



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Going Home for Christmas

Guest(s): Roger Marsh

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and we are so glad you've joined us for this Christmas Eve edition of our broadcast. Whether your family has already gotten into the gift giving, as many families do on the day of Christmas Eve, or perhaps you're heading out to church worship services or maybe heading back from church worship services right now, we are so grateful that you've joined us for this special day where we commemorate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. One of the beautiful things about the advent season is it literally is twofold. On the first part, we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our Messiah, whose birth was foretold nearly 700 years prior by the prophet Isaiah. But secondly, we also remember during the advent season that in the same way the early church was anticipating the birth of their Messiah.

Today, the church triumphant, here in 2025, is celebrating the return of Jesus Christ and we are anticipating His return. Gosh, when you look at the headlines all around us, it seems like that return could be happening any moment and we are so very, very grateful. On today's edition to Family Talk, we're going to enjoy one of Dr. Dobson's favorite traditions, which was sitting down every month and writing a personal letter to each of his ministry friends, and what you're about to hear is a letter that I read from Dr. Dobson's hand a couple of years ago that is more poignant even today as we remember that this is the first Christmas celebration that we will be commemorating without our founder and chairman, Dr. James Dobson, who went home to be with the Lord on Thursday morning, August the 21st. I encourage you to and thank you in advance for your prayers for his wife, Shirley, daughter, Danae, son, Ryan and daughter-in-law, Laura and their two children, Luci and Lincoln, as they are preparing for Christmas this year without dad and well Jimpa as he was known to his grandchildren as well.

So we miss you Dr. Dobson, but the memories do live on. As a matter of fact, one of the things that we love about the newsletters that we send out each month is reading those letters that Dr. Dobson loved to write. He loved to share stories from his life, his reflections on faith and the moments that literally shaped who he was. Perhaps you have some fond memories of receiving his letters in your mailbox. I know how much I've enjoyed reading his heartfelt

stories all throughout the years. A few Christmases ago, I had the honor and privilege of reading to you one of those letters. It was written back at Christmastime 2022, and it literally is the perfect story to help prepare our hearts for Christmas. If you have ever been apart from a loved one at the holidays or maybe you've been thinking about it, I can still think back to the first year I worked in broadcasting.

I was privileged to get my first radio job back in July of 1983, and I was living in San Luis Obispo, California, which is what they call the Central Coast. It's halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. And as I was preparing for the Thanksgiving holiday, our family always got together. It was a small gathering because my mom and dad were both only children, so we had my dad's parents, my mom's mother, that was it, No aunts, uncles, cousins. And for whatever reason that year I remember I was new to my job. I had to work the overnight shift. I was really starting out in radio and on Thanksgiving Day I spoke with my parents and we agreed that it was the best for me to stay in San Luis Obispo on Thanksgiving Day and have Thanksgiving with some friends. And I remember calling home on Thanksgiving at the celebration and I got on the phone with my grandmother who I love more than life itself.

She was a huge influence on me, my mom's mom, and we were on the phone and she was talking about the celebration and everything that was together, and finally she said, "Roger, we really miss you here. It's just not right that you're not here." And I thought, "Oh grandma, don't worry about it. I'll be there next year." And wouldn't you know it that 11 months later, the Lord called my grandmother home and the last Thanksgiving memory, holiday memory, Christmas memory I have of my grandmother was not being there. And so being home for the holidays, I really felt Dr. Dobson's angst when he was sharing this story that he included in his 2022 Christmas letter. It really is the perfect story to help prepare our hearts for Christmas Day. It's about a young soldier trying to make it home for the holidays facing impossible odds until something truly remarkable happens that could only be explained as divine intervention.

So if you have a moment whether you are wrapping some last minute gifts or putting the finishing touches on your Christmas dinner or maybe just taking a quiet moment to rest before the big Christmas day celebration, I encourage you to settle in with us here on this Christmas Eve edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and let me share this beautiful letter with you written in Dr. Dobson's own words.

Going Home for Christmas by Dr. James Dobson. Greetings to you at this wonderful time of year to help us celebrate the yuletide season. I want to tell you a Christmas story as I lived it in 1958. Now, you might find it difficult to believe what you're about to read, but it is absolutely true. In April of that year, I had just turned 22 and graduated from college a month later. I was excited about the future and was anxious to be able to get on with my life.

I'd been accepted as a graduate student at the University of Southern California and planned to begin working that fall on a Ph.D. That is how I would spend the next four years. I was also in love with a pretty homecoming queen named Shirley Deere, who was in her senior year of college. We were not engaged yet, but that seemed to be where we were headed. Then something happened that turned my plans upside down. I received a letter from a colonel at the local draft board. He ordered me to come to a federal building in downtown Los Angeles. Three weeks later there I would take a physical exam to determine my fitness for the draft. The colonel sounded like he meant business, so I decided I had better comply. When I arrived on the appointed morning, at least 400 men were already standing in line. They had received the same letter.

We were ordered to remove all of our clothes except for our shorts and shoes. We snaked along from station to station so technicians could test our eyes, ears, nose, hearts, lungs and feet. Finally, we were told to turn our heads to one side and cough and guys who have been in the military or played organized sports will know exactly what that means. We were then yelled at a lot, which was rather humiliating, and then we took something like an IQ test. Presently, a sergeant with a bad attitude came out and told some of us to enter a big room. "Well", I thought, "this must be good. I've been chosen for something." Then the sergeant walked to the front of the room and said, "You guys have been classified 1A. For the next two years, your a's will belong to the army." He didn't ask if we had other plans.

He just said, "Get your affairs in order. Within 10 days, you are going to be drafted." I thought there must be some way I could keep from being tied up for two years. Well, I quickly found it. I discovered that the National Guard had a program whereby enlistee could spend six months on active duty in the regular army and then they would serve for seven and a half more years in the reserves. That was an eight year obligation, which seemed like forever, but at least I would be at home and I could go on with my graduate education. So the next day, I hurried down and joined the National Guard. I was ordered to come to Fort Ord on August 10th in Northern California. So I took an all-night Greyhound bus on August 9th and the next morning, presented myself for induction into the army for basic training.

They shaved our heads bald as a billiard ball and yelled at us for the next nine weeks. We marched and we fired rifles and pulled 12 hour KP duty and learned to fight. That brought us to the middle of December when we were given a 14 day pass. Most of the guys were excited about going home for Christmas, but unfortunately, I had no place to go. I graduated from college and couldn't go back there. I wanted to be with my parents in Bethany, Oklahoma, a suburb of Oklahoma City, but I had no money because privates like me were only paid \$78 a month and I certainly couldn't afford to fly. Well, then I heard about something called the M-A-T-S MATS program, which stands for Military Air Transport Service. Anybody on active duty could go to a military airport and if you found a plane going your way, the captain might let you fly with him.

So that's what I did. I hung around an airport and finally a lieutenant showed up and announced that he was flying to Oklahoma City, which is exactly where I wanted to go. I asked him if I could fly with him and he said, "Yep, there's a plane on the runway. Just get on it." I picked up my gear and went out to the runway where an old DC 3 was sitting. The DC 3's were the workhorses of World War II, and this one looked like it was pretty much worn out. There were seven other guys who were already on board. I didn't know them. I didn't want to know them. I just wanted to get to Oklahoma City. So I climbed on this plane and it was primitive. The seats were down very close to the floor and they were made of steel and ice cold.

We all sat side by side with our knees up near our faces. Before long, the captain got on board and fired up the engines and we taxied down the runway and took off. We flew for a couple of hours and encountered an incredible blizzard that blew us all over the sky, and then something terrifying happened. The captain spoke to us on the intercom and said, "I have to tell you guys we have a mechanical problem with one of the engines." It turned out to be an oil leak. Do you know what can happen when oil runs onto a hot engine? Fire was likely, and we all knew it. The captain minced no words. He said, "We're going to do what we can, but we may have to jump from the plane." And then he said, "There's a stack of parachutes in the back. Get one and put it on. When I ring this bell three times, you'll have several seconds to get out of this plane."

So the cargo door was open and the blizzard seemed to blow through the fuselage. I had never worn a parachute and I didn't know how to buckle one much less how to jump from a plane and in freezing weather. There was only one guy among the eight of us who had jumped before and he told us how to buckle ourselves into the chutes. By then, it was two o'clock in the morning and we were flying through snow, sleet, rain, and wind. We had no idea what laid below us. It could have been a lake or a church with a steeple. There could have been trees or a highway. Furthermore, each of us would probably be alone because when people jump from a plane, they inevitably get separated. You don't know where you are.

I didn't even know what state I was in, and so we buckled up and waited for the captain to ring. I don't mind telling you I was scared and I was doing some serious praying. Thankfully, the pilot was able to land at a military airfield somewhere in Oklahoma. The plane rolled to a stop and the other guys and I exited the DC 3. Then I encountered a new set of problems. I stepped into blackness. There was no airport, no bus station, no lights. The whole town must have shut down hours before. I didn't even know which direction Oklahoma City was. The men I was flying with got off the plane and then basically disappeared. I never saw them or the lieutenant again. I encountered a guy standing under a streetlight and asked him if there was a highway that came through town and if so, where was it?

He mumbled something about a road that a way pointing at what I thought was south. Well, I finally found a lonely paved road, but there were very few cars on

it. Those that came by were going at least 60 miles an hour and the drivers weren't about to pick up a shadowy guy standing in the rain at three o'clock in the morning with his thumb in the air. I wouldn't have stopped, would you? I began thinking about spending the night in a muddy field all alone and freezing, and I did some more praying. Then I saw an old car rumbling toward me. Unbelievably, the driver pulled over and waited for me to catch up with him. "Where are you going?" He asked. "Oklahoma City." I answered. "Me too." He said. "Get in." I threw my gear in the backseat and off we went. We drove about a mile and passed a big white sign in a field that read Oklahoma State Prison. Do not pick up hitchhikers"

We drove the rest of that night arriving at dawn. The driver asked me where I wanted to be let out. I said, "I don't know." He said, "How about the bus station?" I replied, "That'll do." It was nine o'clock in the morning by then and I'd been up all night and had gone through a harrowing experience. My clothes were still damp. I picked up my gear and I went into the depot. It was nearly deserted. There was only one guy behind the counter. I spoke to him and he looked up as I said, "I need to get to Bethany, which is 15 miles west. Can you get me there?" "No." He said, "We don't go there. In fact, there's no bus service at all to Bethany."

What was I going to do then? Nobody in the whole world knew where I was. I had some change in my pocket and I went over to a phone booth and put in some coins. I called my parents, but no one answered. That figures, I thought, everything else had gone wrong. So I picked up my stuff and started walking toward Bethany. Again, that was 15 miles away. It would've taken me at least five hours while carrying that heavy bag to get home. I was walking on the west side of the street and feeling totally alone. After an hour, I was very weary. Now ladies and gentlemen, you are not going to believe this part of my story, but I can assure you it really happened. As I was walking along carrying this heavy pack, I looked ahead on the road and saw one lone car coming toward me.

As it came closer, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was my mother. She was 12 miles from home driving on a road she rarely traveled. Can there be any doubt that the Lord led her to that time and place? In fact, it began to feel that despite my troubles, there was a divine presence traveling with me. If my timing had been off by even just a few seconds, or if my mother had taken a more familiar road, this exhausted soldier would've trudged for many hours on Route 66. I recognized mom behind the steering wheel as she drew closer, but she didn't see me. I began waving my arms and shouting "Mom," but she didn't look my way until she was parallel with me. Then suddenly she turned and she saw me. My mother made a big U-turn at the next intersection and came rushing back.

We greeted each other right there in the middle of the road. We were so excited to see each other as I tried to explain what I was doing alone on an Oklahoma City street at 10 o'clock in the morning. She thought I was still at Fort Ord. She took me home to the house that I'd grown up in and to the little bedroom where I'd spent my childhood. That was one of the happiest

Christmases ever as I celebrated the birth of the Christ child with my mom and dad. My mother was a fantastic southern cook and she prepared three delicious meals a day. We had such a wonderful time. We played table games and my dad and I watched NFL Football. It wasn't the Super Bowl in those days, but it was a championship game, and just being with them after having been in a pretty hostile environment for quite a while was a wonderful thing.

My dad and I went hunting for bobwhite quail. We brought the birds home and my mother cooked them up. It was just a marvelous time. When the leave time was over, I caught another MATS plane back to California. This DC 3 had a heater and it stayed airborne. I made it to Los Angeles where I spent New Year's Day with Shirley. We were married two years later, and that was 62 years ago, and we are still enjoying every day together. Thank you for letting me share my Christmas story with you. You're welcome to pass it on to others who might enjoy it. James C. Dobson, founder and chairman, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Well, Dr. James Dobson's story reminds us that even in our most difficult circumstances, we are never truly alone. You're listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and which you've just heard is me reading one of Dr. Dobson's treasured newsletters from several Christmases ago. Now, by the way, if you'd like to share this program with someone special on this Christmas Eve or if you'd like to listen to it again yourself, remember, you can always find all of our audio at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. as we gather with loved ones either tonight or tomorrow morning to celebrate the birth of our Savior, let's remember that Christmas is ultimately about Emmanuel, God with us. From the gospel of John chapter one, verse 14, we read, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." how grateful we are that God did not stay distant.

He entered our world as a baby in a manger because He loves us that much. And just as He guided that young soldier through our harrowing night and led his mother to find him on an empty road, God is still present in our lives today, meeting us in our moments of fear and uncertainty with His perfect provision. Now, if you've been blessed by programs like the one you just heard all throughout this year, remember that our 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection is now available where we have gathered the most meaningful and impactful conversations from Family Talk onto a special six-CD set, and believe me this year, the 2025 edition of the Best of Broadcast Collection is more meaningful because of the fact that of course, Dr. Dobson has gone home to be with the Lord. And this year's edition of the Best of Broadcast Collection is a memorial, a tribute if you will, to the life and legacy of Dr. James Dobson.

It features programs all the way back to the beginning, literally day one, May 3rd, 2010 when Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk first hit the airwaves. You'll get to hear that maiden voyage if you will, on the air. You'll also get an opportunity to hear some of the final programs that Dr. Dobson had ever recorded. We dig back into the archives back to 1984 for a conversation he had with Chuck Colson

about the use and abuse of power. You'll also hear the memories that we shared just a couple of weeks ago when Dr. and Mrs. Dobson got to visit the memorial at Normandy and what a well-received program that was. 18 programs in all including the final program Dr. Dobson ever recorded in studio and the final words Dr. Dobson ever spoke into a microphone here in our JDFI recording booth as well. It's a very, very special keepsake that we know you'll want to have.

Now, we'll be happy to send you a copy of the Family Talk 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount. In support of the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and today being Christmas Eve, we encourage you to handle that transaction online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. And keep in mind, this is a keepsake one that you'll want to have for years to come and might possibly even be the kind of gift that someone wouldn't mind receiving as a New Year's present here in 2026 because you'd be receiving it around that time. I encourage you to go to drjamesdobson.org, make a gift of any amount, and as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount, we encourage you to request a copy of the Best of Broadcast Collection. And please keep in mind that our James Dobson Memorial Matching Grant is in place.

So every gift you make in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute will be doubled now through December 31st. Again, go to drjamesdobson.org to request your copy of the 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection, a memorial tribute to the life and legacy of Dr. James Dobson. Or if you prefer, you can send your request through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Once again, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Or if it's easier, just use the initials JDFI for short, P.O. box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. And as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, I want to take a moment to thank you for your prayers and your faithful support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and for Family Talk.

In particular, your prayers and generous gifts that made it possible for us to continue strengthening families all across America with biblical truth and practical wisdom. Thank you for standing with us in this mission. Your partnership means more than you know, and please know that Dr. James Dobson's heart's desire was that the ministry of the JDFI would outlive him. And here we are continuing on honoring the legacy of Dr. James Dobson and the great work that God did through him during his lifetime, and continuing to bless families with programs like these, with blog posts, with videos, with devotionals, and some new resources that you're going to see in 2026 as well. So thank you from our family to yours for all of your prayers and support, knowing that the ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute can and will continue into the next year and beyond.

I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we wish you and your family a blessed and very merry Christmas. May you experience the peace and joy that only comes from knowing the one whose birth we celebrate, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And be sure to join us again next time right here for a special Christmas Day edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust, for the family you love.

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

Here's today's Dr. Dobson Minute with Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: It was on December 23rd, 1818 in the small Austrian village of Oberndorf. The father Joseph Mohr had begun preparing the music for the Christmas Eve service at his local church. He visualized shepherds in a field with stars lighting up the sky around them. He imagined a small stable outside of Bethlehem and the cries of a newborn filling the night air. All the while the words flowed from his pen. Early the next morning he brought the poem to his organist, Franz Gruber and asked him to put a tune to it. A few hours later, the task was accomplished and so it was on Christmas Eve, 1818 that Father Mohr sang tenor and Franz Gruber sang bass as the tiny town of Oberndorf heard for the first time a simple new song. They called it "Stille Nacht." You and I know it as Silent Night.

Roger Marsh: For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.

Hello, friends, Roger Marsh here. In today's rapidly changing world, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute remains committed to our founding mission to preserve and promote the institution of family and the biblical principles on which it is based. Thanks to your prayers and faithful support, we're reaching millions through our daily Family Talk broadcasts, online resources and policy initiatives. As President Reagan wisely said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction," and that's why we are working tirelessly to uphold faith, strengthen families, and protect our God-given freedoms. Thank you for standing with us in this mission. Together we're making a difference for generations to come.