by Andrew Womack, he spoke of a Mark 11:23, which is: whoever says to this mountain be removed and be cast into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will be done shall have what he says. This was Jesus talking and then the promise in Isaiah 53 by his stripes, you are healed, healed, And and the same. First Peter 2:24 and then same message. And then in Proverbs 18:21, which I'm always talking about death and life from the power at the tongue. So we completely changed the way we pray. I was clean. I been clean of cancer, clean of everything, clean of cancer and And. This ride was was really tremendous. I mean, it really just ripped me apart. One hundred forty miles in two days, I mean, it was I wasn't trained for this, but it's a good thing to do, you know, because the exercise is the thing that my legs still worked. Even though I was sick from chemo, the leg still still worked.

John Tesh: And then October 2020, right in the middle of COVID, I started having really bad pain in my pelvis, in my legs and went for a scan and had these two big tumors and one of them had wrapped around my kidney, had killed my, basically killed my right kidney and was a tumor inside my bladder. And I could barely walk and went back to MD Anderson, to the guy who was treating me, Doctor Dr. Christopher Logothetis, who looks just like Dr. Christopher Lloyd Logothetis, right? I mean, he's he's the foremost prostate cancer oncologist in the world, and when he's not practicing, he built sailboats. He builds a sailboat and then he sails it back to Greece. To visit his family was like, Who is this guy? You know, anyway? So he said, John, we can fix this because he wasn't. He was never about killing the cancer. He was about giving you more time, you know? And so he put me on. There were new drugs and it was a form of chemo, but not as not as invasive. And so the difference between that we're talking about the difference in who I was through this whole journey. The difference between 2015 and 2020 October was that Connie and I had already been through everything that we could have possibly imagine. Our faith was renewed. We we knew what the drugs were. We knew what the path was.

John Tesh: We knew how to pray. And so when this happened, it was like, OK, let's go. Let's go, get on that, put on the full armor of God, get or get back in the in the foxhole. Let's get going. And so and so, you know, back in the gym working out hard, listening to the doctor, going to Bible study, you know, and seeing myself well, once I used my imagination and knew that I would be, that I could see myself on the other side of it, I realized, Oh my gosh, I'm doing the same thing I did when I started live at Red Rocks, where I could see myself on that stage. I could I could see the orchestra with me. I could see all of it, you know, and then amplified by my faith, I could absolutely see myself as a healed and whole human being. We just took care of it. We took care of it together. You know, and and I'm and I'm healed. And if you know, I believe in my future, but if something were to happen again, we take care of it. You can't sit home and eat ritz crackers and hopes everything. Hope everything is going to be fine. You know which I love Ritz crackers. But that's what happened was, was we as a team. And let me tell you, it built the most amazing love story between the two of us married for nearly 30 years. Hmm.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. I have to say to everybody who's listening to this, one of the things you will love about John's book is the story of your love story and And. And not only that, you love each other, but you genuinely like each other and just that, that friendship that you have.

John Tesh: So and I love to and by the way, I love to build stuff as you, as you know, my wife is like, would you please just retire or something? And we have three grandkids now under the age of nine. So there's that. And so we, you know, I've been working on something for two years, which is it sort of takes everything that I've done. And Connie has done it. My son, Gib and everything that we believe and the strategies and the routines that we all use and put it into this thing called the warrior mindset. It's a great name, the warrior mindset. It's about how to live the warrior life and everything that you do with your with your faith, with your, with your morning routine, with your with your kids, with any sickness that might come upon you. And I think we'll we'll probably be releasing it when we will be releasing it soon. I just want to win, but it's called. You can check it out. It's called the wariormindset.com.

Whitney Johnson: Ok, that was one of the things I was going to ask you is what do you want people to do after listening to this interview? And so it sounds like number one by your book *Relentless*. And number two, check out the wariormindset.com.

John Tesh: Is that yeah, yeah. Yeah, when you get there, you'll see like thirteen hundred of the videos that we've done as a family, me and Connie and Gib. Wow. And also, you know, live life cut ins, you know, in different parts of the day because Lance Armstrong, I went there once in a long interview with him and actually Lance owns, one of my songs, because whatever you think about all the doping and all that stuff, but Lance's heart is still for helping kids, and we donate one of our songs to his to his ministry. But I said, Why are you doing all this? And he said I asked it a little more elegantly, like maybe the way you asked about my what his formative years is, I said why? And he goes, because I have the obligation of the cure. You know, I have the obligation of God's healing to tell people about.

Whitney Johnson: Music is one of your greatest loves. Is there anything you'd like to sing a few bars of something?

John Tesh: Oh, you know, you don't want me to sing, you know, I say, I sort of sing, you know, big band play something big. I can't get to the piano. Can I get the piano? I I can sing big band tunes because the range is like four notes. For me, anyway, you know, it's like somewhere beyond the sea, somewhere waiting for me. The thing I'm walking to the piano. Now that this is this piano, there's so much junk in the studio because we just finished this big, big event and this piano, this piano is out of tune. So my fault. Here's here's a song that from Red Rocks that that I listen to, I actually myself, I listen to my own music. Sometimes that the middle section of it is sort of the victorious part of getting out of it. I wrote it getting out of cancer. I wrote it on Bastille Day back in 1982 or something like that in France as part of the Tour de France, but it goes like this. But somebody's going to be. So we get to say to you, get up, get a piano tuner, will you please? It's like, it's like I'm in a bar in a western. All right. Just give you a whiskey and a beer. But here's a song, here's a song that a lot of your listeners will recognize. Ok, OK, go. The most. It put my kids through college. And also, it's so much fun to play because anytime the NBA comes on, you hear it. He goes on and on and on.

Whitney Johnson: Wow, that's you.

John Tesh: That's the NBA basketball team. Yeah, I love it.

Whitney Johnson: Ok, thank you for that trait. Two final questions for you. What was most useful to you in this conversation and what, as in what intelligence for your life did you discover?

John Tesh: You don't have to write a book, but that journaling is probably a good idea? I know we didn't even use the word journaling, but it's really what when you were asking these great questions and by the way, people who who may not know this is most people with apologies to people who have interviewed me before. Most people who are they're busy, let's say. We'll just sort of pull up your Wikipedia page and they and they ask the questions all the way down the Wikipedia page. You really did research, which was so honoring to me, even read the book, which is crazy. But I learned from reading the book that all of that data that we talk about intelligence for your life is real, that journaling and journaling with gratitude is can really lift you up. It can change your future. And so when I when I first got the offer to write the book for HarperCollins, they said, We know you're busy, John. We're going to hire a ghostwriter. And what he'll do is he'll interview you and transcribe it, and then he'll write some stuff and you can see if you like it or not. The guy was really, really nice and I love doing it.

John Tesh: But by the way, this book was supposed to take six months and it was two and a half years. I went to them and I said, I know you're going to hate me. We're going to miss the the publishing date, but I really want to write this myself. And there was a was a conference call and there was a big delay before anybody said anything. But Matt Barber, who is at HarperCollins, said, I think this is the right thing, John. And so, yeah, it took me two and a half years and during that period of time, you know, I was still battling all kinds of stuff, but that was my journaling. You know, I went back and looked at my. I was forced to look at my life. I even had to call up people, whether it was Steve Thomas or or Scott White who gave me that first job. Scott White, who gave me that first job at WKIX radio. He ended up sitting next to me in New York City a few years back when I was inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame. I was able to thank him for that at that ceremony, but I call them up and said, You know, what was I doing? You know? John Stossel from CBS Oh, no, no, no, no, John.

John Tesh: No, you you were this, you know, because you, you start writing your own history, rewriting it, right? And so when I went back, it was this amazingly cathartic experience. I realized this is what I'm doing as I'm journaling. And so when I look back, I thought, there's just no question that the Holy Spirit had a hold of me and was holding my hand and saying, you know, and just providing opportunities, providing, you know, you know, energy vision for my future, my my imagination, expectation and all of that because. A guy who is homeless in a tent, pumping gas, and three years later, through a chain of events, that's just impossible. In fact, people have written about this is anchoring the news at WCBS TV at twenty-three years old, it doesn't happen, you know? And and so, yeah, I worked hard, but I and I do not prefer the word luck. Not at all. And Angela Duckworth doesn't either who wrote that book Grit. You know it was. It was. It was grit. It was desperation. And it was a belief in God. Hmm.

Whitney Johnson: Hmm. Any final thoughts?

John Tesh: I really love this interview. Well, you all play a song that my grandkids love this song because we can't go to sleep at night. It's an Italian song, and I can't. I don't know what the somebody will know of the translation, but it's the (plays song).

John Tesh: And it goes on like this and they pretend that they're falling asleep. And then we realized we're not going to go to sleep. It's like (plays song). And then they start running around and my wife is like, Oh gosh, what have you done that?

Whitney Johnson: John, thank you so much. It's been a delight.

John Tesh: It was my pleasure. It was great, great therapy, and I'm going to just start asking people what is their formative thing?

Four key takeaways from our conversation. Number one, the gifts of imperfection. We can all relate to John's formative experiences in one way or another. We are not perfect. Our parents are not perfect. The environment we grow up in isn't perfect. But overcoming challenges here is what makes us who we are. The imperfect mold his parents set for him is ultimately what compelled John to take risks and gave him the tools he needed to forge his own path.

Number two, sometimes breaking rules and asking for forgiveness later is a viable strategy. We've talked about rule-breaking before, and in John's case, he did everything wrong during those days as a homeless college flunk out. But his passion to get on the air could not be contained. He broke into the radio studio. He cut up broadcast tapes so he could get his voice on the air. These crimes, as he called them, were what got his voice and talents in front of key decision-makers. If you're doing everything by the book and not making the progress you want to make, see if there's a rule you can bend within reason, of course.

Number three, you might not know when you've hit mastery on your own S-Curve. John shared a very interesting moment when his boss told him he looked bored doing his daily news broadcast. There will be someone in your life a friend, a colleague, a partner who can see you better than you can see yourself. Always keep your ear out for the advice that will lead to your next curve.

Number four, don't be a victim! When John stopped seeing himself as a victim of cancer, he mustered the will to fight it. He stopped drinking, taking unnecessary drugs and pushed his body to places it hadn't been. He stopped seeing himself as a cancer patient and visualized himself as someone who could beat it. There's lots of science that shows this mentality is so important, and for John, the stakes couldn't be higher. But no matter what hardship you're trying to overcome. Stop dwelling on the problem and visualize what it looks like when it's conquered. This will reveal what you need to do to tackle it. If you're looking for additional episodes, relisten to take the right risks.

Episode one hundred Markus Whitney on visualization and episode 188 and Stephen Nelson episode to Livingston Taylor Episode 177 Because, well, music. If you would like a copy of John's book. Email me at W.J. Whitney Johnson and share with me a reflection from this conversation. We will make five available to you. I read and respond to every note. Thank you again to John Tesh for being our guest. Thank you for listening. Thank you to our producer, Matt Silverman, audio engineer and editor, Whitney job assistant producer Steve Ludwig and production assistant Maddie McDaniel.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt Yourself.