

All in the Family

John 7:1-13

John 7:1 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

² Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand.

³ So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.

⁴ For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."

⁵ For not even his brothers believed in him.

⁶ Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.

⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.

⁸ You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."

⁹ After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

¹⁰ But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.

¹¹ The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?"

¹² And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."

¹³ Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

A Family of Christians?

So many people think that if you live in America or are born into a Christian family or if you go to church, that this makes you a Christian. It's kind of like thinking that if you live in a garage, you must be a car. Like a Husky that has to run straight, the idea is bred into us. My next door neighbor told me that that I'm a Christian because that's how I was raised. There couldn't possibly be any other reason. It's like everyone is born with this idea that whatever your culture or parents tell you to that you are, this is what you are. The whole world seems to have this view by default. Even the Muslim world looks upon America this way. Thus, many of them want to destroy the West, because the West is "Christian." Maybe the idea stems from Judaism, where if you were born a Jew, then you must be a Jew. Jewishness is purely outward and physical, so they thought. The problem is, this idea has nothing to do with biblical Christianity, **OT or NT**.

I'm sure that you have relatives, perhaps even close relatives—a spouse, parents, children, sisters or brothers that do not believe in Jesus Christ. Some of them used to, but no more. Others are in the process of "rethinking" their faith, and not for the better. Some of them have always rejected Christianity. Others, maybe they just pretend; maybe they think that since they said a prayer and walked down an aisle years ago that this makes them a Christian. Or maybe they are deceived and think they are Christians because they have never

heard the true Gospel and just revert to the default mode I mentioned above. Maybe you even fit into one of these categories and no one knows it except for you.

Whatever the case, you know the truth about what makes a person a Christian. Maybe they do not. They must not be allowed to go on thinking that anything makes a person a Christian except saving belief in the Son of God. You must not think it either. Not even family is a tie that can bridge the gap that exists between an individual and God Almighty.

To help you better evangelize your relatives (or even yourself), to help them see that Christianity is not a birthright, I will look at our passage today with this idea in mind. **The Lord Jesus had a family as well.** He was just as you are. His own brothers rejected him, at least for a time. They didn't understand the truth. They even said things to him that were so contrary to the gospel that it could have derailed his whole purpose for coming to this earth, had he let blood get in the way or his mission from the heavenly Father.

John 7:1-13 sets up a new series of chapters that lead to the final conflict in the book of John and the last week of Jesus' life on earth. At the center of our passage are **the brothers of Jesus.** They take up most of our verses. Imagine being Jesus (not that any of us could). You are God in the flesh. You are the eternally preexistent one. You are the creator of heaven and earth. You graciously decide to come down into the womb of a young human maiden. An angel comes to her and

to her betrothed husband (in the ancient world, betrothal was a form of marriage), to tell her that she will conceive in a miraculous way—a virgin birth. To reinforce the point, her cousin is told that she will give birth in her old age, just like Sarah did.

The birth itself is enough to justify belief, especially for Mary and her family who must have told them about these things more than once. But God gives more. After his birth, Jesus is raised in fulfillment of all sorts of prophecy pertaining to him, only increasing the reasons to believe in who he is. At age 12 he goes into the temple and begins acting like a Rabbi, stunning everyone with his knowledge. Now, for over two years, he has been walking around Israel healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the gospel, explaining its fulfillment, doing everything just as Scripture said he would do. His brothers and mother were there from the beginning of his ministry ([John 2:12](#); cf. [Mark 6:3](#); [Matt 13:55](#)).

How do you suppose his own family would respond? His mother seems to have believed from the start. His earthly father, Joseph, seems to have died many years before, but it is presumed that he believed as well. That leaves us with his brothers and sisters. His siblings (at least his brothers) responded just like everyone else. They respond in [unbelief](#). This had to have been, on one level, a crushing blow to Christ in his humanity. All of these things he has done right in front of everyone, and even his own brothers stubbornly refused to

believe. But our Savior endured all suffering for our sake, and they were hardened for a time intentionally, so that he might know exactly what we go through even in things like this.

A New Phase of Ministry: Intensifying Hostility

As I said, John 7 begins a new section in the Gospel of John. It continues through the end of Chapter 11 and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It tells about a period of increasing conflict in between Jesus and the Jews. In Ch. 6, we left Jesus by the **Sea of Galilee**. It was **Passover** (March/April), a year before his crucifixion. Ch. 7 begins with Jesus still in Galilee (**7:1**), but it is six months later, around the time of the **Feast of Booths** (Sept/Oct; **vs. 2**). Six months have passed; how many more things has Christ done that we are not told about (**John 21:25**)?

The Feast of Booths was one of the great OT prescribed feasts (**Ex 23:16; Lev 23:33-36**). It was a celebration of the **ingathering of the harvest of grapes and olives** and ran for seven days in late September through early October. There was a special assembly on the eighth day (or the first day of the week). The main feast took place in Jerusalem. **Josephus** says that this was the most popular of the three principle Jewish feasts. Those traveling from a long distance would build temporary **tents** (or “booths”) that they would live in for the week, hence it is called the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (**Lev 23:42**). The feast was also known for two things that will

become important later in the chapter. It was known as a **water-drawing rite** and a **lamp-lighting rite**. Later Jesus will tell the people that if they thirst they should come to him (7:37ff), and that he is the light of the world (8:12). This is not a coincidence. **We will look at those more in coming weeks.**

John 7:1 tells us why Jesus is in Galilee. “**He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.**” This attitude of the Jews towards the Lord has been festering like a wound that becomes infected with gangrene. It hurts and it is quite literally killing them. You may recall back in **John 5:18** it said, “**This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.**” **The Sabbath will also return** as a theme later in ch. 7 (**vs. 22**). Themes constantly submerge and reemerge in the Gospel of John like a whale coming back up for air. He does this so that you will get it. He repeats himself for our sake, like mothers saying the same thing again and again to their infant. We can't be certain how long ago that encounter was, because John does not name the feast.¹ But the point is clear and it sets the stage for the discussion that Jesus is about to have with his brothers.

¹ Critical scholars think that originally John 7 came after John 5 and that it could have been part of the same episode, but this is implausible and based more in cynicism of the biblical account than anything else. It is possible that the events of John 5 took place during the prior Feast of Booths, which would make the hostility a year in the making.

Jesus' Brothers

All good Jews went to the Feast of Booths, for it was not only an exciting and joyful time of the year, but was also commanded in the Scripture. “You shall dwell in booths for seven days ... it is a statute forever throughout your generations” (Lev 23:42, 41). Yet, Jesus is lingering in Galilee and did not seem to want to go down to Jerusalem as the law commanded. Enter Jesus’ “brothers.” “Jesus brothers said to him ...” (John 7:3).

The first thing to do here is identify who these “brothers” are, especially because this has been hotly debated due to ulterior motives regarding Mary. The basic idea is that Mary remains a perpetual virgin, and so couldn’t possibly have had other children besides Jesus. Since the Greek word “brother” can mean relatives other than brothers, they argue that these aren’t in fact Jesus’ “brothers” in the most obvious sense. So who are they?

First, we can see that they are distinguished from other disciples, because the same verse talks about “brothers” and “disciples.” Brothers are a smaller group than the disciples. Going back to chapter 6, we note that John uses the words “twelve” and “disciples” to refer even to Matthew, Peter, John and the others. It does not call them “brothers.” Also, John 7:5 adds, “not even his brothers believed in him,” which clearly distinguishes them from the twelve, whom we are told did believe in him (John 6:69). Thus, these “brothers” refer to

Jesus' biological family. There appear to be four of them. Matthew and Mark gives us their names: James, Joses (Joseph), Simon, and Judas (Jude) (**Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55**).

Rome's position is that these "brothers" are actually "cousins." The Greek word *adelphos* is no help here, since it can refer to either. The "cousin" view is at least as old as **St. Jerome** (347-420 AD). The view is complicated and strained and there are several forms of it.² In a nutshell is basically involves saying that Mary had a sister named Mary and that the other Mary had these four sons. The problem is that there are several Mary's in the accounts surrounding Jesus, but to me, unless Mary's father was George Foreman (who named all his sons "George"), saying that Mary would have a sister named Mary is really pretty amazing.³

The Eastern Church teaches that these "brothers" are really "step-brothers," sons of Joseph from a first marriage. This view is more plausible, and has roots that go back to the middle of the second century to the Christian books the *Protoevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Peter*. However, the view also rests on an assumption that you just don't find in Scripture. As with Rome, the assumption is that Mary was a perpetual virgin. Without the assumption, you just don't find any reason in the Scripture for taking these "brothers" as anything other than the sons of Mary after Jesus was born.

² For a treatment of all the views see Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 19-32.

³ She could be a half or step sister, but there is absolutely no evidence of this.

Thus, while we can't be certain (the Eastern view is not wrong because of the assumption, it could still be correct), Protestant scholars are surely correct when they say that the most natural way of reading these verses is that they are nothing less than Jesus' brothers via Mary.⁴

I'm not telling you this just so you can have a piece of trivia packed away in case you get called to star on *Jeopardy* with Alex Trebek. The face-value view actually brings much more force and impact on the force of John's statement "Not even his brothers' believed in him." Step brother's are one thing. Since they aren't biologically related to Jesus at all (Joseph is not Jesus' biological father), they would in once sense be no more naturally to protect Jesus' reputation than anyone else. But blood brothers are another. Yes, even blood brothers can become bitter rivals (think Jacob and Esau or the half-brothers of Joseph/Benjamin vs. the other ten). But it is more natural that blood relations "stick together." Thus, the impact of these being Jesus' blood brothers is all the greater since "not even they" believed in him. What crushing words those are. His own family, boys he grew up with, ate supper with, worked in the field with, wrestled with, played with ... not even they believed in him.

Brother's Tempting Jesus to Give Up the Cross

⁴ For example, Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 2: John, Acts*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 73.

But it gets worse. For not only did they refuse to believe in him, they actually tempted him like the devil did. Let's see exactly what they did, because this brings us to the really practical part of the passage. If they did not believe in him, then you have to view the things they say as being **rooted in unbelief rather than faith**. Thus, the things they say are actually evil rather than good. I bring this up because their first words don't appear evil at all. **"Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing"** (John 7:3). The words seem to be an encouragement to Jesus. **"Look, here is how we can really get this ministry off the ground."** **"Think of all the 'seekers' you could bring into your church."** **"Here's a great chance for you to get people to really believe in you, by doing miracles in Jerusalem."** **"Besides, remember, Jesus, you need to go because Moses commanded it."**

But this is actually a temptation. Remember when even the disciples sought to keep Christ from going to the cross (Matt 16:22)? If those who did believe in him would do such a thing, how much more those who did not? This is what is going on in their seemingly innocent words. It is a temptation of the devil.

You will recall that Satan tempted Jesus with three temptations: turning stones to bread receiving the kingdoms of the world, and throwing himself down from the temple. Scholars have argued that John 6 parallels the first two (stones

to bread to the hungry = multiplying bread for the hungry; receiving the kingdoms = wanting to make Christ king).⁵ Of the three temptations, however, it is the third that seems most obviously parallel to what the brothers are doing here.⁶ In fact, the devil seems to have tried a similar temptation with Jesus in the desert.

Satan's temptations was to throw himself off the temple (**Matt 4:5-6**). One person has said this is a temptation "to showmanship in jumping from the pinnacle of the temple."⁷ Satan quoted the Scripture that God would send angels to save him so that he would not crush his foot against a stone (**Ps 91:11-12**). Clearly, if Jesus threw himself off the temple and lived, everyone would see this great miracle and follow him. It really was a temptation to showmanship.

What is the root of what the brother's are saying? "For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world" (**John 7:4**). They want Jesus to take his show on the road, to head to the big city with all the lights, cameras, and action. This is absolutely never what Jesus has in mind with anything he does. But it is

⁵ Raymond Brown, "Incidents That Are Units in the Synoptic Gospels but Dispersed in St. John," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 152–60.

⁶ Agreeing with Brown on this point is Gerald L. Borchert, vol. 25A, *John 1–11*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 280-81.

⁷ Gerald L. Borchert, vol. 25A, *John 1–11*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 280-81. For an entire article on the three temptations of the devil and the brothers see R. Brown, "Incidents That Are Units in the Synoptic Gospels but Dispersed in St. John," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 152–60.

what the people want, and Satan tried to use this same idea to get Jesus to sin and turn away from the cross.

The brothers are not acting in faith here, for John tells us that this is part of their faithlessness, their unbelief. Like the others, they just want the outward signs and the money, power, and fame it can give them as brothers of this great miracle worker from Galilee. This whole idea of getting a bigger audience, of doing the work in public, or showing himself to the world, it is a subtle temptation to give up the cross for the glory, to give up the way of suffering and have the treasures of the world for a season and then die a meaningless death later on.

The temptation is subtle and applies even to our own day. While what they say is true, they do not have in mind the things of God. Christians who love the lights, love the fame, love the show, love the popularity, and love the applause of the crowds really need to beware of their own motives when similar temptations come their way. The church in our day has too often given into this temptation under a religious façade of good ideas (i.e. evangelism), but has itself become worldly in the process. Far too often it becomes an either/or; either the popularity or the gospel, because the fact of the matter is, the Apostolic preaching of the cross is a message incompatible with a desire for fame and glory, because it is a message of humility and suffering and it calls Christians to

enter into the humility and suffering by giving up the glory and fame of this world for the sake of a greater glory to come.

He Will Not Give Up the Cross

This talk about worldliness is not just a hobby horse of mine. It comes from Jesus' response to his brothers. The Lord's response to them is two-fold. He talks about his "time" having not yet come and about his brothers as being "of the world." Let's take the "worldly" response first, since we've been talking about it.

"The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil" (John 7:7). The biggest problem his brother's did not understand was that only trouble awaited him in Jerusalem. They did not understand this because they failed to grasp the true purpose of his ministry. It wasn't to be a magic performer in Las Vegas. It was to convict the world of its sin and rebellion against God. Wherever Jesus went, he told people about their sinful condition. That's not exactly what you find Hollywood doing in movies. They entertain; they don't preach (generally speaking). But Jesus was a preacher, not an entertainer. And his message was one of conviction of sin.

Anytime you tell someone that they are sinful, they get angry. Recently I watched a Huffington Post (AOL) Entertainment Tonight kind of video mocking Kirk Cameron for refusing to back down on his stance on marriage. The

condescension was so thick, you could cut it with a knife. “Gay marriage is wrong,” he says. “God’s way is the best way.” After editing back and forth with some snide remarks by the “reporter”, they pan back to Cameron who says, “It isn’t an attack on one sin over others, because I’m the chief of sinners.” To which the sarcastic sneering little reporter gleefully retorts, “I agree with you on that one Kirk.”⁸ Pure hatred from self-proclaimed “tolerant” people. The world just can’t understand the ways of God, because they are morally convicting. That’s what Jesus faced, only infinitely worse, because unlike Kirk, he also claimed to be God and to be the only one who can take away sins, because he is the one they sinned against! Imagine it.

Jesus’ brothers’ couldn’t imagine it, because they had the exact same thoughts about him that the rest of the world had, only they hid it under a disguise of being his travel agents. “We’re with you Jesus. Just do what we tell you to do and go where we tell you to go.” As long as they can have the Messiah that they want, Jesus will be their best friend. But now he tells them in the plainest way possible that the world cannot hate them because they are of the world. Wow.

The parallel idea of being of the world is found in vs. 6, “your time is always here.” In other words, you can do anything you want any time you want and you won’t be hated

⁸ <http://on.aol.com/video/former-child-star-kirk-cameron-once-again-speaks-out-against-gay-marriage-517416799>

by the world, because your agenda is the same as theirs. But “My time has not yet come” (vs. 6, 7). This is the second response he gives to them. He relates this directly to going up to the feast. “I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come” (vs. 8). One person see here echoes of Psalm 1 and says, “The ‘counsel o the wicked’ cannot be permitted to set his agenda.”⁹

At this point, turn you attention to vs. 10 which says, “After his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up.” This is strange and seems to pose a contradiction. First Jesus says he won’t go up to this feast, and then he does go up.¹⁰ So let’s look at exactly what’s going on here. It gets to the heart of Jesus’ purpose in coming to the earth, a purpose that his own unbelieving brother’s simply couldn’t see, a purpose that everyone must see if they want to have faith in the true Christ.

First, Jesus says “my time has not yet come.” Jesus has said this to them before, namely at the first miracle of turning water into wine, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4; the brothers are there in John 2:12). The idea is wrapped up in Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, the famous “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die.”

⁹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 309.

¹⁰ It causes such a seeming contradiction that there is a textual variant in vs. 8 that changes “not going up” to “not yet going up” in order to alleviate the “absurdity.”

The “time” Jesus has in mind here is the **time of his death**. He means that he won’t go up to the feast because it is not his time to die.

Remember, if the things Jesus says is making the people want to kill him, then going to Jerusalem might be a bad idea. But there is another reason Jesus wouldn’t go to the feast. He would not go the way they wanted to him to go, the pomp and circumstance. In the previous chapter, he already had to dodge the people wanting to make him a king, which he could not have if he was going to die on the cross. In Chapters 6-7, he is still a well respected itinerate prophet and miracle worker, at least by some. We see this in one of the opinions about him in **vs. 12**, “**He is a good man.**” Jesus would be coronated as king in six months, when he entered into the city on the donkey. But it is not time for this to happen, because Christ’s death is a fulfillment of Passover, not the Feast of Booths. Jesus’ death was planned out in advance by God and had very specific meaning and purpose for us. Jesus will not hasten either his coronation or his death. That’s why he stays back in Galilee (**John 7:9**).

But Jesus doesn’t stay there forever, and he never had any intention of doing so. What he **didn’t want was a public event**. So he leaves a little after his brothers and goes to the feast “**not publically but in private**” (**John 7:10**). This avoids the ceremony that would have come had people known he was coming into town. But it allows him to go to Jerusalem and

begin teaching and healing there again, without fear that his time will be rushed upon him against the will of the Father (as if that could happen).

More Unbelief and Hostility

Before John gets to all of this, he focuses again on more of the unbelief surrounding Christ, as well as other opinions about him. That is how the rest of our text pans out. “The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, ‘Where is he?’” (John 7:11). “The Jews” here are, of course, the Jewish leaders and officials who were bent on killing him back in vs. 1. This is not expectant seekers coming after Christ. This is a conspiracy of leaders seeking to figure out how they can destroy him.

This “looking for him” was done in secret, rather than in the open. They went about from group to group listening to the things people were saying about him. This has happened throughout history to Christians and continues even into today. People dare not speak openly about their hostility, for that would draw people away from the plan. Instead, you move stealthily with a deliberate purpose of changing people’s minds in secret. John uses the word “muttering” (vs. 12, 32). It is related to the word used in Ch. 6 for “grumbling” (*goggusmos* vs. *egoggudzō*). One is a verb; the other is a noun. Even the people are being secretive, speaking about Jesus under their breath, as vs. 13 says, “for fear of the Jews.”

Just as today, so then. There were people who were not willing to entertain the idea that Christ was a wicked deceiver bent on destroying the nation. “He is a good man.” Yet others followed the gossip, “No, he is leading the people astray.” Just like Korah who incited the people against his own cousin Moses, so the Jewish leaders incite distrust among the people. The charge was actually continued on by the Jews long after the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. The Babylonian Talmud (circa 2nd-3rd century) actually reports that “Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray” (B. Sanh. 107b).¹¹ Justin Martyr reports that this was a well known view among Jews, “Though they saw such works, they asserted it was magical art. For they dared to call Him a magician, and a deceiver of the people” (*Dialogue* 69). Of course, what is the charge for witchcraft in the Law? Death. Hence, the motivation for accusing him of such a ridiculous thing.

It is curious to me that modern people won't make this kind of a charge against Jesus, even though they hate him. That's just not politically correct. Instead, they stop where many of these Jews did saying, “He was a good man.” A man, but not God. Such are the opinions of those who hate Christ. Such were the opinions of his own brothers.

The Family of God

¹¹ A survey can be found in David R. Catchpole *The Trial of Jesus: A Study in the Gospels and Jewish Historiography from 1770 to the Present Day* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1971): Chapter 1.

What then are we to make of all this hatred and hostility, unbelief and wicked temptation in light of our own families? I have several comments. First, Jesus one time said that **a prophet has no honor in his own country (John 4:44)**. Now it can be added, **“or even his own family”!** If it was true for Christ, it ought not bother you overly much that it is true for you as well. And yet, your not being bothered must not become an excuse to resign yourself to the fact that someone in your family hates God as if this is the way it must be forever. For this is simply not true.

That leads to the second comment. God is a covenant God and as such ordinarily saves people within families, not because he has to, because it pleases him to do so. This is exactly what we find with Jesus’ own brothers! You see, their unbelief did not last forever. They did not die in a state of faithlessness. We know this for several reasons.

1. Jesus’ brothers are mentioned by name in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It appears this was the case, not just to give a detailed list or genealogy, but because they were well known individuals in the early church.
2. We know that one of the four became extremely well known in the early church, because Paul and others tell us as much. Paul refers to James, the Lord’s brother (Gal 1:9). This is not the same James as the brother of John (Matt 4:21, Acts 12:2, etc.), one of the twelve disciples, for our James was not converted until after the resurrection. Paul tells us after he appeared to over 500 people after to prove his resurrection to them that he then “appeared to James” (1 Cor 15:7). The result of this was

his brother's conversion and belief. James became a major figure in the early church, became Bishop of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15) and most believe he wrote the book of James in the NT, from which he may have derived this nickname: James the Just.

3. Finally, the little book of Jude is said to be written by "the brother of James" (Jude 1), and this James is none other than the brother of Jesus. Probably, Jude didn't want to say the "brother of Jesus" because that would have been boastful, especially in light of his earlier unbelief.

The point is, it was the glory of God to save the brothers of our Lord Jesus! This ought to give you hope when thinking about your own family as well. Due to his example, we can pray that God will sovereignly likewise save ours too. But it also needs to convict you that they were not saved in a vacuum. They were presented with compelling evidence of the Lord's deity, especially by his resurrection from the dead. Thus, you must do all within your power to compel your unbelieving relatives of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's doesn't mean you convert them. It means you give them biblical answers to their questions. It means you faithfully speak the law so that they might be convicted of their sins. And it means you do so, as Peter says, with gentleness and respect, humbly, not as one who has figured it all out yourself, but as one who has likewise been changed by the power of God through the law and the gospel.

Jude's conversion and unwillingness to identify himself as "Jesus' brother" leads to my **third and final point**. Even if none of your family should ever convert to Christianity, the Bible talks about a relationship that is deeper than blood. The bible refers to this relationship as "family." Paul says to the churches of Galatia, "**So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith**" (**Gal 6:10**). The Complete Jewish Bible translates it as, "The family of those who are trustingly faithful." The NET, NRS, BBE, NLT has "the family of faith." The NIV, "Family of believers."

Jesus spoke of this on a couple of occasions. One time, Jesus was told that his mother and brothers were outside waiting to talk to him. Rather than let them in, he asked the people this question, "**Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?**" (**Matt 12:50**). Then he stretched out his arms and said, "**Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother**" (**Matt 12:46:50**).

What does it mean to do the will of my Father? We have seen already in John, that first and foremost, it means to believe that Jesus is who he says he is. But then it means to pick up your cross and follow him. Another time Jesus said, "**A person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not**

worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matt 10:36-38).

The point is, Christ sees his truest family as those who trust in him. He takes them to be his own as a bride to a husband, so that together they may become one. Look around you today. This is realized most acutely in the local assembly of believers. For it is here that you have covenanted with one another as each other’s family. Those who do not take seriously their relations in the local church do not take seriously enough these words of true family. They do not understand the biblical teaching on this matter. But you act out your family relations in real life, in person, with those who do not look like you and who came from faraway places with different backgrounds, in a safe environment, where fear of one another leaving is removed by covenant loyalty to each other. That’s what true family looks like in God’s world. That’s the kind of family Jesus was talking about, becoming disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ together. We are those who do believe in him and who have come to realize that he is more than just a good guy. Thank goodness he did not listen to those who didn’t believe in him, or we would never be able to have these experiences together as sons and daughters of God or as the 1970s sitcom had it, “All in the Family.”