

NETFLIXMAS

PART ONE: FOUR CHRISTMASES

Here's the truth: Despite all the happy hoopla and sentimental songs, Christmas can be one of the most stressful and tangled times of the year. Why? Because Christmas is often a time spent with family. Have you ever had a specific moment when you realized that your family was complicated? In Matthew 1:18-25, we see that God's family had drama—a lot of drama. Obviously, our all-powerful God chose it to be this way, since Jesus could have easily come from a long line of calm, peaceable saints. Why do you think God chose to do it that way?

BIG IDEA: Your family has drama. God's family has drama.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There is no such thing as a perfect family picture. Think of a photo with friends or family that looks perfect. Do you recall something less than perfect happening at the time?
2. Are you hoping people will take the photo at face value? Why might that be?
3. Do you ever feel discouraged or depressed when looking at others' photos on social media?
4. In the Bible, whose family at first glance seemed close to perfect? Taking a closer look, what flaws do you see? Is there a biblical family that bears some resemblance to your own? Or someone with whom you identify?

How well did you enjoy U.S. History class back in the day? You probably recall hearing about the bloody Civil War, when more Americans lost lives than in any other war in United States' history. As you remember, the North and South fought not only about slavery, but also about the South's action to secede from the Union. President Abraham Lincoln understood the danger in this division. In a famous speech before the war began, he advocated for unity and agreement in the nation, because, "a house divided against itself cannot stand."

5. Can you think of any other countries or groups who were/are divided against one another? What happened in the end?
6. Bringing this to a smaller, but no less volatile scale, let's think about disunity in families. Have you ever witnessed two parents divided? What was the situation? What was the outcome?
7. Pastor Chris identified 5 common ingredients of family drama:

Confusion: Sometimes, we don't understand the family dynamics around us. Our Christmas gatherings and experiences, growing up, might have been very different from what we're experiencing now.

Complexity: If you look around the room at a family gathering, you're likely to spot someone on top of the world, and someone just trying to make it through the day.

Change: Adding someone new to the family get-together can change the dynamic significantly.

Conflict: Sometimes, traditions that are supposed to be fun—like decorating the tree and getting together with extended family—can actually heighten the tension.

Connection: Family ties can be difficult sometimes, but we're still connected, despite our quirks and issues.

8. Which ingredient(s) of family drama have affected you the most? Think of a situation where you experienced some major drama? How did you handle it? How might you have handled it better?

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9. *With your Bible or BibleApp, read Matthew 1:18-25.*

This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'" When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.
Matthew 1:18-25 (NLT)

10. How would you feel in Joseph's place in verse 19? In verses 20-21? What would you say to family and friends? To God?
11. What reason does Matthew give as to why Jesus was born? (verse 21) Have you experienced Jesus as *Immanuel (God with us)* recently? What do you learn about faith from Joseph?
12. *With your Bible or BibleApp, read Mark 3:20-21 and John 7:1-3.*

One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again. Soon he and his disciples couldn't even find time to eat. When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. "He's out of his mind," they said.
Mark 3:20-21 (NLT)

Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!" For even his brothers didn't believe in him.
John 7:3-5 (NLT)

13. Have you ever heard this story about Jesus family trying to take Him away? If you were in Jesus' sandals, how would that make you feel to know that your own family doesn't believe you? Think you're out of your mind?

Pastor Chris also gave three positive roles you might choose to play in your family drama:

1. I can play the role of a **peacemaker** instead of a **drama queen**.

What do you need to do this Christmas to be a peacemaker?
Forgive someone? Ask for forgiveness? Establish boundaries?

2. I can play the role of **hope peddler** instead of **Debbie Downer**.

What if you chose to be an encourager? Who do you need to speak encouragement to this Christmas?

3. I can play the role of **love giver** instead of **hater**.

Have you accepted God's love?
Has receiving God's love helped you give love to others? How?

MOVING FORWARD

What roles have you played so far this Christmas season? What roles do you WANT to play? How can you follow Jesus' example and become the person who shares peace, hope and love throughout the Christmas season?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

When Jesus family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. "He's out of his mind."
Mark 3:21

