



PO Box 703929
Dallas, TX 75370-3929

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TOOLBOX

EVANTELL'S

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Reaching Relatives in Today's Culture

Three essentials in reaching family members in today's culture

by Dr. Larry Moyer

There are few people we would more like to see with us in heaven than our own relatives. Yet sometimes those seem the hardest to reach.

So, how do you go about reaching those of your own family?

Take heart — Jesus understands

When Jesus walked the earth as perfect God and perfect man, He experienced the same challenges we experience when dealing with relatives. John 7:5 tells us, "For even His own brothers did not believe in Him."

When we speak to God on behalf of our relatives, we are speaking to One who understands our pain. His own family was not open to His claims. The family may be equally as resistant to the truth about Christ. And just like Jesus' half-brothers James and Jude eventually professed faith (and ended up contributing to our New Testament), we can hold out hope for the relatives as well.

Do not limit what God can do — and who He can reach

If most of us were honest, we can see just about anybody coming to Christ more easily than our own relatives. The reason may be that we have tried so many times to speak to them and have seen their refusal to listen, let alone believe.

We must recognize that we cannot bring relatives to Christ, we can only bring the opportunity to

trust in Christ to them. Jesus said in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." Only God can change a heart from stone to flesh. We are not meant to take that burden on our shoulders. And we should not limit what He can do.

Consider mediating on Acts 9 — specifically, the conversion of Saul who became Paul the apostle. If God could get through to him, could He not get through to anyone in your family?

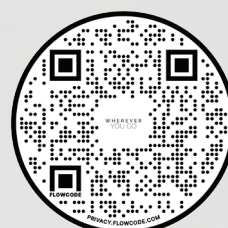
Pray for another voice

Often, it takes someone outside the family to convince those inside the family of their need of Christ. I have been privileged to lead many to Christ whose family members have been trying to reach for years. I am convinced that one of the reasons they listened to me is that I was not part of their family. They received from me the very truth that they had difficulty receiving from them.

You might respond, "But I do not know of anyone they have contact with who is a believer." Keep in mind that God is still on the throne. He could bring someone across their path tomorrow that you had no idea they were going to meet.

Remember that you were not beyond God's reach, and neither are they. Do your part and with expectant faith; look to God to do His.

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Three Categories to Watch Out for from Reluctant Relatives

by Brock Anderson

Most of us have relatives who have not placed their trust in Christ. However, sometimes we don't take time to think about why they're reluctant and how to respond in a way that is meaningful to them. Read over the three categories below. Does a relative come to mind when you read them? If so, consider taking the recommended action.

Apathy

The **apathetic relative** simply is not concerned with the claims of Christianity. They don't show interest when the topic comes up, and they don't seem to have much of a concern about spiritual things.

Action to consider

True stories of the reality of faith can have a major impact. Consider sharing a transparent story of how your faith in God brought you out of a hard time of struggle. You could also consider sharing a faith-story about a family member, friend, or even a story that you're just well acquainted with. Just make sure it's true. Then, you can simply ask something like, "May I share with you why faith in God is so powerful?"

Animosity

A **relative with animosity** has usually experienced hurt/hypocrisy from Christians and they are frustrated at the thought of faith in Christ.

Action to consider

Here's a question they'll never see coming. "Have I ever told you about the times I fail to live according to my beliefs?" Just imagine what kind of conversation can begin with someone who has experienced church hurt or sees Christians as hypocrites. It provides an opportunity for you to be honest about something we all face – not living perfectly – while opening the door to a statement like, "Fortunately, Jesus doesn't tell anyone to follow other Christians, me, or even my pastor – He says to follow Him; and He has never been inconsistent." Then, you can transition into how we trust and follow Him.

Uncertainty

Do you have a relative that seems interested in spiritual things, but attempts at conversations never go anywhere of significance? You're likely talking to someone who is **uncertain**.

Action to consider

You may try asking a simple question like, "Has anybody ever explained to you what it means to be a Christian? I'd be more than happy to if you're interested – with no strings attached." I think it's especially important to let them know you're not expecting a decision right this moment. You're just seeking to explain something they seem interested in so they can better understand it. If it's "that moment" for them, the Holy Spirit will take care of that.



A Family Affair

Do you have other family members who have placed their faith in Christ? If so, set up a mechanism for prayer and discussion around ideas for engaging non-believing family members. Seems simple, right? However, many families simply don't think of approaching other family members in this way. We can often take a "me" approach to reaching that uncle, brother, parent, etc. Why not get ideas and prayer cover from others in your family who believe? See what God will do when you work together.

Encouragement from James & Jude *(the half-brothers of Jesus)*

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"When His family heard about this, they went to take charge of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind." – Mark 3:21. Jesus' family members, including his half-brothers, were convinced He was "out of His mind." However, both James and Jude would go on to not only believe in Jesus, they would also write part of the New Testament, and James would become a key leader of the early church! You may say, but they were brothers of Jesus! Yes, but this was true of them when they thought He was crazy as well. So, what changed them? The resurrection. The same truth and power that changes everything for us as well. The story of Jesus' family members can give us hope for our family! Even if they call you "crazy", you are in good company, and there is hope for them yet!

REACHING FAMILY MEMBERS IN TODAY'S CULTURE



WATCH
THE
REPLAY

