



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** God's Help in My Life: The Story of Dale Evans

**Guest(s):** Dale Evans Rogers

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Hope that you and your family had a wonderful Resurrection Day celebration yesterday. On today's Family Talk broadcast, we're bringing you a deeply moving testimony, one that speaks to the heart of what it means to trust God through life's darkest valleys. Our guest is Dale Evans Rogers, beloved wife of cowboy legend, Roy Rogers, and a woman whose faith was tested in ways most of us can hardly imagine. Dale wasn't just a Hollywood star and an accomplished author. She was a mother who experienced the unthinkable, losing three of her children. In just a moment, you're going to hear Dr. Dobson provide some context for today's program, sharing a bit about his personal connection to Dale Evans. Then we'll hear Dale herself speaking to an audience as she opens her heart about grief, loss, and the sustaining power of Jesus Christ.

Her testimony is both heartbreaking and hope-filled, a reminder that even in our deepest pain, God's presence never leaves us. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to begin today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: When I was a boy, I loved playing Cowboys and Indians. I remember pretending to be Gene Autry or Hop Along Cassidy or Tom Mix or The Red Rider. And when I'd finished school, I would rush home and go to my radio and turn on the Long Ranger. It's actually Lone Ranger, but that's not what I called it. The music for that program was the William Tell Overture. And I would bounce to the music on a chair and pretend I was riding a white horse like the Long Ranger did. Life was very simple and predictable in those days. Well, the reason I bring that up is because in the early 1980s, my staff and I went out to Apple Valley, California and met with Dale Evans, the wife of Roy Rogers.

I was so excited to see her and remembered how the two of them could wipe out all the bad guys by the end of a 30 minute program.

I loved it, but many years later, I did have the opportunity to meet Dale face to face. We're going to let you hear just a little bit of my interview with Dale. We're not going to spend the whole program on that, but here's what Dale said in answer to one of my questions from Apple Valley, California about 1982.

Dale Evans Rogers: People are beginning to realize we are in jeopardy as far as our freedom is concerned.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. That's right.

Dale Evans Rogers: Right. And that's why I was prompted to write this book because I believe that if women abdicate the throne of motherhood and being the keeper of the home corral, now I mean this with all my heart. And if they neglect the little children from one to five in those formative years where they say that you know this, where a child, what they learn goes very deeply into that subconscious.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the foundation. Everything sits on that.

Dales Evans Rogers: That's right, and from then on, they learn very quickly, very fast, but they forget too very rapidly. But those first things are solid down there. And that's why it's so important that the little child from one to five, for the next generation, these young mothers today, that they know why they love this country. They know why they believe in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in the Bible, and in our laws that were taken right from there, that they implant those things into those little children, mind. Listen, it can be a babe in arms. You can sing to them about it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that was Dale Evans, and I still believe she was right about what she had to say. Rather than letting you hear the rest of that interview though, we have something else we want to do with the program. Dale spoke to an audience. I don't know to whom she was speaking. And this was 40 years ago, so it was even a year or so back before I went out and met Dale. And she shares some of her personal heartbreak. She opens up about her relationship with her husband, Roy, and the devastating events that happened to their family. I don't want to give any more of it away. I just want you to listen to this testimony from Dale Evans Rogers. We call it a classic edition of Family Talk.

Dale Evans Rogers: My name is Dale Evans Rogers, and I'm here to share my faith and experience with God in hard times, the hard times of my life, and the hard times in some other lives that I've known, people that are very, very close to me. First of all, Jesus didn't promise us a rose garden with no thorns, did He? What Jesus really said was, "In the world, you shall have tribulation, but you be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." And Jesus in me and Jesus in you overcomes the hard times in our lives. There is so much that I would like to tell you about how God has been with me in the hard times. And I've had some hard times in my life. I've been married to Roy Rogers. That's not the hard time. Okay? I've been married to Roy Rogers for 34 years as of this date.

In 1947, New Year's Eve, Roy and I married. At this time, he was a widower. He was a widower with three little children, an adopted girl, seven, his own daughter, five, and his little boy, 16 and a half months old, whose mother had died at his birth with a blood clot. We were married on this ranch in Oklahoma,

and I remember I was dressing and I got terrified of what I was going to do. I thought, "What have you done?" You know, you know, I had been divorced. I rebelled in my early teens and eloped with my first sweetheart and it was an absolute disaster. We had a little boy and when our Tom was six and a half months old, he abandoned me. His father abandoned me. Just walked out and he said, "It was a mistake. We're too young. I don't want to be tied down and you shouldn't either." I couldn't trust anyone.

I thought, "What are you doing? You've got three little stepchildren. How can you do this?" And I went into the closet, like the Bible says to go in your closet and pray in secret and the Lord will reward you openly. And I just closed the door and I said, "Lord, I'm sorry. I haven't followed you and you know what all is in my life, the things I've done." I said, "Lord, please help me in this. You know we can't make it without You." And I said, "Lord, give me courage to establish a Christian home for these children like I had. Please God, because we won't have a chance." And I went out and Roy and I were married. We went back to Hollywood and they took me out of Roy's pictures and all of a sudden I had lost my identity. I wasn't a good mother.

I wasn't a good housekeeper. I'd worked since I was 17, made my own money and all of a sudden I'm a nothing and I was miserable. And the harder I tried, the more they would push me away. And one day, my blessed Tom came in. By now he was at USC majoring in music and he had been a devout Christian, a sold out, born again Christian since he was 10. And Tom said, "I want you to go to church with me tonight. You owe it to these children to give them a Christian home here, whether Roy or you, you've got to do that." So I went with him and he was an assistant choir director at Fountain Avenue Baptist Church, right in the heart of Hollywood. I went and I heard a sermon about the home, that home that was founded on the rock of faith in Christ would stand.

And my son asked me to commit my life totally to Jesus. He said, "You don't know him personally. You know about Him, but He's not in here with you." He said, "I've watched you take pills to go to sleep and pills to get with it in the morning." He said, "I have seen you read books on peace of mind, all kind of books on psychology and psychiatry to find peace." He said, "If you really knew Jesus and He was in here and you had the Bible and knew it, He said you could throw it all away and you'd find peace." And He had me. He had me. And the following Sunday, I went back to that church and I gave the Lord my life. And I asked Him to wash me clean with the blood he had shed on the cross of Calvary. I asked Him to come into my heart by the Holy Spirit, lead me the rest of my life, make my life count.

And I said, "Lord, if You have to break me, You know my frame. If You have to break me, You do it. I want to belong to You and I want my life to be what You intended it to be." And you know something? I went out of there a new person and I felt free. I felt as light as a feather. It was fabulous. I went home and Roy saw it in my face. He said, "Something's happened to you." I said, "Yes, I've given my life to Jesus Christ." He said, "You leave me alone." I said, "Okay." He

did. He said, "Don't you start pressuring me about that." I said, "Okay, okay." But I taught the children little prayers and we had round table grace. And later Roy said he was scared to death we'd call on him, but because of what he saw Jesus doing in me and through me, nothing I did, I never could do it myself, never because of what he saw, he accepted Jesus Christ as his savior just six weeks later in that same church. The Lord gave us such joy for a year and a half.

We met in people's homes. We had different ministers that would give us devotions. It was wonderful. And then He ushered in a hard time for us, a crucial test. Doctor said I couldn't have a baby without a big operation, but God has the last word and here came little Robin Elizabeth. And I knew when she was four days old, I was so happy about this child and Roy was riding around the Colosseum to 90,000 people and people were caring when he talked about his new daughter. And right after that, I found that Robin had Down syndrome and a hole in one of the ventricles of her heart and that she wouldn't live very long. I want to tell you, I know what heartache is. I felt like it was a stone right here that eight. I felt like my heart had just congealed like that and shriveled.

Too much to cry. I was just stunned and our minister came and ministered to me. If I hadn't been a committed Christian, it would have destroyed me. I might have been gotten on dope. I might have been an alcoholic. Roy and I might have split up and the first thing I thought about, you know something? I remembered my promise to God back in Louisville, Kentucky. That's the first thing that came to my mind. And I said, "Lord, this time, if You want to heal her, I'll spend the rest of my life telling people You healed her because there was no medical help for her whatsoever, but He had another purpose. And I thought this is going to destroy my husband's faith. This is a thing that kept him from God all along.

But God bless him. We sat there and the doctor said, "Put her in an institution because she's not going to live long and you're going to take away the time from the other children." Roy said, "We will not." He said, "God has sent this child and allowed this for purpose. If we put her away, we'll never know what it is. We'll take her home and we'll love her and we'll trust Him." And He gave us two years. I learned more Scripture in the two years of Robin Elizabeth's life than I've learned all the rest of my life together.

I hid those promises of God in my heart so that I would not sin against Him when He took her back. And He took her back two days before her second birthday and He gave us that peace, that passes all understanding. Then the Lord let us adopt this little Indian girl from Hope Cottage at Dallas, seven months old, Roy's part Indian. That's how we got her. And we took a little abused, afflicted boy in Kentucky, five who had been left to starve in a motel whose parents had beaten him so he had no bridge for his nose, who had an astigmatism in one eye, but we were conditioned to take a child like this because of Robin. We took him home with us and with love and with care and with training and little medical help, he just blossomed like a rose. It was terrific.

Then we went to England with Dr. Billy Graham on his first crusade over there at Herring Arena and we saw a cute little girl, little Scottish girl who was an orphan of divorce and we asked to bring her over on a goodwill tour the next summer and she fell in love with America and asked if we would be her foster parents. So we acquired her. Then Dr. Bob Pierce with WorldVision came and we loved him. What a heart. What a heart for the world for Christ. And he showed us pictures of the little GI babies in Korea. And here we had this little girl and we're all a bunch of such pale faces. And so we decided that she should have a little sister her age to grow up with her. And we asked Dr. Bob Pierce if he would find a screen, a little girl that looked like Dodie, our girl.

He and Dr. Graham were over there and they took this picture of Dodie who was three and they matched her up with a darling little girl named Ini Lee and Dr. Bob Pierce brought her over to us the following summer. Now we had this great international family and the Lord blessed us. He freed me to write, to express my faith and something I'd wanted to do when I was in high school. And I felt His presence so often. I used to go to take a walk in the morning on our big ranch in Chatsworth and I'd go up on this rock and I would pray and I would commune with the Lord and I would feel His presence and the reason it was wonderful. He's blessed and blessed and blessed. And in 1964, 1964 and 1965 ushered in the two hardest years of my life to date.

That little girl, we renamed her, Deborah Lee had just passed 12 and Roy had just nearly died with that spinal fusion that he had in his neck that had to be fused together, the discs. The day that he was off, he caught staph infection and they didn't think they could save him. He was on the critical list for days. The day they took him off, the apple of his eye, Debbie Lee, our little Korean flower, she was a beautiful child. She was Korean. Her mother was Korean. The father was from San Juan, Puerto Rico. And she would come and she would get off those horses riding on that dust and everything on that series we used to make. She would come in and she'd say, "Hi, daddy." When we came home with dark and she said, "Daddy, you look so tired. Come sit down." She'd go get him a cup of coffee.

She'd get a wash rag. She'd wash his face. Then she would massage his hurting neck and then she'd comb his hair. She'd take his boots off. He adored her and it was mutual. And the day he went off of the critical list and was moved to Bel Air Convalescent Hospital, Debbie was killed in a terrible accident coming from Tijuana. She'd gone on a mission that our church had. I was choir director of the church. Little girl was ill, and that's why I wasn't with them. But the bus, the tire blew on it and it veered into the oncoming lane and woman coming about 70 miles an hour in a station wagon. Her mother and four little children and Debbie and her little girlfriend didn't even belong to our church or had just walked to the front for the little things they'd bought in Tijuana.

And this station wagon, when this thing happened, the station wagon came right in onto where Debbie was standing and her little girlfriend was thrown under the steering column and they were killed instantly. It was so hard. And I

had had a beautiful experience in the Holy Spirit two months prior. I know now, I believe with all my heart that the Lord knew this was going to happen. He knew I needed some special undergirding, spiritual undergirding to take this because Roy couldn't do anything.

And He took me through that, a double funeral and He did. He was so present. It's like He said, "Do this and do this and do that." And I was numb. I was numb with shock. It was hard. Humanly, I could not handle that, but God was there and He handled it for me, through me. It's just like He was propelling me all the time, all the time. And you know, I had not had the courage to look upon Robin when she died, but I had to look upon Debbie because I wasn't with her on that bus. And they said I couldn't. And I said, "I just want to check to see if everything's all right. I'm not ..." And the mortician asked our manager, said, "Ask Mrs. Rogers to come in here and look at Debbie. God has helped us do the impossible." And I went in and I was afraid to look almost.

And when I did, I looked at her and all of a sudden I didn't see Debbie. I saw a coat Debbie wore. That's all. Just a coat of flesh that the spirit of my child no longer needed. The only thing I asked God when I gave him my life was to let me live to see each one of my children except Jesus Christ as Savior. That's all. And He had every one of them to that date. And you know, all of a sudden when I saw that, I started to praise God. I started to praise Him and my heart lifted. And for a few minutes, it was as if I was in paradise or wherever with Debbie in the spirit. And I was so happy for her. And I realized that she would never experience anymore, any heartache, any tragedy in her life anymore. She was prayed up.

I had just seen her kneel at our church altar the day before and recommit her life to Jesus Christ. See how faithful He is? And so I was at peace. One year later, one, then He gave me the book, *Dearest Debbie*, to give to WorldVision to help feed other children like Debbie. One year later, that little boy who was abused, who had worked so hard to become normal, who had, who had gone into the army, we didn't think he'd pass bootcamp, Fort Pope, but he got out and they sent him, bless his heart. He called himself the rebel. He was from Kentucky. He'd write and he always signed Sandy the rebel. His name was John David and Roy Jr.'s name was nickname was Dusty. And Roy said if he ever got another boy, call him filthy. So he had the three boys.

But the day that kid made it first class, private first class in Germany, Gelhaus in Germany near Frankfurt, he was talked into doing a ridiculous thing, a dare to chug a lug. Many of you that have been the service know what that is to wet down his stripe, to prove he was a man and he choked to death, killed him. He was engaged to be married in June when he came home on leave and he was going to make the army his career. But Sandy was a Christian. I praise God that my salvation doesn't depend upon my merits, but on the merits of Jesus Christ. Who could stand otherwise? It hurt me so bad because he wanted so to prove himself, but he had proven himself a private first class. And to a lot of boys,

that's like graduating from Yale because he was handicapped and he made it with prayer and determination.

And you know two weeks later, we got the most beautiful letter. He said he thanked us for adopting him into a Christian home. He said he considered it a privilege to serve the United States of America and the armed forces. And he said, "This land believed in God and they believed in Jesus and believed in the Bible and in the Holy Spirit." And he wanted to be a part in helping other lands to keep free so they could worship like they wanted to. That letter came two weeks after he died and it's in our museum with his flag that they presented me at his military funeral. I don't know what people do without faith in God when these things happen because when I was a child, I used to say, "Oh God, please don't you ever take my mother away before you take me. Don't you ever take one of my children before you take me. I can't stand it and I'll die. Don't ever do that, Lord. Don't do that to me." But you know what? He has proven to me that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Roger Marsh:

Dale Evans Rogers testimony reminds us that faith isn't the absence of pain, it's the presence of God in the midst of it. Even when life brings unimaginable loss, Jesus Christ walks with us through those every valleys. You are listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and today we featured a powerful testimony from the late Dale Evans Rogers about trusting God through heartbreak. If you missed any portion of today's broadcast or if you'd like to share it with someone who may be walking through their own season of grief, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) or [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has an invitation for students all across the country to reflect on this powerful question. How has faith shaped our nation and how is God calling you to help shape what comes next? High schoolers and middle school students alike are encouraged to reflect on how faith has influenced the founding and development of our nation and how they believe God is calling them to live with purpose, responsibility, and hope in the years ahead in our special America's 250th anniversary essay contest.

Now through this initiative, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute aims to engage and equip young people to better understand and appreciate the role of biblical truth, prayer, and faith in America's founding and to carry those principles forward into the future. For more contest information, go to [drjamesdobson.org/usa250](http://drjamesdobson.org/usa250). That's [drjamesdobson.org/usa](http://drjamesdobson.org/usa) and the numbers 250. Essay submission deadline is April 30th. Winners will be announced by the end of May and students will be competing for cash prizes up to \$2,500.

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to sharing testimonies like the one you heard today, stories of faith that continue to inspire new generations of listeners. There's a good possibility that today was the first time you ever heard the testimony from Dale Evans Rogers, and your support makes programs like today's possible. These podcasts are made possible through the generous partnership of friends like you who believe in bringing timeless truth to today's families.

If you benefit from the daily encouragement you receive from Family Talk, you're invited to join in this work of sharing these remarkable stories of God's faithfulness with families who need hope. Your gift of any amount truly makes a difference. To make a secure donation online, go to [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net), that's [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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