

God's will has been made known... to us... by Him, Personally! He breathed out spoken words which were understood clearly, written down precisely, and preserved meticulously throughout generations. He has laid out His will so we would have no misunderstandings about what He is after on this earth, in regards to His creation, through His most cherished creation - you (and me).

God establishes peoples for Himself and commissions them/us to Be Fruitful and Multiply.

He said it in the garden of Eden to Adam and Eve in **Genesis 1:28** *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

He said it to Noah and his family in **Genesis 9:1 & 9:7** *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." "And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it."*

He describes it to Abraham in **Genesis 17:6** *"I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into [a multiplicity of] nations, and kings shall come from you."*

He said it to Jacob in **Genesis 35:11** *"And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply."*

He speaks through the prophet Ezekiel to His chosen people, the nation of Israel in **Ezekiel 36:11** *"And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful."* And also the prophet Jeremiah about Israel in **Jeremiah 23:3** *"Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply."*

God says the same thing to us today. We are to be fruitful and multiply as well, filling the earth with the same kind of beloved, called, anointed and appointed creatures we are... spirit-filled believers who love God first and best and love one another as ourselves.

It is one thing to be commanded to produce, and there are a lot of producers out there producing a lot of things... many which do not please The Lord. Obviously He intends for a certain, specific thing to be replicated and multiplied when He tells us to "be fruitful and multiply." This is where BFAM's dual meaning comes into play.

God wants to Be FAMily with us. And He intends for us to Be FAMily with one another as His Church. So what does that look like? How do we accomplish this, especially with so many apparent divisions in our world, our culture, and even the Church? Is it even possible, at this point?

God never gives us instructions or expectations that we cannot accomplish... humbly and with His help. (After all, He never intends for us to be prideful or arrogant, seeking to do anything apart from Him.) Father God is always available to help us, as we see in **Philippians 2:13**, *"for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."*

Jesus is always with us, helping us accomplish His will for us to become united as one... family. Look at **John 17:21-23**, and notice His will, where Jesus prays, asking our Father *"that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so*

that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

Jesus echoes His longing to be together as one as He assures His followers (and reminds every one of us today) commissioning us in Matthew 28:20b, *“behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* As Jesus does, He demonstrates His unity with the Father. Remember God’s guarantee in **Hebrews 13:5** *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

The Holy Spirit is always in us to remind us of His will, as seen in **John 14:26** *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*

Talk about oneness! The three Persons of the Godhead are in total agreement and commitment to stick with us and work with us to accomplish His good, acceptable and perfect will. (Romans 12:2) Aren’t you glad you aren’t alone in this venture? Do you feel a boost inside, knowing the God is 100% backing you as you choose to renew your mind and be transformed into the Kingdom family member He’s always intended for you and His Church? This is exciting.

But it won’t happen without dedicated effort... yea, verily, WORK! :)

It is possible. And not just possible, or even merely a good idea, but entirely commanded by God! We must not take this lightly. It must be our daily aim to live like the family God describes in The Word.

As this may be a fairly new concept to you, especially as you consider not only in your household, but your congregation/campus, but also extending to other churches, and denominations and what we might even call religions (Evangelicals, Catholics, etc.), let’s explore how God describes this united family of beautiful oneness through several agreeing scriptures.

While Romans chapter 12 is extremely useful all throughout, describing the life of a true Christian (or Christ follower), I’d like to focus on the verses specifically *related to* (get it?) Christian conduct toward/with another Christian. I emphasize this because of the tremendous opportunity when we do it right and the horrifying stakes of getting it wrong. Jesus, continuously demonstrating His incomparable, perfect love for us, issues the command and outlines the opportunity in obedience - on the very night He would be betrayed by one He loves, as He’s preparing for the worst day of His life. **John 13:34-35** *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

Look at that last phrase... That’s a big IF! And there in the converse are the stakes. No one will know that we are Jesus’ followers if we don’t have love for one another. If we don’t show it, if it isn’t evident, if it isn’t obvious, and constant, and true, and abounding... we will not look any different than anyone else in the world. That should be a terrifying thought. “I could look identical to the world - in all its selfishness and sinfulness, with all its abuses and manipulations... if I don’t have love for my brothers and sisters in Christ.”

So often we will be accused of hypocrisy or any number of other things, stemming from this lack of demonstrated love for “one another.” And maybe you’ve heard or overheard this phrase, “I didn’t know you were a Christian!” YIKES! Shouldn’t everybody be aware that we belong to Jesus, behaving like Him, with love and truth and service abounding? Throughout the world, Jesus has a pretty good reputation, but His followers... not so much. We don’t act like Him... enough... yet.

So with those dramatic stakes in mind, let’s look at how His family is described, functioning at its best, as He intends and commands.

Take a few moments and do a quick search in your favorite digital bible reader for “love one another.” Notice just how many times it is said throughout scripture! A LOT! Jesus says it, Paul says it, Peter says it, John says it - often! The specifics of other passages will amplify this concept to real actions we can employ to succeed, living as family.

Romans 12

v3 - humility

v5 - we ARE one body in Christ, connected with other believers

v6 - uniquely gifted for usefulness

v9 - love honestly

v10 - love and honor as family members

v13 - meet each others’ needs and be hospitable

v15 - celebrate others’ victories and be present in their grief

v16 - live harmoniously together

While these are largely applicable and appropriate and helpful to employ with every human, believer or unbeliever, in the context of brother to brother, they are supercharged elements of demonstrated love that will convince others that we are the genuine article, legitimate followers of Jesus.

Consider **Acts 2:42-47**, *And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Believers gathered together, both at/for the religious gathering, but also casually in each others’ homes, as a daily routine. Our frantic pace of life must be sacrificed on that Romans 12 altar, where we give our lives continually as living, pleasing, holy, acceptable sacrifices to God. Instead of that breakneck speed, we create margin, eliminating activities, events, certain relationships, in order to be more together than ever with brothers and sisters in the faith - for evangelism and edification, for fellowship.

They were generous and open-handed with their material possessions and money. Notice how they just shared useful things with one another, and how they just sold stuff to supply every believer’s need. Our materialism must be sacrificed on that same altar, because Jesus was right: **“You cannot serve God and money.”**

Let’s look at Jesus’ words in context (Matthew 6:19-24): **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for**

yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Treasures in Heaven are amassed by laying aside your own treasures here for others. Your heart gives freely to those in need, particularly of the household of God. The Complete Jewish Bible describes "the good eye" of vv22-23 as the generous eye, a generous person. If not generous with money, we are lovers of money, and thereby haters of God. It is impossible to love both. (Want to see how in love with Jesus you are? Check your heart as you reach for your wallet.)

Let me add Acts 4:32-37 as another example of this generosity for the sake of eradicating need amongst the family of believers, going even so far as to sell houses and land to make provision for beloved brethren. (And also, the implicit trust in their spiritual leaders to distribute it appropriately.)

They went "to church" together and they went "as Church" together. This was a lifestyle. You've most likely heard the phrase, "doing life together." This is that. (Incidentally, Deitrich Bonhoeffer's book, Life Together, is an incredible read and a beautiful resource that will inspire you towards this lifestyle.) Instead of merely sharing a hobby outside of Sunday Services, they were a part of each other's lives, including the prayers, needs, accomplishments, celebrations, studies, failures, successes.

You may be wondering at this point, "Ugh! Who has the TIME?!" This is a very reasonable and adept realization that we are short on time. And the truth is, you are the only one who can fix up your life to accommodate this. We all have the same 24 hours each day, and we use every minute with something. Could it be that time is shared with others than retained for ourselves? Yes, even amidst the mess of a house that is well-lived in (I have 5 children, so I know of which I speak). Consider inviting someone over to share some life with the greeting, "Come over for coffee. I have to tidy up but we can catch up while I _____."

They ate meals together... and they did so joyfully, thankfully, and generously. My friend actually brings his BBQ over in his van so we can cook meat for nachos. We potluck ingredients and undoubtedly there are leftovers of everything - which we split up between our families as the evening closes. There is something supernatural about sharing meals together in this way... not that I think we'd need much convincing on this point.

They praised God together, wherever they were. Could be in a "temple" situation like a campus, could be a house-church-type gathering, could be a prayer meeting, could be a YouTube video that is shared and caught - where praise breaks out, because it is allowed, welcomed, encouraged, even anticipated.

They enjoyed favor with all the people. Take this however you like, either all believers or all humans, but I'll take all the favor I can get! Imagine this. What would it feel like to be favored constantly? Enjoyable, right? Well, that's exactly what God thinks, which is why He wants it for you. He loves you and wants you to enjoy all His good gifts to you.

To round out this Acts 2 passage, perhaps best of all the blessings is this last one: New Jesus Followers were added every day! I shudder to think of times I've missed this best blessing,

caught up in the other ones (that felt good to me, my creature comforts, etc.), ignoring how this is the most important to Jesus, because it goes on an on for eternity, one way or another, and that the largest spiritual family possible has always been His goal. It is why He endured the cross, even despising the shame that came with it, for the joy set before Him - more and more people choosing to live FOR Him, choosing to live as family IN Him, all made possible BY Him.

This is not an exhaustive curriculum, by any means, of all possible ways we are shown God's family treating each other with love and honor, serving one another, it is a good primer and a good reminder that we don't have to stay how we are, disconnected, distracted, unavailable and even unloving. After all, being members of one another, we all have a unique and necessary part to play, to which I say - go in love, play your part, honor God, Be FAMILY!

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

*25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." **Eph 4:15-5:2***