Beautiful Outlaw: Experience the Playful, Disruptive, Extravagant Personality of Jesus

The best way to introduce—and entice you to read—John Eldredge's book *Beautiful Outlaw* is simply to share a statement he makes in the opening pages:

Jesus came to reveal God to us. He is the defining word on God—on what the heart of God is truly like, on what God is up to in the world, and on what God is up to in your life. An intimate encounter with Jesus is the most transforming experience of human existence. To know him as he is, is to come home. To have his life, joy, love, and presence cannot be compared. A true knowledge of Jesus is our greatest need and our greatest happiness. To be mistaken about him is the saddest mistake of all.

Check out these Book Notes to get an overview of how this book will change the way you think about Jesus which in turn will set you on a reenergized pursuit of Him like never before.

Title: **Beautiful Outlaw: Experience the Playful, Disruptive, Extravagant Personality of Jesus**

Author: **John Eldredge**

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Book Overview:

Reading the Gospels without knowing the personality of Jesus is like watching television with the sound turned off. The result is a dry, two dimensional person doing strange, undecipherable things.
In *Beautiful Outlaw*, John Eldredge removes the religious varnish to help readers discover stunning new insights into the humanity of Jesus. He was accused of breaking the law, keeping bad company, heavy drinking. Of being the devil himself. He was so compelling and dangerous they had to kill him. But others loved him passionately. He had a sense of humor. His generosity was scandalous. His anger made enemies tremble. He'd say the most outrageous things. He was definitely not the Jesus of the stained glass.

In the author's winsome, narrative approach, he breaks Jesus out of the typical stereotypes, just as he set masculinity free in his book, *Wild at Heart*. By uncovering the real Jesus, readers are welcomed into the rich emotional life of Christ. All of the remarkable qualities of Jesus burst like fireworks with color and brilliance *because* of his humanity.

Book Quotes:

More words about Jesus are helpful only if they bring us to an experience of him. LOCATION: 26

After all the nonsense that is repeated about Jesus being a gentle peacemaker, reading the Gospels is really quite a shock. We discover a Jesus who is in fact frequently embroiled in conflict—most of which he provokes himself (like healing on the Sabbath). And every single one of these clashes is with very religious people. Not one hostile encounter involves a "pagan." LOCATION: 129

For to come to know Jesus intimately, as he is, as he wants to be known, is to release a redemptive landslide in your life. There will be no stopping the goodness. The first purpose of your existence will be resolved, and from there you are set to fulfill all of God's other purposes for you. Now—do you really think that the enemy of our souls, the archenemy of Jesus Christ, is simply going to let that happen? Satan is far too subtle to rely on persecution alone. His most masterful works are works of deception (ask Adam and Eve about this when you see them). So the Deceiver deceives by means of distortion, and his favorite tool is to present a distorted Christ. LOCATION: 136

Jesus came to reveal God to us. He is the defining word on God—on what the heart of God is truly like, on what God is up to in the world, and on what God is up to in your life. An intimate encounter with Jesus is the most transforming experience of human existence. To know him as he is, is to come home. To have his life, joy, love, and presence cannot be compared. A true knowledge of Jesus is our greatest need and our greatest happiness. To be mistaken about him is the saddest mistake of all. LOCATION: 177

So, if you do not know Jesus as a person, know his remarkable personality—playful, cunning, fierce, impatient with all that is religious, kind, creative, irreverent, funny—you have been cheated. If you do not experience Jesus intimately, daily, in these very ways, if you do not know the comfort of his actual presence, do not hear his voice speaking to you personally—you have been robbed. If you do not know the power of his indwelling life in you, shaping your personality, healing your brokenness, enabling you to live as he did—you have been plundered. LOCATION: 191

Because when we lose his personality, we lose Jesus. LOCATION: 246

You can learn a lot about an artist by the work he or she leaves behind—the hubris of Hemingway, for example, is difficult to hide even if he wanted to; so is the tortured darkness of Edgar Allan Poe. The whimsy of Chagall shimmers through his paintings, as does the radiant genius of Van Gogh. The personality of the artist leaks through their work. God included. LOCATION: 271

Laughter is from God. This one quality alone might save us from the religious veil that forever tries to come in and cloud our perception of Jesus. LOCATION: 312

Maybe if we allow Jesus the playfulness we see in his creation, we can then see him at play in the Gospels. Perhaps it will help us unlock some of these otherwise perplexing stories. LOCATION: 327

We cannot understand his actions, nor taste the richness of his personality until we set them within context—the man is operating deep behind enemy lines. This colors his extraordinary movements across the pages of the Gospels and helps to strip away that benevolent religious fog that continues to creep into our reading. It also gives depth and poignancy to moments of self-disclosure such as, "The Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). Because he was hunted. LOCATION: 439

In two verses he empties the temple, a report that reads like the crack of a bullwhip. But take the action slowly. First, Jesus observes the shenanigans, and it makes him furious. Then he takes the time to make a weapon. Where did he get these cords? That required some looking around. Having found them, he had the patience and forethought to weave them together effectively to make a usable whip—he knows what it takes to move large, sedentary cattle and self-righteous profiteers. There's time enough here to cool off if this is merely an outburst of anger. But no, this is a planned and sustained aggression. LOCATION: 476

If you would know Jesus, you must know that this—his fierce intentionality—is essential to his personality. LOCATION: 538

The more we can grasp his humanity, the more we will find him someone we can approach, know, love, trust, and adore. LOCATION: 625

Imagine living your entire life in a world where the people closest to you don't get you. Oh… you do live in that world. And Jesus understands. LOCATION: 692

Creation is epic and intimate. He is epic and intimate. Everywhere around me, an obsession with beauty and attention to detail. LOCATION: 761

You must understand an important distinction—there is Christianity, and then there is church culture. They are not the same. Often they are far from the same. The personality conveyed through much of Christian culture is not the personality of Jesus but of the people in charge of that particular franchise. Tragically, the world looks at funny hats or big hair, gold thrones and purple curtains, stained glass or fog machines and assumes this is what Jesus must be like. When you are confronted with something from Christian culture, ask yourself, Is this true of the personality of the God of the wind and the desert, the God of sunshine and the open sea? This will dispel truckloads of religious nonsense. And by beginning his Gospel here, John makes it clear this is quite biblical. LOCATION: 834

Remember, Jesus is not strolling through the Israeli countryside offering poetry readings. He is on a mission to rescue a people who are so utterly deceived most of them don't even want to be rescued. His honesty and severity are measured out precisely, according to the amount of delusion and self-deception encasing his listener. When a soul is encrusted with pride, bigotry, self-righteousness, and intellectual elitism—as was his dinner host—then that shell does need to be struck hard at times in order to cause a crack that might allow some light in. Jesus strikes with the precision of Michelangelo. LOCATION: 907

I absolutely love the loving courage of this man to say what everyone else knows but won't say. LOCATION: 923

Now, in order to appreciate how beautiful this is, think of how rarely it occurs, and how even more rarely it is done well. Most people go through their entire lives without anyone, ever, speaking honest, loving, direct words to the most damaging issues in their lives. Pause for a moment, and count the times this has been done for you. Better, pause and count the times you have offered this to someone you love. LOCATION: 928

Let's be honest—why aren't we more honest with each other? Because it will cost us. Socrates didn't exactly get a warm reception for telling the truth. John the Baptist got his head handed to him on a platter for telling it like it is. Kill the messenger. We don't want to pay that bill. If we speak as honestly as Jesus does, if we even venture into the hallowed sanctuary of someone else's precious sin, it is going to make the relationship messy to say the least. Why won't you tell your mother-in-law that she is a fearful, controlling woman? Why won't you tell your pastor that his children hate him, hate his sanctified hypocrisy? Why won't you tell your best friend that most of the time they are selfish and self-centered, and you carry all the burden of maintaining the relationship? LOCATION: 934

Because to risk speaking as Jesus does takes time, because then I'm involved, because who knows what their reaction will be, because, because, because. What I'm saying is I don't really care enough to risk the tension, backlash, penalties, or rejection. LOCATION: 942

The man shoots straight. Sometimes he's playful; sometimes he's fierce; the next moment he's generous. This is the beauty of his disruptive honesty—you can count on Jesus to tell you the truth in the best possible way

for you to hear it. LOCATION: 955

What would it be like to have someone in your life who knows you intimately, loves you regardless, and is willing to be completely honest with you? Yes, it would be a little unnerving, certainly disruptive—but doesn't part of you also crave it? Most people have to hire this. They pay a therapist to be honest with them because neither their friends nor family have the capacity or willingness to do it well. No matter. Get this however you can. LOCATION: 977

One of the things I most respect about Jesus is his inability to speak nonsense. LOCATION: 992

Proof that you have encountered a distinct personality in Jesus is his ability in one tender moment to say the kindest thing and the most startling words the next. What do you make of someone who can lovingly whisper, "Then neither do I condemn you," then shout "Snakes! Reptiles! Sons of hell!" LOCATION: 996

Now keep in mind, there is a world of difference between being offensive and saying something that offends. It is a matter of location—where in fact does the offense lie? The man who makes a racial slur betrays something ugly in him. The friend who says you've had too much to drink spares you something ugly in you. A foghorn is offensive at a dinner party; it is the sweetest sound in the world for a ship lost in a storm. Jesus' words are not offensive. It is something in us that is offended. LOCATION: 998

Jesus' heart of love is not diminished by the fact that some people will actually choose hell over surrendering to God. He weeps over it. He warns, urges, pleads, performs miracles. As they nail him to the timbers, he says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Because if they don't find forgiveness, it is going to be a mighty black day of reckoning. Jesus prays for them, prays they will find mercy. LOCATION: 1031

The spirit of our day is a soft acceptance of everything—except deep conviction in anything. This is where Jesus will suddenly confront the world as a great rock confronts the river flowing ever downhill. He is immovable. The cry used to be for "tolerance," by which we meant, "We have very strong differences, but we will not let those be the cause of hatred or violence between us." Now it is something else, where all convictions are softened to second or third place while we all agree to enjoy the world as much as we can. But truth is not like conviction. Conviction might be a matter of personal opinion, but truth is like a great mountain, solid and immovable whether we like it or even acknowledge it. Christianity is not a set of convictions—it is a truth. The most offensive thing imaginable. LOCATION: 1059

The risks Jesus is willing to take with his reputation are simply stunning. LOCATION: 1109

Let's get the religious drapery off this. A dove and a snake. Surely they remember the dove descending on Jesus. As for the snake metaphor—these Jews would have connected that instantly to the serpent in the Garden. Be as holy as the Spirit and be as cunning as Satan. You want us to do what?! Jesus is saying, "Look, this is a very dangerous world." The disciples glance at one another, thinking, Right. We've got the Son of God on our side. "I mean it," he continues. "Take this seriously. I'm sending you into the Congo with a butter knife. You are easy pickings. You must be holy and you must be cunning." LOCATION: 1234

You will appreciate the mastery of Jesus only to the degree that you understand the minefield he walks. He is advancing against the prince of darkness in a bid for the human heart. The whole situation is booby-trapped. Satan already has the upper hand—he took our hearts captive when we fell, back in Eden. Some he has snared through abuse, some through seduction, others by means of religion. Oh, how hard it is to rescue the human heart, to dislodge people from their chosen means of survival without toppling them into resignation, despair, or defensiveness. LOCATION: 1365

Jesus won't take the shortcut of a power play. He doesn't force anyone to follow him. He seems rather reluctant to do his miracles. He never overwhelms anyone's will with a fantastic display of his majesty. He woos, he confronts, he delivers, he heals, he shoots straight, and then he uses intrigue. He lives out before them the most compelling view of God, shows them an incredibly attractive holiness while shattering the religious glaze. But still, he lets them walk away if they choose. LOCATION: 1369

But there is the greater humility of setting aside the power—the Son of God lays down his glory to become a human being. It is the humility of utter dependence. Jesus wept, he prayed, he learned obedience—so that we might learn to do the same. LOCATION: 1571

This fear runs deep in the human race. It is ancient, Genesis 3:10 stuff—"I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." The fear of exposure. It is far more powerful than we like to admit—the origin of every fig leaf and fashion trend. It's what gives power to culture. We long to be praised. We dread exposure. LOCATION: 1667

"What people think of me" is a very powerful motivator. It is still shaping us more than we'd like to admit. It shapes our theology, our politics, our values. I spent time today with a young man in the music industry; why did I use the term "dude" more than I usually do? Before that, I was speaking with a woman in ministry; I never used the term "dude," but I did talk about "the Lord" a good bit. I feel like a chameleon. I "adapt" myself to the social foliage around me. Do any of us go through one entire day being utterly true no matter how many different environments we move through? Do you even know the true you? Is there a true you? Whether it is born of fear or longing or uncertainty or cunning or wickedness, it so natural for us to shape ourselves according to the moment we scarcely notice how much we do it. Now, toss in the promise of reward—wealth, power, success, the adoration of others—and boy, oh boy, is it hard to be true. LOCATION: 1679

We typically think of integrity as the ability to resist temptation by resolve. And that's a good thing; self-discipline is a good thing. But there is another level of integrity, the kind where you don't even want the seduction that is being presented to you. Goodness runs so deep, so pervasive through your character and your being that you don't even want it. We respect the man who is able to reject sexual temptation. But how much more the man whose soul is such that he does not want any woman but the woman he loves and is married to. LOCATION: 1690

The diversity of Jesus' actions, timing, manner, words, dare we say moods; his sudden changes of direction, then his stillness—it's hard to keep up with. It certainly is colorful, but almost dizzying, like a Byzantine mosaic, alive and shifting like the northern lights. Dazzling, but nearly to the point of leaving us confused. As soon as we've grabbed on to one dimension of Jesus—his generosity, his compassion, his honesty—he seems to turn it on its head, or us on ours. LOCATION: 1750

Jesus is this man. Remember now these snapshots; imagine them; take your time and bring each one before your mind's eye: On the beach, catching the boys fishing. Clearing the temple. Touching the man with leprosy—after his famous sermon. Infuriating the Pharisees by healing on the Sabbath. Midday at the Samaritan well. Before Lazarus's tomb. Losing his cousin. Late in the reception at Cana. Dinner with Martha. Learning to use a hammer and nail. All those miles by foot. His own trial and torture. And then—the Emmaus road. The vast richness of this man is… enthralling. LOCATION: 1791

His ability to live with all these qualities we've seen, in such a way that no one quality dominates—as is so often the case in our personalities—eclipsing the richness of the others. To live in such a way that there is always something of an element of surprise, and yet, however he acts turns out to be exactly what was needed in the moment. Oh, his brilliance shines through, but never blinding, never overbearing. He is not glistening white marble. He is the playfulness of creation, scandal and utter goodness, the generosity of the ocean and the ferocity of a thunderstorm; he is cunning as a snake and gentle as a whisper; the gladness of sunshine and

the humility of a thirty-mile walk by foot on a dirt road. Reclining at a meal, laughing with friends, and then going to the cross. That is what we mean when we say Jesus is beautiful. LOCATION: 1807

Friends, this is not simply a nicer view of Jesus. This is not merely a more winsome Christ or a smattering of fresh insights. This is not confetti—lovely while it falls, soon to be swept away. Jesus is our life. We need Jesus like we need oxygen. Like we need water. Like the branch needs the vine. Jesus is not merely a figure for devotions. He is the missing essence of your existence. Whether we know it or not, we are desperate for Jesus. LOCATION: 1832

Love Jesus. Let him be himself with you. Allow his life to permeate yours. The fruit of this will be… breathtaking. Now for the best news you will ever receive. O, how I wish this book had a sound track, because the orchestra would resound here with a crash, and then go utterly silent as you read these next words: You get to. You get to. You are meant to have this Jesus, more than you have each new day, more than you have your next breath. For heaven's sake—he is your next day, your next breath. You are meant to share life with him—not just a glimpse now and then at church, not just a rare sighting. And you are meant to live his life. The purpose of his life, death, and resurrection was to ransom you from your sin, deliver you from the clutches of evil, restore you to God—so that his personality and his life could heal and fill your personality, your humanity, and your life. This is the reason he came. Anything else is religion. LOCATION: 1844

So, the best thing you can do at this point is simply begin to love Jesus. Just love him. It will open up your heart and soul to experiencing him, and to receiving his life. Just begin to make a practice of loving Jesus. As I'm driving in my car, I will simply tell him, "I love you." Not once, like a sneeze, but over and over again: "I love you, I love you, I love you." It turns my whole being toward him in love. When I wake up and the sunshine is pouring through the window, I'll say, "I love you." I'll look at a photograph of some fond memory, or some beautiful place, and I'll say, "I love you." A breeze will caress my face ever so gently, and I'll turn into it and say, "I love you." Anytime something makes me laugh. When I see a chipmunk or a wave, when I enjoy a movie. I love you, I love you, I love you. LOCATION: 1858

I realize I'm challenging things that good people hold sacred. The point is not the words; the point is the fruit, their effect. Stained-glass language reflects a view of what Jesus is like; it shapes our perceptions of him and, therefore, our experience of him. Whatever the term may be, just ask yourself: Does this sound like his actual personality? Does this capture his playfulness, infuriating the Pharisees; his humanity, generosity, and scandalous freedom? Does this sound like the Jesus at Cana, at dinner with "sinners," on the beach with the boys? Or, does the phrase conjure a more "religious" image of Jesus? LOCATION: 1908

False reverence is a choice veil of the religious fog. It will bring a shroud between your heart and his. LOCATION: 1919

This is—yet again—one more cunning ploy of the religious to keep us from the kind of intimacy with Jesus that will heal our lives. And change the world. We are not meant to merely love his teaching, or his morals, or his kindness or his social reforms. We are meant to love the man himself, know him intimately; keep this as the first and foremost practice of our lives. It is a fact that people most devoted to the work of the Lord actually spend the least amount of time with him. First things first. Love Jesus. LOCATION: 1965

If you have never given your life to Jesus Christ, now would be the perfect time. This is the moment he chose for you. Time for you to come home to the heart of God. This prayer will help you: Jesus, I need you. I need your life and your love. I believe you are the Son of God. I believe that your death on the cross was for me—to rescue me from sin and death and to restore me to the Father. I choose right now to surrender my life to you. I turn from my sin and my self-determination and I give my life to you. Thank you for loving me and forgiving me. Come and take your rightful place in my heart and in my life. Be my Savior and my Lord. Live in me; live

through me. I am yours. LOCATION: 1988

Friends, you don't want to be telling Jesus what he can and can't do. So, the best place to begin and one of the most powerful things you could ever pray is this: I renounce every limit I have ever placed on Jesus. I renounce every limit I have placed on him in my life. I break all limitations, renounce them, revoke them. Jesus, forgive me for restraining you in my life. I give you full permission to be yourself with me. I ask you for you—for the real you. LOCATION: 2058

Honestly, friends, we have been a little naive. We thought knowing God would come easily. We didn't account for the fact that we still live behind enemy lines. If knowing Jesus is the single most important thing that could ever happen to a person, then would it not follow that our enemy would have a very strong investment in keeping this from happening? So he'll throw whatever he can in the way. LOCATION: 2092

So—what about Jesus? What really fries this gracious, humble, immensely patient man? Well, the clearing of the temple comes to mind—that's clearly one of those moments where the passion of Jesus breaks out like an avalanche. And what was that all about again? Why was he furious enough to empty the building with the whip he made? Religious falsehood, that's what—religious posing making it hard for people to get to his Father. Justified, sanctified and entrenched—the most difficult kind of barrier to remove, because it is sanctified. LOCATION: 2202

As I said at the outset of this book, if you will simply read the Gospels without bias, you cannot come to any other conclusion but that religion is the enemy—or in the hands of the enemy. LOCATION: 2219

I'm not on a tirade. I want to get on to how we can better love Jesus and experience him. Yet to pass this over would be an injustice to you—this is the source of most of the debris keeping people from Jesus. If you want to know him as he really is, to experience him just as intimately as the disciples did, you are going to have to clear out the religious fog. LOCATION: 2232

So let's start with this point of clarity—there is Christianity, and then there is Christian culture. They are not the same. Folks develop a taste for organ music and fog machines in the same way they develop a taste for public radio or NASCAR. Then they insist that organ music or fog machines are the way to know Jesus. From here, it just gets weird. Big hair. Reverent tones. Shouting. Robes. Funny hats. Smells and bells. Golden altars. Broadway-style services choreographed down to the second. LOCATION: 2244

Loving the culture of church is not anywhere close to the same thing as loving Jesus. The Pharisees loved their religious culture—the long prayers, the solemn garments, the honor bestowed upon them for being members of the clergy. But they hated Jesus. LOCATION: 2251

Here's the test—if you can't take your church culture and language and drop it in the middle of a bar or a bus, and have it make winsome sense to the people there, then it's not from Jesus. Because that is exactly what he could do. That's what made him the real deal. LOCATION: 2268

We don't smoke and we don't chew and we don't go with girls who do. The Pharisees were experts at this. Minding your manners replaces internal holiness—something Jesus was particularly intent on reversing. This results in technical righteousness. LOCATION: 2312

Trivial morality takes the severe beauty of holiness and makes it ridiculous. LOCATION: 2326

Jesus came to the most religious people on earth, and much of what he had to do in order to bring them to God was to free them from their religion. LOCATION: 2363

Now for a wonder of wonders—not only do you get Jesus, you get to live his life. Really. Everything you've seen here, everything you've read about, this life is yours for the asking. That is what Jesus believed. That was his understanding of our desperation and his mission: I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (JOHN 12:24) I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (JOHN 15:5) LOCATION: 2636

Jesus has no intention of letting you become whole apart from his moment-to-moment presence and life within you. LOCATION: 2751

Your brokenness and your sin are not something you overcome so that you can walk with God. They are the occasions for you to cry out for the life of God in you to rescue you. Not God outside you, up in the sky somewhere. Christ in you, your only hope of glory. Let this sink in: Jesus has no intention of letting you become whole apart from his moment-to-moment presence and life within you. LOCATION: 2752

How do we remain in vital union with him? By loving him, by obeying him, by surrendering more and more and more of ourselves to him. LOCATION: 2763

One of the reasons we like our friends is because we like who we are when we are with them. Wow, is this true of Jesus—when he and I are close, I like who I am. When we seem to be distant, I am a disaster. Well dressed, perhaps, putting a good face on things, but lifeless—like a cut flower. As a buddy said over lunch the other day, "When I'm in Christ or he's in me or however you describe that, everything is different—the way I see myself, the way I see you. I am the man I want to be. LOCATION: 2776

Loving Jesus helps us to become what human beings were meant to be. As Athanasius said, "He became what we are that we might become what he is." LOCATION: 2783

Listen carefully (this is the father on the platform, fumbling for those last words): Suffering will try to separate you from Jesus. You must not let it. LOCATION: 2833

The worst part of suffering is the damage it can do to your view of God, your relationship with him. Feelings of abandonment creep in: Why did he let this happen? Anger. A loss of hope. Mistrust. Forsakenness. At the very time you need him most, you will feel most compelled to pull away from Jesus, or feel that he has pulled away from you. This is what the father who wrote Hebrews was trying to prevent. LOCATION: 2834

Your suffering is neither pointless nor isolated. Somehow, Jesus' sufferings overflow into our lives; somehow ours are linked to his. This is a great honor. It grants our sorrows an incredible dignity; it invites us to know an intimacy and connection with Jesus in them, because of them. The sufferings of Jesus are the noblest part of his life story; the cross, the crown of thorns. What an unspeakable honor that he would share even this with us. This fellowship is a treasure we have not tapped into but one we will need. LOCATION: 2849

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.