

Unites
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Allen Power

Mark 3:23-35

Opening: DNA testing (ie - 23andme; Ancestry) is the new cutting edge thing to do. **Has anyone done it? Why are people intrigued? What might be the dangers?** Did you know there is even one for testing your dog?

Advances in DNA testing have made determining paternity a precise science. Sometimes you don't need a DNA test, the family resemblance is obvious. Our grandson Knox looked like his Dad in ultrasounds before he was born.

- In this section of Mark chapter three, Jesus gave us the “test” for how to spot the “spiritual family resemblance” of a true follower of Christ.
- He gave a strong warning about the eternal danger of rejecting Christ.
- Finally, we'll see that following Christ can lead to being misunderstood.

Big Idea: A true follower of Christ will bear a “family resemblance.” The “spiritual paternity test” of a follower of Christ is doing the will of God. That can lead to being misunderstood by others --- even our own family and friends.

- Last week in Mark chapter two we saw the beginnings of the hatred of Jesus by the religious establishment. Hatred that would end at the cross.
- In chapter three Mark documented more examples of how Jesus was making waves, making enemies, and being misunderstood.
- The crowds following Jesus were so big they almost crushed Him.

- Verse eleven says, (ESV) ¹¹ And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”
- Jesus made his way back home to Capernaum and verse twenty says the crowd was so great He and his new disciples couldn’t even eat a meal.
- His earthly family (Mary and his brothers) became concerned and traveled from Nazareth for an intervention. “He is out of his mind,” they thought.
- The Pharisees were plotting “...against him, how to destroy him” and thought they had the perfect ploy: “He is of the DEVIL!”

Mark 3:22 (NLT) ²² But the teachers of religious law who had arrived from Jerusalem said, “He’s possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That’s where he gets the power to cast out demons.”

- Jesus responded to them “speaking in parables.”
- “The Greek term translated “parable” means a comparison. Jesus was an expert in using a familiar situation to illustrate a spiritual reality.”ⁱ
- He met their accusation with a question:

²³ Jesus called them over and responded with an illustration. “How can Satan cast out Satan?” he asked. ²⁴ “A kingdom divided by civil war will collapse. ²⁵ Similarly, a family splintered by feuding will fall apart. ²⁶ And if Satan is divided and fights against himself, how can he stand? He would never survive. (NLT)

- How can Satan (Beelzebub) cast out Satan? That makes no sense! Then Jesus used another illustration regarding His power over Satan:

²⁷ Let me illustrate this further. Who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.

- Not only was Jesus NOT controlled by Satan, Jesus has the power to defeat Satan and will one day put Satan away forever (Rev. 20:10.)

- Then Jesus gave a stern warning of the danger of their accusation.

²⁸ “I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven,

- Jesus stated, “...all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven.” Last week we talked about the forgiveness Jesus offers to all people for ALL our sins.
- Blasphemy (irreverent or profane speech about God) “...was prohibited in the Third Commandment and carried the death penalty in ancient Israel.”ⁱⁱ
- What a radical statement! Jesus told the religious leaders that God is willing to forgive even someone who blasphemes against Him.
- But, there IS something God will NOT overlook or forgive:

²⁹ but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences.” ³⁰ He told them this because they were saying, “He’s possessed by an evil spirit.”

- Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit in the context of this passage was the fact that the Pharisees “attributed Jesus’ power to Satan rather than to the Holy Spirit.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- This wasn’t a single act but a continuous condition of hard-heartedness.
- Anyone who had been around the church has heard of the “unpardonable sin.” **Do you know what that term means? Have you ever wondered if you might have committed the unpardonable sin? Do you know someone how might be on the verge of this?**

The ESV Study Bible: “...blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—that is, the persistent and unrepentant resistance against the work of the Holy Spirit and his message concerning Jesus (cf. Acts 7:51)—this, Jesus says, will not be forgiven. The person who persists in hardening his heart against God, against the work of the Holy Spirit, and against the provision of Christ as Savior, is outside the reach of God’s provision for forgiveness and salvation. Christians often worry

that they have committed this sin, but such a concern is itself evidence of an openness to the work of the Spirit.^{iv}

- The Holy Spirit draws unsaved people to Jesus by convicting of sin and testifying that Jesus is the Savior. The “unpardonable sin” is continuing to reject the Holy Spirit’s prompting so long that eventually you are so hardened that you can never accept Christ’s free gift of salvation.
- Concern about committing that sin means you haven’t yet. To be sure you don’t, repent (sorrow for and turning from sin) and believe (Jesus is Lord.)
- The Pharisees thought Jesus was the devil. His kinfolk thought He was “out of his mind.” Verse 21 says his family came for an intervention.
- Jesus was about to teach them and us about “family resemblance.”

³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him. They stood outside and sent word for him to come out and talk with them.

³² There was a crowd sitting around Jesus, and someone said, “Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you.” ³³ Jesus replied, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?”

- Who is my mother and brothers? Maybe Jesus has lost it! Not so fast.

³⁴ Then he looked at those around him and said, “Look, these are my mother and brothers. ³⁵ Anyone who does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

- A dangerous misunderstanding: *“We are all God’s children.”* No, we are all God’s creation and He loves everyone and desires to save everyone.
- Matthew 7:21 (ESV) ²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
- **What does it mean to “do the will of God? How can I know the will of God? Why is Bible study essential?**

- Luke's version: Luke 8:21 (NLT) ²¹ Jesus replied, "My mother and my brothers are all those who hear God's word and obey it."
- The first place we can KNOW God's will is God's word.
- We don't come to Bible study to get smarter. We study scripture to learn how to improve our "family resemblance."
- It's not enough to know it; we have to DO it. There is lots of scripture on doing the will of God. Here are four key verses:

John 6:40 (ESV) ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (Trusting in Christ as Savior is always God's will!)

1 Peter 4:2 (NLT) ² You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. (Our desires will change.)

Romans 12:2 (ESV) ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Our heart and mind will change.)

- Put simply: Doing the will of God means loving and obeying Him and His word with everything that is in us.
- Doing that may lead to being misunderstood. Clearly at this point Jesus mother Mary and his half-brothers didn't yet understand His mission.
- So how do we deal with family and friends who don't understand our passionate love and obedience to Christ?

Chuck Swindoll writes:

"Managing the misunderstanding that comes from unbelieving (or, in some cases, less committed) family and friends is a delicate issue. On the one hand, we don't want to turn our backs on our natural families, severing earthly relationships and slamming the door to evangelism. On the other hand, we can't disobey our Lord and Savior in a desperate effort to honor our father and mother or please our friends and family. Often, decisions need to be made. Hard decisions

that can affect relationships. Decisions that call for supernatural wisdom. How do we handle this? Let me unpack three simple statements that will give us some guidance as we seek to manage those times when family and friends misunderstand us.

- *First, face it. Realize that not all family members or friends who don't know Christ will be able to understand your devotion to Him.*
- *Second, accept it. Don't fight it. Don't try to force your perspectives, priorities, and pursuits on them. You can't force them into believing or even accepting your own convictions. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.*
- *Third, adjust to it. Live your faith, pray for the faithless. Be ready to share Christ with them when the moment is right, but don't do things to push them away. Don't go out of your way to alienate them with a barrage of spiritual emails, gospel-embedded text messages, constant invitations to church events, or hidden gospel tracts under their pillows or taped to the bathroom mirrors. Don't force mealtime prayers on them. Embrace the new reality that you now live with genuine commitments to both your natural family and the supernatural family of God. Adjust to it.”^v*

So, What's the Takeaway?

- A true follower of Christ will bear a “family resemblance.” The “spiritual paternity test” of a follower of Christ is doing the will of God.
- We don't need a sophisticated, scientific lab report.
- We simply need to spend time in God's word to know His will.
- Then we need to ask His Holy Spirit living in us to help us DO that will.
- Daily we need to ask the Father to identify where we've fallen short, ask Him to forgive us and help us to move forward in doing His will.
- That's what a member of Jesus' family looks like.
- That's family resemblance.

ⁱ Explore the Bible Leader's Guide – Lifeway 2018

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

iii *ibid*

iv Crossway Bibles. *ESV Study Bible* (Kindle Locations 126734-126739). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

v Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Mark* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (p. 102). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.