



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Holiday Traditions: Dr. Dobson and Dr. Clinton Share Their Favorite Christmas Memories

**Guest(s):** Dr. Tim Clinton

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Dr. James Dobson: This is Dr. James Dobson saying Merry Christmas, everyone. And as always, thank you for listening to Family Talk.

Roger Marsh: Well, greetings and welcome to this Christmas Eve edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We are honored that you've chosen to listen in today and we appreciate you making Family Talk a part of your holiday festivities as well. This Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, let's remember to praise God for His everlasting love and faithfulness. Now, we have a very special program in store for you here on Family Talk today. Dr. Dobson and Dr. Tim Clinton sat down together to share about some of their favorite Christmas memories and traditions. I know that you'll enjoy hearing these heartwarming stories. Let's listen now to today's Christmas Eve edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I've invited my colleague and friend Dr. Tim Clinton to join us together, to talk about our recollections of the past. And we're going to roll back the clock a little bit and talk about our childhoods and our memories of family events and the Christmas tree itself and church programs and all the other wonderful things that occur at that time of the year.

So, Tim, I'm going to ask you to talk about your own childhood. What was it like? You were one of eight children. Your father was a pastor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: What was that like?

Dr. Tim Clinton: We loved Christmas, Dr. Dobson. I have so many fond memories of growing up in central Pennsylvania. Again, one of eight. My dad loved Christmas so much, he made such a big to-do about it. He would decorate the house. He'd get out there on the ladder and hang wreathes and lights everywhere. And inside, he'd do everything he could because for him, it was all about everyone coming home, especially later in life, it was about all of his kids.

Dr. James Dobson: How big a house did you have?

Dr. Tim Clinton: We grew up on a farm. I grew up in an old farm house that we rented. And then later on, my mom and dad moved into a trailer and they had two rooms built onto the trailer. One was a small, extra bathroom because when we had a lot of kids coming home, everybody's fighting for the bathroom. And then they built just a small, extra living room where we'd have the big Christmas tree. Everybody would lay all over the floor. We'd have sometimes upwards to 40, 50 people packing into a trailer.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you poor? And did you know you were poor?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Dobson, we grew up in rural central Pennsylvania. We didn't have much money. My dad, of course, is a pastor, served three small rural country churches. One in Dubois, Pennsylvania, one in Rockton and one in [inaudible 00:03:03], Pennsylvania. But you know what, Dr. Dobson, the people were so kind to us. While we didn't have a lot, we didn't know any different. We felt like we were so blessed and the church people used to be so good to us. I remember as a boy, I don't know if you have ever heard of what a pounding is.

Dr. James Dobson: That means you beat up the pastor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's when you love on the pastor. We couldn't wait for the pounding to happen on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, Wednesday night prayer service.

Dr. James Dobson: That's why they brought all the food in.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Dobson, they would bring it all in. We would try to figure out what all would come in. And they often would give some extra money to my parents to help them get ready for the Christmas season so we could enjoy that time of the year. I tell you while we didn't have a lot, we had a lot. We had a lot of love. We had a lot of connectedness. We've got so many memories. There was something about Christmas. And as a boy, I can remember thinking about the hallelujah chorus, the reading of the Christmas story. My mind goes back to Christmas trees, Rudolph, Charlie Brown Christmas, the Grinch. So many things that prepared the heart to really begin to embrace what Christmas was all about.

Dr. James Dobson: Tim, as I know you agree that Christmas is a whole lot more than gifts, and yet that is a part of a fun Christmas. I wonder if you can remember some gift that stands out in your mind. Before you do, I want to tell you mine. My dad used to take me hunting when I was eight years old and carrying a BB gun, and then it became a .22. And that was about three years later. And then one Christmas, when I was 13 years of age, he bought me a 410 shotgun and I felt like I was a man. For the first time, my dad trusted with a real shotgun. And that stands out for me as one of the gifts that meant so much. I don't want to over emphasize the importance of gifts, but it does play a role too.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I remember as a boy wanting a bike so bad. My first bike. And I wanted a Spyder bike, they were the hot item. And we didn't have much money. And I remember coming down the steps Christmas morning, and I got down the bottom of the steps of my older brother, Jimmy, and my brother-in-law had schemed a little thing on me. They went up and took one of the old bikes out of the attic, cleaned it all up, tried to make it look nice, put a bow on it and put it in my place and said, "Hey, we got something special for you this year." And I looked at it and tried to be joyful. And then they brought out my Spyder bike. I'll never forget it, Dr. Dobson. Boy, I'll tell you, it was gold, blue and white banana seat, big handlebars. That was the dream. My brother Jimmy gave me a 12 gauge when I was 12. He brought me an H and R single shot. He came back from the Marine Corps, had saved up money, bought it in South Carolina, brought it home and gave it to me. I still have that gun. I had it refinished, probably cost was 30 bucks back in those days. That thing meant something to me.

Dr. James Dobson: That brings back such memories to me. I was hunting with my dad early on. I think I was 12 and he was carrying his Ithaca pump 12 gauge.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's a special shotgun.

Dr. James Dobson: Special gun. And I was bugging him all day to let me shoot it. And he finally turned to me and he said, all right, I'm going to let you take your first shot. And he handed me that 12 gauge and he gave me no instruction. He didn't tell me what was about to happen. He handed me that gun and I was loose as a goose. And he handed that gun to me and I fired it and it knocked me flat on my back. It went flying in the air and landed barrel up in the sand.

Dr. Tim Clinton: No way.

Dr. James Dobson: And my dad laughed at me for 30 minutes about that. He knew I was about to learn a lesson about guns.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You learned a real one there as a kid. Yes, I agree with you. We put such an over-emphasis on gifts, but you're so right. The spirit of giving in this and it's meaningful.

Dr. James Dobson: Christmas is obviously a time for celebrating the birth of Christ and the wise men coming and the story of Bethlehem and all that and too kind of surrounded by a fantasy childhood activities and so on. Some people would not feel good about that. I want to tell you, first of all, how I feel about it. We were able to do both of those things together. I would not take away from my children the excitement of Christmas itself as a fun thing for children. It certainly was for me.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Boy, it was for us.

Dr. James Dobson: But also, we were very careful not to take away from the birth of the Christ child.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Something interesting my dad did for us. His pastor friend, his name was Bob Withrow would dress up as Santa every year and he would come to our house. So we had the designated night when everybody was there and Santa would come. Can you imagine a trailer with that many people and kids going crazy and Santa's coming to the door and he's bringing gifts in for everybody. And he's handing out candy canes to everybody. They'd be jumping on him. They'd be saying, Santa. He'd be saying, "What do you want this year, little boy?"

Dr. James Dobson: Did they believe he was really Santa?

Dr. Tim Clinton: The little ones of course would. They'd just, Santa's here. But you know what, everybody engaged in the process because there was a goal in mind. And that was when Santa was done passing out all the gifts and all the fun was over, he pulled out his Bible and he sat down and he read the Christmas story to our family every year and told us the most important part of Christmas was the birth of Christ. And that's what the true meaning of Christmas was all about.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you do that for your children as well?

Dr. Tim Clinton: We do. Oh, and I'll tell you what, we also go outside with the little kids and somebody else always down, running around and they've got, well, it's Rudolph because there's a red light down on the hillside, the sound of reindeer and bell's going off and "I'll be back soon." But Christmas, Dr. Dobson, it's in our hearts. It's about who we are and what we make of it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there's no doubt about the fact that that's the heart of the Christian story itself. How did your church celebrate Christmas?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Dobson, I remember as a boy and through the years, always having a Christmas play and a service to come in and to commemorate the birth of Christ. The small rural church I grew up in, Dr. Dobson, my dad would often say, does anyone want to pick out a song to sing or let's have a sword drill? Do you guys remember those in the small churches? And we'd love to start with the very first Christmas song the Sunday after Thanksgiving, we'd get it started. And it was "Silent Night." It was the "First Noel."

Dr. James Dobson: So, it was a whole month of celebration.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, a month of celebration. And my dad so loved the miracle of Christmas is what I'll call it, the birth of Christ because he believed that story changed everything. To him, it was the true game changer. Emmanuel, God with us, like Paul said in Galatians 4:4, "In the fullness of time, God sent forth his son, made of a woman to redeem them." When you begin to slow down and begin to understand the gift, like Paul said, thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

Dr. James Dobson: You know what's a shame is the pace of living that has crowded out time for the real meaning of Christmas. With all the gifts and all the food and all of the things

that you're going on with, relatives coming and all that, there just seems to be little time for us to stop and contemplate the miracle of the birth of Christ. Imagine that, God himself incarnate came to this earth, born of a virgin and came that we might all be reconciled to him. I love the first chapter of John. I think it would be good for us to read some of the Scriptures today. I love this beginning of the first chapter. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God. And the Word was God." Guess who the word is? When it refers to the word, it's really referring to-

Dr. Tim Clinton: The Christ child.

Dr. James Dobson: The Christ child. He was in the beginning with God. "All things were made through Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was His life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." It's a good place to begin, isn't it? The Christmas is really about that story. The coming of God himself incarnate living within us, inhabiting this world with us and then living a sinless life and dying to save us from our own sin.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Part of our tradition as a family is to have the children come up and they'll surround us and we'll begin to sing different Christmas songs. And as they do those songs, we come out of it and continue in the scriptures. One of my favorite places is in Luke chapter two, where the Scripture says "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy, which shall be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord, and this will be a sign unto you. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying glory to God in the highest. And on earth, peace and goodwill toward men."

Dr. James Dobson: So, your father would read that scripture?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, my father loved the Scriptures. Yes. Everything stops. Everything stops. And it's centered here. Now, my dad and my mother are gone. And by the way, I probably want to speak a little bit about this being a difficult time of the year too. I want to share a custom that we do as a family to walk through that piece of this time of year. But for us, it's slowing it down and centering, not on the gifts, not on family, but on the Christ child and what Christmas is all about. And the most important piece, it's to worship Him. The wise men came, why, to worship Him. I think we've lost the sense of worship. I think we've lost a sense of wonder because I think you're right, we're so busy. We're so caught up in the work and all the responsibilities and having everybody come over and, and maybe dealing with difficult family members and so much that's happening, or maybe we don't have any money this year, we don't have any money and we just feel lost or confused and we're trying to center ourselves, Dr. Dobson. It's hard to slow it down.

Dr. James Dobson: It really is difficult. I'm not sure we've ever been really able to go at the pace that I'm more comfortable with. Those things that are happening are what also makes that time of the year so meaningful to us, having those we love come in and be with us and the laughter and the fun that takes place. One year Shirley and I did something that was very memorable. There was an older lady in our church named Mamie and she and her husband had been missionaries in the Virgin Islands. And he was swept off a rock while he was fishing and Mamie lost him that day. And as far as I know, she was all alone at this Christmas that I'm talking about. And we decided to dedicate Christmas Eve that year, exclusively to Mamie. And Shirley and I focused our conversation exclusively on Mamie that night.

And the kids caught the spirit of it too. And they went along with it and they talked a lot to Mamie and she had brought some dusty old scrapbooks from decades ago, which had photos of her husband and their children and the natives that they had won to the Lord. And we turned those pages and we stood behind her while she turned those pages. I think I called it a highlight, that's what it was, the highlight of many years for us. Christmas is often a very selfish time, especially for kids. You want them to have a good time, but they are concentrated on submitting their list of toys and gifts that they wanted and it was so refreshing to brighten the world of this elderly lady who has now gone on to be with the Lord. That was very meaningful for all of us.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that story, Dr. Dobson. We, as a family, do something a little similar every Christmas Eve. We, as a family still, before we open gifts, jump in the car together and we buy poinsettias or we'll buy baskets of fruit, usually both. And I have my kids join me and we do the old fashion, we go to the doorsteps of homes and we still do caroling. And then I have my kids give gifts of fruit or a poinsettia to families. And I tell you, some of the greatest life lessons have come out of those moments. We have a family just this past year who, they can't stop saying "You have no idea what it meant to us for you to knock on our door on Christmas Eve and give us that basket of fruit. Why would you do that?" Honestly, it was about the issue of giving, not getting, giving.

Dr. James Dobson: You and I are both counselors and we deal with families and all kinds of circumstances. There is more depression around this time than any other time of the year. How do we explain that?

Dr. Tim Clinton: My aunt Milly taught me a lesson when I was a younger man, Dr. Dobson, when she came up to me one time after I was speaking, preaching at the church and she said, Tim, Christmas is not my favorite time of the year. And she told me about what it was like to lose her son around the holidays. And she said, Tim, it just opens a wound for me every year, every year. And I thought about it and I began to think about how many people struggle when these times of, loss is a reason. I think some people are just lonely, don't have anybody.

Dr. James Dobson: Can you imagine being in a nursing home and not having any members of your family come to see you on Christmas Day? I mean, that's happening.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know. I mean, it's grievous. I mean, that's sad. And I think of maybe a dad who can't see his kids because the relationship's broken, or a mom, or what have you or children who just are angry or at odds with others. It's like why not as much as in us, figure out how to work through those things. Talk to somebody. I'd love to share a little story about loss and what we've done as a family, through the loss of my parents. When my mother passed away, it was devastating for our large family. She was a matriarch and that very first Christmas for us was, man, it was a mess. We went up to the trailer to my dad's place and you can imagine us all packed in. And it's the first year where mom's not there. My little sister, Wendy, had put together a song, "Light a Christmas Candle."

And she said, we were going to start a new tradition. And that is, we're going to be honest about our emotions. And we're going to gather as a family, light a Christmas candle to commemorate her and to honor her in this moment because she's with us this Christmas, even though she's gone. And Dr. Dobson, there were a lot of tears, but I'll tell you it was a healing salve that God brought over us as a family. And when my dad died some 11 years later, we still do this tradition together to honor the love and the goodness and the grace that we had in them and all the years we had together as a family.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't it interesting that you and I have experienced something similar in regard to what you just said because my dad died on December the fourth and he and my mom were planning to come to California to be with us for Christmas. And Christmas, of course, was on about three weeks later. And there was an empty chair there and we were all in tears and especially my mother who just loved my dad. I can't describe their relationship. And for him to be taken out just suddenly, he was just sitting at the table and he fell into my mother's arms and onto the floor and was gone. And I was speaking on that day. It was a Sunday and I was speaking out in California and at break time they came and told me that call had come, that my dad was gone. And that was the saddest Christmas that we ever experienced.

I don't know how people get through those experiences without having the Lord, without the promise of the Christ child, without the promise of eternal life with the crown of righteousness. We are going to see him again. He's there now waiting for us. And there have been times when we've sat around and talked about all the members of my family and Shirley's family who know the Lord who have gone on to heaven and we're going to have quite a reunion on the other side when that occurs.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's taken us a few years to get over their loss, but I know this, God's put a bridge over it and we're now able to tell a lot of stories and laugh together, but we hold onto that blessed hope. It's what Christmas is all about. And my dad, right before he passed away, he said to me, "Tim, it's because of Him, meaning because of Christ, he said, 'I'll see you again. I'll see you again, son.'"

Dr. James Dobson: Is that when he was dying?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes. He says because of Him that I'll see you again. And we hold onto that hope. That's what Christmas is all about. That's what brings us joy.

Dr. James Dobson: We dare not let the secularization of this most blessed day of the year cause us to miss the real meaning of it, to spend all our time on things that really don't matter. But we still want to have family time and good food and maybe some presents for one another.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We got to watch some football too, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Hey, now we're getting serious.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think maybe the message today, at least in my heart and mind is, let's make sure we don't miss this Christmas. Don't miss this Christmas. Make a memory.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Tim, I'm so glad that you came out to be with us and you need to be with your own family, but you came out and we did this program today and especially on this subject of Christmas, which means so much to us both. I appreciate you, my friend. I appreciate your participation in your becoming part of the team here at James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Dobson, thank you for having me out here. And I love being with this team. It's a special, you're right, special time of the year. Special Merry Christmas to you and Miss Shirley and your family.

Dr. James Dobson: Merry Christmas to you. I was want to say to all our listeners, Merry Christmas to you all, may this be one of the most blessed Christmas seasons you've ever had.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi, this is Dr. Tim Clinton for Family Talk. Wise men still seek Him, through the desert, through the night, press on. Keep Him at the heart of your celebration. Merry Christmas. Thanks for listening and being a part of our family at Family Talk.

Roger Marsh: Hello everyone. Roger Marsh here for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. The news comes in all shapes, sizes, and formats these days, but how do you cut through all the noise and get to the heart of the matters that affect your family? Well, come to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and sign up for Dr. Dobson's monthly newsletter. You'll find clarity on tough issues, encouragement for daily life, and trusted principles to help you build strong, healthy and connected families. Go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and sign up today. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).