

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 Love & Family

## How do I start to value connection over perfection?

My earliest memories of family feature Christmas. This is how it became my favorite holiday (along with the gifts, of course). From waking up early in anticipation of opening gifts to impatiently stirring our parents from sleep at too early an hour, my sisters and I couldn't wait to see what Santa had brought.

Our family bond grew, matured, and changed as life cycled into adulthood, transforming those early mornings into flights from different cities bringing us home. Our adult years brought a tapestry of experiences — celebrating each other's successes and milestones while weathering seasons of relationship pain, disappointment, and distance. Through it all, we discovered the profound joy of resolution and the deepening of family bonds that can only come with time.

These family dynamics—both the joys and challenges—are so fundamental to human experience that even Jesus himself lived through similar relationships. We know he understood family difficulty and dysfunction because Hebrews 4:15 says he was "tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin," meaning he faced everything we face. Who can forget the occasion in John 7:3-5 when Jesus's brothers taunted him by saying, "Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world"? We then learn these words came from them

because, "even his own brothers did not believe in him." Yes—even the son of God experienced sibling rivalry.

Yet Jesus also highlighted the importance of family. In Mark 3:31-35, his mother and brothers come to look for him:

When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." Then Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him. They stood outside and sent word for him to come out and talk with them. There was a crowd sitting around Jesus, and someone said, "Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you." Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then he looked at those around him and said, **"Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."**

— MARK 3:21, 31-35 NLT

The concern of Jesus's mother and brothers, though perhaps misguided, came from a place of deep love and protective instinct—something any family member can relate to. The Contemporary English Version of this passage says, "When his family heard what he was doing, they thought he was crazy and went to get

him under control." Like any family, they wanted to protect him from what they feared might be self-destructive or damaging choices.

Jesus responded to their love by speaking to the crowds who had gathered to hear his message of Good News, explaining that familial love is more expansive than biological ties in the eyes of God.

## The unbreakable spirit of love and family

Just as blood carries life through a biological family, the Spirit of God creates life-giving connections that flow through his spiritual family. This means that alongside the precious blood connections shared by biological kin, there exists an equally vital spiritual and soul connection shared by the family of God. God is our father, we are his children, and this makes us family.

And you did not receive the "spirit of religious duty," leading you back into the fear of never being good enough. But you have received the "Spirit of full acceptance," enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, "Beloved Father!" For the Holy Spirit makes God's fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, "You are God's beloved child!"

– ROMANS 8:15-16 TPT

This spiritual family changes the world because all who choose to belong to the family of God tear down the walls of distance. Where we would otherwise call each other strangers in distrust, through faith in God's parenthood we call each other family.

You Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens with everyone else who belongs to the family of God.

– EPHESIANS 2:19 CEV

The spirit of love and family shine through the family of God. Recognizing God as our Father broadens the idea of family to include the church. This community can provide support and love to everyone, whether they are alone or part of a large biological family.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

– EPHESIANS 3:14-15 NIV

The spirit of love and family is what truly empowers the New Testament church to make a difference in the world. If we want to follow this example and share the hope it brought, we need to see each other not just as members of a church, but also as family.

I am writing these things to you now, even though I hope to be with you soon, so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

– 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-15 NLT

When God is at the center, the church becomes the pillar of truth, eliminating isolation and leading people home to a loving family. This extraordinary bond spreads love universally, just as early Christmas mornings remind us of family joy. The Bible teaches us how to build a church that brings joy to the world, turning strangers into siblings and making every day feel like home. This hope is what every believer can experience and share to illuminate a dark world with the spirit of love and family.

# The spirit of love and family in *The Family Stone* and *This Christmas*

Two great Christmas movies about family are *The Family Stone* and *This Christmas*. They both celebrate the imperfect journey of love and family.

*The Family Stone* portrays a deeply connected family navigating dysfunction while strengthening bonds. *This Christmas* shows a family facing challenges yet expanding their definition of family.

## THE POWER OF IMPERFECT LOVE

Neither family pursues unrealistic perfection but embraces family as a gift. They demonstrate what I like to call "antifragility"—growing stronger through adversity. Like the New Testament church discussed earlier, they show how challenges can deepen rather than destroy bonds.

## BEYOND THE “PERFECT FAMILY”

Both stories urge us to rethink our perfectionist views of family that prioritize a polished image and accomplishments that play well on social media. They reveal three powerful lessons about family

1. They show how unwise choices and destructive behaviors can be weathered and resolved.
2. They show how non-biological relationships can become family through love.
3. They reflect the teachings of Jesus about spiritual family transcending blood ties, and being a journey of love rather than perfection.

## How can we apply this today?

The goal of family—whether biological or

spiritual—isn't perfection but experiencing the profound gift of connection that God promises to nurture. Just as these films show families growing through challenges rather than being destroyed by them, the church is called to be a place where bonds deepen through adversity and love expands our understanding of family beyond traditional boundaries.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What qualities of family do I appreciate and value? How can I bring those qualities into my spiritual family?
- What are my expectations of family? How can I shift them from ones of perfection to ones of connection?

## WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

- **Embrace family as a journey not a destination.** Acknowledge that both biological and church families grow through challenges. Let go of perfectionist expectations of family. Trust God to build family his way instead of imposing your ideals.
- **Expand your circle of love.** Seek out those in need of family, particularly during holidays. Include non-biological connections in celebrations and welcome new relationships into your home and heart.
- **Build antifragile family bonds.** Turn challenges into relationship-building opportunities, choose forgiveness over distance, and support each other in success and struggle.
- **Live as God's family daily.** Make your church friendships as much of a priority as biological family relationships. Spend time together outside of church activities by sharing meals, celebrating special occasions, and enjoying everyday moments. Show everyone what it means to be part of God's family by caring for each other in practical and loving ways.