

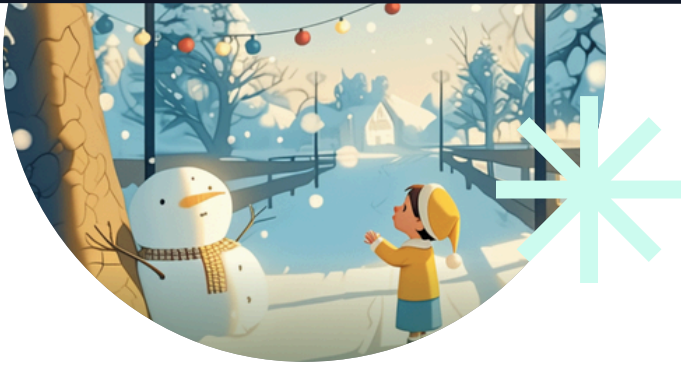
A 9-DAY HOLIDAY SERIES



The Unbreakable Spirit of Christmas

How to experience the resilient power of Jesus during the holidays and beyond.

The Spirit of Idealism



How do I triumph over the obstacles I face in life?

When seeking to define what a spirit of idealism might look like, search no further than this unexpected woman in Scripture:

A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely.” But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away, saying, “She is bothering us with all her begging.” She came and worshiped him, pleading again, “Lord, help me!” Jesus responded, “It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.” She replied, “That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table.”

“Dear woman,” Jesus said to her, “your faith is great. Your request is granted.” And her daughter was instantly healed.

— MATTHEW 15:22-28 NLT

The woman in this passage was a Gentile, which simply means she was not of Jewish descent. God had designated the Jews as his chosen people, promising that the Messiah would come from them ([Isaiah 42:6-7](#), [Genesis 12:3](#)). Though it may have felt

like it, Jesus was not rejecting the Gentile woman, but rather telling her that the Jewish people would have the opportunity to know him first so that they could share God's message of salvation with people of all nations.

This makes the woman's faith even more extraordinary. There were many reasons to believe that Jesus wouldn't help her and her daughter, but she believed anyway.

The point of this passage, and others like it, is not the dramatic imagery of exorcist-like demon possession but rather the profound level of supernatural activity that Jesus subdued to smooth the path for those who would believe. This path is one of faith, which the Gentile woman exercised to bring healing to her daughter. What can we learn from her?

The unbreakable spirit of idealism

This passage vividly illustrates how our faith grows more powerful when we are resilient. This resilience comes from **spiritual idealism, the belief that—regardless of obstacles—sustained faith will always triumph.**

The Gentile woman faced three main obstacles:

- 1 **Silence from Jesus** ("But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word.")
- 2 **Rejection by others** ("She is bothering us with all her begging.")
- 3 **A challenge from Jesus** ("It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.")

Despite these tests of her faith, the woman's belief strengthened her resolve. Her idealism shines through in her response: "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table."

This act of faith—refusing to give up and continuing to believe despite many reasons not to—moved the heart of Jesus. He responded, "Dear woman, your faith is great. Your request is granted."

The spirit of idealism in *Spirited*

In the 2022 movie ***Spirited***, we see this same fighting spirit of faith as the characters battle against cynicism—a distrust in the existence of goodness. Cynicism is a destructive force that steals our idealism. The consequence of it is that we lose our joy and the belief that our lives have purpose.

The movie shows individuals once shaped by distrust who rediscover their hope and purpose. Like the Gentile woman, they develop the conviction that idealism isn't naivety but courage—the act of believing in the power of goodness even in the face of obstacles.

How do we apply this today?

We live in an **increasingly cynical world** where **trust continues to erode** at an alarming rate. Fighting this cynicism with faith restores our sense of idealism. Faith increases our capacity to hope and strengthens our resolve as we pursue the destiny to which God has called us.

Like the Gentile woman in Matthew 15, we must see dark times as temporary and God's power to lead us into a beautiful life as permanent. This is what it means to possess the spirit of idealism.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- In what areas have silence, rejection, or challenge from others made me doubt or feel tempted to give up?
- How have the cynicism and distrust in the world affected my faith and what can I do to fight to rebuild it?

WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

- Study people in Scripture who manifest the spirit of idealism, allowing their example to fuel you with hope and courage this Christmas. A good place to start is the book of Luke in the Bible and taking note of the idealism in Jesus and the people he interacted with.
- Write down two dreams that God has put on your heart. Decide to believe every day that God can fulfill these dreams, even in the face of obstacles.