

Preparing for Family Drama

Lesson 01 in the series: "Getting Ready for the Holidays"

I. Jacob wasn't looking forward to coming home and reuniting with his twin brother Esau.

"Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother, Esau, who was living in the region of Seir in the land of Edom. He told them, 'Give this message to my master Esau: "Humble greetings from your servant Jacob. Until now I have been living with Uncle Laban, and now I own cattle, donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform my lord of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to me.'" After delivering the message, the messengers returned to Jacob and reported, 'We met your brother, Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you—with an army of 400 men!' Jacob was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two groups. He thought, 'If Esau meets one group and attacks it, perhaps the other group can escape.'" Genesis 32:3-8 (NLT)

Note: Jacob had a good reason to be afraid. "Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: 'I will soon be mourning my father's death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob.'" Genesis 27:41 (NLT)

II. Jacob prayed asking God to rescue him from an explosive family situation.

"Then Jacob prayed, 'O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O LORD, you told me, "Return to your own land and to your relatives." And you promised me, "I will treat you kindly." I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps! O LORD, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. But you promised me, "I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.'" Genesis 32:9-12 (NLT)

Life Application: We need to pray asking God to rescue us from explosive family situations.

- We can ask God to change hearts (ours and theirs). "Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth." 2 Timothy 2:25 (NLT)
- We can pray for wisdom. "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking." James 1:5 (NLT)
- We can pray for courage to do hard things. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)
- We can keep on praying. "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7 (NLT)
- We can remind God of His promises to help us. "Now let your unfailing love comfort me, just as you promised me, your servant." Psalm 119:76 (NLT)

III. Jacob sent generous gifts to Esau in an effort to make amends.

"Jacob... selected these gifts from his possessions to present to his brother, Esau: 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. He divided these animals into herds and assigned each to different servants. Then he told his servants... 'When my brother, Esau, meets you, he will ask, "Whose servants are you? Where are you going? Who owns these animals?" You must reply, "They belong to your servant Jacob, but they are a gift for his master Esau. Look, he is coming right behind us.'" ...Jacob thought, 'I will try to appease him by sending gifts ahead of me. When I see him in person, perhaps he will be friendly to me.' ...As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him. Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept... 'And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?' Esau asked. Jacob replied, 'They are a gift, my lord, to ensure your friendship.' 'My brother, I have plenty,' Esau answered. 'Keep what you have for yourself.' But Jacob insisted, 'No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God! Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been very gracious to me. I have more than enough.' And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift."

Genesis 32:13-20,33:3-11(NLT)

Life Application: We need to do our part in making amends. “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.” Matthew 5:23-24 (NLT)

- We can speak kindly. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)
- We can apologize for our part of the problem. “I’m sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me.”
- We can make restitution. “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Luke 6:31 (NIV)
- We can seek wise counsel. “It’s harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city.” Proverbs 18:19 (NLT)

IV. Jacob set some terrible consequences in motion when he tried to manipulate his way out of a difficult situation.

- a. Jacob sowed seeds of resentment between Joseph and his brothers.

“Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and his two servant wives. He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.” Genesis 33:1-2 (NLT)

Life Application: “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.” Colossians 3:21 (NIV)

- b. Jacob taught his children “it’s ‘OK’ to lie.”

“‘Well,’ Esau said, ‘let’s be going. I will lead the way.’ But Jacob replied... ‘Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children. I will meet you at Seir.’ ...So Esau turned around and started back to Seir that same day. Jacob, on the other hand, traveled on to Succoth. There he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Succoth (which means ‘shelters’).” Genesis 33:12-17 (NLT)

Life Application: Our children are learning how to handle family drama by watching us.

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

JOHN SCHMIDT • 11-10-19 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Questions

1. Describe an episode of family drama during the holidays that occurred while you were a kid. What happened? How was the matter handled? What could have been handled differently?
2. Read Matthew 5:23-24. Why do you think Jesus encouraged his disciples to make amends with someone they offended BEFORE attempting to worship God?
3. Discuss the following ways we can pray asking God’s help to resolve family issues:
 - We can ask God to change hearts (ours and theirs). 2 Timothy 2:25, Proverbs 21:1
 - We can pray for wisdom. James 1:5
 - We can pray for courage to do hard things. Deuteronomy 31:6
 - We can remind God of His promises to help us. Psalm 119:76

Which of these ideas resonates most with you? Why?

4. Read Proverbs 15:1. Sometimes when we’re seeking to reconcile with an offended family member “how” we say things can be more important than “what” we say. Why do you think this is so?
5. Proverbs 18:19 says, “It’s harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city.” Where do you turn for good counsel on how to handle a complicated family situation?
6. Spend some time praying for each other regarding upcoming family reunions over the holidays. Be as open as you can be about difficult relationships and unresolved conflict. God will help us! He wants us to keep on praying and not give up. Matthew 7:7-11