

Family & Finances

Money Sex & Power Series

Old Testament Reading

Genesis 37:1-11

Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

² *This is the account of Jacob's family line.*

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

³ *Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.*

⁵ *Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."*

⁸ *His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.*

⁹ *Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."*

¹⁰ *When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

New Testament Reading

Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ *Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.*

¹³ *"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.*

¹⁷ *"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.*

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ *"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

²² *"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'* So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ *"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'*

²⁸ *"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'*

³¹ *"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"*

Questions Asked Regarding Family & Inheritance

What is the priority between family stewardship vs. the Kingdom?

What does the Bible say about wills?

How compatible with Christianity is the Asian (and "old money" European) ideal that money should stay in the family? The point being that the money is to take care of family?

Many Families are destroyed by money. Should parents split inheritances evenly? Can it be fair?

Favouritism

Who was the favoured child in your family if there was one and how did it feel for you?

Or if you are an only child, how do you think that shaped you?

How does it affect who you are now?

Although it sometimes feels like the others are cursed, it is also the favoured child who is cursed.

The curse comes from the parents who hold power and influence over the children.

Principle of Impartiality

Impartiality is clearly in reference to issues of power, especially between the poor and the rich.

It is a matter of justice.

Jesus was referred to in the Gospels by others as being impartial.

Paul's letters instruct us not to sow favouritism.

The Old Testament shows again and again how partiality is destructive within the family.

Jacob & Esau, Joseph & his brothers, Mannaseh & Ephraim.

So inasmuch as we can we are to be impartial in areas where fairness and justice are applied.

In family, being fair helps maintain the peace.

In the tradition of many cultures, firstborns are favoured.

And sons are favoured.

This has led to injustice and despicable practices.

The Principle of Individuality

Despite not being partial, there is also at work in Scripture the concept of chosenness.

God chose Jacob and not Esau for different reasons than Isaac.

In fact, Isaac tried to thwart the blessing of God and Rebekah manipulated the situation.

God will still choose a person or a people for himself.

This is sometimes seen to be in conflict with the principle of impartiality.

But it is a different principle at play.

God treats each person according to what is in their heart and uniqueness.

Abel's offering is accepted and Cain's isn't not because of what they offered but because of themselves.

God is discerning and a judge.

He treats each person in the way that is suited to them and as needed.

This too is what we may need to learn in families.

We sometimes push the concept of fairness into the realm of sameness.

Men are not the same as women and vice versa.

The wealthy are not like the poor.

The victim is not the same as the perpetrator.

In the areas of God's choosing, treatment and judgment,

he will treat each person according to their individual situation.

And although we may not understand it, we must come to trust him.

This principle requires a deeper form of wisdom, trust and compassion.

Inheritance

How has money played a role in your relationship with your parents?

How does it affect who you are now?

Principle of Love vs. Utility

Some of the questions go towards aspects of wills and inheritances.

The important question is what does it mean to love someone.

Do you give someone you love what they want or what they need?

The principles of impartiality and individuality are operational here.

Wisdom is indeed required.

What we are to provide for our children is not material but character.

The threat to people is not just from the world but from themselves.

This is something Jesus knew very well.

Giving money is not the way of parenting.

Giving love, instruction and equipping children to become loving, faithful adults is.

Money is often used as a form of control, manipulation or threat in families.

We can control and use others in a manner of utility or equip, and shape them.

I have learned and share often now that God did not create us in order to use us.

He created us in order to bless us and make us blessings to one another.

Inheritances are meant to bless, not use.

We are not to live vicariously through our children.

To place expectations and burdens upon them that are not for them to bear.

[A note to fathers.]

Personally, I do not worry whether my children will be rich or poor.

I want them to be loving, wise and good.

In fact, material resources have nothing to do with what I want for them.
What they have matters much less than who they are.
It is my role as a parent to shape that.
It is also my role as your pastor to care for your soul.
Money, inheritance, material things can and will corrupt you if you let it.

Responsibility

How have you felt neglected or provided for by your family?
How does it affect who you are now?
How do you intend to provide for your family whether immediate or extended?

Principle of Mutuality

With inheritances, we are meant to take care of children.
But there is also the matter of how children are to care for parents.
In the Asian culture things are based on deep roots of obligation.
You are to always honour and support your parents.
In more western cultures, it is more an aspect of independence and individuation.
Both have blessings and pitfalls.
People have expectations of one another and those who are in between generations and cultures get stuck.
Instead of pointing fingers and tsk tsking others, we need to seek to understand.

There are verses of Scripture that provide the balance to inheritance.

Mark 7:1-12

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus² and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.³ (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.⁴ When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

⁵ *So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”*

⁶ *He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:*

*“These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.*

⁷ *They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.’*

⁸ *You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”*

⁹ *And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’¹¹ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—¹² then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.¹³ Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”*

Jesus was taking the pharisees to task for not allowing people to care for their parents. For the word of God, as Jesus understands it requires the honouring and loving of ones parents.

1 Timothy 5:3-8

³ Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. ⁵ The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. ⁶ But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame. ⁸ Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

In regard to caring for widows, the obligation is upon the children and family.

There is always a mutuality to the Christian life where we are declared righteous first by the way we relate with God then with those around us.

So inasmuch as parents are not to place burdens upon their children but provide proper care children are not to neglect thier parents and provide proper care for them!

But in this, it is according to the best of your ability.

In so you show the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

Not everyone comes from a family where we are blessed.

Often times it is a mixed blessing and curse.

But as far as you can, this is God's instruction.

Take care of your family.

Both your parents and your children.

In so doing, heaven comes here.

In neglect of this, it is a taste of hell.

We have relationships between spouses, parents, children, siblings, in-laws, extended family.

How you treat your family is a direct reflection of your life in the Kingdom of God.