

10 THINGS JESUS I WISH NEVER SAID

WEEK TWO: MAKING THE CIRCLE BIGGER

This week, we look at how Jesus enlarges our view of who is in our family, and pushes us towards people who may not be like us, but who share our faith.

1. JESUS DOESN'T SHRINK OUR IDEA OF FAMILY, HE GROWS IT

- Read Mark 3:31-35 & Mark 3:16-18

It is critical to take the whole counsel of God into account when reading any passage of scripture, to ensure that we do not create doctrines or responses that do not align with God's character. This is one particular passage that has provoked criticism against Jesus, as it appears, at first glance, that he is undervaluing his own family. But when we hold this up to other passages in scripture, we know that Jesus highly valued family, and so we can conclude that the critical lens imposed upon this passage is incorrect.

Jesus is not undermining the idea of family, but is actually calling us all to make it even more inclusive. When we first hear this, it seems like a positive thing, but as we consider the implications more deeply, our sinful, selfish nature tends to resist the idea because it pushes against all of our idolatry. We do not believe that, with the discomfort it will bring, it will actually be to our benefit.

▪ Our new family is:

- ☞ Diverse - Although we, by nature, have a deep desire for homogeneity, Jesus calls us family regardless of our backgrounds. This would not have been easy to hear then, and it is not easy to hear now. But the reality is that diversity is good for us - it makes our thoughts and lives richer in so many ways.
- ☞ Full of grace - When Jesus looked around at the disciples, he told them that they were doing the will of God. He saw them with eyes of grace, even though they were not yet mature or faithful. When he calls us into his family, he calls us to see each other with eyes of grace. This does not mean that we extend permission to live licentiously. Rather, it calls us to greater accountability and faithfulness, while continually extending grace.
- ☞ Unified in obedience - We tend to prioritize the people we are closest to, and not those who push us towards faithfulness and obedience to God. Jesus prioritized those who were with him in obedience, and gave them much grace. The church should be a place that extends much grace, while at the same time being the very place that calls us to obedience, repentance, accountability and faith. If we find that we are not growing in our Christian walk in our church community, it means that we have not positioned ourselves in a space where we allow the others to come alongside us and grow us - instead, we are keeping our hearts and minds shut off to the work that God does in and through community.

▪ Obstacles to living in this new family:

- ☞ Faulty view of church - The western world has made church into something it is not. It is not a Sunday service or a weekly Bible study. With this view of church, it is not surprising that we struggle to grasp the concept of submitting ourselves to these people and calling them "family". We cannot fix the problem that we have created in our perception of church overnight, but we need to start with admitting we are completely wrong, and then build up from there.

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- ☞ Commitment to comfort – Our biggest issue is our self-protective desire for comfort. We live like the world does, doing everything for the comfort and pleasure of our own nuclear families, and resist any responsibility outside of that. We even take pride in this way of living. But Christ calls us to widen the “net” and to embrace the church as our family, which will cost us, and bless us beyond measure. The problem is that we do not believe that, in any way, can there be blessing in something that will be inconvenient and costly.
 - ☞ Desire for homogeneity – We want to feel comfortable, and not be challenged or provoked out of that comfort-zone at all. So we all want everyone around us to think, feel and look just like us because it is what feels easiest.
 - ☞ Unbelief – The underlying issue is that, although we believe the gospel conceptually, we don’t believe it at a deep and transformative level. And because our hearts are not invested in it, we do not trust that God’s way of making us all family is a good thing or that it will benefit us.
- ❖ Q: How does it genuinely make you feel that God has called us to a diverse sense of family within our church (think of a wide range of ages, cultures, ethnicities, social and economic backgrounds, class, levels of education, experience and more. Think about sharing your home and your finances with the waitress from Wimpy, the petrol attendant from Sasol, the CEO of Nedbank, and the Swim coach at the gym. How do you feel about these people being added to your sense of family?)
 - ❖ Q: What does it mean for us to be *unified in obedience* while being *full of grace* at the same time?
 - ❖ Q: Which of these do you think we, as a community, do poorly, and why do you think that is?
 - ❖ Q: Which of the struggles with our church family, mentioned above, is the most relevant in your life (your faulty view of the church, your commitment to comfort, your desire for homogeneity or your unbelief in the gospel at a heart level)? Explain how this impacts your sense of family within our church community.
 - ❖ Q: How will we actively push through and overcome the commitment to comfort within this Gospel Community, and how will we hold one another accountable to this process of obedience and faith, so that we actually do grow and change in this area? (*Remember: insight isn’t change!!!*)

2. JESUS MAKES US PART OF HIS FAMILY

- Read Romans 8:15-17

Jesus calls us into his family because he has already made us his family, through reconciling us to himself and one another. We are adopted sons and daughters, and co-heirs with Christ. It is who we are, and now it is time for us to live out that identity in our everyday lives, trusting him to bring about the good that he desires for it to produce. He is not calling us to try and be or do something that is impossible. He is merely calling us to live out who we now are. It is a call to real faith.

- ❖ Q: Why is our ability to behave like family directly linked to how we view our identity in Christ?
- ❖ Q: Why is the decision to start living as though we are family actually an act of faith?

Personal Reflection Q: What is one thing that God has spoken to you clearly about this week, that he wants you to change, live out, demonstrate or submit to him?
