



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Delayed Delivery: A Christmas Story Read by Dr. James Dobson

**Guest(s):** Dr. James Dobson

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone, I'm James Dobson and thanks for spending a part of this marvelous Christmas Day with us. With me in the studio is my beloved wife, Shirley. And I really do wish you could see her. She's all decked out in red and white for the occasion.

Shirley Dobson: Thanks, Jim. I hope our listeners agree with me that this is the most important time of the year. Everything we care about is embodied in Christmas, from children, to families, to friends, and of course, the good food, and especially the celebration of the Christ child. Because of His birth and resurrection, we have the promise of eternal life.

Dr. James Dobson: So ring the Christmas bells that you brought Shirley, as we say together.

Shirley Dobson: Merry Christmas, everyone.

Dr. James Dobson: Merry Christmas, everyone.

Roger Marsh: Hello and welcome to this Merry Christmas Day edition of Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And whether you're driving to or from a friend or relative's house, maybe fixing a meal for yourself, or for a gathering of your family here on this Christmas day, we pray that you are warm and safe, and grateful that you are here with us today to celebrate just for a moment. Now, there's so much to be grateful for today. But most of all for the ultimate gift that God has given us, His son, Jesus Christ. God loves us all so much. He loves us past our imperfections and our shortcomings, that He took on the form of a man so that we may one day live in Heaven with Him. Here's how the Apostle Paul puts it in Philippians chapter two, verses six through eight. "In your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature, God did not consider equality with God, something to be used for his own advantage.

Rather, He made himself nothing by taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." Jesus endured unspeakable suffering all because of His love for us. That is the real reason we celebrate Christmas. As it says in John chapter three, verse 16, you know it so well. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son that

whosoever believes in Him will not perish but will have everlasting life." And at Christmas time, we also celebrate the anticipation of the Lord's return as well. So as you can tell, there is much to celebrate here on this day. Now on today's broadcast, we have an extra special program for you. Dr. James Dobson will be reading a special message which contains a heartwarming Christmas story from his book *A Family Christmas*. So here now is our own Dr. Dobson with his special Christmas presentation right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson:

Dear friends, approximately 20 years ago, I collaborated with several authors to prepare a book entitled *A Family Christmas*. It consisted of nine classic short stories that will warm your heart. They were illustrated throughout with prints of wonderful paintings by acclaimed artist and my friend, the late Gerald Harvey. *A Family Christmas* is no longer in print, which I regret because it captured the soul of the Yuletide season. Thus, I have chosen to devote my letter this month to an excerpt from a book that is no longer available. And I begin with this. Introduction. What three words in our English language carry more emotionally laden memories than a family Christmas? What other simple phrase unleashes such a flood of nostalgia, half-forgotten longings and well-remembered tastes and smells, sounds and melodies and images. Happy or sad, festive or quiet, a family Christmas carries us from where we are to where we've been, or perhaps to where we want to be.

I have only to close my eyes to find myself in scenes from a boyhood in Texas with my mother and father. Scenes that are often interwoven with images from Oklahoma, California and Kansas, around the fireplace with Shirley, Danae and Ryan. Lights turned down low, the fire popping and snapping on the grate and the sweet fragrance of Christmas candles filling the room. These are among my most precious memories of my life. The book also recalled other images that most of us have only seen in literature, in art or in film. They represented a time gone by before most of us were born, and yet they're part of the heritage of Christmas that is still with us today. Gerald Harvey's paintings focused on turn-of-the-century scenes that were vividly preserved on canvas and sculpture. Sleighs jingling along snowy country lanes, and the clip-clop of horses hooves on cobbled streets.

The soft glow of gas lights around the town square filled with shoppers and tiny churches on starry nights, light pouring through the windows and the good folks of the village gathering for a Christmas Eve service of carols and praise. It was all there for us to enjoy. You can understand why I feel a certain sadness about the passing of an era. Whether we speak of our own families or the worldwide family of God, this season is time for giving and receiving like no other. What I'll share with you now is the opening story of *A Family Christmas*, written by Kathy Miller. She titled it "Delayed Delivery," and these are her words.

There's never been a winter like this. Stella watched from the haven of her armchair as gusts of snow whipped themselves into a frenzy. She feared to stand close to the window, unreasonably afraid that somehow the blizzard might be able to reach her there sucking her breathless out into the chaos. The

houses across the street were all but obliterated by the fury of wind-borne flakes. Absently, the elderly woman straightened the slip covers on the arms of her chair. Her eyes glued to the spectacle beyond the glass. Dragging her gaze away from the window, she forced herself up out of her chair and waited a moment for balance to reassert itself. Straightening her back against the pain that threatened to keep her stooped, she set out determinedly for the kitchen. In the doorway of the next room, she paused, her mind blank, wondering what purpose had propelled her there. From the vent above the stove, the scream of the wind threatened to funnel the afternoon storm directly down into the tiny house. Stella focused brown eyes on the stove top clock.

The 3:15 time reminded her that she had headed in there to take something out of the freezer for her supper. Another lonely meal that she didn't feel like preparing, much less eating. Suddenly she grabbed the handle of the refrigerator and leaned her forehead against the cool white surface of the door, as a wave of self-pity threatened to drown her. It was too much to bear losing her beloved Dave this summer. How was she to endure the pain? The daily nothingness. She felt the familiar ache in her throat and squeezed her eyes tightly shut to hold the tears at bay. Stella drew herself upright and shook her head in silent chastisement. She reiterated her litany of thanks. She had her health, she had her tiny home, an income that could suffice her for the remainder of her days. She had her books, her television programs, her needlework. There were the pleasures of her garden in the spring and summer, walks through the wilderness park at the end of her street. And the winter birds that brightened the feeders outside her kitchen picture window.

Not today though, she thought ruefully, as the blizzard hurled itself against the eastern wall of her kitchen. Ah Dave, I miss you so. I never minded storms when you were here. The sound of her own voice echoed hollowly in her room. She turned on the radio that stood on the counter next to a neatly descending row of wooden canisters. A sudden, joyful course of Christmas music filled the room, but it only served to deepen her loneliness. Stella had been prepared for her husband's death. Since the doctor's pronouncement of terminal lung cancer, they had both faced the inevitable, striving to make the most of their remaining time together. Dave's financial affairs had been put in order. There were no new burdens in her widowed state. It was just the awful aloneness, the lack of purpose to her days. They had been a childless couple. It had been their choice. Their lives had been full and rich. They had been content with busy careers and with each other.

They had many friends. Had. That was the operative word these days. It was bad enough losing the one person you loved with all your heart. But over the past few years, she and Dave repeatedly had to cope with the deaths of their friends and relations. They were all of an age, the age when human bodies began giving up, dying. Face it, they were old. And now on this first Christmas without Dave, Stella would be on her own. Mabel and Jim had invited her to spend the holiday with them in Florida, but somehow that had seemed worse than staying at home alone. Not only would she miss her husband, but she would miss the

snow and the winter and the familiarity of her home. With shaky fingers she lowered the volume of the radio so that the music became a muted background. She glanced through the fridge briefly, then decided that a hot bowl of soup would be more comforting fare this evening. To her surprise, she saw that the mail had come.

She hadn't even heard the creak of the levered mail slot in the front door. Poor mailman out in this weather. Neither hail nor sleet. With the inevitable wince of pain, she bent to retrieve the damp white envelopes from the door. Moving into the living room, she sat on the piano bench to open them. They were mostly Christmas cards, and her sad eyes smiled at the familiarity of the traditional scenes and the loving messages inside. Carefully, her arthritic fingers arranged them among the others, clustered on the piano top. In her entire house they were the only seasonal decoration. The holiday was less than a week away, but yet she did not have the heart to put up a silly tree, or even set up the stable that David built with his own hands. Suddenly engulfed by the loneliness of it all, Stella buried her lined face in her hands, lowering her elbows to the piano keys in a harsh abrasive discord and let the tears come.

How would she possibly get through Christmas and the winter beyond it? She longed to climb into bed and bury herself in a cocoon of blankets, not emerging until her friends and spring returned. The ring of the doorbell echoed the high-pitched discordant piano notes, and were so unexpected that Stella had to stifle a small scream of surprise. Now who could possibly be calling on her on a day like today? Wiping her eyes, she noticed for the first time how dark the room had become. The doorbell sounded the second time. Using the piano for leverage, she raised herself upright and headed for the front hall, switching on the living room light as she passed. She opened the wooden door and stared through the screened window of the storm door in consternation. On her front porch, buffeted by waves of wind and snow stood a strange young man whose hatless head was barely visible above the large carton in his arms. She peered beyond him in the driveway, but there was nothing about the small car to give a clue to his identity.

Returning her gaze at him, we saw that his hands were bare and his eyebrows had lifted in an expression of hopeful appeal that was fast disappearing behind the frost forming on the glass. Summoning courage, the elderly woman opened the door slightly, and he stepped sideways to speak into the space. "Mrs. Thornhope?" Her extended arm beginning to tremble with cold and the strain of holding the door against the wind. He spoke again. "I have a package for you." Curiosity drove warning thoughts from her mind. She pushed the door far enough to enable the stranger to shoulder it and then step back into the foyer to make room for him. He entered, bringing with him the frozen breath of the storm. Smiling, he placed the burden carefully on the floor and stood to retrieve the envelope that protruded from his pocket. As he handed it to her, a sound came from the box.

Stella actually jumped. The man laughed an apology and bent to straighten up the cardboard flaps, holding them open for her to peek inside. She advanced cautiously then turned her gaze downward. It was a dog, to be more exact, a Golden Labrador Retriever puppy. As the gentleman lifted its squirming body up into his arms, he explained, "This is for you ma'am. He's six weeks old and completely housebroken." The young pup wiggled in happiness as being released from captivity and thrust his ecstatic wet kisses in the direction of his benefactor's chin. "We were supposed to deliver him on Christmas Eve," he continued with some difficulty, as he strove to rescue his chin from the wet little tongue, "but the staff at the kennels start their holidays tomorrow. Hope you don't mind an early present." Shock had stolen her ability to think clearly.

Unable to form coherent sentences, she stammered, "But I don't. I mean who?" The young fellow set the animal down on the doormat between them and then reached out a finger to tap the envelope she was still holding. "There's a letter in there that explains everything pretty much. The dog was brought last July while her mother was still pregnant. It was meant to be a Christmas gift. If you'll just wait a minute, there's some things in the car I'll get for you." Before she could protest, he was gone, returning a moment later with a huge box of dog food, a leash, and a book, *Caring for your Labrador Retriever*. All this time, the puppy had sat quietly at her feet, panting happily as his brown eyes watched her. Unbelievably, the stranger was turning to go. Desperation forced the words from her lips, "But who, who brought it?"

Pausing in the open doorway, his words almost snatched away by the wind that tousled his hair, he replied, "Your husband, ma'am." And then he was gone. It was all in the letter. Forgetting the puppy entirely at this site of the familiar handwriting, Stella had walked like a somnambulist to her chair by the window. Unaware that the little dog had followed her, she forced tear-filled eyes to read her husband's words. He had written it three weeks before his death and had left it with the kennel owners to be delivered along with the puppy as his last Christmas gift to her. It was full of love and encouragement and admonishments to be strong. He vowed that he was waiting for a day when she would join him. And he had sent her this young animal to keep her company until then. Remembering the little creature for the first time, she was surprised to find him quietly looking up at her. His small panting mouth resembled a comic smile.

Stella put the pages aside and reached down for the bundle of golden fur. She thought that he would be heavier, but he was only the size and weight of a small pillow, and so soft and warm. She cradled him in her arms and he licked her jawbone then cuddled up into the hollow of her neck. The tears began anew at the exchange of affection, and the dog endured her crying without moving. Finally, Stella lowered him to her lap where he regarded her solemnly. She wiped vaguely at her wet cheeks, then somehow mustered a smile. "Well, little guy, I guess it's up to you and me." His pink tongue panted in agreement. Stella's smile strengthened and her gaze shifted sideways to the window. Dusk had fallen and the storm seemed to have spent the worst of its fury.

Through fluffy flakes that were now drifting down at a gentler pace, she saw the cheery Christmas lights that edged the roof lines of her neighbors' homes. The strains of Joy to the world wafted in from the kitchen. Suddenly, Stella felt the most amazing sensation of peace and benediction washing over her. It was like being enfolded in a loving embrace. Her heart beat painfully, but it was with joy and wonder, not grief or loneliness. She need never feel lonely again. Returning her attention to the dog, she spoke to him, "You know, fellow, I have a box in the basement and I think you'd like it. There's a tree in it and some decorations and lights that will impress you like crazy. And I think I can find the old stable down there too. What do you say we go hunt it up?" Well, the puppy barked happily in agreement as if he understood every word.

That's the end of the story, and I'll close with these thoughts about the meaning of Christmas. Love is stronger than death and reaches into eternity with gifts of kindness coming from loving hearts that can warm the coldest winter and bring light into dark and lonely places. And once upon a dark night in a little village called Bethlehem, every one of us received a gift like no other. It was a gift of surprising kindness and enduring love. A gift that, to this day, warms hearts, releases captives, pushes back the shadows, and delivers hope and joy to transform desolate seasons of our lives. God's great gift delivered just when we needed it the most, will walk us through every trial, every hardship, every lonely day, and every starless night. And one day we'll all be together in the presence of the gift, where loneliness and death and separation and tears will fade like a distant dream.

The gift is ours right now, and His name is Jesus. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift. Well, this is James Dobson, and I do hope you enjoyed this touching story by Kathy Miller. She wrote it in her book, *A Family Christmas*. But it occurs to me that there are some people in our listening audience who feel like Stella in this story. They're lonely and discouraged. Perhaps they've lost a loved one. Is that you? If it is, I do hope that you'll find peace in the Christ child and the promise of eternal life. Merry Christmas, everyone. Blessings to you.

Roger Marsh:

Well, I hope you've been encouraged and blessed by the touching story, read by our own Dr. James Dobson here on this Christmas Day edition of Family Talk. If you enjoy our programs here at Family Talk, and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, you will certainly enjoy our 2023 Broadcast Collection. This five disc CD set will make a great addition to your home library. And it's yours as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So give us a call at 877-732-6825, or go online to [drjamesdobson.org/2023](http://drjamesdobson.org/2023). You can also request the 2023 Broadcast Collection via the U.S. mail.

Our ministry mailing address is The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute or the JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Now, keep in mind, for the entire month of December, we have a special matching grant in place thanks to some special friends of our ministry. So that means that any donation that you make in support of the JDFI this month will

instantly be doubled. You can make a tax-deductible donation online when you go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), or call us at 877-732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening to Family Talk here on this Christmas Day, and may your day be filled with joy and God's richest blessings.

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

Dr. James Dobson: For all practical purposes, John Pierpont lived and died a failure. At least that's what history might tell you. It's not as if John didn't try to find his niche. He poured his heart into everything he did. He just didn't seem to be good at anything. His career started out well enough with a teaching degree from Yale, but his first teaching job didn't last too long. John was much too easy on his students. So he went back to school to become a lawyer. He failed at that as well. He opened up a dry goods store, but soon went bankrupt. Next John tried his hand at poetry. He wasn't bad at it. He just couldn't pay his bills. So again, he went back to school, this time to become a preacher. His first congregation asked him to resign. Politics had always intrigued him, so he ran for the governor of Massachusetts.

He lost big, so he ran for Congress. Again he lost, even bigger. In the Civil War he served as a chaplain, but only for two weeks. He died at the age of seventy-one as a clerk in the Treasury department. His tombstone reads simply poet, preacher, philosopher, philanthropist. But somewhere along the way, John wrote a song, a song so simple that any three-year-old can sing it, yet as timeless and cheerful as Christmas itself. John Pierpont wrote Jingle Bells, a song about sleighs and horses and snow and laughter. If John Pierpont was a failure, we should all fail so wonderfully.

Roger Marsh: To find out how you can partner with Family Talk, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).