

**SERIES: CHRISTMAS - THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY SERMON:  
SERMON: GOD CALLS FAMILIES  
12-3-23**

**OPENER:**

As far as I am concerned there is no more better time of the year to preach than during the Christmas season. There is no other story like the Christmas story! In fact, the more you know about the stories behind the story of Christmas, the richer and deeper and sweeter Christmas will be.

The angel told Joseph..... *“You shall call his name Jesus,”* *“for he will save his people from their sins.”*

We needed a Savior. So God promised a Savior. That’s why Jesus came. That’s why we follow him.

**WE BREAK PROMISES, BUT GOD KEEPS HIS.  
WE RUN FROM GOD SO GOD COMES TO US.  
WE SUFFER FOR SIN, SO JESUS COMES TO SUFFER FOR US.  
THIS IS THE CHRISTMAS STORY. THIS IS OUR STORY,**

And when we begin to live into the Story, it changes the way we understand the world and our place in it.

**OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS I WANT US TO LOOK AT THE STORY  
BEHIND THE STORY.**

The Bible has much to say about the Lord’s birth. We can look into scripture and the entire story becomes clearer, more real, more relatable, and more relevant to us.

The title of my message today is: **GOD CALLS FAMILIES**

I want to look at the family of Jesus. And as we do that I want us to realize the importance of families in the purpose and call of God.

The Bible has much to say about the holy family.....

> We know the names of Jesus’ grandfathers. (Did you ever think about the fact that Jesus had grandparents that he visited growing up?)

On Joseph’s side Jesus’ grandfather was named Jacob.

***Matthew 1:16.....and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.***

**On Mary's side her grandfather was named Joachim.**

**> The New Testament also provides the names of some of Jesus' other relatives.**

**Two relatives of Jesus are mentioned in *Luke 1:5-25* who were named Zacharias and Elizabeth.**

**In their elder years, Zacharias and Elizabeth gave birth to a son whom they named John. Their son John later came to be known as John the Baptist. You may not have realized it before, but Jesus and John were cousins. As cousins it is likely that Jesus and John spent time playing together as they were growing up since they had known each other from childhood.**

**> Jesus had 4 brothers and at least 2 sisters we know of.**

***Mathew 13:55-56 (NIV) When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. <sup>54</sup> Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. <sup>55</sup> "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup> Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" <sup>57</sup> And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home." <sup>58</sup> And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.***

**So Jesus' brothers were James Joseph, Simon and Judas or also called Jude. The Bible does not give the names of his sisters, but because they are listed plural, we know that there had to be at least two sisters in the family.**

## **1. GOD CALLS FAMILIES**

**The brothers of Jesus were instrumental in the early church.**

**But Jesus' brothers did not believe Him to be the Messiah until after Jesus' resurrection.....**

***John 7:5 (NIV) For even his own brothers did not believe in him.***

***1 Corinthians 15:7 (NIV) Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.***

**Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection and that is when James understood that his older brother was God in the flesh. James became a believer and in time, he eventually became the main leader of the church in Jerusalem. James even wrote a book in the New Testament that bears his name.**

**Jesus also had another brother who wrote a book in the New Testament. His brother Jude, the fourth son in the family of Joseph and Mary, also became a strong believer after Jesus' resurrection. Like his older brother James, Jude emerged as a Christian leader and he also authored a book of the New Testament that bears his name. Some other resources say that the other sons and daughters of Mary and Joseph were also involved in ministry.**

**So, we have Mary, Joseph, Mary's parents, her grandparents, Joseph's grandparents, Zacharias, Elizabeth, John called John the Baptizer, We have Jesus' brothers, James and Jude who were instrumental leaders in the early church. There is fourteen people right there in the family of Mary and Joseph.**

**THE FAMILY OF JOSEPH AND MARY IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW GOD CALLS ENTIRE FAMILIES AND GIVES THEM A SPECIAL FAMILY PURPOSE.**

**GOD HAS BEEN EXTENDING HIS CALL TO ENTIRE FAMILIES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME AND HE WANTS TO CALL YOUR FAMILY TO A SPECIAL PURPOSE TOO.**

**In the Old Testament we see:**

- > Noah, his wife and their three sons and their wives were called to fulfill god's plans.**
- > Abraham, Sarah, and their entire lineage were called.**
- > Issac and Rebekah were selected by God to bring His will to the earth.**
- > Jacob and his 12 sons all played a part in God's purposes.**
- > Moses and his brother Aaron and their sister Miriam were called to lead the people across the desert to the Promised Land.**

**In The New Testament we see the pattern continues of God extending His call to entire families:**

- > Mary and Joseph and their children were called.
- > Zachariah, Elizabeth and their son John the Baptist were called.
- > Of the Lord's disciples.....James and John the son of Zebedee were called and Peter and Andrew, two brothers were called.
- > Phillip, who was an Evangelist and loved by the early church had for daughters who had the gift of prophecy.
- > *Acts 21:8-9 (NIV) Leaving the next day, (Paul and Luke and a few others) we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. <sup>9</sup> He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.*

> The Bible reveals very little about Paul's family. Acts quotes Paul referring to his family by saying he was "*a Pharisee, born of Pharisees*". Paul's nephew, his sister's son, is mentioned in *Acts 23:16*. In *Romans 16:7*, he states that his relatives, Andronicus and Junia, were Christians before he was and were prominent among the Apostles of the early church.

And Paul said they were of note among the apostles. The fact that these were relatives of Paul means there were two more of his family members in ministry.

> Barnabas is another example of God extending His call to multiple members in one family.

There was a Christian lady who lived in Jerusalem whose name was Mary, she was the sister of Barnabas. It was at her house they were having a special prayer meeting, you remember, when Peter escaped from prison. She had a son, named John Mark, who was Barnabas' nephew.

**SIDE NOTE:**

As they started out on their missionary journey, Barnabas and Saul together once again, you find John Mark going with them as their assistant. But no sooner had they arrived in Cyprus and set sail for Asia Minor than for some reason John departed from them and went back home.

As they set out later on their second missionary journey, Barnabas was anxious to give his nephew another chance, but Paul said, "No." And from that point Barnabas departed back again to Cyprus and disappears altogether from the New Testament story, and Mark went with him.

Unquestionably, Barnabas sacrificed his missionary career for the sake of this young man.

But that isn't the end of the story of John Mark, for later we find him in the book of Colossians, in Philemon, and Timothy. You will find him with Paul in imprisonment, a comfort and blessing to Paul. Soon after Paul's death, it would seem that Mark associates himself with Peter, and under his guidance and direction writes the second Gospel which bears his name, the Gospel according to Mark.

In this one single family, we find that three family members - Barnabas, his sister Mary and John Mark - were all called.

## **2. THE CALL OF GOD TO FAMILIES BEGINS WITH ONE PERSON**

You may be saying, "Oh how I want this to happen with my family. How can God's call be extended to my entire family?"

**THE CALL OF GOD TO YOUR FAMILY BEGINS WITH ONE PERSON WHO HAS AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD AND SURRENDERS HIS OR HER LIFE TO HIM.**

**IT CAN BEGIN WITH YOU.**

### **EXAMPLE:**

In Noah's case, he was the first one in his family who heard God's call. God spoke to Him first. But his obedience to follow the call affected his whole family and brought salvation to all of them.

### **EXAMPLE:**

What about Abraham? He is another example of how it all begins with one person. God only spoke to Abraham at first but because he listened and responded to God's invitation Abraham's decision affected his wife Sarah, their son Issac and their whole lineage.

**EXAMPLE:** The salvation of the jailer where Paul and Silas were imprisoned.....

***Acts 16:29-34 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"***

***<sup>31</sup> They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." <sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. <sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were***

*baptized. <sup>34</sup> The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household*

***”BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS AND YOU WILL BE SAVED - YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD”***

**YOUR DECISION TO FOLLOW JESUS CAN TRIGGER A CHAIN REACTION THAT CAN EXTEND TO YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY.**

**MAKE NO MISTAKE, GOD WANTS TO USE YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY AND GIVE THEM A SPECIAL PURPOSE.**

### **3. BE THE SOURCE OF GOD’S PRAISES FOR YOUR FAMILY**

#### **MARY IS THE MAIN SOURCE OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY**

The bulk of what we know about the events surrounding Jesus’ birth come directly from Mary herself. Before Luke wrote about the birth of Jesus in his gospel, he first interviewed Mary while she lived in Ephesus, where she had moved with the apostle John later in her life. It was Mary herself who vividly told Luke about all the miraculous events that he wrote about in the gospel of Luke. Mary’s memory of these astounding events is referred to in.....

*Luke 2:19 (NKJV) But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. (NIV) “treasured up all these things”*

**“kept” = Greek = to keep within oneself in order to closely guard or to accurately and carefully preserve.**

**“Ponder” = Greek = lay in order, like one who carefully and meticulously chronicles a story**

Mary was so impacted by the amazing sequence of events in her life and in the life of Jesus that she chronicled all of it in her heart and carefully preserved her memories of it. Then she vividly related it to Matthew and to Luke.

**AS WE TALK ABOUT THE STORY OF THE LORD’S BIRTH, REMEMBER WE KNOW IT ALL BECAUSE MARY NEVER FORGOT.**

**WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET THE MARVELOUS THINGS WE HAVE WITNESSED GOD DO IN OUR OWN LIVES SO THAT WE CAN SHARE**

## **THEM WITH OUR CHILDREN AND WITH OUR FAMILIES AND WITH OTHERS TOO.**

***Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV) Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.***

We need to have a strong families that build each other up and encourage each other in the Lord. I think, across the board, a breakdown in families is why the world is as dark as it is today.

To reach this generation and to carry this revival that is breaking forth in our church, we must have strong disciple-making families.

### **4. HOW DO YOU ANSWER THE CALL OF GOD AS A FAMILY?**

#### **1. Model the Life of Christ**

We must be the ones that model God first in all that we do for it to stick with our kids.

The first thing we must do is set aside one-on-one time with God.

The second thing is make Church and Small Group (environments of spiritual growth) a priority.

The third thing is serve together in the church as a family.

Children see these things. A lot more is caught than taught, and children can spot a fake.

#### **2. Disciple Your Family**

If we are not involved in making disciples, we are missing our true calling in Christ. I view my kids and my granddaughters as my number one disciples. I believe that I am a faith trainer first to my family.

Don't expect your kids to pray if you they never see you pray.

Don't expect your kids to have a love for the Bible if they don't see you reading yours.

**Don't expect your children to have a heart of compassion for others if you don't model that in your home.**

### **3. Pray Together**

**We have heard it said, "A family that prays together stays together." I believe that strongly.**

**But I want to add another phrase to that "A family that answers to God's call prays together."**

**We need to make time for prayer. I think three places that are a great opportunity for prayer are the kitchen table, bedtime and the car.**

**We need to set some boundaries to guard prayer time.**

**Some common things that compete with God are media, our love of money, education, relationships, sports and hobbies. Pray through these things. God is faithful. He will reveal if you are putting anything before Him if you humbly ask.**

**CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE BECAME DISCIPLE  
MAKING FAMILIES THAT PUT GOD FIRST?  
HE USED JUST 12 DISCIPLES THAT CHANGED HE ENTIRE WORLD.  
WHAT COULD HE DO WITH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY IF YOU CENTERED  
YOUR HOME AROUND HIM?**

### **4. Ask Tough Questions**

**I think we all need to continually ask ourselves tough questions. > How is our time with God as a family?**

**> How are we serving each other, our children, and others?**

**> Am I leading my home with zeal and enthusiasm?**

**> Am I putting anything before the Lord?**

**> Am I being spirit-controlled or flesh-controlled in my house?**

### **CLOSING:**

**Mary vividly remembered the details surrounding Jesus' supernatural birth.**

**>What miraculous events in your life can you recall?**

**>Do you regularly share those with your family?**

**>Is God's goodness regularly the topic of discussion in your home?**

**Both Luke and Matthew wrote significantly about the Christmas story. Do you read and discuss these gospel accounts with your family during the**



**holidays? If you haven't in the past, make a decision to start this year, begin now.**