

WHO ARE MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHERS?

Mark 3:20-21, 31-35

We know a **Saudi Arabian woman** whose father has four wives. She has numerous siblings ranging in age over several decades, and most of them have children of their own. All the members of this extended family live close to each other in what our friend terms a “compound.”

Most North Americans would feel restricted, even stifled, by such tight family living quarters. While we all agree that family is important, we would balk at such a high amount of nonstop family togetherness.

But close family ties were the norm in the culture in which Jesus grew up. While respecting his family members, Jesus had even higher priorities. He gave precedence to another family: the children of God the Father.

Group Discussion. How have you experienced the church functioning as a family?

Personal Reflection. Think of the people you feel closest to. Are they your relatives, or are they not related to you? Why do you feel close to them?

Jesus had been teaching and preaching with his disciples throughout Galilee. He had experienced ongoing conflict with the religious authorities who watched him closely to find fault with him. Back home in Capernaum, as a crowd gathered in a house to hear his teaching, members of Jesus’ immediate family learned of his activities and took action. *Read Mark 3:20-21.*

1. How did Jesus' family react to what they were hearing about him?
2. What could possibly have led them to that conclusion?
3. If you were in their place, how do you think you might have responded?
4. *Read Mark 3:31-35.* Notice how Jesus' family approached him (vv. 31-32). What does their approach indicate?
5. Jesus could have told the messenger, "Those people are not my mother and my brothers," or he could have gone outside and told them directly, "You are not my mother and my brothers." What did he do instead, and what difference would his approach make (vv. 33-35)?

6. What was Jesus really saying when he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers" (v. 34)?

7. The consistent teaching of the New Testament is that people become children of God through faith in Christ, not by obedience to God's law (see John 1:12-13). Then what could Jesus mean when he said that "whoever does God's will" is his family (v. 35)?

8. How can a Christian's physical family be a spiritual help or a spiritual hindrance?

9. What are some practical evidences of being part of Jesus' true family?

10. How have you enjoyed the benefits of being part of Jesus' family?

11. What are some challenges and difficulties of living in the world as the family of Jesus?

12. How can Jesus' words comfort and encourage a person who is estranged or in conflict with their physical family, whether because of faith or for other reasons?

13. What will you do this week to live more authentically as a brother, sister, or mother of Jesus?



Give thanks for family members who are committed Christian believers. Pray for family members who still need Christ. And pray that you will be conscientious and committed members of Christ's eternal spiritual family.

NOW OR LATER

Study John 1:1-13 concerning how people become children of God.

Study 1 John 2:28-3:24 concerning the true children of God and how we should treat each other as members of God's family.