ARE YOU IN THE FAMILY?

The Jews emphasized self-reformation, while Jesus emphasized RELATIONSHIP with Him. When His family attempted a "family intervention" with Him, He asked the question: "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" (Matt. 12:48).

Matthew 12:49 (NKJV)
49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!

In the surrounding context, Jesus talks about who is His mother, brother, and sister, but nothing is said about "father". Perhaps the reason for this is because, spiritually speaking, reference to "Father" is to be reserved for the heavenly Father alone.

> **Matthew 23:9 (NKJV)**
> **9 Do not call anyone on earth your father**; for **One is your Father, He who is in heaven.**

If you take the Bible seriously, you will only use the spiritual title "Father" for Father God who is in heaven. If you take Christ's words seriously, this title is to be reserved for God the Father alone.

In a physical sense, the Bible does speak of men as being earthly fathers, and Paul did use it in the sense of a small "f" in speaking of his relationship to people he had led to the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15) or in the sense of forefathers (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1). However, in the authoritative sense of spiritual Father, only God is to be referenced in this manner.

Note that those who are here called "***disciples,***" meaning believing/learning followers of Christ, are said to be part of Christ's spiritual family. We are not saved by following, but true believers are true followers of Christ. The following is the fruit of true faith.

> **John 10:26–28 (NKJV)**
> **26** But you do not **believe**, [***the issue***] because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.
> **27** My sheep **hear My voice**, [***respond in faith***] and I know them, and **they follow** Me.
> **28** And **I give them eternal life**, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Easy believism says you can be a true believer without being a follower of Christ, but Jesus never said that. To have that kind of theology, you have to read verses on BELIEVE in isolation, ignoring the greater context of the Scriptures.

We are saved by faith alone, but it must be the right kind of faith. A true saving faith is a heart-changing/life changing kind of faith which proceeds to follow Christ – not perfectly but certainly. As the Reformers said, "*We are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies does not remain alone."*

> "It is therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith that justifies is not alone." – ***John Calvin***

And to show you all the more that it is only true disciples (that is, true followers) who are Christ's spiritual family, Jesus went on to clarify the issue in verse 50.

Matthew 12:50 (NKJV)
50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

Note the connection between "disciples" in verse 49 and "whoever does the will of My Father" in verse 50. That is a direct parallel.

A disciple is one who does the will of the Father, and therefore it is disciples who are truly part of Christ's spiritual family (cf. Jn. 8:31-32).

This is consistent with and builds on the emphasis seen at the climax of the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 7:21-23.

> **Matthew 7:21–23 (NKJV)**
> **21** "Not everyone who **says to Me, 'Lord, Lord**,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father** in heaven.
> **22** Many will **say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord**, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'
> **23** And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice** lawlessness!'

Jesus made the issue His LORDSHIP. Those that truly know Him as Lord seek to do the will of the Father, thereby indicating that they really do know

Him as Lord. In contrast are mere talkers. They say, “Lord, Lord,” but it doesn’t affect their practice because it is not real in their hearts.

Matthew chapter 12 signals a major transition in the ministry of Christ. Whereas earlier the emphasis had been on reaching out to the country as a whole – now the emphasis is more on individuals – whosoever will come. Whereas earlier the emphasis was on presenting the kingdom on the condition of repentance, now the emphasis will be that the kingdom is delayed and that Christ is going to the cross.

Of course, in the sovereign plan of God, He knew where it was going all along – but He allowed it to unfold as it did for His sovereign purposes, which all bring glory to Him.

But note the emphasis here in Matthew 12:50 on ***“whoever***” does the will of My Father. This is a universal appeal.

> **John 1:11–12 (NKJV)**
> **11** He came to His own, and His own **did not receive Him**.
> **12** But **as many as received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who **believe** in His name:

Whosoever will can come and be a part of Christ’s family – but one does have to receive Christ by believing in His name – which is to say His person. And who is His person? He is Lord and Savior!

> “The whoever indicates the universality of the invitation. No one who believes is excluded. And, on the other hand, not one who does not believe will be included.” – ***John MacArthur***

Doing the will of the Father STARTS with believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.

> **John 6:29 (NKJV)**
> **29** Jesus answered and said to them, “**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent**.”

Jesus, in effect, told them that what God wants them to DO is to believe in Him. They wanted to know about “works,” but Jesus said, “believe”. This is ***“the work***” (so to speak) that God wants them to do.

This is in the same vein as when the Philippian jailer said, "***What must I do to be saved?***" And the response came back, "***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved***." What must you DO? You must believe! The will of the Father first and foremost is that people believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once this takes place, then a progressive sanctification begins to work its way out in the life to where one's whole life is now colored in a whole new way. Again, the issue of doing the will of the Father is not one of perfection, but it is one of direction.

> **John 5:28–29 (NKJV)**
> **28** Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice
> **29** and come forth—those who have **done good, to the resurrection of life**, and those who have **done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.**

Normally we break the whole of humanity into the two categories of believers and unbelievers, and that is right. But here Jesus broke it into the two categories of those who do good and those who do evil. And the point is true faith changes the entire trajectory of a person's life – so much so that true believers are generally characterized as those who do good – or as Jesus put it in Matthew 12:50, "***does the will of My Father***".

Just to be clear, we are not saved by doing good or by good works of any kind, for that would contradict GRACE (Eph. 2:8-9). However, if we are saved, the identifying fruit or the evidence in the believer's life will be that we desire to do the will of the Father.

Matthew 12 presents a great contrast: On the one hand, we have mere empty reformation. On the other hand, we have a life-changing relationship with Jesus that results in us being a member of His spiritual family. The first represents a works salvation that cannot save. The second represents true saving faith.

The Jews were BIG on reformation. There was religious reformation, moral reformation, self-reformation, legalistic reformation, social reformation. In one sense the whole of Judaism had become about mere reformation (cf. Matt. 23:15).

Colossians talks about things that indeed “have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion” (Col 2:23).

By way of application, there are lots of “reformation” programs today. We have 7 steps, 12 steps, we have meditation, and all manner of various self-help disciplinary plans. And many of these may, in fact, bring a measure of positive change in the person’s physical life. After all, you can, to a point, train the flesh to behave outwardly, but what you can’t do is internally change a person’s spiritual nature. Only God can do this. Only the gospel can fundamentally change a person spiritually from the inside out!

In Romans 1-3, Paul at great length shows that the pagan, the moralist, and the religionist are all equally under condemnation. The moralist might think he has a leg up on the pagan, but both are under condemnation. The religionist might think he has a leg up on the pagan and the moralist, but he too is under the same condemnation.

And here is Paul’s conclusion:

> **Romans 3:22–23 (NKJV)**
> **22** even the **righteousness of God**, **through faith** in Jesus Christ,
> **to all and on all who believe.** For there is no difference;
> **23** for **all have sinned and fall short** of the glory of God,

Self-reformation always comes short. At funerals they will often say, “He was a good person” – but the question is HOW GOOD? It doesn’t matter how reformed a person may be; they still come far short of God’s glory standard. Isaiah 64:6 says, “all our righteousness are like filthy rags”.

Our works can never save us in part or in whole. Any and all efforts of mere reformation can never save us in part or in whole. We need Jesus. We need a life-changing faith relationship with Jesus. This is ultimately the only thing that will really change us spiritually for time and eternity.

Only those with a life-changing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are His true disciples. Only they are part of His spiritual FAMILY!