

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 Resilience



How can God restore my fighting spirit?

The Israelites humiliated Midian; **the Midianites' fighting spirit was broken**. The land had rest for forty years during Gideon's time.

– JUDGES 8:28 NET

The thematic inspiration for this devotional series “The Unbreakable Spirit of Christmas” worked its way into my heart while reading Judges 8:28. It was here that I learned and meditated on one truth for days—**our fighting spirit can be broken**. The Israelites broke the fighting spirit of the Midianites, which led the Israelites to victory.

We don't need to delve into the history of this Israelite-Midianite feud to recognize the very human condition of a broken spirit. We all have a fighting spirit; the Midianites were using it to be oppressive and cruel to God's people, but the human spirit can also fight for good things. When this spirit is broken, we will lose our fight.

This verse led me to a clear-eyed conviction, which is that if any of the dreams God has laid on my heart are to come true, I must develop an unbreakable spirit. I must develop resilience, the capacity to bounce back from difficulties and disappointments without being defeated by them.

From there, my study took me to Jesus,

the restorer of broken spirits, and his interaction with a man named Simon in Luke 5:1-11. Jesus inspired Simon, who would later become the resilient apostle Peter, by teaching him to leave who he had been in the past to embrace who he was meant to become.

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

“Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets again.” And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear...When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man.”...Jesus replied to Simon, “Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!” And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

– LUKE 5:1-6, 8, 10A-11 NLT

The unbreakable spirit of resilience

These passages illuminate a profound truth about the human spirit and its relationship with God. In Judges, we see the devastating impact of a broken fighting spirit through the defeat of the Midianites. In Luke, we witness the restoration of a broken spirit through Simon Peter's encounter with Jesus. Together, these stories reveal both warning and hope.

THE BREAKING OF THE MIDIANITES' FIGHTING SPIRIT

The Midianites' fighting spirit was oppressive and was broken through the Israelites' faith in God and the perseverance that came as a result. Our fighting spirit can be broken when we abandon faith in God and stop persevering.

In my experience, these are some signs that our fighting spirit is broken:

- **We experience repeated defeats that begin to seem inevitable.** Our feelings of failure make us believe that victory is impossible.
- **We compromise our standards.** A broken spirit can lead us to compromise with sin because we are tired of fighting for what is right.
- **We abandon our dreams.** Our fear of disappointment becomes so strong that we avoid any possibility of victory. We develop a tendency to settle for less rather than continue fighting.
- **We retreat inward, replacing courage with defeatism.** Our sense of purpose disappears, replaced by skepticism and self-preservation.

PETER'S JOURNEY FROM DOUBT TO PURPOSE

When Simon Peter's broken spirit came in

contact with Jesus's unbreakable one, Peter moved from exhaustion and skepticism to extraordinary faith. We can learn a few lessons from his interaction with Jesus that can help us do the same:

- **Peter chose to be honest about his brokenness.** His vulnerability and honesty became stepping stones to transformation.
- **Jesus responded to Peter's honesty with a new calling and purpose.** The spirit of Jesus is unbroken by our sins, mistakes, and doubts. When he looks at us, he sees who we can become.
- **Jesus restored Peter's fighting spirit** such that Peter became one of the most courageous and outspoken apostles. He was the first to preach a gospel sermon, recorded in Acts 1-2, where 3000 people decided to be baptized as disciples of Jesus.

The contrast between these two stories reveals a crucial truth: while a broken spirit leads to defeat like the Midianites experienced, coming to know and follow Jesus offers the possibility of complete restoration and transformation, as seen in Peter's life.

The Midianites represent the end result of allowing our spirit to remain broken, while Peter shows us that even in our moments of greatest defeat and doubt, our spirit can be renewed through faith. Peter's interaction with Jesus shows us that in those moments when our spirits have been broken, it is God and God alone who can transform our broken spirit into a fighting one.

The spirit of resilience in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*

The Grinch's journey powerfully parallels these biblical themes of transformation. We can learn three key lessons from his story.

1. THE GRINCH HAD A BROKEN SPIRIT

A broken spirit often masks itself as bitter strength. As the Bible says in Job 36:13, resentment comes from a heart that won't express its need for help. The Grinch illustrates this: his bitterness is a defense against pain, and his Christmas theft reveals his inability to find joy. His transformation mirrors Peter's, ignited by the Whos' unbreakable joy.

2. CINDY LOU WHO BELIEVED IN THE GRINCH'S GOODNESS

Cindy Lou Who recognizes the Grinch's potential for love despite his meanness. Like Jesus was for Peter, she becomes the agent of faith that helps restore the Grinch's fighting spirit. She actively seeks him out and believes in his goodness, mirroring Jesus's faith in Peter's change.

3. THE RESILIENT COMMUNITY OF THE WHOS TRANSFORMS THE GRINCH

The Whos embody resilience by celebrating Christmas despite material loss. Their joy and faith shed light on the Grinch's bitter misery and offer him a better way of life, much like Jesus offered Peter a new way of being. Their acceptance heals the Grinch's wounded heart, transforming his bitterness into a sense of belonging. This demonstrates that genuine faith and joy can conquer even deep-seated bitterness.

This story, like Peter's transformation, shows that when our spirits have been broken, they can be restored by an agent of faith (symbolized by Cindy Lou Who) and a community of love (the Whos). The powerful combination of these two elements will restore our fighting spirit and lead us back to joy.

How do we apply this today?

True resilience is the capacity to sustain a fighting spirit. It comes not only from individual

strength but also from relationships and community. It often begins with someone who sees our potential beyond our pain, inspiring us to let go of the past and embrace our true purpose with bold imagination and hope.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What are some battles in my life that I have stopped fighting?
- What would it look like to re-engage in these battles with a renewed fighting spirit?
- What do I need in my relationship with God in order to develop a resilient spirit?

WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

- **Acknowledge when you're being a Grinch:** Recognize if you have retreated into the refuge of bitterness, understanding that the real issue is you have lost your fighting spirit, not that you are an inherently resentful or evil person. Decide to have a resilient heart, then seek God and the relationships necessary to find renewal.
- **Be the Who:** Identify someone struggling with bitterness or isolation. Reject judgmentalism; instead, take the initiative by doing the spiritual work to inspire them with your faith and love this Christmas.
- **Examine your community:** Consider what protective barriers might be being built in your community as people decide to retreat into isolation instead of engaging in close and intimate friendships. Make a decision to create a relationship culture of resilience by replacing bitterness with love and forgiveness.
- **Change the world:** See the world from God's perspective, understanding that much of the sadness in the world stems from people having lost their fighting spirit. People of faith can help restore this spirit, changing the lives of others as ours have been changed. By doing this, we can change the world.