



Families, Deception, and Drama – Part 1

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We are starting this series about Lies, Deception, and Drama that finds it's way into the family. You don't have to say amen to this, but you are probably going to agree. You didn't choose your family. You were born into a family and now you get to make the choice of taking personal responsibility for your life and your decisions and the family you are now raising. We're addressing that in the weeks ahead here in September. I love asking families as I get to know them... I prefer to talk to the children more than the parents because you can learn about a family a lot by asking the children. And the smaller the children, the more information you get about a family.

I met a family a few weeks ago. I think they have like four kids. I love the question, "who's the most athletic child in the family and they all point to the most athletic. When it's time to do chores, who jumps in and takes over and just gets after it? They all point to that person. I love asking this. Who is the most obedient child in this family? They all like to take credit for that one.

Then I asked them, who starts the fights in this family? And they all went "Grace." That's ironic. What an ironic name for the child. But then I asked, "Who's the quickest to say I'm sorry?" Years ago, I was at a birthday party and there was a family there. The parents' initials are Shay and Ashley Robbins. I just got sat across the table from a couple of their kids and I was asking all these same questions. About halfway through, Ashley goes, "Why don't you start asking him some questions about his family?"

I said, "That's fair."

When our children are young, sibling rivalry is common, it's normal – Jealousy, selfishness, competition, are primary causes for sibling conflict. Mom and Dad, don't stress. Your children were given something by God called youth. As parents, you get to

take these moments of squabbles and fights and you get to teach life skills like apologizing, sharing, reconciling in a relationship.

Like with this girl... It was her turn at the hose. She was giving it to her brother. Some of you are parents that are like "Let them work it out." How many of you were raised in that home – *I'm going to let the kids work it out, they need to learn how to do that.*" I love this one. This little guy right here was pitching a fit because he had to share the leg hole on this cart. I love this picture because I can tell little sister is going to make his life miserable for the next 20 years.

Some of you had parents that said, "I'm just going to let the work it out," but some of you had parents that are like, "I'm going to get involved and help you work it out," Like this mom who created *our get along shirt*. Whoever came up with that idea, whatever mom decided to do that, you are brilliant. One of the best ideas I've ever seen for parents. I've seen teenagers in it and it's perfect.

Now, here's what we hope, as today we talk about the blame game. We're going to talk about what it means for you and me as we become adults that hopefully we stop pointing the finger of blame and we take personal responsibility for what we are deciding now as adults. Because, hopefully, as you move from the kids table to the adult table, things change. Some of you are going, *They didn't in our family*. We may be a little more quiet about it, there may be some more secrets, but we still have the squabbles at the adult table that we had at the kid's table. For some of you, you are in a strained family relationship right now. There is a sibling rivalry that went with you into adulthood. Maybe your parents played favorites. There was preferential treatment to one child.

Listen, the resentment from that can travel with you not only into adulthood, but for a lifetime. You felt like you had to fight for your parents' attention. Maybe you were asked on a regular basis, "Why can't you be more like your brother? Why can't you be more like your sister. Maybe you've dealt with the jealousy over the success of one of your siblings. Maybe you're envious over the looks or the relationships, the marriage, the children of another siblings. You're still dealing with the competition for attention, and you've heard the black sheep and golden child – that still plays out in your family. You feel like that even if it hasn't been assigned to you. Maybe you have a relationship with family, siblings strained over the direction of the family business or inheritance..

Amy and I did a real adult thing this past week. We met with a lawyer to set up a trust because we want to make it easy for our children upon our death.

I remember walking out after the meeting. I said, "We're in our fifties now, but how much of an adult do you feel right now? That was a big boy, big girl thing to do in there.

As the lawyer asked us questions, I realized... He was asking me questions and getting into our business. And asking questions about the kids and how the kids get along and our level of trust for the kids. Are they dealing with this issue... I realized about halfway through our meeting that every single one of his questions was based on experience. He's seen it play out in families. A mom and Dad dies and brothers and sisters start to fight over what's left to them. We started working through that.

Maybe right now you are in a family that a sibling has shut you out or the sibling has removed themselves from the family. I've spoken to people in church that haven't talked to family members in over 10 years. Some in their entire adulthood. When they left home, they went their separate ways and there is no communication because of the bitterness and the resentment that has set in.

Some of you had someone marry into the family – a brother-in-law, maybe a sister – in-law who now has alienated their spouse from your family – your sibling, your brother, your sister.

Some of you feel trapped in the disfunction of your family. You don't know what steps to take. Maybe some of you are in a family where it is anger, abuse, addiction, and it has run in your family for generations. And you get to be the first one that breaks that curse, that cycle in the family. Maybe someone in your family experienced trauma. We're going to deal with this on the last Sunday of this series. And the family doesn't know what to do with it. Some members of the family went passive – they don't want to talk about it, and this is how those secrets... Let me tell you... there are secrets all throughout this campus today. Because a family member went passive. Another family member learned about it, and they went scorched earth. And the whole time, the victim was forgotten. It may be true of your family.

This is why we are doing this series. You don't have to live in the family, lies, deception, and drama. There is a way out and God provides a clear path out for you and for me.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Genesis 3. We are going to spend the bulk of the message in Genesis 3 and 4, as we look at Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel. As you're turning there, I want to start in Genesis 2: 15-17. ***The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it...*** This is so important to understand. If you think work is a curse, it is not. Work was around before sin entered the picture in Genesis 3. So, work is part of God's plan for creation. He put the man in the garden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶***And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden..."*** That is so important for us to understand. I don't know why it is in this community there are hundreds, if not thousands of great places for me to fish, but I want to fish on the golf course pond that says, "No Fishing." Why am I drawn to that? What are they hiding in there? What are they keeping from me. So, he said, ***'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'*** "For the wages of sin is death." God is clear, but some of you, if you believe that the Christian life is all a bunch of don'ts – Don't do this, don't do that, you are forgetting and missing out on all the trees that are available for us, and the joy in life.

This is where we start today – **obedience**. When you follow God's will and way, it brings life, freedom, fellowship, and joy. When you listen to his Word and not deny his word. When you follow what he has for you rather than trying to go your own way. Because your own way leads to destruction and death and that's disobedience. And this marks some of your family. Disobedience, disobeying God brings death, bondage, shame, and blame. And all of that marks your family of origin. And you and I get to choose to do something about that.

Genesis 3 - **3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say..."** That is so important because this is where your liberal drift starts. I know what it says, but is that really what God meant? I know it says male and female he created them, but is that really what God meant? I know it says that a man will leave his father and mother united to his wife and they become one flesh, I know it says man and woman get married, but is that really what God meant? Did God really say ***'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?***

²**The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"**

And here are the three lies of Satan and it's the same three lies he tempts you and I with every single day. It's the same temptation that we deal with.

⁴ **"You will not certainly die,"** *The first lie* – he denies God's Word. **The serpent said to the woman.** ⁵ **"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

Here's what he's saying: Don't listen to God, open your eyes. Be illumined. You are restricting your life too much by just following his Word. Think bigger. And when you do think bigger, you're going to discover things and be like "Wow. That's the second one.

And then this is where it ultimately ends – ***and you will be like God***. Which is what every person is striving for in the world today. I am my own God. I set the rules. I determine my path. I'm going to do this. *So, guess what I'm going after? My truth.*

It's about my truth and how I'm going to live my life is different than your truth and how you live your life. These are the lies of Satan that are still at work in the world today. And you and I can fall for them.

Here's how we are tempted:

Satan tempts you to deny God's Word... I'm so glad we are going into Bible studies for the fall and our discipleship teams that come together because when we gather together... You may have someone that shows up to your group and the Word of God is declared and they are like, "Yeah, but..." and they want to put experience in the driver's seat. We don't put experience in the driver's seat. We don't put emotion in the driver's seat. What we put in the driver's seat is God's Word.

So, that's the first thing he does – deny God's Word so, if this is not true and it's not what I'm supposed to guide my life with, what do I do? Well, Satan then tempts you to be open and seek new truth. I love what one pastor always said, "Don't be so open minded that your brain falls out." You begin searching for other voices and other people.

Now we've got the internet, and we've got abilities to go out, make decisions for ourself outside God's Word and then just go look for the people that support what we believe and decide. That way leads to destruction, death, bondage, shame, and blame. And ultimately 3. Satan tempts you to be your own source of truth.

I'm going to show a picture here and I'm going to ask for no response to it, especially no laughter. There's a point I want to... And I never want to tell people how to emote. I hate

doing that, but I don't want to set something up that comes back on you in about 30 seconds. This picture flew around the internet in July... it's Andy and Kristin in the middle of an affair at a Coldplay concert and they get called out. I was actually shocked at how many people from our church, in the weeks that followed this, texted me, emailed me, messaged me saying, "Hey, I just wanted to say thank you, Ted, for not making a joke of this like the whole world is doing."

The reason I didn't bring it up, but I bring it up now is I'm working with couples that are in the middle of this right now. Let me tell you what happens when we sin. You know there is a difference between regret and repentance. And repentance often begins with regret because it begins with regret over the consequences. When this happened, I immediately knew. It's embarrassment obviously, it's loss of job, it's loss of income, loss of marriage, loss of children, I'll be honest with you, the week or two that followed... I was thinking about all that because it's what we do, it's the life of the church, helping people through this.

And while the whole world laughs about it, I'm just sitting there going, *Wow, I know what they're going through.* I'm going to add one to it. I haven't had time to develop this, but I think that's what we love about Woodland hills. You let me work things out on the fly.

This whole Phyll's baseball thing, that seems to be the new one. This lady went and took that ball back from the kid.

Somebody told me today they think she lost her job already. Then some people sent me some stuff. This is where we are in our world today. "Let's find out who she is, internet, Do your thing. Get after her."

Let me ask you a question. If I filmed your worst moment ever as a parent, that time you yelled at your kid, I filmed it and put it on the internet and said, "Go get them, world." That fight you had with your spouse that was ugly and the F bomb you were dropping in that fight and you're a leader in our community and I film that and post it on the internet and said, *Go get 'em. Let's take him out.* What would happen. I filmed your worst moment to broadcast it.

You see what happens is when we are tempted to live our own life and we get caught, we immediately go to consequences rather than dealing with the root issue and the root issue is sin. So, instead of dealing with sin, what happens is we blame.

Look at Verses 12 and 13, ¹² ***The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”*** So, eve’s going to take responsibility for this. ***Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”***
The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate it.”

When a couple drifts or siblings fight, we blame each other. And today, to begin this process of dealing with the lies and deception and the drama in your family, I’m going to ask you to end the blame game. Fire your spouse as your source of life, fire your sibling as your source of life, fire your children as your source of life, your parent as your source of life, Jesus is your source of life. And in everything we’re talking about today, he gives you everything you need to do it.

But you have the blame game in every family. Every family I know... At the debrief 8:15, Travis Brawner says, “I can’t think of one family that this message doesn’t hit. We’ve all dealt with it at some level. And every family in here, on campus, online, has that over emotional, never happy, always making excuses, constantly complaining, excessively posting negative thoughts, blaming the world for their problems, and never taking personal responsibility person in their family.

We have it and it’s like here we go again. They do no wrong and it’s all on us. And if this person chooses to get help... I’ve seen this more than I care to remember. If they choose to go to counseling, they just so happen to find that one therapist that jumps on the band wagon with them so they never have to deal with their own sin.

That’s why in my office, there is a Plack that Bill Rogers, one of our elders years ago that said, “Those absent are protected here.” If your brother ain’t in the room, we ain’t talking about your brother, we’re talking about you. This isn’t about fixing your brother. If you’re ever with a therapist that diagnoses someone not in the room, bad therapist.

I’ve seen too many counselors not teach people how to take personal responsibility for their sin issue and blame everybody else. I get boundaries. Boundaries are healthy, but this whole cut them out completely and the quickness we see today in of everybody is toxic and teaching people to dishonor their parents. Be very careful when you do seek health with family issues. The lies of Satan lead us to blame others rather than take responsibility for what’s in our own heart. And by the time you get to Cain and Abel...

Chapter 4 – we see this continue through the family and when I mention Cain and Abel, I’m sure you immediately think murder. But something happens before that murder that

Cain could have taken responsibility for, that he could have repented of, and done something different, but instead, he chose another path.

So, pick up with me in Chapter 4, verse 1 – Adam made love to his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the Lord, I have brought forth a man.” Later, she gave birth to his brother, Abel. Now Abel kept flocks and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought an offering, fat portions from some of the first born in his flock. The Bible says very clearly the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering, he did not look with favor.

In Hebrews 11: 4, we read ***Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. But on Cain and his offering, he did not look with favor.*** So, Cain was very angry and here it begins.

He was very angry, not at anything he did. Something else is going on and his face was downcast. ***Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door, it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.***

What could Cain have done at that very moment? He could have repented and brought a better offering. But instead, we go to Verse 8 – Now Cain said to his brother, Abel, I’m going to fix this. I’m going to take care of this. Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said Cain, where is your brother, Abel? I don’t know, he replied. Am I my brother’s keeper? And the Lord said, “What have you done?” Listen, your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, you will no longer yield its crops for you, and you will be a restless wanderer on the earth. And God is going to expel him even further out from Eden.

Now watch what Cain says to the Lord in Verse 13. ***My punishment is more than I can bear.*** And there it is again, the regret over consequences, the regret over punishment, not the repentance over sin. He could have brought a better offer, he could have repented, but instead, now the punishment is too much, and too often, when people seek help for what’s going on in their life, they want help with the consequences. They want help for the judgement that they are feeling. But where it needs to start is with repentance.

Today, you are driving me from the land, he says, and I will be hidden from your presence, broken fellowship. I will be a restless wanderer on earth and whoever finds me will kill me.

But now watch grace and mercy show up in Verses 15 and 16. That even in judgement, we see God's mercy. Even in wrath, God's wrath, we see his mercy.

But the Lord said to him, "Not so. Anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over. God is going to protect him in the midst of pronouncing wrath upon him.

Then the Lord put a mark on Cain. We don't know exactly what that mark is, so that no one who found him would kill him. So, Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod east of Eden.

What I want to do in the last few moments that we have is just share some ways, some considerations for you and me as we think about breaking a pattern of sin in our families. The lies, the deception, the drama, the secrets, things that have been carried from generation to generation is now at your doorstep. It's affecting your family. You have some decisions to make. I have some decisions to make.

Your family of origin influences you, but do not let them define you. There may have been a lot of nonsense in your home growing up. It doesn't need to be your home. You get to choose. You didn't choose our family; you were born into it. But everything we are talking about now are choices that you get to make.

Take responsibility for your emotions, words, and actions, not your family members. This is so important. You are responsible 100% for your heart and the wellspring of life, everything that flows out of it. So, this is on you and as a new family, you get to make decisions. You got married, you started having kids, you're making decisions now. You're like, *well, I can't make that decision because I think I will make Mom mad.* You are not responsible for the emotions, words, and actions of your mother. You are responsible to esteem her as highly valuable and honor her, but you have to make decisions for you and your family. And you can do that in a way that honors boundaries and honors people. You don't have to be mean about it, you don't have to be angry, you don't have to accuse, you don't have to blame. You take personal responsibility for you, your life, your family, your emotions, your words, and actions

Grieve over your sin more than consequences. This is where life-change truly begins to happen. I have worked with a lot of people over 30 years of ministry and I've not seen life - change flow out of the regrets for consequences. What happens is even if they get past the hurdle – I get a new job, I start making money again, I got remarried. If they don't deal with the repentance for their sin, I promise you it will resurface. So, we grieve over sin not just the shame, the embarrassment, the loss of income, the loss of relationships, the being cast out.

Stop blaming others and start repenting of your own sin.

I was talking with a friend this week. He has a real passion to help pastors recover from moral failures. He gets in a lot of trouble for doing this. He says, "We have two extremes in the church. The guy falls in ministry, and we send him on a cruise for six months and then just put him right back in the pulpit. That's not a good way. He says, but the other way is we say go away, we never want to hear from you again. He says, I'm not about restoring people to their pulpit, I'm about restoring people to Jesus. And then to their family. Not to their family then to Jesus. But to Jesus. Because something happened from their front stage persona...

There was a huge gap between here and backstage.

He says, "So we deal with that. He was the one... he was just sharing with me. he said, "We've offered in the church today what's called counterfeit repentance. And really all it is Helping people work through regret. But what we need is the heart of David. What we need is Psalm 51 – if you're in the middle of it right now and you don't know how to move forward and how to make your family healthy and whole, it starts with you first and foremost being restored in your relationship with Jesus. Listen to David's words and let this become part of a prayer for you.

I'm going to teach on psalm 51 on November 2 and cover the whole passage but just introducing it today.

Have mercy on me oh God according to your unfailing love. Cry out for his mercy. According to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions, wash away all my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

The bible is clear. If we confess our sin, he is faithful to forgive us of our sin. Don't let regret be a roadblock to repentance. Let it lead you to repentance. And realize what's

really going on. ***I know my transgression, my sin is always before me. I wake up with it. I go to sleep thinking about it. It's all throughout the day.***

Watch this: this is Verse 4 and this is the key. ***Against you and you only have I sinned.*** We want to immediately restore this relationship or that relationship... Many of you who have been in 12 step programs, you know that ain't the first step. Reconciliation meetings that takes place a little bit down the road. First and foremost, for the believer in "Christ Jesus, we are reconciled in our relationship, restored

Against you and you only have I sinned the holy God and done what is evil in your sight. So, you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

Grieve over your sin and the part you brought to the family. Stop blaming a family member for your poor attitude and actions right now and take personal responsibility and repent of it today.

Memorize and meditate on God's word to combat the lies your family told you, the blame they placed on you, and the blame you placed on them.

We talk about this all the time. Messages written on the heart. How do you get a message written on your heart? It's what you saw your parents doing over and over and over again. You see everything, you hear everything, you forget nothing. And then you repeat. Everybody in here has thousands and thousands of messages written on their heart and a lot of those messages are lies.

So, what do you do with them? You go back to the truth. Not denying God's Word, but memorizing it, meditating on it, getting it in your heart so you can be like Psalm 119:11 says, ***I have hidden your Word***, not denying it, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, I want it in my heart so that I might not sin against you, first and foremost.

You may be zero percent to blame for what happened to you. you are zero percent to blame for the family you were born into, so you may be zero percent to blame for what happened to you, but you're 100 percent responsible moving forward for your words, your actions, your emotions. Stop the blame game today and take personal responsibility for what you bring to the family. And all of us together begin to break that cycle of sin for many that have been passed on through generation to generation.

Father, I pray for moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas and children that haven't spoken to for years because of the tension and the drama, and the deceit that lives in the

family. Let today be a day where grandma and grandpa, who have held secrets, mom and dad who have Held secrets, repent of that before you. Not the consequences and what is done to the family, but the sin that took place. Many generations took the approach of hiding sin, but we're called to confess it. That it would be confessed today with phone calls and texts and face to face meeting would go out and people would be restored in relationships, reconciled to brothers and sisters, moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas. Do that work that only you can do.

I pray for the one who has never placed faith in Jesus that today would be the day of their salvation. We pray all of this in the authority of the name of Jesus. And everyone agreed and said... Amen