

**Mark 3:31-35**

31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

The power of Jesus is clear in the New Testament. His intellectual power is demonstrated when he is confronted by controversy. His principal opponents are the scribes and the Pharisees both groups put their law over the human condition. The healing power of Jesus is seen when he sees the human need and heals the blind, lame, epileptic, and even the dead. The spiritual power of Jesus is seen during the exorcisms as he casts out demons. The teaching ability, handling of controversy, and healing power of Jesus is accredited to the power of God. This power is stronger than Satan, stronger than evil, and responds to human suffering.

Early in his ministry Jesus recruits his disciples and embarks on a preaching tour. He heals people and large crowds follow him. One thing I find to be particularly interesting and worth noting is that when unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted "You are the Son of God!" This is very significant in that it shows instant recognition. The demons recognize Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus is also challenged with controversy early in his ministry with accusations of blasphemy and eating with sinners. His family attempted to restrain him from what they perceived as madness. The scribes accused him of being deranged and demon possessed and now his closest relatives are on the outside.

While Jesus is teaching his family arrives and the inside crowd that is gathered around him tell him that his family is here. Then Jesus asks a provocative question "Who are my mother, brothers, and sisters. He points to those listening and answer his own question "Here is my family." We see ourselves as adopted into the divine family. Through the loving sacrifice of Jesus we are children of God. The context is clear, you have to be one with Christ. Whoever does the will of God is the true follower of Christ. Jesus proclaims that it is those faithfully respond to God's gift of love and obey the message. This is another biblical lesson on the necessity of responding to faith. The New Testament is loaded with commandments from Jesus and other lessons that emphasize the necessity of having an active faith. Hearing the word, recognizing and accepting the divine status of Jesus, confessing belief, and being in church are not enough. You must actively follow Jesus in the pursuit of the will of God. Jesus Christ himself said that his family is made up of those who do the will of God. You must walk in the path that God directed. You must walk with Jesus in your journey of faith. God did not give strict regulations, God gives us a guideline with love being the guiding rule. If you love God, you will automatically follow the will of God. Jesus places the will of God above all else including all human earthly relationships.

The first disciples left family and occupation in order to follow Jesus. His mother, brothers, and sisters, call from the outside. This shows us that they are not disciples. Then Jesus defines family in terms of discipleship. It is those who do the will of God. At issue

is the realm of power and influence. Jesus rejects relationships of power and subordination just like Jesus rejects the societal status quo. Jesus rejects both family authority and social authority because no authority is above God. Jesus faced verbal combat in the public realm where males engage in public debate in order to establish and maintain social status. The private realm is inside a house with the women and children. What is of prime significance is that the family of Jesus includes the women and children. This is a very significant distinguishing characteristic that distinguishes the followers of Jesus from the audience of the teachers of the law that was only for adult men by adult men. Jesus does not belong to the powerful elite in society with religious credentials that are established to satisfy the powerful aristocrats. The disciples that follow Jesus do not belong to the powerful elite in society either. God does not force compliance. God allows for individual choice with room for sincere repentance where insiders can fall away and outsiders can find their way in.

Jesus enacted God's offer of mercy by associating with social and religious outcasts. The will of God transcends social and family restraints. Jesus did more with his personality, acceptance, and teaching to help women and children than all other influences. The theology of Jesus is one with a family connection. This family connection is repeatedly taught by the Son of God. So, God is a parent figure, Jesus is the son figure, we are adopted into the family of God as the children of God. We are made righteous not by anything we can do or say. We are made righteous by the action of Jesus who took our sins to the cross. This brings us into a right relationship with God by paying off our debt. This relationship is based on love - very strong love – not the love of romance, but the kind of love that cares enough to sacrifice for you. We are brothers and sisters with Christ. We are kin.