

# Connect360: The Family of God

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- *Lesson 13 in the BaptistWay Press Connect 360 unit "The reMARKable Journey Begins" focuses on Mark 3:31-35.*

Jesus asked the rhetorical question, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" Some of the crowd surrounding him might have wondered if Jesus suffered from an identity crisis. For a moment, they may have asked how Jesus could have forgotten his own family.

Apparently, Jesus did not allow the question to hang in the air for long. Looking around at those who encircled him, Jesus identified them as his mother and brothers, saying, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

## Family redefined

Jesus redefined family. First and foremost, Jesus was the Son of God, and he was perfectly obedient to his Father's will. So, obedience to God the Father is evidence of kinship. Jesus declared that anyone who joins him in doing God's will is his family. Obedience to God shows the family resemblance.

As we look at how Jesus responded to his family, we should not presume to know more than what the Scripture tells us. Nobody can say with certainty Jesus refused to see his mother and brothers when they came asking for him. He very possibly may have gone out to see them after making his point to those who gathered around him. Jesus did not reject his family. They chose to position themselves "outside" the circle of discipleship rather than approach him.

Certainly, we should not view this encounter as Jesus showing lack of respect to Mary. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, fulfilled the biblical command to honor his mother. While hanging on the cross, Jesus entrusted Mary to the care of “the beloved disciple,” traditionally understood to be John. As the eldest son, Jesus fulfilled his responsibility by ensuring his mother’s wellbeing. Significantly, he granted the care of his mother to a close follower, rather than to brothers and sisters who—at that point—had rejected his message. Even in that moment of great agony, Jesus recognized one who was faithful to God as closer kin than his own biological siblings.

## **Highest allegiance**

As followers of Jesus, our highest allegiance belongs to him, taking precedence even over loyalty to biological family. When large crowds came to Jesus, he wanted them to understand the high cost of discipleship. Jesus said, “If anyone come to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Obviously, Jesus—who taught love for all people—did not really mean anyone should hate his or her own family. In fact, on more than one occasion Jesus cited the commandment to honor father and mother. But compared to our love and devotion to Christ, any other love in life—even love for family—should pale in comparison.

This teaching should govern how we respond to others within the church. We too often think in terms of church membership rather than church fellowship. The church is not a club we join; the church is a family into which we all are adopted. The church is not an organization; the church is a living, growing organism. The church is our family of faith, and every individual within the fellowship is our brother or sister.

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