

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 Gratitude

How can I transform my perspective to love the life I have?

Gratitude strengthens our spirit by transforming our perspective. It helps us appreciate both the riches that money can't buy and the mistakes of our past that have shaped us into who we are.

A person in the Bible who experienced these shifts in perspective was a man named Zacchaeus.

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled. Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!" Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to

be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

— LUKE 19:1-10 NLT

Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, had amassed his wealth through corrupt practices common among tax collectors of his time—using his position to cheat people and extort money from them for personal gain. Yet something drove him to seek out Jesus—likely a growing awareness that his pursuit of financial security had left him spiritually empty.

His encounter with Jesus transformed Zacchaeus so profoundly that he volunteered to give away half of his wealth and repay those he had cheated, joyfully offering them even more than he had taken.

The unbreakable spirit of gratitude

This generous response could flow from only one source: a spirit of gratitude. Many things in Zacchaeus's life could have broken his spirit, including his own guilt, his spiritual

emptiness, and the scorn of people around him. But instead of being broken, **Zacchaeus became grateful**. He was grateful that Jesus had noticed him and offered him a chance to find his way. Jesus had saved him from a lost and empty existence and shown him that true life is found not in money but in God.

The spirit of gratitude in *It's a Wonderful Life* and *The Family Man*

It's A Wonderful Life is a movie about transformation. The main character of the movie, George Bailey, has lost his way—much like Zacchaeus in the Bible. An angel named Clarence comes to rescue George, not by giving him money to achieve his ambitions or experience greater prosperity, but by helping him rediscover gratitude for the life he already has.

Another movie with a similar theme is **The Family Man**, whose main character is Jack Campbell, a modern-day Zacchaeus: wealthy and self-absorbed, valuing possessions over relationships. Like Zacchaeus, he experiences a spiritual breakthrough after what I will always believe is God mysteriously intervening in his life. His perspective is transformed; he begins to understand and believe that true wealth comes from the experience of love, family, friends, and the opportunity to give rather than receive.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TODAY?

Gratitude rewires our hearts. When we truly experience it, gratitude opens our eyes to see what matters most, moving us beyond ourselves to live with generosity and love. Like Zacchaeus, whose encounter with Jesus completely transformed how he viewed wealth and community, genuine gratitude has the power to

revolutionize everything about our lives—our priorities, our relationships, and most importantly, our understanding of what makes life truly rich.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What are some material things that I tend to value more than spiritual wealth?
- What sins and mistakes have been making me more guilty than grateful? What can I learn from Zacchaeus to help me develop a spirit of gratitude rather than being broken by my guilt?
- What would my life be like if I lived with gratitude as my foundational attitude?

WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

- As you develop a spirit of gratitude, look for ways to live with generosity and love. Like Zacchaeus, George Bailey, and Jack Campbell, make decisions about your priorities and how you will treat the people around you. Your shift in perspective can change the trajectory of your life, helping you enjoy it and live it in a more positive and intentional way.