

**Intro:**

Our theme is 'Families Making a Difference'. I started casting about thinking about how to address this topic. In fact, one night a few weeks ago, I was thinking about it so much that I couldn't go to sleep.

I thought of a family in the Scriptures who had a major influence, and thought they should be the subject of this message. After two hours of tossing and turning, I had the whole message written out in my mind.

It was brilliant! Wish I could remember how it went!

Well, I do remember the main theme and the direction I wanted to go with the message, so I hope you will find it profitable as well.

If you want your family to make a difference for the Lord, I think you need to adopt the mindset of this family that I am thinking of.

The first thing that I need to do is introduce you to the family. We are going to have to pull together some threads of Scripture to weave the picture for you. The family isn't introduced to us in any one specific place.

As soon as we start, however, I think that you will agree with me that this one family has had the most significant spiritual impact on your life of any family in history.

**I. Introducing the people in the Lord's family****A. The beginning of the Lord's earthly family (Mt 1.24-25)**

1. Joseph
2. Mary
3. Jesus

**B. The expansion of the Lord's earthly family (Mt 13.54-56)**

1. The children of Mary and Joseph
  - a. Four sons: James, Joses, Simon, and Jude
  - b. At least two daughters
  - c. Unbelieving controversy concerning this family
    - 1) Some wish to deify Mary and say these were not her children
      - a) One suggestion: these are cousins
      - b) Another suggestion: these are the children of Joseph by a previous marriage

2) But...

- a) If cousins, what is the point of mentioning them the way the Nazarene people do?
- b) If Joseph's sons...
  - i) How would Jesus be the heir to David's throne if he had elder brothers?
  - ii) If all older, what became of them during the years Joseph was off in Egypt with Mary and the young Jesus?

The best, most natural, and *most biblical* answer is to see that these are indeed the children of Joseph and Mary, born after the birth of Jesus.

d. Relations in this family

- 1) His brothers did not believe in him (Jn 7.5)
- 2) His family thought he was taking too much on himself and sought to bring him home (Mk 3.21, 31ff.)

2. The children of Mary's sister

For this, we first need to compare three passages that identify the women who were at the cross when Jesus died

a. John identifies four women, standing right by the cross (Jn 19.25)

- 1) Mary
- 2) Mary's sister
- 3) Mary the wife of Cleophas
- 4) Mary Magdalene

Presumably, John took Mary immediately to his home when the Lord designated him to care for her.

b. Mark identifies three women 'looking afar off' - presumably after Mary has departed (Mk 15.40)

- 1) Mary Magdalene
- 2) Mary the mother of James the less and Joses (the wife of Cleophas in John)
- 3) Salome - Mary's sister

c. Matthew identifies three women also (Mt 27.56)

- 1) Mary Magdalene
- 2) Mary the mother of James and Joses
- 3) The mother of Zebedee's children... Salome... *Mary's sister*

This makes James and John first cousins of Jesus — the family circle expands a bit more.

3. And finally, one more possible expansion...

- a. Remember Mary, the mother of James the Less, the wife of Cleophas?
- b. Who is James the Less? One of the 12, called James the son of Alphaeus in the 'disciple lists' (Mt 10.3, Mk 3.18, Lk 6.15)
  - 1) Edersheim tells us that Alphaeus and Cleophas are forms of the same name
  - 2) Luke 6.16 tells us that James and Judas (not Iscariot) are brothers
  - 3) Edersheim concludes that Simon the Zealot, another disciple is also a brother of these two – based on a citation in Eusebius
- c. The same citation in Eusebius says that Cleopas, the father of these three, was the brother of Joseph, the husband of Mary

This last identification is of course more tenuous (no Scriptural authority).

Nevertheless, we see that the band of disciples is much more tightly knit than we generally think when reading the Gospels.

- In addition to these five in the family of Jesus, so to speak, Peter and Andrew are business partners of James and John
- And Philip and Nathanael are friends of the four fisherman, from the same town, Bethsaida

That accounts for 9 of the 12 disciples.

## II. Considering the impact of the Lord's family

### A. The impact of the band of disciples

1. James and John prominent in the band
2. Pentecost
3. Rapid growth of the church in Jerusalem
4. Gave birth to the church that expanded through the Roman empire
  - a. Jerusalem
  - b. Judea
  - c. Samaria
  - d. The uttermost parts

But let's consider the specific enduring impact of members of the Lord's family...

### B. The impact for all generations by the written word

1. The writings of John
  - a. John's Gospel
  - b. 1, 2, 3 John
  - c. Revelation
2. The epistle of James

Who is this James?

- a. There are several 'James-es' in the NT
  - 1) James the son of Zebedee: first disciple to be martyred
  - 2) James the less (nothing more heard of him in NT)
  - 3) James the Elder in Jerusalem – leader of the Jerusalem church
- b. James the Elder is identified for us in Galatians as *the Lord's brother* (Gal 1.19)
  - 1) Remember the unbelief of the brothers of the Lord?
  - 2) After the resurrection, Jesus specifically appeared to James (1 Cor 15.7)

Why? To finally win him over and appoint him to ministry, I think

c. It is James the Elder who wrote the book of James – James the Lord’s brother

3. And the epistle of Jude (Jude 1)

a. ‘Jude, the brother of James’

b. That is, the brother of the Lord

### III. Understanding the transformed spirit of the Lord’s family

A. The surrendered lives of the Lord’s brethren

1. Jude: the servant – *slave* – of Jesus Christ (Jude 1)

2. James: the servant – *slave* – of God and of the *Lord* Jesus Christ (Jas 1.1)

These are men who absolutely refuse to trade on the family name.

- We are so prone to pride – we love to connect ourselves with the fame of other people.
- We will recount famous people we have seen, how close to them we were. (Just ask our family how we once spent an hour in Washington DC with a man who has become very important.)

James and Jude will not elevate themselves above the other apostles – they are on the same level.

James and Jude will not presume that their status as blood brothers of the Lord means anything – they are his slaves.

B. The surrendered life of the Lord’s cousin, John

1. How does John introduce himself in his own Gospel?

a. First sighting (Jn 1.35-40)

b. Last sighting (Jn 21.20-25)

2. John won’t even tell you his name

## Conclusion:

Our message comes down to this: if you want your family to have an impact, to make a difference, you are going to have to adopt the mindset of this family.

- You are going to have to become slaves of Jesus Christ.
- You are going to have to forget yourselves.
- You are going to have to make advancing Christ's kingdom your one and only passion in life.

The apostle Paul caught this spirit – he said, “forgetting those things which are behind, I press on to the high calling of Christ”

How about you?