

Tonight I'm hoping to address everyone in the room, whether you're young or old (and I know, mostly young tonight). Whether you have a family or not, what I'm hoping is that through our time together we'll see that the church is a family of disciples that show love and make more disciples. This may be something you're familiar with or not, but what I'm hoping is that we'll see that what this truly means is if you've been transformed by the gospel, you will make room in your life to invite others to become part of the family of God.

We'll see this today as we look at the gospel of Mark, and specifically chapter 3. So if you want to go ahead and turn to Mark, chapter 3 in your copy of the Scriptures, or if you don't have a Bible then feel free to take the one from the seat in front of you. That is our gift to you. (You're welcome WC.) So whenever you get there, just save your place and look back up here, because we're going to spend a few minutes up front talking about what leads up into this passage of Scripture.

While you're turning there, in the first chapter of Mark we see immediately who Jesus truly is...the Son of God. Then in the same chapter, Jesus is baptized and something really amazing happens. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit is there with God the Son. I just want to emphasize that it is incredible that we get to see the relationship of the Trinity here on these pages. All other relationships have a beginning, but not the relationship God has with himself.

At the very beginning of the universe, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Son are all at work together to establish the universe and everything in it. And out of this perfectly loving relationship where there was harmony and God glorifying himself and not needing anything... If we've read Genesis 1 and 2 we know that out of this relationship came all things, including the first family: Adam and Eve. Unlike anything else God created, he created them in his own image. If you go and look in a mirror, you're going to see your reflection reflected back to you. Well similarly, Adam and Eve would reflect the glory of God, because they were created in his image.

Then soon after that, God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, so we know from this that a family is good and a family is right. That's important for us to mention as we move forward this morning, because what we're going to see is if you've read Genesis, chapter 3, then you know that from there Adam and Eve made a devastating decision by disobeying God's good commands, causing sin to enter into the world, and causing their relationship with God to be broken, as well as with each other.

Because of Adam and Eve's rebellion, the image of God in humanity has been fractured ever since. If you go and look into a fractured mirror your image will be distorted. In the same way, because of the shattering effects of sin, sin distorts our ability to reflect God's glory, thereby fracturing our relationship with him and with each other. If we're honest with ourselves we can all realize how, no matter how hard we try, on some level in our friendships, and those of you who are married, in our marriages and in our families, we can see this fracture taking place.

But God had a plan to rescue sinners, even from the very beginning. God made a promise that he would rescue his children from sin. Then finally after waiting thousands of years, the Son of God arrives. Jesus begins his mission here in the gospel of Mark, and in the first three chapters we see Jesus on the move. He's battling the powers of darkness. He's rescuing sinners into his kingdom. He even invites other people to join him in his mission. These people are called disciples. A *disciple* is a student, but what we'll see here as we read together is that Jesus considers his disciples to be more than just students.

So if you'll read with me now, Mark, chapter 3, verse 31. Let's read together. **"And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.' And he answered them, 'Who are my mother 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.'"** Would you please pray for me? Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your Scriptures. We thank you that we have them in our hands and that we can read them here together. We pray, Lord, that you would help me to be faithful to them tonight. Allow me to say what's right. Allow me to say what's true. God, I pray that, Holy Spirit, you would be present in this room tonight. I ask that you would search our hearts, convict us of sin, and open our eyes to see wonderful things in your Word. I pray that through our time together discussing this passage you would transform us to reflect more clearly the image of God. I pray that you would help us all to see and to take away what you want for us tonight. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

While Jesus is teaching a crowd of people, someone tells him that his mother is looking for him, but Jesus responds by telling everyone something truly outrageous. We may not pick up on it as much because we live in the twenty-first century, but in the first century in Israel the family you were a part of was incredibly important. Your entire identity was built on what family you came from. But Jesus tells the crowd that his family is his disciples who are sitting around him. He doesn't mention the woman who's outside who had given birth to him.

The gospel of Matthew tells it even more clearly: **"And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he 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.'"** Now Jesus either lost his mind thinking that some hairy guy like Peter was his mom, or he's really saying something truly profound at this moment. My vote is that he's saying something profound and true. Jesus did not see his disciples as just students, but as a family. In fact, Jesus considers his disciples to be a more true family than our biological or our human family.

Jesus came here on a mission to start a new family, the family of God. Being a part of this family is more important than the biological family we come from. That's what Jesus is saying. This may be hard for some of us because we may be blessed by the families we're a part of, and your parents may have disciplined you or prayed for you and there's a good relationship there. For others, because of sin, maybe your family seems more like a curse. But if the Holy Spirit adopts us, then we are born again into the family of God, just like Lan talked about last week.

So it doesn't matter how good you are or how bad you are. What really matters is that we can be adopted into this new greater family because of Jesus, who lived a life perfectly reflecting the glory of God to others. When Jesus went to the cross, he exchanged his flawless image for our shattered image. So it doesn't matter if you are a college student, if you're married, if you are a parent in here tonight, or if you're a widow. None of these roles matter, because ultimately we are orphans, unless the Holy Spirit adopts us. Then we will be like Jesus. We will get to call God our Father, and then the relationships we have in the church become the most important relationships we can have.

Of course, I'm not saying that your responsibility to your parents isn't important because it absolutely is, but the allegiance we now have to God's family becomes even more important. If you are a Christian, then the role you play now as a student, as a spouse, as a parent, a child, are all temporary roles, and these roles will one day fade away. However, your true, eternal identity is a disciple. If you've been adopted by God, you're a disciple first. Everything else is second.

God's story becomes your story. God's mission becomes your mission, which means we will be busy (as Jesus was talking about in verse 35) doing the will of God. We need to talk about what the will of God is then, and there are two things I want to address tonight that Jesus told his disciples are his will for them.

1. *They should show love.* Based on what Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew and in John, they're to love God with everything they are. They're to love their neighbors as themselves. They're even to love their enemies. Then through the way they show love to one another, everyone will know they truly are the disciples of Jesus. This is truly impossible unless we have a firm understanding that God loved us this way first.

We were all enemies of God, and he showed us love by giving up his Son. Jesus showed his love for us by freely giving up his position as a son, so you and I could be adopted as a son or a daughter. He was separated from the loving relationship he had with the Father so you and I wouldn't have to. So Jesus' family does the will of God by showing love.

2. *They do the will of God by making more disciples.* In Matthew 28 after Jesus' resurrection, as he was preparing to ascend into heaven, he gets ready to pass on his mission. His disciples were there. What once was his mission will now be carried out by his disciples. Now *they* get the job to go and bring new people into the family of God, and not just people from the same city, but people from all over the world. It was always Jesus' intention that his family would grow to include every ethnic group in the world.

Then when *we* are adopted into God's family, *his* mission to make more disciples becomes *our* mission. So we go making disciples, and like Augustine said, "Since we cannot do good to all, pay special regard to those who by the opportunities of location, of time, of circumstance, are brought into closer connection with you." That means we can think about making disciples in terms of concentric circles.

So parents who are in here, those who live closest to you are your children. You have the role, obviously, to train them up, but even though you are their mom and dad they are still spiritual orphans. Like I said, you have the job to invest your life to help invite them into the family of God. If your children *do* become Christians, they're no longer just your son or daughter; they are actually your brother or your sister.

Then from there we either go into our jobs to invite our bosses or our fellow employees into the family, or we go into our schools. Whether or not you are an elementary school student, middle school student, high school student, or a college student, your fellow classmates need to know Jesus in order to call on God as their Father. I'm not just talking about conversion, of course; I'm talking about opening your life, sharing your life with others.

So this is how we go into our neighborhoods, into our cities, and around the world. The family of Jesus carries out the will of the Father by showing love and making more disciples. I think each of us needs to see each other in light of this mission this evening. It doesn't really matter if you are a college student. It doesn't matter if you are a child. It doesn't matter if you're a family that doesn't normally associate with college students. If we truly belong to Jesus' family, then we will make room in our lives to invite others to become part of the church both locally and globally.

Of course, this isn't going to happen on its own. Some of us may have to make some sacrifices. Tim Chester in his book, *Gospel-Centered Family*, has some really great examples for us to look at tonight, to

see how everyone can participate together in building the family of God. I'm going to show nine points up here on the screen. I don't know if you feel like you have to write everything down or not. I'm hopefully going to be able to put this on the blog later so we can just read along.

Since the majority of us are college students, I would really encourage you to see how you can fit into these nine points we're talking about, and to see how you don't have to wait until some future point where you have a family, or you don't have to wait until a family invites you to be a part of their family, but you can actually take the initiative and seek out the opportunities to show love and make disciples.

1. *Include the people from the church family in your family time.* It's an indulgent myth that family time must be exclusive. Let people share in ordinary family meals. Be a family to single people. This is a great way for families to involve single adults in our church by letting them be involved in their lives. Then also by seeking that opportunity out you have so much to offer the families who are in our body.

2. *Involve your children in your hospitality.* Don't sideline them in favor of your guests. Get your children cooking and serving food. Include them in conversations. Encourage guests to interact with your children. Play games together, guests and children included. Think of hospitality not just as a performance art, but including people in family life. And yes, for parents who this applies to, this may be hectic and feel awkward to involve your kids in this way, but through these experiences your children will actually learn how to love others through gospel-centered service.

3. *Don't think of your family as self-contained or self-sufficient.* You can't raise your children or nurture your marriage on your own. You need people who can advise you on feeding toddlers or handling teenagers. You need people who can tell you you're doing okay when it feels like everything else is unraveling.

4. *You need the wider church family for advice, encouragement, and challenge.* Open your family life for other Christians to explore. From time to time, ask older Christians to give you honest feedback. What do they see in your family life? Do this especially if they've just spent time with you all.

5. *You need to provide support to the other families in your church family.* Being a single parent is especially tough. Not only is the parent/child ratio doubled, but there's next to no time off from children. We can't be a husband to a single mum (he's British, so there's the "mum") or a father to her children, but we can be substitute uncles and aunts. I think especially single people, since there's more time in your lives, there's more space, this is especially a way you can provide support to the families who are here in our body, who you may know in your home groups, or if you come to a different service you can run into them and initiate this kind of relationship.

6. *'It is not good for the man to be alone,' says God in Genesis, chapter 2.* Of course, God's immediate solution in the garden of Eden was marriage, but marriage is not an option for everyone or at every time. So if you have the space, have someone live with you and be part of your family. So especially if you're a college student or a single adult out of college, a really great way to practice gospel-centered community is by having other brothers or sisters move in with you.

If you're a brother, have a brother move in with you, and if you're a sister, have a sister move in with you. Then don't think about this in just temporary ways, but think about how you can actually live out the gospel through adopting a child as your own. As you're thinking about what kind of family you would like to have in the future, pray and consider if that would be something God would call you to do.

7. *Many people have not grown up with good models of family life.* They would really benefit from an opportunity to share in the life of a Christian family for a while before they start a family of their own.

8. *Think of ways you can involve your children in the life of the church, and not just in the children's or young people's ministry.* Can they accompany you when you do ministry? I think a great way for kids to be involved with their parents doing ministry is they can serve together on the greeting team. They can do anything, even going on a short-term mission trip together. Also, parents can connect with other families with the same age children, and then organize a service project.

9. *Encourage your children to build relationships with adult believers.* And build relationships with young people yourself. We've found relationships between young people and Christians who are older than them but younger than their parents to be invaluable. This is something that happens all the time in Kids' Village and our middle school home groups and our high school home groups, where college students, single adults, are investing their lives in the next generation. They're on the frontier making disciples for the next generation.

Of course, this doesn't just have to happen in these ministries, up here on a Sunday or on a Wednesday night; these can happen in the homes of the families who are a part of our church family together. So I would encourage you, if you're a single adult or college student, to take the initiative. Seek out the opportunities to not just receive from someone who's an older adult who's a further-along Christian, but to see that as an opportunity for you to make disciples.

I think a great way also to do this is for children to participate in home groups. Again, this could be awkward, hectic, and might make you feel nervous, like you won't get anything out of it because kids are

running around all the time, but what greater way to expose a child to the kingdom of God than by actually seeing the family of God in action?

So my encouragement is that no matter what life stage you're in tonight, if you're a college student, if you're in high school, if you're a parent, or if you're married, don't wait for someone else to initiate this kind of relationship. Pray and ask God to help you become further integrated into the family of God, or ask him to help you make room in your life to invite others into it.

Please don't set priorities for yourself or for your family that cause others to be excluded from the grace you have received. Begin opening yourself up to opportunities to show love and make disciples, regardless of your background, regardless of your life stage, because all of the boundaries that naturally separate us, whether it be ethnic, socioeconomic, or an age-based boundary, all of these boundaries will be erased when Christ returns.

When that moment in history arrives, we won't need family relationships to reflect the image of God any longer. Instead, when that moment arrives, we will be perfectly relating to one another in harmony and love. We can begin walking in this now through the help of the Holy Spirit. There are orphans in our homes; there are orphans in our jobs, in our schools, in our cities, and all over the world. If you have become part of Jesus' family, he has given you the authority and the power to go and rescue others.

If you're resistant to becoming part of the family of disciples, then I would encourage you to ask yourself...*Am I one of his children?* Or if you're just too busy, then what is it that truly matters more? What is it you're living your life for? What has greater purpose than being part of Jesus' family? Later in the gospel of Mark, Jesus says it this way. He said, **"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?"** Another pastor said, "If we'll give up on ourselves and give in to Jesus, he'll exchange our darkness for his light. He'll exchange our distortion for his beauty. This is news worth sharing."

Let's pray together, and then those of us who are part of God's family can respond to what Jesus has done for us by coming to either of the stations down here or in the back by taking the Lord's Supper. We'll dip the bread in juice. The bread reminds us of Jesus' broken body, how it was broken for us on the cross. The juice reminds us of Jesus' blood, how it was poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

However, if you're not a Christian, it's totally fine for you to just sit where you are and watch, or if you're not sure whether you are a Christian or not, it would be best to just wait on taking the Lord's Supper until you've had an opportunity to talk with your family, or whoever it is who brought you today. Then if you would still like to pray or talk to somebody about what it means to be a Christian, there will be some men

and women in the back who would love to help you. So let's pray together and respond to what God has done through the Lord's Supper, through singing, and then leaving here together as a family on mission.

Father, I thank you so much for your Scriptures that you have made available to us. I pray, Lord, that you would continue to work in our hearts and in our lives to allow us to see meaning and opportunities for us to go share love and make disciples. For those of us who have been living lives secluded from others, not willing to share grace, God, I pray that you would help us to pry our hands off of whatever it is that is more important to us.

Is it comfort? God, I pray that you would help us to see and respond and actually take the initiative to seek out opportunities to be a blessing to others, to share the message of salvation, and to share our lives, to make disciples, to show love. God, we need your help to do this. Would you help us to see where we fit in this story? I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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