

Family, Friendship & Mission Genesis 25-33



One of the most complex but vital areas of mission is within our own families. People often react to the term family because of past experiences or future hopes. This is because familial relationships can be difficult to navigate. In some cases family causes us a lot of pain. In other cases there is a lot of joy. In most cases there is a mixture of joy and pain. At the best of times, there is no greater missional force than the family. At the worst of times it will embitter you against God. Families have a complex dynamic.

Isaac's Family (Genesis 25-33)

One of the most problematic stories in the Bible is that of Abraham's family. More precisely, the relationship between his son Isaac, his wife, Rebekah and their twin boys, Esau and Jacob. In a brief recounting of their story,



Isaac and Rebekah's relationship was a match made in heaven. Abraham's servant was guided by God to find Rebekah among her family.



They are unable to have children but God answers their prayers and they have twin boys.



As things turn out, Isaac favours the burly and outdoorsy Esau.

Rebekah favours the clever and cultured Jacob.

Here the rift between husband and wife, child and parent, sibling and sibling begins.



In the end, Rebekah and Isaac deceive Isaac and steal the blessing from Esau.

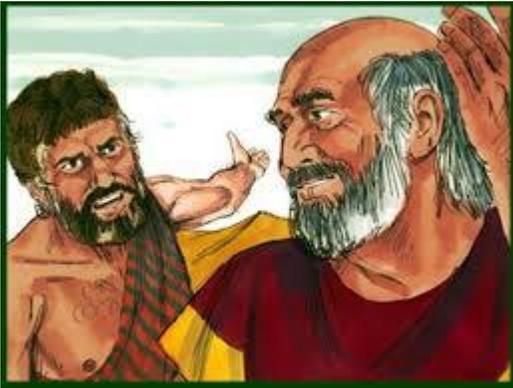


Esau, in a rage, swears to kill Jacob and forces him to flee to his mother's brother, Laban.



Along the way, he is given a vision and for the first time encounters God.

Laban, although he shelters Jacob, puts him to work.



Laban deceives Jacob by marrying off his older daughter to Jacob in place of his younger daughter who Jacob loved. By doing so he squeezes about 20 years of work out of Jacob. (7 years for each daughter and 6 years for the flocks). Laban changed Jacob's wages 10 times.



He marries both sisters and also has two concubines.

He favours one of his wives over another.

This is a continuing legacy of favouritism that will play out in the future.

Jacob does very well for himself despite this uncle.



In time he gathers enough wealth to try to steal away home only to be confronted by his father-in-law. Imagine the complexities of that family!

As he approaches the land of his family, he is unsure of what he will find.

He sends out peace offerings ahead of him

but the report he hears is that Esau is on his way with 400 men.



It is in light of this uncertainty that Jacob that night wrestles the angel and is crippled. This is where this story of a broken relationship picks up...

Genesis 33

1 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. 2 He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. 3 He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

4 But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. 5 Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked.

Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant."

6 Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. 7 Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

*8 Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?"
"To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said.*

9 But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

10 "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. 11 Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

12 Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."

13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. 14 So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

15 Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you."

"But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord."

16 So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. 17 Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.

18 After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. 19 For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. 20 There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.

The Need for Reconciliation



You can choose your friends but not your family.

At this time I would like to lead you in a mediation - for you to think about your own family.

As such I also wish to remind you that when we speak of family and friendship in the church, we are not speaking of just simply nuclear families.

We are speaking of generations of families.

We are speaking of an entire people.

As such, even when we speak in the categories of relationships you may not experience, you are encouraged to think upon the relationships of this type that you do know beyond just the nuclear family or even traditional image of the family.

Husbands & Wives

With your Spouse

Trust, Expectations, Demands

Listening v. telling

Sharing v. silence

Do we just focus on the kids or are we still dating?

What children will appreciate most is to learn that they are not the centre of the parent's world.

The parents are the centre of the family, not the children.

That is what either gives emotional stability or dissipation.

The love of parents for each other - their friendship is the cornerstone.

What children fear most is divorce.

This does not mean you have to put on a show, but demonstrate healthy relationship.

But this friendship extends beyond a couple but to all.

Sons & Daughters

Favouritism

The balance between love and acceptance and expectations.

Not placing a burden on your children they are not meant to carry.

Projecting your own fears and insecurities from your own family history - familial curse.

Are you a champion to your children or a detractor?

The greatest power a parent has is encouragement and guidance.

Do they know you love them?

Can they be proud of you?

Do you teach them about humility, forgiveness, confession, faith?

Or do you teach them how to hide or lie?

Parents are stewards of their children.

Children belong to God.

My father's most important words to me was that he would one day be my friend.

Do your children know this and do you show it?

What does it mean when Jesus calls the woman who suffered from bleeding "Daughter?"

Mothers & Fathers

With your mother and your father

Appreciation vs. Taking them for granted

True maturity is reached when a child begins to care for their parent.

We individuate when we become our own people.

Not shackled to expectations - we learn to fly.

Do you see the frailties of your parents and do you show grace?

In the end it is a two way street.

It is painful to have family that are emotionally, relationally, physically, spiritually sick.

But that is what God deals with in all his children.

Do we show mercy to our parents.

We will not always have them with us.

Have we made peace, whether with them or about them?

Are they our friends?

Jesus said, "My brothers and sister, my mother and father, my family are those who do the will of God."

Brothers & Sisters

People we take for granted.

People we fight with.

People we learn to get along with.

And yet so many families are shattered - so many brothers and sister are at odds.

Since Cain killed Abel, since Esau and Jacob.

We tell our children, when we are gone you will only have each other.

In light of the #MeToo movement and #TimeUp

How do we as men treat women? Our sisters?

Pax Christi



God is not recreating the nuclear family.

He is recreating the entire human family.

What does that mean?

The greatest missional testimony is that of healthy family relationships.

Although the health of your own familial relationships is a part of your mission,

The church is not a haven just for people in nuclear families.

The mission of the church as a whole comprises of the healthy friendships

epitomized by healthy relationships.

Not what families actually are but what they can become only by the grace of God.



The Pax Christi Icon was created in 1999 in the Monastery of St. John in the Desert near Jerusalem and presented to Pax Christi International, a Christian organization that seeks to end cycles of violence in the world through prayer, education and action.



This is the central panel of the Icon of Pax Christi - the Peace of Christ.

It is an icon of Esau and Jacob embracing.

They are standing on Esau's sword, the sword of his anger.

Behind them is Jacob's ladder.

Above them is Christ who makes true reconciliation possible.

And below are the words in Greek, Latin and Hebrew: "Christ is our Reconciliation."

Icons are not merely works of art.

They are considered windows into God's Kingdom for us to look through and into.

They are a window into what we are called and welcomed to.

Peace in our families.

Peace in our world.

A peace that Only Christ brings.