



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Tiny Foot

Guest(s): Dr. James Dobson

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, in recent years we have witnessed historic changes that many of us never thought we would ever see in our lifetimes. In June 2022, on the 24th day of the month, after nearly 50 years of prayer and dedicated effort from millions of Americans, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in the landmark *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision. This represented an unprecedented victory for the pro-life movement. It also opened the door for states to protect unborn children like never before. And yet as we celebrated the third anniversary of this milestone earlier this year, we realize our work is far from complete. Hearts and minds still need to be changed and women facing difficult circumstances need our support and our compassion more than ever before. Today we're going to share a letter written by our very own Dr. James Dobson.

In it, he shares the story of a doctor faced with an impossible choice in a delivery room many years ago. This account comes from Dr. Frederick Loomis who practiced medicine in the state of California during a time when medical options were far more limited than they are today. His experience speaks to the profound value of every human life and perhaps especially when that life doesn't exactly match our expectations of "perfect." As you listen to Dr. Dobson reading this letter, I encourage you to listen with an open heart, whether you're driving to work or maybe doing some dishes or laundry at home, or just taking a quiet moment for yourself, this story will remind you why we must continue to advocate for the sanctity of human life. It shows how one decision to protect a vulnerable life can have ripple effects that touch countless others in beautiful and unexpected ways.

This program that you're about to hear is part of our 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection, and I have to admit, as we were reviewing the material to determine which programs would make the cut for the 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection, it did bring a tear to just about everyone's eye to hear Dr. Dobson reading this letter once again knowing that he received his eternal reward and went home to be with the Lord on August the 21st of this year. I'll have more information by the way, at the end of the broadcast on how you can receive a copy of the 2025

Best of Broadcast Collection and have your gift to support the ministry of the JDFI doubled, but right now, let's sit back and listen as Dr. Dobson reads his letter out loud, a program we call "The Tiny Foot" here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you have time right now to read something simply for enjoyment? I doubt it. Nevertheless, I'm suggesting that you take a few moments just for yourself. You do deserve a break today. Situate yourself in your most comfortable chair, perhaps with a cup of hot cider and a few low-fat cookies and read the inspiring words of Dr. Frederick Loomis. This obstetrician's story is included in an outstanding collection of writings entitled *Christmas In My Heart*, compiled by Dr. Joe Wheeler. If this little piece doesn't light your fire, you have wet wood. These are Dr. Loomis's own words, recalling the delivery of a baby many years ago before cesarean procedures were commonly used to rescue infants at risk. He called his story "The Tiny Foot," and this is what he said.

Two years after I came to California that came to my office one day, a fragile young woman expecting her first baby. Her history was not good from an emotional standpoint, though she had come from a fine family. I built her up as well as I could and found her increasingly wholesome and interesting as time went on, partly because of the effort she was making to be calm and patient and to keep her emotional and nervous reactions under control. One month before her baby was due, her routine examination showed that her baby was in a breach position. As a rule, the baby's head is in the lower part of the uterus for months before delivery, not because it is heavier and sinks in the surrounding fluid, but simply because it fits more comfortably in that position. There is no routine spontaneous turning of all babies at the seventh or eighth month, as is so generally supposed, but the occasional baby found in the breach position in the last month, not infrequently changes to the normal vertex position with the head down by the time it is ready to be born so that only about one baby in 25 is born in the breach position.

This is fortunate as the death rate of breach babies is comparatively high because of the difficulty in delivering the after coming head and the imperative need of delivering it rather quickly after the body is born. At that moment, the cord becomes compressed between the baby's hard little head and the mother's bony pelvis. When no oxygen reaches the baby's bloodstream, it inevitably dies in a few short minutes. Everyone in the delivery room is tense except the mother herself in a breach delivery, especially if it is a first baby when the difficulty is greater. The mother is usually quietly asleep or almost so. The case I was speaking of was a complete breach. The baby's legs and feet being folded under it tailor fashion in contrast to the frank breach in which the thighs and legs are folded back on the baby's body like a jackknife, the little rear end backing its way into the world first of all.

The hardest thing for the attending doctor to do with any breach delivery is to keep his hands away from it until the natural forces of expulsion have thoroughly dilated the firm maternal structures that delay its progress. I waited as patiently as I could sending frequent messages to the excited family in the

corridor outside. At last, the time had come and I gently drew down one little foot. I grasped the other, but for some reason I could not understand, it would not come down beside the first one. I pulled again gently enough, but with a little force with light pressure on the abdomen from above by my assisting nurse and the baby's body moved down just enough for me to see that it was a little girl and then to my consternation, I saw that the other foot would never be beside the first one.

The entire thigh from the hip to the knee was missing and that one foot could never reach below the opposite knee, and the baby girl was to suffer this, a curious defect that I had never seen before, nor have I since. There followed the hardest struggle I have ever had with myself. I knew what a dreadful effect it would have upon the unstable nervous system of the mother. I felt sure that the family would almost certainly impoverish itself in taking the child to every famous orthopedist in the world whose achievements might offer a ray of hope. Most of all, I saw this little girl sitting sadly by herself while other girls laughed and danced and ran and played, and then I suddenly realized that there was something that would save every pang but one, and that one thing was in my power. One breach baby in 10 dies in delivery because it is not delivered rapidly enough and now if only, I did not hurry. If I could slow my hand, I could make myself delay those few short moments. It would not be an easy delivery anyway.

No one in all this world would ever know. The mother after the first shock of grief would probably be glad she had lost a child so sadly handicapped. In a year or two, she would try again and this tragic fate would never be repeated. Don't bring this suffering upon them the small voice within me said, "This baby has never taken a breath. Don't let her ever take one. You probably can't get it out in time anyway. Don't hurry. Don't be a fool and bring this thing upon them. Suppose your conscience does hurt a little. Can't you stand it better than they can? Maybe your conscience will hurt worse if you do get it out in time." I motion to the nurse for the warm sterile towel that is always ready for me in a breach delivery to wrap around the baby's body so that the stimulation of the cold air of the outside world may not induce a sudden expansion of the baby's chest causing the aspiration of fluid or mucus that might bring death.

But this time the towel was only to conceal from the attending nurses that which my eyes alone had seen. With the touch of the pitiful little foot in my hand, a pang of sorrow for the baby's future swept through me and my decision was made. I glanced at the clock. Three of the allocated seven or eight minutes had already gone. Every eye in the room was upon me and I could feel the tension in their eagerness to do instantly what I asked, totally unaware of what I was feeling. I hoped they could not possibly detect the tension of my own struggle. At that moment, these nurses had seen me deliver dozens of breach babies successfully. Yes, and they had seen me fail too. Now they were going to see me fail again. For the first time in my medical life, I was deliberately discarding what I had been taught was right for something that I felt sure was better.

I slipped my hand beneath the towel to feel the pulsations of the baby's cord, a certain index of its condition. Two to three minutes more would be enough. So that I might seem to be doing something, I drew the baby down a little lower to split out the arms, the usual next step, and as I did so, the little pink foot on the good side bobbed out from its protecting towel and pressed firmly against my slowly moving hand, the hand into who's keeping the safety of the mother and the baby had been entrusted. There was a sudden convulsive movement of the baby's body, an actual feeling of strength and life and vigor. It was too much. I couldn't do it. I delivered the baby with her pitiful little leg. I told the family the next day and with a catch in my voice, I told the mother. Every foreboding came true.

The mother was at a hospital for several months. I saw her once or twice and she looked like a wrath of her former self. I heard of them indirectly from time to time. They'd been to Rochester, Minnesota. They'd been to Chicago and to Boston. Finally, I lost track of them all together. As the years went on, I blamed myself bitterly for not having had the strength to yield to my temptation. Through the many years that I have been here, there's developed in our hospital a pretty custom of staging and elaborate Christmas party each year for the employees, the nurses, and the doctors on the staff. There's always a beautifully decorated tree on the stage of our little auditorium. The girls spend weeks in preparation. We have so many difficult things to do during the year, so much discipline, and so many of the stern realities of life that we have set aside this one day to touch upon the emotional and the spiritual side.

It is almost like going to an impressive church service as each year we dedicate ourselves anew to the year ahead. This past year, the arrangement was somewhat changed. The tree on one side of the stage had been sprayed with silver paint and was hung with scores of gleaming silver and tinsel ornaments without a trace of color anywhere and with no lights hung upon the tree itself. It's shown but faintly in the dimly lighted auditorium. Every doctor of the staff who could possibly be there was in his seat. The first rows were reserved for the nurses and in the moment the procession entered, each girl in uniform, each one crowned by her nurse's cap, her badge of office. Around their shoulders were their blue red cross capes. One end tossed back to show the deep red lining. We rose as one man to do them honor and as the last one reached her seat and we settled in our places again, the organ began the opening notes of one of the oldest of our carols.

Slowly down the middle aisle marching from the back of the auditorium came 20 other girls singing softly. Our own nurses in full uniform each holding high a lighted candle while through the auditorium floated the familiar strains of Silent Night. We were on our feet again. Instantly I could have killed anyone who spoke to me then because I couldn't have answered and by the time they reached their seats I couldn't see. And then a great blue floodlight at the back was turned on very slowly, gradually covering the tree with increasing splendor, brighter and brighter until every ornament was almost a flame. On the opposite side of the stage, a curtain was slowly drawn and we saw three lovely young

musicians all in shimmering white evening gowns. They played very softly in unison with the organ: a harp, a cello, and a violin. I'm quite sure I was not the only old sissy there whose eyes were filled with tears.

I have always liked the harp and I love to watch the grace of a skillful player. I was especially fascinated by this young harpist. She played extraordinarily well as if she loved it. Her slender fingers flickered across the strings and as the nurses sang, her face made beautiful by a mass of auburn hair was upturned as if the world that moment were a beautiful and holy place. I waited when the short program was over to congratulate the chief nurse on the unusual effects she had arranged, and as I sat alone there came running down the aisle a woman whom I did not know. She came to me with arms outstretched. "Oh, you saw her," she cried. "You must have recognized your baby. That was my daughter who played the harp and I saw you watching her. Don't you remember the little girl who was born with only one good leg 17 years ago? We tried everything at first, but now she has a whole artificial leg on that side, but you would never know it would you. She can walk, she can swim. She can almost dance. Best of all though, through all the years when she couldn't do those things, she learned to use her hands so wonderfully. She's going to be one of the world's great harpists. She enters the university this year at 17. She's my whole life and now she's so happy and here she is." As we spoke, this sweet young girl had quietly approached us. Her eyes glowing and now she stood beside me. "This is your first doctor, my dear, our doctor." Her mother said her voice trembled. I could see her literally swept back as I was through all the years of heartache to the day when I told her what she had to face.

"He was the first one to tell me about you. He brought you to me." Impulsively, I took the girl in my arms across her warm young shoulder I saw the creeping clock of the delivery room of 17 years before. I lived again those awful moments when her life was in my hand when I had decided on deliberate infanticide. I held her away from me and I looked at her. "You never will know my dear." I said, "You never will know, nor will anyone else in all the world just what tonight has meant to me. Go back to your harp for a moment, please and play Silent Night for me alone. I have a load on my shoulders that no one has ever seen, a load that only you can take away." Her mother sat beside me and quietly took my hand as her daughter played. Perhaps she knew what was on my mind and as the last strains of "silent night, holy night" faded again, I think I found the answer and the comfort I had waited for so long.

I read Dr. Loomis's story at dawn this morning as tears streamed down my face. When Shirley awoke a few minutes later, I shared it with her and she quietly dabbed at her eyes with a hanky. We both thought of the 30 million unborn babies who though entirely healthy and brimming with human potential have been denied the opportunity to live and love and learn. Undoubtedly among them were future musicians and scientists and teachers and ministers and homemakers who were never given a chance. What a tragic loss to the human family. Dr. Loomis's story also spoke volumes about the worth of every child, especially the handicapped and needy. Jesus once referred to such individuals

as the least of these, my brothers. Each of them is precious. Since my years of service on the staff of a large children's hospital, my greatest respect and admiration have been reserved for the mothers and fathers like those in the story who have devoted their lives to the task of raising a physically or intellectually challenged boy or girl.

If that is your circumstance today, you may not receive the acclaim that you deserve in this life. The media and the world outside may never even know that you're there, but the Lord has seen your sacrifice. If you remain true to your calling, he will say those incredible words on resurrection morning, "well done thou good and faithful servant." There's another profound lesson tucked within the story that we've read. It focuses on God's sovereign will, which is preeminent whether or not we understand or agree with it. Dr. Loomis almost overlooked that truth. He apparently concluded that providence had made a disastrous mistake, tempting him to take matters into his own hands, but there was a purpose, a divine plan, and folding in that delivery room that he failed to comprehend. We simply must not attempt to play God in matters of life and death, which are the exclusive prerogatives of the Creator.

Our obligation is to trust Him even when the pieces don't fit. God makes sense even when He doesn't make sense. There's an order, an intelligent design to the universe even when everything seems to be swirling out of control. Jesus came to bring life and life more abundantly to whosoever would simply believe on his name. By His advent, by His death, 33 years later on a cruel Roman cross and by His resurrection, we are adopted into His family and given the promise of eternal life. What a blessing. Indeed, every good and perfect gift is linked to that miraculous event in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago. All the transcendent values in which we believe including our reverence for human life find their origins in the words of the master. Even the story we just read evoked these eternal themes, which is why I shared it with you. I don't know if Dr. Loomis was a believer in the lordship of Jesus Christ, although I think he must have been. His compassion for a tiny deformed baby certainly reflects the teachings of the One who said to His disciples, "suffer the little children to come unto me."

Roger Marsh:

Oh, it's so good to hear the voice of Dr. James Dobson yet again sharing one of his powerful monthly letters on this edition of Family Talk. If you want to hear the program again in its entirety, or if there's someone you know who would love to hear this and would benefit from hearing Doctor read this letter, you can go to drjamesdobson.org and forward them a copy of this program. Again, we call it "The Tiny Foot," and it's a part of our Best of Broadcast Collection. We also encourage you to explore the many resources available on our website at drjamesdobson.org, including articles and broadcasts about the sanctity of human life. You'll find links to pregnancy resource centers in your area and other ways to get involved in protecting life. As one of our staff members internally likes to refer to Dr. Dobson, he calls him the William Wilberforce of the pro-life movement for really sounding the clarion call to get the church involved in fighting for the unborn.

You can read those resources and hear them as well when you go to drjamesdobson.org. And at the start of today's program, I mentioned that the broadcast you just heard is part of our 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection, and we would love to send you this inspiring collection as our heartfelt thank you for your gift of any amount in support of the JDFI today. Now, we've carefully selected these programs because of their timeless messages and life-changing impact, and they literally run the gamut. All the way back in the archives we went to find the first program for Family Talk, which was broadcast on May the third, 2010. You'll also hear the very last interview that Dr. Dobson recorded in the studio that happened in March of this year, and the final words that Doctor Spoken to a microphone here in the JDFI studios and many, many other programs as well.

To request your copy, go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast and please keep in mind that we have a special opportunity just for you that will allow your gift to be doubled. There's literally never been a better time to give because of the historic Dr. James Dobson Memorial Matching Grant. Thanks to this arrangement, your gift will be matched and therefore doubled in size and impact through December 31st of this year. That means a \$100 gift would become \$200, a \$500 gift would become \$1000. A \$50,000 gift would become \$100,000. Just imagine the difference your doubled gift will make between now and the end of the year. Every gift given by members of our Faithful listening family will be matched dollar for dollar by some wonderfully generous friends in our ministry. So if you gave a donation earlier this year and you'd like to capitalize on this match, I encourage you to give a gift online at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your tax deductible donation 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, that's JDFI, the initials for the James Dobson Family Institute. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949.

Every day, we strive to defend the sanctity of human life and support those making difficult decisions. We reach out to families facing unexpected circumstances. We advocate for the unborn and provide resources for those in need, and your partnership makes all that possible. So thank you again for considering a year-end donation to support our ministry when you go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcasts. Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening today. On behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the JDFI, we're grateful for your ongoing support and be sure to join us again next time right here for another Best of Broadcast 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.