

Relating to Extended Family

By David Hutchison

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read John 1:12–13; Romans 8:15–17; and 1 John 3:1–2. Also read the comments related to Matthew 12:46–50 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are the benefits of spiritual adoption in these verses?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Luke 14:26 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Do you think Jesus really wants people to hate others, or is He using poetic exaggeration?

Assignment Three

Read Leviticus 19:32 and read the comments related to 1 Timothy 5:1–2 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: How can we treat elderly family members with the respect described here?

Scripture to Memorize

“For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

Matthew 12:50

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will give love, honor, and respect to all family members while recognizing that some family members will refuse to follow Jesus.

David Hutchison is associate professor of New Testament at Southwestern Seminary. He teaches at the seminary's Houston campus, online, and at the Darrington Unit of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Your uncle is upset that you are a Christian. He considers himself the leader of the family, and he told you that your family has always stayed together. No one with your last name has ever gotten himself mixed up in this “God nonsense,” as he calls it. He is pressuring you to abandon your faith and stop embarrassing the family. How are you going to respond?

What Is “Extended Family”?

“Extended family” can refer to blood relatives outside of your immediate family or to those you become related to by marriage. We generally use the term to refer to all of these relationships, and we will do so in this lesson.

Don't Be Surprised by Divisions

Family members are special. Your family mostly understands you and the nuances of relationships within the family. On the other hand, some of your family live so far away that you hardly ever see them. This physical distance limits your relationship.

Some families experience an even greater distance: spiritual distance. You may share the same last name, but your worldviews are worlds apart. Don't be surprised. Jesus taught that there would be divisions within families. He also taught that there is a bond that is even closer than the bond between family members: a spiritual bond shared by those related to God the Father.

Read Matthew 12:46–50 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verses 46–47. Jesus' mother appeared regularly in the Gospels. Jesus' brothers appear occasionally, but they did not believe in Jesus until after the resurrection. (Rising from the dead can have that effect on people.) The Gospels also mention that Jesus had sisters (Matthew 13:56). On the occasion recorded in Matthew 12, Jesus' mother and brothers arrive.

Verses 48–50. Jesus probably shocked the crowd. Rather than giving His mother and brothers preferential treatment, Jesus taught that there is an even greater relationship than blood. Those who do the will of the Father are Jesus' brother and sister and mother. Jesus shares an everlasting spiritual bond with those who do the will of the Father. The Father's will is that people believe in Jesus and obtain everlasting life (John 6:40). The New Testament refers to this new family relationship as adoption.

By believing in Jesus, we become children of God, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ. Being called “children of God” is a magnificent privilege. The world will not know or understand us because it does not know God. Sadly, not all of our family or extended family will share in these wonderful benefits. Jesus told us this would happen so we shouldn't be surprised.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week should now report on the benefits of spiritual adoption.

Read Matthew 10:34–37 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verses 36. a person's enemies will be the members of his own household. Jesus does bring peace with God to those who believe in Him (see Romans 5:1). But since many do not believe, He actually promises there will be divisions. These divisions will exist between immediate and extended family members.

Verse 37. not worthy of Me. When faced with the choice between family and Jesus, we must follow Jesus.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week should now report on Jesus's discussion of family in Luke 14:26.

Read Luke 14:26 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 26. does not hate. Jesus uses poetic exaggeration to show the great loyalty to Jesus required for disciples. We know He is exaggerating because He elsewhere tells disciples to love everyone, even enemies (see Luke 6:27–28). The love and devotion someone has for Jesus is so much greater than the devotion to family that love for family looks like hate in comparison. We can apply the same principle to our relationships with extended family. Our devotion to Jesus must far exceed our loyalty to extended family.

Read 1 Timothy 5:1–4 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Whether or not family members believe in Jesus, we should treat them all with love, honor, and respect. The specific relationship in question will guide the disciple in knowing how to respond.

Verse 1. Paul gave Timothy instructions regarding how to treat others. Some implications of these instructions are general enough to help everyone. **older man.** For relationships you have with family members who are older, treat them in a respectful way as you treat your mother or father. They do not have the same authority over you, but you should still respect and honor them. If you are under the authority of another family member, obey that person like a parent.

Verses 1–2. brothers . . . sisters. Treat other females like a sister and treat other males like a brother.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week should now report on ways to treat elderly family members with respect.

Studying the Passage

Verse 3. widows. Christians have a responsibility to care for widows. Widows often depended on others for basic needs. Rather than leaving her care to the church, the widow's family should provide for her as a demonstration of faith. This teaching is similar to James 1:27, which defines true religion as visiting orphans and widows in their distress.

Verse 4. has children or grandchildren. But Paul implies that there is an even stronger

rationale when the widow is your mother or grandmother. If disciples should care for other widows, how much more should you care for your mother or grandmother?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 17. The general instruction to pray without ceasing is certainly appropriate for family members who do not know Jesus. We should be patient as well. It is difficult to be patient when people continue to reject God's ways, but we should remember that God is patient and His patience gives people an opportunity for repentance (see Romans 2:4). Be consistent in your witness through words and actions, live so that no one can slander you with cause (see 1 Peter 3:16), but realize you cannot force people to follow Jesus.

On Your Own

In the space below, write the name of a family member who needs your love, compassion, and gospel witness.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to. . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Family is a gift of God, but Jesus prepares disciples for the sad reality that some within our family will reject the gospel. You will share closer bonds with some fellow believers than with some family members. We should not be surprised that the gospel brings division.

In a surprising story (see Matthew 12:46–50), when Jesus's mother and brothers approached Jesus to talk with Him, Jesus declared that those who do the will of the Father are His mother and sister and brother. Jesus was describing the spiritual bond that results when one is adopted by the Father. Jesus also taught that believing in the gospel can bring division to a family (see Matthew 10:34–37).

Furthermore, the love a disciple has for Jesus must so exceed the love one has for family that by comparison, love for family appears like hate (see Luke 14:26). These realities provide an important backdrop for understanding how to relate to extended family.

We should love and care for extended family members. If the family member is older, we should give honor and respect, speaking with them as we would speak with our father or mother. We should treat other family members like brothers or sisters (see 1 Timothy 5:1–2).

If our mother or grandmother becomes a widow, we should care for her (see 1 Timothy 5:3–4). If being a disciple involves caring for widows, how much more should we care for our mother or grandmother. By extension, we can apply this same logic to other family members in need.

We should pray without ceasing (see 1 Thessalonians 5:17) for family members who do not believe in Jesus. We should be patient and consistent in our witness through words and actions. Even though some will not believe, young disciples may well get to lead some family members into an everlasting relationship with King Jesus.

Follow up Question

How should we relate to our extended family? How does the bond between family members compare with the bond between Christians?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.