

How Many Brothers and Sisters Do You Have■

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of viewing fellow believers as family in Christ, highlighting the deep spiritual relationships we have as brothers and sisters in the faith. It challenges listeners to examine their relationships within the church, prioritize unity, and actively cultivate a sense of family among believers. The speaker encourages transparency, communication, and love for one another, drawing parallels to biblical examples and historical anecdotes to illustrate the significance of being part of the family of God.

Scripture: Matthew 12:46, 1 Timothy 5:1, Romans 16:13, Hebrews 10:24, Proverbs 18:1

Topics: "Unity in the Body of Christ", "Cultivating Spiritual Family"

Description

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Transcript

Good afternoon. Before we turn to the passage, I've got a question. If you have a brother or sister, raise your hand.

If you've got at least three brothers, keep your hand raised. If you're not certain how many brothers and sisters you have, then keep your hand raised. That's what I'm trying to get at.

What's the first thing when you hear that question? Do you hear the term brother? And do you think in your natural relations or spiritual relations? And you could say, well, James, the fault was you. You didn't qualify your statement by saying brothers in Christ. Well, here's my question to you.

Does Christ qualify? That in every place in the New Testament? Does He add that little in Christ or spiritual family? But turn to Mark 3. Mark 3. You should rightly be able to say if you're part of this church, I had two of my brothers died last year. And I would say there's one of them, Marlon, I wish I would have got to know better. Got to know Victor.

But Marlon was with us a short time. But the assumption of my question is we think of the natural relations that comes right away to our mind. But is the natural the first category that comes to your mind? Is it the

most important? What does Christ view as the most important category? The supernatural or the natural? And some of you, you might be like me.

You hear we're brothers and sisters in Christ. We're family in Christ. And you might already in your mind be thinking, I know that.

My question is, do you really know that? Do I really know that? Where can I grow in this reality in my life? So don't approach my message as this is old news to me. I hope there's some new news here. But even for those who have been saved for many, many decades, will be challenged to go all the more deeper in seeing this reality in their lives with this local body of believers.

And someone I thought about in the Bible who thought they really were maybe loving the sheep really well, but they weren't as well as they could was Peter. Christ says to Peter, do you love Me? And Peter says, yes, I love You. Lord, You know I love You.

And Jesus says, feed My sheep. And it happens again and again. And kind of like Peter, we could fall into that category at times for our own self-assessment of our love for the Lord or our love for His people.

We've got to humbly step back and say, Lord, I've got more ground to take in this area. You know, this goes a lot deeper than us just calling people brother and sister just like a drunk dad could be called a father, but not really manifest any fatherly characteristics to his children. So Mark 3. Mark 3.31. This account is in Matthew and Luke as well, but I wanted to approach it from Mark.

Mark 31, And his mother and his brothers came. And standing outside, they sent to him and they called him. They summoned him.

And a crowd was sitting around him. So it's not just his disciples. You've got a crowd.

It's not just the twelve. And they said to him, your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. So they're making this statement.

And he answered them, Who are my mother and my brothers? So Christ puts a question forward. Who are my mothers and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

Well, amen. Let me pray and then we're going to dive into this. Father, Lord, I know that the reason You've even led me to this passage to seek to feed the sheep from here is that, Lord, You've been feeding me from this passage and other verses and just this whole reality, Lord, about us being family and being brothers and sisters.

And Lord, I don't want to fail to love these precious blood-bought ones who are among me. And Lord, I know I've got failures. And Lord, we all to some degree feel that.

And we want Your help that we would be better family members in the household of God. And so, Lord, Your adoption, what You've done to adopt us is just incredible. Lord, we heard about it in the Lord's Supper.

Lord, it's just amazing what's happened on that cross. So Father, I ask for Your help right now. Lord, I'm just one of Your sons.

And I'm wanting to help these, Your children. And I'm one of Your children. So I ask that You give me some clarity and power in Christ's name, Amen.

Mark 3. What a question Christ puts forward. Who's in? Who are my mother and my brothers? He asks them that and they don't give an answer, right? Who knows what they were whispering? What were they probably thinking in their minds at that point when Christ's family got there? What did they anticipate Christ was going to do when they made the announcement that His mother and brother were there? He's going to get up. He's going to go.

And He's going to follow the summons that His mother and His brothers have made. Not only does He not do that, He then makes a striking statement with His family outside. He makes a striking statement to those among Him that you are my mothers and brothers.

I mean, there's so much weight in that statement. I realize there are ways it could be taken wrong and we're going to try to look at enough here where I hope I give a balanced presentation of this reality. But one of the first questions in this context here, what leads up to Christ making this striking statement to His followers? Because here He's in a situation and boom, He teaches this reality to them.

Right? I mean, had this been really brought up prior to this point? This idea of being family in Christ? You have passages in the Old Testament that if they rightly interpreted, they would realize it's all going to be like that with all of us being Israelites spiritually together. But why did His mother and brothers call and summon Him? What was going on in their minds leading up to this passage? Does anyone know? Yeah, if you look at the context, you go up right prior to this, you've got this whole issue with the scribes who'd come down. But look at v. 20.

Then He went home and the crowd gathered again so that they could not even eat. And when His family heard it, so His family hears of this, it says they went out to seize Him, for they were saying, He is out of His mind. And then you've got the scribes came down and the scribes are saying things like He's possessed by Beelzebub and He's making rebukes to them.

And then v. 31, His mother and His brothers came. Right? They had a perception. At this point, right here in this chapter, something is not right in His thinking and they're going to summons Him.

And as you see right there in v. 21, they went out to seize Him. To arrest Him. This isn't a sense that they just came to call Him outside for a conversation.

They're wanting to get Him out of this situation that He was in. Now there are some who want to take the Greek in v. 21 and they want to try to reason away that it's referring to Christ's family, that it's referring to His mothers and His brothers. They don't like that because they think it's an embarrassing statement about Jesus' family's opinion of Him at this point.

But brethren, we've got no reason to be embarrassed. For one, we're not here worshiping Mary. We're not some Catholics who are exalting this lady.

She had sin just like Peter had sin and He's the same Savior in Jesus Christ. But no, this is one whom His family thought He was out of His mind and they wanted to seize Him. Ironically, in the context, who else is wanting to seize Christ? The scribes.

You've got the scribes wanting to seize Christ. You've got His family wanting to seize Him. This is intense what Christ is facing right here at this point.

You know what's ironic? If there was ever a man who was in his right mind, all the time, 24-7, who was that man? Yeah, the man Christ Jesus. He never was not in his right mind. He had perfect mental clarity at every point.

He never misspoke. He never spoke when he shouldn't. And he never omitted from speaking when he should.

The man Christ Jesus was without sin, living full of the Holy Spirit every waking moment of His life. You know what? The Gospels honestly testify and underscore that it was not just the scribes opposing Christ at this point. It was His own family.

And if you know John 7-5, it records, for not even His brothers believed in Him. When did His brothers even get converted? When does that even happen? And some might say, what about Mary? Didn't Mary in Luke 1 have, My soul magnifies the Lord and My Spirit rejoices in God My Savior? How do you go from that to then saying something like He's out of His mind? Well, I would ask you this, how does Peter go from saying, I'll never deny You, Lord, to then a little while later denying Christ three times? How does someone go from A to B? Sin. Unbelief.

Fear. Persecution. Trials.

It can change even the best of us in a moment. We might boldly be believing and standing, and then all of a sudden be crippled by some manifestation of unbelief. But people constantly had an incorrect understanding of Christ.

And that's part of my thrust this morning. Do you have a correct view on Christ and the family? Because Christ here is teaching us a correct view. And it's not just do we know that in our head.

It's not just do we use the terminology brother and sister and mother, but are we actually living this out in our lives? So, it seems His family's come to interrupt His preaching, but instead of that happening, Christ going outside, He actually forsakes His mother and brethren right here to continue preaching, and He loudly declares that those disciples among Him are those who are nearest to Him. This is shocking. If you were sitting there and you heard Christ's statement, when you're expecting Him to go out the door, and then He actually owns you? He owns us? Is this family? What a manifestation of love that is from the Lord Jesus Christ right here.

And if you notice here and if you look at the other accounts, this is not just some thought that's going to a specific twelve. This is to all Christians. He says right there in v. 35, whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

And in Luke's account, it says, whoever hears the Word and does it. And no, that's not teaching we are saved by obedience. But it's just loudly declaring, as many other passages do, that those who've really been adopted by God and saved by Him and transformed and are part of His family, they're going to start forming the characteristics of looking like the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, if a person comes up the street and they say, hey, I'm your brother, you might tend to be cautious. Yet all this has changed for us as Christians. How many of you here have met someone and then in a very

short period of time you felt like you had known them for ten years? Has anyone ever experienced that reality? I think about our brother Ian a year ago out at St. Mary's.

And he sees a guy sitting down at a table in the summer with a Patriots hoodie on. And he goes to give that guy a track. Noah.

And what does he find out? Him and Noah start talking and they're brothers. He could say, I have another brother. I didn't know I had this brother.

And they all of a sudden have this depth in a relationship that will exceed their relationship with their own biological brothers who aren't Christians. And Christ is not saying that is an incorrect affection in the heart. He's actually putting that forward as the highest thing.

Even last night, I tuned in to watch the live stream of Paul Washer preaching a sermon in Houston. I know some of you were there yesterday. And it's the same lines of what I was studying.

It really struck me when Paul made the comment that at 22 years of age in Austin, prior to some meeting, he was helping set up equipment. And in some hallway, he ran into a man. And this guy had an odd accent.

And Paul asked the man, well, where are you from? And the man said he was from Africa. And they continued to talk. And you know what Paul Washer said? Paul said, as he talked to that man, he said, it was like he was part of me.

It was like he was part of me. It was extraordinary. But that's what we are.

The body of Christ. How does a 22-year-old kid who grew up on the farms and some preacher from Africa feel like they're part of each other just after meeting each other on one occasion? Because they're both in Christ. We're one body in Christ.

It's not just that this is something we should have a sense of in our own local church. This is something we should have a sense of with the global, universal body of Christ in every believer. If your question is, when you think about what's more important, is there going to be biological family in heaven? And what verses can you think of? Will all of the saved members of a natural family be over there as a unit? Or is all of this far lesser and pointing to something else that is a greater union and a greater family than that in the natural realm? And one passage I hope you think of is in Matthew 22.

They bring to Christ... There are seven brothers among us. The first married and he died, and having no offspring, he left his wife to his brother. So to the second and third down to the seventh.

After all of them, the woman died. And then they asked this, in the resurrection therefore of the seven, whose wife will she be? And what was Christ's answer? Whose wife will she be? For they all had her. But Jesus answered and said, you are wrong, because you neither know the Scriptures, you neither know the power of God.

For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but they are like angels in heaven. Brethren, there's no marriage in heaven. There is.

Let me correct my statement, but it's marriage to who? It's to the Lamb. We're the bride of Christ. We're getting to heaven.

There's something far bigger than some natural relations on this earth. You might be up... I mean, the Scriptures don't necessarily say, but am I going to know who my physical family is up there? Who is a believer? Sure, but the bigger thing is that they're my spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the bigger thing.

What about children? You know what children that I'm going to see there? Children who were children of the faith, who were saved through my evangelism. Do I hope that my five children are also there and have also been a means of God to see them come to Christ and be daughters and sons of God? Absolutely. I want that.

But my point is this, which family is eternal? Which is going to last there in a billion years from now? We're one body in Christ. This oneness in heaven because of Christ's blood is such a perfect unity that whatever awareness I might have there, the natural realm is so much more insignificant. It's like some fading memory compared to the real reality that we're now in.

And many of you know that people will kind of comment on that movie a long time ago where a man thought he was in reality, right? And then he took this pill, and now all of a sudden, he saw things as they really were. Brethren, there's so much we look through the glass and see dimly right now, we don't really see things for as they really are. But come that day, it's all going to be very, very clear.

And our goal right now is to renew our minds more now to think how it will be then. And that's what Christ is doing. Christ is informing them of this reality.

You think, what's a brother? Someone who has the same father or mother? And we have the same father, right? God the Father. And I would even add this, we are brothers by blood. By the blood of Christ.

Right? And Christ is saying by that sense, you should judge your ultimate family based on eternity and not the temporal. You know, it's interesting here, who does Christ not say He has among Him when He makes this statement? Here are my mothers and my brothers. And He mentioned sisters before that.

Who does He not comment on? Fathers. Why do you think He doesn't comment on fathers? Yeah, I mean, a couple of verses, Jesus said, call no man father, for we all have one Father. It doesn't mean you can't have men who are influencing you, just like a mother might be influencing a young sister in the church.

That's totally a true reality. But we don't go around calling people father, for we have one God and Father of all. And I think Christ here is all the more wanting to emphasize that reality and wanting us to think in that way.

Romans 8, 16, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And in Luke's account, He actually uses the term whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother. So He's showing us we're children of God who are family and are actively seeking to do the will of God together.

And this relationship that we have, it's more real than our marriage. Whether the spouse is saved or not, in Heaven, my wife is going to be my sister in Christ. Because it's temporal here.

You see, this world is passing away. That's why we can't live for these things and these realities. Because they're not the ultimate thing.

So back to the situation in the text. Carter mentioned this earlier, but part of you, you read it and you think, what did you think they expected Christ to do? And He didn't do what I think they would think He would do. I mean, we can't get into their minds, but the fact they announced that His family was there seems to imply they assumed He would want to know so He could go outside to them.

Who are my mother and my brothers? Who are my mother and my brothers and sisters? And as I mentioned, if you look here, Christ does not first qualify this. He says in His response, and He answered them, Who are my mother and my brothers? And then looking about at those who sat around Him, He said, Here are my mother and my brothers. And He doesn't add in the spiritual realm, but then He clarifies, how do you know whether you're family? For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

What does this sound like? It's implying. If someone came up here and they said, I'm your brother, and I look and I say, who's my brother, and I point over here and I say this guy's my brother, what's that seem to indicate about this guy? It seems to indicate I'm saying he's not. It's grammatically worded in the very sense of an absolute statement here.

He's not saying they both are and one's in the spiritual realm and one is not. Again, we're going to clarify in a minute, Christ isn't doing away with natural family here. He's showing us the bigger picture of the way things really are.

And we need to make sure we're living with that in the way we think. Christ right here declares those sitting there are His family and that His family is not His family. You can say, well, yeah, in the spiritual sense.

Yes, I realize that. But why doesn't Christ add that qualifier? Why doesn't Christ say, well, yes, just in the spiritual sense? We want to be careful to not qualify what Christ doesn't qualify. John Piper made this comment about this text.

He said, whatever you do, don't domesticate the radical teachings of Christ. If they make you uncomfortable, let them do their work. They're designed to create real disciples who are ready to lose all to gain Christ.

The world might call it hate. They may call it foolishness. It's not.

It's love. It's the wisdom of God. Now is Christ doing away with the natural family unit? No, not at all.

Is Christ saying that a child shouldn't honor their father and mother? No, He's not saying that. Many young believers that we've had in our own church need to do a better job of honoring their natural family members and respecting them and showing honor to them. But even in the church, think of what Paul said in 1 Timothy.

He said if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them, the children, and he's thinking about natural, not supernatural birth, first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents. That's the natural parents, not the spiritual mother. For this is pleasing in the sight of God.

You see, so Paul's not doing away with this. I still have got my natural family. Those who are Christians and those who are not Christians.

I still have them. I still have responsibilities there. And I still have a household and you've got a household.

You don't neglect all of that for the sake of your Christian fellowship. At the same time, like this young girl in Lebanon is facing, she might end up losing all the natural. But you know what she's not going to lose? She's going to gain brothers and sisters.

She already has gained brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. But Paul talks about an elder's qualifications and his children. He's not talking about all of an elder's spiritual children.

Galatians 6.10, as you have an opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith. I mean, there is a distinction being made by the Lord and by the apostles. How do you think those sitting there felt when hearing this and having Christ own them as his family? I forget if I used this illustration before, but some years back I saw some film and someone had a really rich parent and they didn't know who their parent was and eventually the parent came and let them know I'm your father.

They got really excited. Hey, I got a rich father out there who's loaded with money. I mean, how much more to find out you're a child of God? That Christ owns you as his family.

I mean, it's just, you know, it's kind of like Noah and Ian at the campus. You find, I have a long lost brother I didn't know about. Or John Salus, what did he share about Vest Chancellor who's going to be with us in two weeks? What would Vest say when they go evangelize? Let's go find our what? Our brothers and sisters in Christ.

You're going downtown to find your brothers and find your sisters and get people added to the family. Because Christ has lost sheep out there. And we're going to try to get those.

This is an incredible statement of love that it should really thrill our hearts how Christ is identifying with us. And talk about idolatry of Mary, right? How many people idolize Mary in the Catholic church and even beyond the Catholic church? And it's like here, Christ is putting you above her. He's saying you're my family.

You're believing Me. You're doing the will of God. They think I've lost my mind and they're trying to pull me away.

That's not to be pulled away to do the will of God. One of our issues as Christians is we don't really know how Christ views us. Some people struggle with assurance because they don't understand the doctrine of justification.

They don't understand how legally right they really are before God's courtroom. Well, I would add in the same way here, some of you might be struggling because you're forgetting the reality of the fatherhood of God. You can think back to Craig's message on adoption.

Don't forget those realities on adoption. And you might even forget you've got brothers and sisters in Christ. Should any of us feel alone? If we've got family, I do feel alone.

Okay, well, the family might be failing you. What can you do more to be around those brothers and sisters and be encouraged and stirred up by them? Christ right here is living out what He taught. Christ taught that in many situations, the believer is going to have opposition from their natural family.

Matthew 10.35, He even says, I've come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. That's what we see going on in Lebanon right now.

Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Christ is saying you can't even follow Me if you're not going to count Me and My people as this supreme thing.

I'm going to go with them to the end through persecution, through suffering, through whatever happens, whatever gets carried down in Canada and comes down here. I'm going to stand with them. Even if my family thinks I'm crazy and I'm out of my mind, and people are saying we've got the spirit of Beelzebub, and people are saying you're in a cult, and all these things, and they think I'm crazy.

No, I want to stay with my family. My brothers and sisters. I want to live for the Lord.

Christ knew His message would set a man against his father in some situations. And He knew the unbelieving person might rise up against the believing and persecute them. And I would just say this, brethren, make sure it's the unbelieving person rising up and persecuting you.

It's not you rising up and persecuting the unbelieving person. I hope that's not the case. We receive hatred from the lost, but we better not be the ones going and hating on them.

Christ says something very similar in Luke 14. If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father, and again, if you're new to the Bible, that doesn't mean you literally go hate your parents. You call to love and honor them.

But your love for Christ in many ways will appear as if you have hatred towards your parents. You actually have more love now towards your parents than you ever had before. But it gets interpreted differently to try to appeal to you to stop being so radical for Christ.

If anyone does not come to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he can't be in the ministry. Is that what it says? He can't be a disciple. Christ is choosing the brethren and doing God's will over natural kin and to many that appears like hatred.

Look, I'm just wanting to say what the Scriptures say, but that should not turn your zeal on to make you go and persecute your family and be unloving. Like I said, many young believers, they take things too far. When I was first saved, I felt like I was dropping nuclear bombs on my family.

And as they say, the young believers are in cage stage. You need to take them and stick them in a cage until they can mature enough to go out there. But you know what? Jesus didn't stick the demoniac in a cage after he got converted.

He said go and tell your family of how I have mercy on you. So we shouldn't do that. But God's able to use even someone who is ungracious.

The truth has the power to save even if the messenger fails in their attitude. Christ's words are strong. Like I said, here are my mother and my brothers.

It implies those over there are not. And most commentators would right away agree with that, but I'm amazed some of the people, they're trying to loop through it all. Hop around it all.

Let's take the knife and let's just dull the edge so we don't feel the sting. Christ doesn't do that there. Wouldn't He say more? Why do you stop at verse 35? Maybe you should expound on this even more.

Lord, just to make sure we really understand it correct. And that's all He says right there in this passage. You know what? Did Christ's strong words, did they lead to His family being helped ultimately spiritually or hindered? Helped.

You read in Acts 1. 14. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and His brothers. Whatever happens from Mark 3 all the way to Acts 1, guess who's there in the prayer meeting as you've got this church that's about to go into all manner of persecution? It's His mother.

And it's His brothers there. So His strong stance that one might look at and say that's going to hinder your family coming to Christ and really coming to believe, it didn't hinder ultimately. We see that here in the life of Christ.

And you've got to remember, Christ's perfect conduct here. The tone and everything He said in chapter 3 right here, it's spot on. As I said, supreme love for Christ actually makes your real love true for your family.

When did I really start loving my family? Honestly, it's when I got converted. I mean, the first 20 years, it was all about using people for my own gain. It was all about selfishness.

I was dead in my trespasses and sins. But when you get saved, you now can have a real love for your family. And you know, Mary in John 19, Christ said to one disciple, behold, your mother.

And from that hour, the disciple took her into his home. What a privilege it is to have family in Christ. To be a family in Christ.

It was after Paul got saved that he said he could wish he was cursed and cut off for the sake of his kinsmen, his sake of his brothers according to the flesh. He wasn't saying that prior to his conversion. Right? The only real love we can manifest to our lost family is once we've been converted.

As a whole, Nettleton, how many know who Nettleton is? He's unknown. How many know who Charles Finney is? I wish you didn't know anything about Finney, but you knew everything about Nettleton. Nettleton lived the same time as him.

He was really used of God as Finney sadly manipulated many people into false conversions. Nettleton wrote this, and a change of heart among sinners now will of course produce a change of views and feelings and pursuits which will end in separation of intimate friends. At such a season, many who feel little or no concern for their own souls will complain about being neglected by their former friends who have become the subjects of divine grace.

They imagine that those who have embraced the Gospel have now ceased to love them. Let me tell you, they do not love you less, but they love the Savior more. They cannot accommodate themselves to your feelings and wishes consistently with their attachment to Him.

They cannot make you their intimate associates as formerly unless they change their character or you change yours. With them, the old things have passed away and all new has become new. They have lost their relish for the pleasures of sin, the amusements and vanities of the world.

They have set their affections on things above, not on things on earth. In this sense, they're dead and their life is hid with Christ in God. They're no longer conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their mind.

If you will not follow them and become Christians in solemn earnest, they must in this sense forsake you. In such a case, Christ requires them to forsake father and mother and wife and children and all that to a man hath or he cannot be His disciple. A separation of views and feelings of interest and pursuits must take place.

If you will not accompany them, or they must die with you in the wilderness and never enter heaven, that they love you still. Their bursting hearts and streaming eyes when they speak of you, they tell of their love for you. In their name and while as I doubt not, their prayers are solemnly offered for the success of the invitation.

I now renew to every one of you the invitation come. Sorry, the end of that was read a little sloppily. But how is it that you can go from really not caring about your biological family and then you get converted and now you're actually praying for them and they're offended by that when before you never prayed for them? There wasn't this love there.

And I know many of you have gone through different things and some of you have handled it very well. Others like myself failed in many different ways to live out these principles and to be a good testimony. And some of you have excelled in it and yet you're being slandered as handling it poorly.

But that's part of Christianity. We will be spoken evil of. But we want to make sure it's not for some valid action that we have done.

I had a J.C. Ryle quote. Ryle said, this made a complete breach between all the friends and all the relatives I ever had before. I mean by this that it made kind of a gulf between us.

There was kind of an understanding without it being stated that my taste and my likings and habits had undergone a complete change. Amen, right? That's what happens when you get saved. It made an insensible kind of estrangement which no one can comprehend but those who've gone through it.

My friends thought me wrong. And I thought them wrong. That they were annoyed at me yet could not alter me.

That I was sorry for them that I couldn't alter them. You see, that's the tension we've got. We have true love now as Christians for family who's not converted.

For co-workers who are not converted. We love them now more than ever because before we had no real ability to truly love them. Because we were dead spiritually.

So who are my brothers and sisters? Verse 35, whoever does the will of God. And that begs to differ. Are you doing the will of God? What is the will of God? And in Luke's account, he says, hear the Word and do it.

It makes you think of James 1.22. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself. My conduct will show who I'm related to if I've been adopted by God the Father. There's going to be holiness in my life and increasing holiness.

Christ comes along in Luke 6.46 and He says, why do you call Me, Lord, Lord? Why do you identify as one of My children? But you don't do what I say. You've got many verses that use the phrase the will of God and sometimes you like to go to those and I think that they can be helpful, but 1 Peter, this is the will of God that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 1 Thessalonians 4, this is the will of God.

Your sanctification that you abstain from sexual immorality. This is the will of God. Give thanks in all circumstances.

This is the will of God. The world is passing away. Don't love these things of the world.

Whoever does the will of God abides forever. What categories do we have in the spiritual realm? We've got children of God and we've got what over here? Children of the devil. Every one of us here today is in one of these categories.

If you're a child of God, you've got family in Christ. If you're a child of the devil, you don't have that, but you know what? God is willing to adopt you. He's willing to bring you into the fold if you'll but come to Him and trust that His Son died to pay your ransom.

In Luke's account, he says Christ stretched out His arms and said, here are my mother and brothers. If Christ is here today and He was making this statement, would He stretch out His arms towards you? Would He stretch out His arms and say, you are my brother, my mother, my sister? Look, being a child and a brother with the King of kings and the Lord of lords is not some far-off thing. It's really near.

Just like that passage in Deuteronomy 30. You don't have to go far away. It's near.

People long for family. They long for fellowship. People are going to love them.

That's what you're going to find in Christ. People will truly love you with not perfect motive, but they're trying to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you see like Paul Washer said how believers are a part of you? I mean, I'm a part of you.

You're a part of me. And you're not going to find that if all you do is come to this church for one sermon a Sunday. You're not going to find this church as your family.

You're not going to experience that reality of that. We're inviting you into a family not to hear a sermon, but to be a part of a body who's seeking to go and honor the Lord Jesus Christ, use our resources and our time for His kingdom and advancement. His people became my people, my new family.

When I got converted to the meeting early and I was there, I remember talking to people and I felt like I knew them my whole life. It was incredible. That's what we should expect.

No, it doesn't always happen like that because there's sin. Right? There's sin in us. There's sin in others.

Yes, we've got different personalities, but Christ, He says in Matthew 19, I preached on this a few weeks ago not emphasizing this, but He says, everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or a father or a

mother or children or lands, for My name's sake, will receive a hundredfold. But you know what Luke's account says? Luke adds this statement. He says, many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.

You hear that? Christ isn't just saying this is all going to come at some future point. He's saying you can have family right now a hundredfold more than what you left behind in order to follow Jesus Christ. A young girl got saved in Burma.

At an arm's length, she said to Him, to find this religion is such an effect on my mind that it's made me love the disciples of Christ more than my dearest natural relations. And that's what we're talking about. We're part of each other.

We're part of each other. That should make us ask this question, am I helping to add to the family? Am I helping to add to the family? Am I helping to keep family unity? Am I helping to bring us further on? It talks about bringing in sons and daughters in the Old Testament. We want to be actively participating in that.

We want to be participating in our family who are suffering. Those who heard Paul last night, that was one of Paul's main points in his messages. He said, there's my brothers over there being slaughtered.

I mean, if it was your biological brother in a war and you got a letter that he might be near to death, how would you pray for him? Well, we have our brothers over there. A brother more real to us than a biological. I realize you grew up with your biological.

It feels closer. It's hard to enter in with those you don't know. That's why we need to make our effort to know people.

And then that emotion all the more grips us with greater love for them. But just the fact knowing they're part of Christ whether you know them or not. We ought to be praying for them.

It says in Hebrews, those in prison, pray for them because we are one body. Right? We are one body. What are you not willing to sacrifice for your brethren's welfare? I don't mean just their temporal good.

We need to do that. But you know what you also find? Are you willing to confront people for their spiritual good with sin that you find in their life? How willing are you to do that? How willing am I to do that? We watch our brothers and sisters and we cower away because we're intimidated. It says in John, we know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death. I mean, Tim did that sermon years ago called the church is a world of love. We want that.

I want that more and more in my own heart towards you all. More love. And I'm only going to get that if I have more love for Christ.

I have more love in reality of what He's done for us in bringing us together. I have a caution here. How far do you take this whole brother and sister and mother thing? Is it just like a literal brother and sister? Well, it's deeper in the spiritual sense, but practically, it's not the same.

Let me explain. Could a young man and his biological sister, they move to this town and they go rent an apartment together to live there? Sure, no one's going to say there's a fault with that. If one of you brothers in the church says, hey, me and another sister in the church are going to go rent an apartment, you know

what? We're going to be all very concerned.

You could take it too far. And I mention this caution because I've seen this in church history. My caution to you in this is specifically in brother and sister relationships or in brother to mother relationships.

It says in 1 Timothy 5.1, Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father. Younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters in all purity. Right? There's got to be purity in my heart.

And I remember reading of an account where a guy basically became emotionally attached to a woman and they justified this relationship that was idolatrous because, well, she's like a mother to me. We've got to be very careful. You could do that with a sister.

All sorts of situations you could do that. Got to guard our heart. I love the sisters in this church.

I'm thankful for you all. You know what? But my wife is really the one behind those relationships. Are you going to sit down with me like Priscilla and Aquila? As a couple, you'll sit with us and we'll pour into you? Absolutely.

But I want to treat you sisters in a way in all purity. And if at times I miss that by being too cold and not giving a hug to someone who desires a hug, I'm sorry. I'm trying to figure out how to love the brethren in all purity and even the sisters and the mothers.

But your question is, one more verse, Romans 16, Greek Rufus, chosen in the Lord, also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. Don't you like that? I mean, you can have people, they've been like a mother to you in a way that really honors God and that is a blessing from the Lord. But here, in closing, a question.

Is there distance in your relationships and why? Or is there a lack of depth in your relationship? You hear this and you think, I don't feel this in this church. I don't feel like I've got brothers and sisters and I've got mothers. Look, I'm not saying that I'm not failing you and that others might be failing you, but we always got to come back to step one and look, what more could I be doing to produce this deeper relationships with my brothers and sisters? Am I being intentional to go and to talk to people? And in the conversations, am I being intentional to be transparent? Am I being at the meetings or am I neglecting the meetings? Am I showing hospitality? When's the last time I've had someone over to my house, apartment, car, tent? It doesn't matter what you've got.

And when was the last time someone was there? That you had a brother, sister, mother, family in Christ over? You know what can hinder relationships? Ongoing conflict, bitterness in the heart, us being too critical of someone. You know, you get in this mindset you're better than everyone, you're always finding fault with things, and then you don't feel like a family because you're the judge now. You've lost this family feeling, this reality.

Does a family need to correct one another? Absolutely, there's balance that needs to be found in all of these things. Is there ongoing sin in your life? I mean, you know what happens? People tend to isolate themselves. Proverbs 18 says they isolate themselves because they seek their own desires.

Not always, but there's often some sort of sin that's being coddled and hidden. The best thing to do is get that in the light. Tell your family.

Tell some members in the family about it. Get help. Don't keep going on like that.

I mean, how many problems in our physical families come from a failure to communicate? And that's the same thing in the church. I mean, we've got to communicate with one another. Problems can happen.

Selfish ambition. Too much competitive nature. That greaves the spirit when you come to the meetings.

You're not going to feel like a family if you're trying to compete with others. Another hindrance can be your mind being poisoned against someone. Someone will go tell you something about someone else and you never go to the other person to get clarity.

You know, one presents his case first, the other seems right, then comes along and examines it. You never get the examination, so your mind says, oh, that's really what happened. You know, I thought it was this way.

And then it kind of goes on in your mind for a while and your mind gets poisoned and you start to doubt the other person's love for you. Without giving them a chance to answer to whatever it is that you're concerned with. Another thing that can hinder is an overemphasis on biological family.

You know, it was more of a problem 10 years ago, right? With the whole homeschool family integrated movement. Tim did a sermon called The Family According to Jesus to really go after that. But I'm thankful we've got a church who views that they're raising their families in the midst of a body of believers.

It's not just I'm out there with my family all week and I'm coming here on Sunday to hear a message and be around the brethren for a little bit. I mean, we're in this together. You all are talking to my kids.

I'm talking to your kids. We're evangelizing, we're praying them. We're hand in hand trying to get to the end.

You know, another problem that hinders it is pride. I don't need them. I don't really need you guys.

Paul said, as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor the hand, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Do you realize that I need you? And you need me.

You have something to offer me that I need. Don't fail to serve me in that way. And I'm trying to not fail to serve you in that way.

Doesn't matter what member you are in the body. There's something there. I want that for my own good because I need help in different areas.

I've not arrived, you haven't arrived, we're all trying to get to the end. So what can I do more to cultivate and produce this fellowship and relationship with every believer in this church and fight for this to be more and more of a reality in my life? Yesterday, I was walking down the hall to go do something. I saw a book on the shelf.

The title was Le Brie. Has anyone read Le Brie? Le Brie refers to the shelter which was a bunch of houses that Francis Schaeffer and his wife had in the middle of Switzerland. I read 130 pages in a few hours because it was just that good.

I couldn't put it down. But you know what? It kept showing up again and again in that book. And even why I picked it up, when I thought Le Brie, I bet they really had a sense of family among each other.

And they did. And they were living up there as a family. Brothers and sisters and mothers in Christ.

And you could say, well, yeah, that's great. They had all these houses. They could walk over to each other's houses.

Brethren, we've got cars. San Antonio's not that big. We're not in Austin.

We can make it to someone's house in less than an hour. And we can fellowship. We can be in each other's lives.

And Francis Schaeffer's home was always open. I want you to know my home's open. I mean, you guys know where I live.

I'm there. You want to meet? Call me. I'm trying to schedule meetings throughout the week.

We're trying to meet with people pastorally and be involved. And if you feel like we're not as involved in your life as you would like, then you let me know so you can come over to my house. I'm trying to pack the schedule out.

Not to the point where I get burned out. There's a balance there, I realize. You know, an open home.

You say, I'm not living near you. Well, you've got a car. You could drive.

I could drive to you. Another thing that hit me, two weeks ago, we watched a movie called The Long Gray Line. It was made in 1955.

And the long gray line refers to the gray winter overcoats worn by army cadets at West Point. And the long gray line refers to the unbroken line of officers who've come there to serve the nation. And the movie basically follows a guy named Martin Meyer who worked at West Point his entire life.

Now, his home was always open. I mean, the whole movie, you're basically in his home and he's interacting with recruits who were only there for a few years and then they're going to go to war. And you know what happened to many of those recruits? They died.

But Martin and his wife, it's like those people were their sons. They were their kids. Not biologically, but based on this love.

And brethren, they weren't Christians. How much more can we have that as Christians? Where it's not a long gray line of all these people coming through West Point and we're interacting with them, but it's what you call a long grace line of people coming through grace, living and dying, and here we are together as a family in Christ, bought by the blood of Christ, loving one another. And did not Jesus say, by this all people will know You are My disciples if You have love for one another? Right? Love for one another.

Oh, how we need more love for Christ in order to love one another better. But we've got an elder brother who's going to defend us. That's the Lord Jesus.

He's going to love us, communicate with us. He's going to provide for us. And you should feel so loved to know that Christ acknowledges you here.

It's His brother. It's His sister. It's His mother.

He identifies with you. He's not ashamed of you. He's not ashamed of you.

So God, help us to not be ashamed of Him and the family that we have here together in Christ. Well, let me pray. Lord, as one said, have we ever measured what it's like to be a brother and a sister of Christ? Lord, the honest fact is we haven't.

At least, we haven't done it accurately. The tape measure ran out. Lord, we couldn't measure the heights and the depths of Your love.

Lord, I'm just amazed at Your patience. Lord, I look back on my 14 years as a Christian and my 14 years in this church, and Lord, I see all manner of different times that I have failed to love as I ought. And Lord, You're patient with us.

Lord, You work through things in our lives and we're so grateful for that. You've not abandoned us. Lord, I pray You would help us all the more to live this life as a family of Christ.

Lord, as brothers and sisters all the way to the end. So Lord, if there's people here that they're struggling to say, I really feel that. Lord, I don't experience that.

Lord, I pray that You in this next week, that You would do something there, that You would shift that, that You would change that. Lord, is that not Your will? Lord, that by our love, the world sees that this is the truth? Please, Lord, that they will know we're of You. And Lord, we pray for those who are not part of the family.

Lord, that they'd come in. That they'd come and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and find their desires altered and changed. And Lord, I do pray for the young people.

Lord, help them to rightly honor their father and mother. And Lord, at the same time, balance that out. With forsaking a father and mother and mother-in-law for Your sake, Lord, we so much struggle with the right balance in understanding how to live out the truths we see in Your Word.

And so Lord, I pray You'd individually guide each person in their scenarios. So Lord, we just commit this time to You. We thank You for being our God.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/NpmceN55VQo.mp4>

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