

HOPE IN THE CONFLICT + + +

| SETH FLICK

Good morning, King of Kings! Man, it's awesome to bring the Word of God to you today in December. Hey, I want to bring you back, though. Like, let's have a good memory flashback. I want to bring you back to when families would sit together and watch the same show, not just have something on the background and everybody's second screen in it.

I'm talking all the way back to the 1900s. That's right, like 1990, where we'd all sit down and we would watch TV together on what night? Friday night, because TGIF, you know what that stood for? Thank goodness it's funny, that's right, because they didn't want to get a cease and desist from TGIF restaurant. But we would all sit down and we would watch shows like, what, Perfect Strangers with Belki Bartokomis, right? And Step by Step and Full House. And Just the Ten of Us. And my favorite, Family Matters.

Now, if you remember, right, Family Matters was a great Midwestern family show. It took place in Chicago. My family was in the Milwaukee area, so like, we could kind of connect. They had Carl Winslow and Harriet as the mom and the dad. They had Eddie, the oldest son, Laura, the daughter, and that third child that they wrote out of the program with like two seasons to go, and they expect nobody to notice. And of course, their most famous character, the one that had dances made after him, T-shirts made after him, suspenders sold because of him, Steve Urkel, who said, Did I do that? And the answer is yes, yes, you did. Come on.

But that was Family Matters. Now, one of my favorite episodes is Carl needed to go on a diet because he had his 20th high school reunion. He wanted to look svelte and slim and fit for this. And so he tries to go on this very restrictive diet very quickly. Aunt Rachel, who of course lived with him, made him a delicious meal of steamed asparagus. Say, mmm. Say, mmm, Northwestern Fremont. Mmm.

Steamed asparagus is fine. Steamed asparagus is gross. But they're passing all this delicious food past Carl's nose. This giant lasagna tray comes across. Laura, his daughter, grabs it and he's tug-of-warring and just like, I need a smell. So he tries to take from his daughter there.

There's another scene where he's on an assault bike and he says he can't get off. But Laura and the other daughter put a plate of cupcakes about three feet away. And so he can't get off, but he does like three wheelies in a row to try to get over there. And he just can't quite reach it. And Laura comes down. Oh, I'm so sorry, dad. Was that a temptation for you? I'm just going to take these upstairs.

And finally, they cut to the hardest part. Carl's been hungry for days. Just living off of asparagus and dreams at that point. And he goes down and he grabs the fridge door. And the fridge door's locked with a note that says, don't eat this. Take a glass of water. Go to bed.

And so he's rampaging through all of the different cabinets. And finally he finds baby Richie, his nephew's baby food. Pureed spaghetti and meatballs. That sounds delicious. But he's desperate. He

grabs it. Runs into the closet while making a bunch of noise. And he's just eating it with like just spoons and snarls when Harriet opens the door.

Carl, what are you doing? Nothing. And he keeps eating.

So this episode, he's taking from Laura, his daughter. He's taking cupcakes from both daughters. Or trying. He's taking baby food from a baby. But it's all hilarious for 23 minutes. Because by the time the episode is at its end, he shows up to his high school reunion. And even though he's a little bit on the bigger side, he's still far skinnier than the rest of the people he is trying to impress.

And then the next week's episode comes along and you want to know something? That conflict wasn't even there. Not even addressed. And if you remember right, all of these family sitcoms worked in the same way. They were serialized. If you missed one episode, you could watch the next episode and it would be fine.

All of the conflicts in a family's problems were settled in between 22 and 24 minutes. And is that what happens in your family? Is every conflict, every moment of chaos solved in 22 to 24 minutes? I don't think so.

And that's why I think this series that we're going to delve into is incredibly important because it's not just the name of a show that family matters, but your family matters.

So we're going to take a look at a real family in the scriptures, Jacob's family, and we're going to look at real issues in a family. So today we're going to talk about sibling rivalry for week one.

Week two, we're going to take a look at Jacob and his relationship with his father-in-law, Laban. And we're going to look at what happens when the authority that's above you isn't worthy of honor and authority. How do you reconcile that? How do you live like that as a family?

And week three, we're going to see that there's a big underlying reason why we have so many conflicts. And it has to do with all the idols that exist in our family. We're going to see that Jacob actually finds out his family has been following other literal idols and he's called to do something about it.

So every single week is something incredibly practical in teaching for you. Because when you have chaos in your life, whether it's 23 minutes or two months, it's not funny. You can't just sit down on your child's bedside and figure it all out with your arm around his shoulder.

It's because we've been taking from each other in families for years and years. That's how it started, right? Like Adam and Eve, they were part of a beautiful family. And Eve went and took what wasn't hers. And Adam could have intervened. And there could have been some reconciliation that happened there. But instead, Adam took as well.

Because it was like, well, if she took something, then I should take something also. I mean, that's only fair, right? And so on and so forth until every single family in this world got just as jacked up as the first one.

And we're making it worse and worse and worse because we take and we take. And we're not just taking lasagna. And we're not just taking pureed spaghetti and meatballs. We're taking the very things that families thrive on. We're taking peace. And we're taking trust away from those we should be protecting and those we should be caring for.

So first, let's define what a taker is. Because I think it's easy to spot in somebody else. It's really hard to spot when you're the taker. And this message, it's going to be really hard for you. And you're going to be challenged. This is probably the hardest message in the series.

I'm just going to lay it out flat for you. A taker is someone who believes that their own gain outweighs the well-being of others. And I want you to just take a second right now in silence, whether you're Fremont, Northwest, whether you're here.

Just take a moment and think about someone from whom you've taken. Someone whose trust you betrayed. Somebody close. Because this is the spot that you and I have to be in as God's Word interacts with our lives.

Because I tell you what, if you can identify what you've taken from somebody else and the way that you've made them feel and the way that you've wronged them, then that's the first step in you actually having peace that Jesus can bring for you.

Because we're not a church and we're not a family of takers. That's not how we're marked anymore. But I want to show you what is occurring in the scriptures. Because perhaps the teaching that's here is exactly what you need to move forward in your family right now.

So we're going to start with Jacob and Esau. These are the siblings that are having the rivalry. I'm a hunter, so I connect with this story. I can go out and be out in the field or in the woods all day long. I go out before the sun goes up. I come back in after the sun goes down. I can be out all day.

Now, when I go out and I come back in, yeah, I might be a little bit peckish, but I'm not going to go to my younger brother, Jace, and say, Hey, Jace, I was just outside all day. Your dinty more beef stew looks delicious. I'm going to trade my future for all 2,000 milligrams of MSG to course throughout my body.

That's what we find in Genesis chapter 25, when we see Jacob and Esau's relationship begin to get really strained. You see, Esau had been out hunting and he came back, what seems to be empty handed because he didn't have anything to eat.

And in a moment of desperation, he goes to his brother, who should provide for him as a good brother should in the Lord's dictates, in the Lord's family, and Jacob should be able to provide for him.

So Esau says, Can you give me some of your famous stew? And Jacob sees a moment that he can take advantage of his brother. He says, Absolutely. I will give you some of my dinty more classic. I will crack it open for you. I'll heat it up for you.

All you have to do is give me your birthright. So Esau, in a moment of desperation, says in Genesis 25, 34, the Lord says that Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and Esau ate and drank, and he rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

So yeah, Jacob may have given the bread and he may have given the stew, but it was not so he could help his brother. It was a transactional opportunity where Jacob could take advantage of Esau and take away Esau's future.

And if you think that that was just a one-off, that Jacob didn't just lead up to his name, his name, by the way, not only meant heel, because as he was being delivered out of his mother, Rebecca, he actually grabbed at the heel of his brother, Esau, and they both kind of came out together.

Yaakov, Jacob, also means deceiver. And he didn't just deceive one time. He deceives again.

Esau is told by his dad, Isaac. Isaac's like, hey, Esau, my vision is going. My days are short. I'm probably going to die soon, and I want to give you my blessing. This was separate from the birthright. I want to give you my blessing, but what you must do is you have to go out and hunt again, be successful, prepare my favorite meal, bring it back to me, and then I will place my hand where it needs to go so that I can give you my blessing.

Well, Rebecca hears about this. Rebecca is Jacob and Esau's mom, and Rebecca has a favorite child. Now, for any of you who look to keep peace in your family, how many of you think if it's a good idea to let your children know that you have favorites?

Now, it's one thing to tell each one of the children, you know you're my favorite, right? You know you're my favorite. My kids are over here. You know you're my favorite, right? If they all think they're my favorites, that's okay.

But Rebecca goes to Jacob and says, basically, you're my favorite. This is what your dad is going to do for Esau. This is what you need to go do.

Go to the domesticated animals while Esau is out hunting like dad had requested. Go to the goats. Bring me a couple of them. I'll make his favorite meal.

Jacob kind of resists. He's like, I don't know. I don't know if this is going to work.

He knows Esau is super hairy. I'm super hairy. You can't see it on screen. But what would happen if Isaac touched my skin? He'll know right away it's not me.

And so, Rebecca, not as Harriet Winslow with, like, wisdom from family matters, but as kind of, like, leaning into this sibling rivalry, says, oh, the goat that I'll prepare the meal for, I'll also remove its skins, and you can place it on your arms.

And so Isaac smells the aroma entering into the room. Jacob, disguised as Esau, brings it in. Here you go, father. I'm ready for my blessing.

Isaac still doesn't exactly know which child it is. So he's like, come closer, come and give me a kiss. And what does he smell? He smells the skin of a goat. He smells what outside should smell like.

And then he places his hand, and he feels the furriness of what he thinks is Esau. He blesses Jacob with the blessing.

And as Jacob goes out with the blessing, Esau comes in with the prepared meal from a successful hunt, and he sees what's happening.

And in Genesis 27, 38, he says, have you bought one blessing, my father? And then Esau lifted up his voice and wept because his dad says, no, this is all I've got for you.

And the thing about weeping, this is like deep crying out from one's soul. This is like being torn from the inside out. It indicates an intense, ongoing betrayal.

And in response to all of this, when we move to Genesis 27, verses 39 through 40, basically Isaac, as the dad says, you are cast away from the fatness of the earth. That is like the blessing of the earth.

It's not only by now you, by your sword shall live. Like you're going to have to fight for your future because of what your brother has done and you shall serve your brother.

Now think about this. One of the biggest sibling rivalries has just occurred. Deception has taken place now for basically a second time where Jacob has taken advantage of his brother Esau.

And now Esau is asking for his dad to intervene. He's asking for the Danny Tanner moment on the bedside. He's asking for the Carl Winslow wisdom to be given to him to help him navigate.

But rather than doing so, basically Isaac's like, Oh, I'm sorry. My hands are tied. I mean, I did what I did.

And so now you have no future. I know you're looking at me to advocate for you, but I can't do that.

Your brother took from you, but I'm going to abdicate my role as dad where I should be intervening, but I'm not going to.

And now all of a sudden we've got one taker, Jacob, without a dad who will intervene, continuously sinning against his brother.

And so in Genesis 27, 41, it says that Esau begins to harbor a Natar, a grudge against his brother. And it says now Esau hated Jacob. And now he says, I will kill my brother.

So now Jacob has taken a birthright. Jacob has taken a blessing. And now Esau says, well, he's taken so much from me. I deserve to take something more from him.

The way that I can get the blessing and the birthright back is if he's not in the picture anymore. And if dad isn't going to do it, I'm going to step in and make things right. I'm going to take his life.

Now, now we need some parent to step in right now. When you look at these serialized like shows, who would be the one character that would come in and make everything better.

If the dad who is usually goofy and affable, wouldn't insert himself at the Carl Winslow, wouldn't do something, which character is going to come in and make the story right again. Yeah.

Let's see. As we progress through this text, just running like linearly through this text, through this story, mom is asked to intervene because now things are getting real serious. Chaos is really deepening in the home.

And so Rebecca mom says, okay, I do have a plan here. Genesis 27, 42 through 45. She says, behold your brother, Jacob, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. Flee, flee until his fury turns away.

There is no plan for him to come back. She thinks, oh, you know what would be best to solve this chaos. Do you know what would be the best thing to solve the problem that's here? Let's avoid it. Let's avoid it. Let's just be silent about it. Let's just sweep it under the rug, right?

Because that is the best thing to do with families. Dad's laissez-faire hands off, not getting into this mess. Mom's no, no, no, no. Let's not talk about it.

You see how this story connects with your family and my family. How many times have you had a dad that's not going to participate in actively trying to lead a family by bringing peace into it? And that's what happens here.

How many times has mom had as a solution? Just don't talk about it anymore. Just avoid it.

Well, here's the teaching with that. As far as I've been able to see as a parent avoidance, avoidance has never solved the family conflict. It only delays and makes worse its consequences.

Am I right? And here's what's really sad. Like she wants to save her child. She wants to save Jacob's life so that maybe she could have a better relationship with Jacob because Esau is going to try to kill him.

She never sees Jacob again. So the very thing that she's trying to do by avoiding this problem so that hopefully she can have a relationship with Jacob is the very thing that stops the relationship.

And again, brothers and sisters, how many times have you seen this in your own family?

The more we avoid stuff, the more we walk away from it, the more we try to keep it a secret and shh, the worse and worse it gets year after year after year.

And so the takers continue to take and everyone else thinks they're justified and taking something away from them.

And the problems come to a point where we cannot avoid them anymore when we're in each other's company.

So we just avoid each other altogether and we don't even see each other anymore.

And that's what happens when moms and dads don't interject into a family to lead in peace, to bring Christ or mercy from him into the mix.

So what happens when takers take?

Well, let's take a look. Let's recap. Esau had taken away his birthright. What did this mean for him?

Well, he was supposed to get a double share of more than everybody else. He was supposed to get twice as much as Esau, but he gave that up for his stew and Jacob willingly took it.

He was supposed to have legal headship of the family. Esau was supposed to be able to make deals, purchase land on behalf of everyone, but he can't do that because it's been taken away.

He was supposed to be the spiritual leader of the entire clan, but it's been taken away.

He was supposed to have a place in the Messianic line because his grandpa Abraham was told that the Messiah would come from their family.

And now Esau cannot even connect himself to that anymore because the birthright had been taken away and nobody did anything about it.

What else did he have taken away?

Well, he had his blessing taken away because of this deception with Jacob stealing Esau's blessing.

It was supposed to be this beautiful moment where a father looked at his son and prophesied what his future could look like and that God would have favor on him and that Esau should have been prosperous, but that's taken.

He was supposed to have dominion and authority over Esau to lead him, but that's taken.

He was supposed to have a secure future in the land, taken.

Public confirmation as the covenant heir that he could continue on with his proclamations of peace, but that's taken because nobody in the family thought it mattered enough to step up.

And it wasn't just Esau that had many things taken away, but Jacob as well.

So during this time period, because of the wisdom of his mother, he lost his home.

He lost his relationship with his brother.

He lost 20 years of his life in exile.

He lost his relationship with his mom.

He lost a sense of safety because he was always living in fear of the sword of his brother Esau.

All because nobody was courageous enough in this family to say this family matters and we're going to step into conflict and we're not going to avoid it.

We're not going to put our hands up and say, well, what's done is done.

Man, what could your family look like?

If you were the one to step up, if you were the one to step up, if you were the one that didn't need to take any more, but to give, what would it look like if you had the courage to forgive rather than take?

Well, here's what has to happen first.

The inheritance needs to be given back.

It needs to be given back to Esau, but also whatever inheritance has been taken away from you needs to be given back also.

And that is the gospel ministry of Jesus.

He is the firstborn of all of us.

He's like the best that humanity could ever have, but he's also still fully God and he lived an incredibly perfect life so that everything that was supposed to be given to him as an inheritance for his perfect life can now be given to us.

And this is where this is beautiful.

First Peter chapter one, verses three through four says this, according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to what an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you.

If it's all of those things, that means that it cannot be taken. It has been given to you as a gift.

That's what grace is. That's what the cross is. That's what resurrection is. And that's where your family needs to live.

Not as another taker.

There's so much of that. The world doesn't need more takers.

The world doesn't need more justification of why you need to get yours.

The world needs more givers in the shape of Jesus.

Another scripture I want you to think about when you think about givers and takers is second Corinthians chapter five.

It says this, God made him to be sin who knew no sin so that we could become the righteousness of God.

What it means is that Jesus took all of the taking issues.

He took the debt you created when you took from your brother or sister.

He took the grudges that were nursed because of all the taking that's occurred.

He's taken away the manipulations that you and I have done to try to take more from the other.

He's taken our failure. He's taken our sin.

That's what Jesus did on the cross as he took on our sin.

That's what he takes.

But look at the inheritance of the blessing that he gives.

He gives you freedom.

He gives you an inheritance that can't be taken away, which means you don't have to look to justify taking from somebody else.

He's caused reconciliation with the family that actually matters.

The father who loves you, he's brought you back to him and he's restored what sin has destroyed in your family.

Now I want to bring you one last point from the story of Jacob and Esau.

20 years have gone by and you can page through Genesis 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

You finally get to Genesis 33.

Jacob desires something more for his life.

He desires his family to be unified.

He desires to be in that land that was rightfully his.

He desires his family to matter and to come back together again, but he's still terrified of Esau.

And Esau could have looked at Jacob far off and he could have said, he's coming to me.

He owes me.

I'm going to take my time.

I'm going to take what's mine.

If he can go over here and if he can grovel at my feet, maybe then he will deserve my forgiveness.

But instead something wonderful happened in Esau's life because of the mercy of Yahweh, because of the forgiveness that only Jesus can bring.

And it says in Genesis 33 verse 4, Esau did not wait for Jacob.

Esau ran to meet him.

He embraced him.

He kissed him.

They wept together because their family matters and they're both together again because they were both able to be humble and new and give to God.

And new and give each other the forgiveness that's needed.

Now I said, this is going to be the hardest message in the series for you.

And this is why.

And I want you to put yourself in a heart position to hear a hard word.

I know you've been hurt.

I know that someone close to you has taken something from you and I don't know what it is and I'm not going to excuse their behavior.

I'm not going to make it less bad, but Jesus's command, not a suggestion, not a hypothesis.

His command is to do what Esau did.

His command is forgiveness.

Do you remember when Jesus was talking with Peter, his disciple about how many times one should forgive?

Was he like, eh, twice.

Cut off the line at two sins.

20 sins.

No.

In Matthew 18, Jesus and Peter are having a conversation about should I be forgiving people that continue to sin against me?

And Jesus says, yeah, 77 times.

And it's not so that you keep track and you're like 76 and that's the limit.

That number is that number because it's a number of fullness and wholeness so that you don't keep track.

Forgiveness is a must within our family because our family matters.

So going to that person is going to be hard, but this is where you do have a little bit of room to grow with patience because although forgiveness is a must, trust takes time to adjust.

Do you have to go back to your abuser and let them abuse you again?

No, absolutely not.

Do you have to make sure that the thing that they did to you that hurt is okay?

No, it's still not okay.

But you are called to say to God, I don't hold this sin against them anymore. Whatever it is, because forgiveness is a must.

Whatever it is, because forgiveness is a must, but trust takes time to adjust.

Forgiveness is a command of the followers of God.

This is the pace of our life in our family.

But trust, trust grows very slowly.

Think about it.

Sometimes there's forgiveness and trust and it happens in 20 seconds.

But how long did it take Jacob and Esau to get to a point where they could embrace each other?

Did it take a moment?

It took 20 years to get them to a point where they could reconcile like this together and trust each other again.

Forgiveness leads, trust follows carefully and gradually with Holy Spirit patience.

But we lead as God's people in families that matter because of forgiveness, because Jesus gave first, because we know that reconciliation is possible because we know that we have sinned and taken more than 77 times.

Look, I can't solve your problem in the 29 and a half minutes I've had to preach this message.

A sitcom isn't going to solve your problems in your family in 23 minutes.

Sometimes it takes longer than that.

But I just want you to leave remembering the story of Jacob and Esau and remembering that forgiveness is a must, but trust takes time to adjust because your family matters.

Amen?

All right, let's close out in prayer.

Jesus, we know that we've wronged other people, people close to us and whether there's a sibling in our household or a sibling in the church, we know that we have wronged others.

And Lord, we come to you with repentant hearts.

We offer them up to you.

And thank you for your work on the cross.

Thank you for your resurrection.

Thank you for forgiveness where the word give is in the middle of forgiveness because that'll be a reminder for each of us that although others have taken away, you give us grace.

And so we can give grace as well.

So Jesus, give us grace, give us peace, but give us patience with our families that matter.

And all God's people said, Amen.