

# Sermons on Matthew

## Who Are My Brothers?

*Matthew 12:46-50*

*With Study Questions*

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## Who Are My Brothers?

*Matthew 12:46-50*

**While He was still talking to the multitudes, \_\_ behold, His mother and \_\_ brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. <sup>-47-</sup> Then one said to Him, “ \_ Look, \_\_ Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You. \_ ” <sup>-48-</sup> But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “ \_ Who is My mother and who are My brothers? \_ ” <sup>-49-</sup> And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “ \_ Here are My mother and My \_ brothers! <sup>-50-</sup> For \_ whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother. \_ ” (Matthew 12:46-50)**

## **Preface**

This text loses its oomph in cultures which have little regard for filial duty<sup>1</sup> and familial commitment—in other words, in places where the family is not that big of a deal, like today’s West.

Roman Catholics, Jews, and tightly woven ethnic groups will more readily appreciate the gravity of this action by Jesus than the typical 21<sup>st</sup> century Westerner with his general loner, rebel mentality. Here we have the Jewish Son ignoring (at least for the moment) His mother, and then subordinating her and His siblings to those in the room. While they’re outside waiting to speak to Him, He uses them as a teaching tool.

Old Testament accounts of Sarah (Genesis 18), Rachel (Genesis 30), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), Bathsheba (1 Kings 1), and many others reveal the mentality of the current audience of Jesus; a chrome steel bond existed between the mother and the son. This was no insignificant transitional event.

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## **Still Talking**

The incensed radio talk-show host opened fire on politicians and religious leaders who “think they know what God wants.” He called them

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<sup>1</sup> The duty of a child to his parents.

arrogant, sanctimonious, egotistical, etc. “How do they know what God wants?” This “how can you know what God wants” line makes frequent appearances, even by people who ostensibly believe in God. Let’s be frank, if you can’t know what God wants, there’s really no point in believing in God. But such is not the case. God had made His will known.

It cannot be over-emphasized that Jesus came preaching, teaching and, here, talking. Communication is not merely incidental to God. God speaks and we would understand. Language is part of God’s design as a means of grace and redemption. For this reason the Apostle taught that...

**...it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21b)**

The enemy of our souls never ceases to place the word of God in his cross-hairs. Whether the assault is on the veracity of the Scriptures or on the ability of man to know the mind of God, it all amounts to the same diabolical question:

**...“Hath God truly said...?”<sup>2</sup> (Genesis 3:1)**

Jesus spoke, and we should listen.

## Seeking to Speak

Interestingly enough, Matthew records that His mother and brothers came not to hear but to speak. Scripture seems to indicate that His family had not yet come to faith: **“For \_\_even His \_brothers did not believe in Him.” (John 7:5)**

I don’t wish to press this too far, but Jesus had already taught, **“\_Assuredly, I say to you, no \_prophet is accepted in his own country.” (Luke 4:24b)** Familiarity breeds contempt, or at least, a lesser respect.

I remember the first sermon I ever gave. I had labored in prayer and study. Nervously I began to preach. My mother’s neighbors brought my mother who sat in the front row and continually raised her hand to ask questions and offer suggestions. I didn’t have wisdom or insight to somehow use my mother as an object lesson. I simply answered her questions.

When confronted with the Word of God, our listening to speaking ratio should be ten to one. It is not without reason that James teaches we should be swift to hear and slow to speak (*cf.* James 1:19).

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<sup>2</sup> The serpent asked Eve.

**Then one said to Him, “\_Look, \_\_Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.”<sup>-48-</sup> But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “\_Who is My mother and who are My brothers\_?” (Matthew 12:47, 48)**

## **The Family Picture**

The entire universe is a classroom for the Teacher of teachers. His family arrives and they're promptly placed on the blackboard. Again, let us be aware of the eyebrows which must have been raised when Jesus failed to immediately respond to His mother's presence.

In the same way, marriage between mortals is, at best, a pale picture of the holy union between Christ and His church; our bonds of blood merely serve as an instructional tool when compared to the spiritual and eternal brotherhood of Christ. All is designed for the glory of God.

But beware of the danger! The temptation here might be for us to begin to nurture a diminishing view of the importance of our human families. That type of thinking not only misses the point, but weakens the very instruction Jesus seeks to impart.

Akin to the way a husband goes way off target when he neglects his wife to serve the Lord (or so he thinks), the family member severely strays when he neglects his family during his religious pursuits. The wife and family are to benefit by the presence of a believer in the household, not suffer. The Christian is called to the highest love for his family. Mountains of Scripture support this!

**But if anyone does not provide for his own, \_\_and especially for those of his household, \_he has denied the faith \_\_and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)**

How strong are these words against those who neglect their family (including their parents) in the name of God!

**—He answered and said to them, “\_Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?<sup>-4-</sup> For God commanded, saying, \_\_‘\_Honor your father and your mother\_’; and, \_\_‘\_He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.\_’<sup>-5-</sup> But you say, ‘\_Whoever says to his father or mother, “\_Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God\_” —<sup>-6-</sup> then he need not honor his father \_\_or mother.\_’ Thus you have made the**

**\_\_commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.  
(Matthew 15:3-6)**

The teaching of Jesus here should never inspire us to neglect nor, sadly in some cases, harbor contempt for our families. It should all work quite the opposite. A biblical disposition toward wife, husband and family should elevate the love and commitment found in a Christian household far beyond that offered by the world.

Then, from the vantage point of this elevated understanding of the household, we begin to appreciate the unfathomable glory of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). Let us not lower the bar while Jesus is raising the field.

**And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said,  
“\_Here are My mother and My \_brothers! <sup>-50-</sup> For \_whoever does the  
will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother\_.”  
(Matthew 12:49-50)**

### **A Stretched Out Hand**

That Matthew records Jesus stretching His hand out toward His disciples designates a certain affection—the cameraman at this point would be instructed to pan over the followers of Jesus. Mother and brothers are left waiting at the door. Who’s in the room?

**And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples,  
“\_Why does your Teacher eat with \_\_tax collectors and  
sinners\_?” (Matthew 9:11)**

Considering the number of times Matthew mentions tax collectors (who generally considered to be sell-outs and sinners) in his gospel, you get the impression that *he* took great comfort in that room under the outstretched hand of Jesus.

In 1984 I had a very marginal possibility of qualifying for the Olympic Trials. I met a coach who had trained a two-time gold-medalist in my event. He said if I moved from the South Bay to Oregon he would train me. Within a few months my VW bus was all packed up and I was on my way.

When I walked on the track he acted as if he didn’t know me. I reminded him of his promise. He shook his head and said he had no room for me. I walked off the field dejected. One of the other athletes whispered to me, “He’s testing you.” I came back the next day and was rejected again

and again and again. Finally, as if disgusted, he reluctantly agreed to coach me for a fee of \$25 per month. For weeks he didn't even look in my direction.

Then came one of the happiest moments of my athletic career. While addressing the group, he looked me in the eye and referred to me as one of his athletes. One can only imagine how those sinners at the feet of Jesus must have felt when He held His own family at bay in order to gesture their inclusion in the family of God.

**For \_\_both He who \_\_sanctifies and those who are being sanctified \_\_are all of one, for which reason \_\_He is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Hebrews 2:11)**

### **Doing the Will of God**

\_\_**"Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven"** should not, and simply cannot, be understood as one who sins not and never fails. If such were the case, Jesus would have no one to stretch His hand toward. To view the will of God here as a system of merit where the hearer somehow earns his approval before God would turn all Christianity on its head.

Grace was the teaching of the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 53:5), it was the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 20:28), and it was the continual argument in the epistles of Paul.

**...\_knowing that a man is not \_\_justified by the works of the law but \_by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not \_\_by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. (Galatians 2:16)**

Herein lies perhaps the greatest distinction between Christianity and all other religions. Jesus came to save sinners; all over religions provide instruction on how men might save themselves. Notice the stark contrast between the teaching of Christ and the instruction found by a contemporary rabbi in a local newspaper. He writes,

**A rabbi had the good fortune to meet the wonderful angel of good luck □- Elijah the Prophet. □Elijah said to the Rabbi, "Come let me show you two people that will merit Paradise in the world to come." □The Rabbi followed the angel and they came upon two people. □"These are the worthy ones said**

**Elijah.” “What is their merit?” asked the Rabbi. The good angel answered “When they see unhappy people they extend a kibitz (a joke) and change the unhappy people into happy ones. For this mitzvah (good deed) alone, they merit Paradise.”<sup>3</sup>**

This is not to say that when Jesus speaks of those who do the will of the Father that He has no concern at all for the behavior of His followers. The good tree will produce the good fruit (Matthew 7:17). But a bad tree doesn't become a good tree by somehow producing good fruit—that's impossible. The bad tree needs help from without (perhaps a tree surgeon?). The sinner needs help. It's not enough to make people laugh. So what is the will of God?

**And this is the will of Him who sent Me, \_\_that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:40)**

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## Questions for Study

1. Discuss the nature of the family relationship during the time of Christ (Page 2)?
2. How do people know what God wants (pages 2, 3)?
3. What did Jesus spend vast amounts of time doing (pages 2, 3)?
4. Do the actions of Jesus lessen the importance of family? Explain (pages 4, 5).

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<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Eli Hecht, Daily Breeze, 1/18/06

5. Who are Jesus' brothers (pages 5, 6)?
6. What does it mean to do the will of God (pages 6, 7)?