

CREW Bible Study

Youth XP3 Message Series – FAMILY MATTERS – Week 2

- **BOTTOM LINE:** Your family matters even when it's fractured.
- **GOAL:** To help students understand that problems or pain in their family story doesn't discount their family from being used by God.
- **SCRIPTURE:**
 - *Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright. – Genesis 25: 279-34*
 - *But God's not finished. He's waiting around to be gracious to you. He's gathering strength to show mercy to you. God takes the time to do everything right—everything. Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones. – Isaiah 30:18*

MESSAGE

Have you ever tried to use something, but then noticed it was broken? I pulled a glass out of the cabinet the other day, poured some tea, and sat down to eat dinner. As I was eating, I noticed that this glass had a line going down the side. Tea wasn't spilling out of it, but the glass was clearly fractured. I don't know what happened or when it happened, but the glass was broken. And to avoid the risk of the glass completely shattering, I threw it in the trash.

When things get broken, that's a frequent response. Trying to fix whatever it is takes time and might cost money. You have to ask yourself, "Is it worth it? Or is it better to just throw it out?"

But what about this.....what if it's your *family* that's broken? Is your response to try to fix it? Or toss it aside?

In one way or another, to some degree, we all have or will experience some kind of brokenness in our families.

- Maybe it's **failed expectations**. It seems like nothing is ever done right. There's constant correction and disappointment about everything.
- Maybe it's **constant tension**. It could be slamming doors or yelling, but maybe it's just a cloud of stress and anxiety that you feel, especially when certain subjects come up. And it makes living in your house stressful.

- Maybe it's **secrets**. You never really saw it when you were younger, but now you know the truth. Maybe you've discovered some things that you wish you didn't about a relationship, a legal problem, addiction or a bad decision. And now it makes you feel like you can't trust your family.
- Maybe it's a **fracture** from a divorce or a family member leaving. You thought you would find a "new normal", but you haven't found it yet.

How we respond matters. In our minds, most of us have an ideal family. But no family is ideal – family is *real*. Every family goes through times when things feel broken, whether it's just a little bit or a major deal. And those times are when we tend to respond in one of two ways: either we count our family (or that family member) out, or we count ourselves out.

- We use our family member's mistakes or unreasonable expectations as a reason not to listen to them and shut them out.
- Or, to save ourselves any more heartache, we take ourselves out. Maybe for you, it means staying in your room as much as possible. You isolate yourself.

All of us have probably felt the urge to want to pull away from our families to some degree for some reason. But what we're talking about today can help you see something better.

Here's the good news: God has a long history of working through families that are stressed, fractured, broken, and dysfunctional. And God has unconditional love for all of them.

One of the most famous people in the Bible is a man named Abraham. Abraham had two grandsons named Jacob and Esau, and what happened between these two brothers definitely fits into the category of family tension.

Esau was the oldest and according to the customs of the time, the oldest would receive special privileges that the other children of the family wouldn't get. This was his *birthright* and it was a big deal. And you can probably imagine that it made his brother jealous.

One day, Esau was out hunting and when he arrived home, he was super hungry. His brother Jacob was cooking stew and it smelled amazing. Esau asked his little bro for a bowl of it. And that's when things went sideways. Hear what happens in Genesis, chapter 25 beginning with verse 29:

Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So, he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So, Esau despised his birthright.

So, to recap: Esau wants the stew. Jacob says “no.” Jacob says “Well, ok, but you have to give me the greatest thing you have. You have to hand over your birthright to me.” Esau says “Yes, ok, but just to get the stew.” Jacob takes him absolutely seriously. And the sibling drama takes off from there. It got messy. So messy that later on, Esau tried to kill Jacob and Jacob ran away from home.

That’s high drama and brokenness. And it might seem like the story ends there. But it doesn’t. Over time, God used this family – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau and their relatives that followed – to bring Jesus into the world. Many generations later, Jesus was born into this same family to bring good news and very good things.

From God’s perspective, there is no family you can count out, there’s no person in a family you can count out, and you certainly shouldn’t count yourself out. God is never done. The story of Jacob and Esau tells us that even in our worst family moments, our family story isn’t over. Even if we can’t see it right now, we can trust that God has a plan and He is working through us.

Here’s two things to remember:

1. **Don’t count your family out.** We said earlier that family isn’t ideal, family is *real*. And being *real* means that we mess up sometimes. But when our family members mess up, we shouldn’t count them out, or throw them away like a broken glass. Ask God to help you see how the relationship can be fixed and what actions you can take to help.
2. **Don’t count yourself out either.** You don’t know what’s going to happen next. So, don’t check out just yet. Don’t isolate yourself. Don’t run off. Challenge yourself to stay open to communicating with your family. God is always working. Let Him keep working.

Many years after this story, the prophet Isaiah shared some words with God’s people to remind them of this very thing – that God continues to work in us and through us. He says this in Isaiah chapter 30, verse 18:

But God’s not finished. He’s waiting around to be gracious to you. He’s gathering strength to show mercy to you. God takes the time to do everything right—everything. Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones.

Fixing things that are broken is one of the things God does best. Have faith in what He can do. God hasn’t given up on you or your family, so don’t give up either.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If you could be a part of any famous family (real or fictional), which would you pick?
2. Can you relate to feeling the brokenness that comes from these?
 - a. Failed expectations
 - b. Constant tension

- c. Secrets
 - d. Fracture of divorce or a family member leaving
 - e. Other?
3. How would you describe the emotional temperature of your family on most days? Cold or hot? Lukewarm? Why? What affects the emotional temperature of your family the most?
 4. What is your go-to response when you feel tension in your family?
 5. What would you say to a friend who believes their family will never be different than how it is right now?
 6. Jacob and Esau probably would be surprised to learn they were such a part of God's story – despite their brokenness. What would you do differently today if you knew that there was potential for God to use your family's story?
 7. Read Isaiah 30:18. What does this verse mean to you? What do you think it means for your family?