

SMALL GROUP GUIDE **NOV 15, 2026**

A New Loyalty

Early in Jesus' ministry, the crowds were so thick that He and His disciples "*were not even able to eat*." When His family heard what was happening, "*they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind'*" (Mark 3:20–21). A few verses later they arrive at the house, standing outside and sending word for Him. Jesus' answer is startling. He looks at the people seated in a circle around Him and says, "*Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother*." Jesus is not rejecting His family – on the cross He will make sure His own mother is cared for (John 19:26–27). He is announcing a new family, formed not by blood but by obedience, with a claim on us that runs deeper than any other. In a culture where church is often one commitment among many – fitted around work, sports, travel, and the holidays – "The Gospel According to Mark" tells a different story. Following Jesus means shifting our primary loyalty to the family of God.

- Think of a family tradition, table, or gathering that has shaped you – or one you wish you'd had. Share it. What did it teach you about what it means to belong?

- Read Mark 3:31–35, and then look back at Mark 3:20–21. Does anything stand out to you about the contrast between the people "outside" and the people seated "in a circle around Him"? Does anything surprise or challenge you?

- Jesus defines His family this way: "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." What do you think it means that this new family is formed by doing God's will rather than by blood, background, or preference? Who might that open the door to?

- Read Mark 10:29–30. Jesus promises that those who leave family for His sake will receive "a hundred times as much *in this present age*: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children." What do you think He means by that? How can being part of God's family bring that in this present time?

- For some, this passage is a challenge to hold family more loosely. For others, it is an invitation into a family they've never had. Which is it for you right now? What might one small step toward life in God's family look like this week?

Prayer

Read aloud together:

Jesus, thank You for looking at a room full of ordinary people
and calling them Your family.
Thank You that whoever does the will of God
is Your brother and sister and mother.

Forgive us for the loyalties we have quietly placed above You –
our comfort, our plans, our schedules, our own kind.
Forgive us for treating Your family as optional
and Your people as strangers.

Teach us to honor the families You have given us,
and to hold them inside a larger love.
For those whose homes are hard or far away,
make Your Church a place of belonging.

Seat us in the circle around You,
listening to Your voice and doing the Father's will,
until the world can look at us and say,
"Here is His family."

In Jesus' name, amen.

Practice

Jesus looked at the people around Him and called them family. With Thanksgiving and the holidays approaching, many of us will gather around tables full of people we love. Others will spend them alone, far from home, or carrying grief. The family of God is meant to notice the difference.

This week, set aside 5 minutes and ask:

- Who in my church family feels most like a brother, sister, mother, or father to me – and do they know it?
- Which of my loyalties most often crowds out my commitment to God's family?
- Who in my group, church, or neighborhood might be alone or far from family this holiday season?
- What would it look like to treat that person as family rather than as an acquaintance?

Then we want to challenge you to make the first move. Not necessarily a seat at your Thanksgiving table just yet – though that would be wonderful – but the reach-out: a call, a text, an invitation to dessert or a walk, a question about how they're spending the holidays. Keep it simple and don't worry about getting it perfect. Be sure to share with your group what happened and how it went afterward.