



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Family Matters / Week 2

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

Your family matters even when it's fractured.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that problems or pain in their family story doesn't discount their family from being part of God's story.

SCRIPTURE

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:27-34 NIV).

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future (Hebrews 11:20 NIV).

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- *Communicator note: Tell a personal story about seeing a friend's family growing up and wishing your family was a little more like their family—a little more "perfect."*
- As kids, we tend to see our parents as superheroes and our families as being great—or at least as being normal. But then something happens and it changes things.
- It's the moment when we realize that our family isn't perfect. Or maybe we realize that our family is broken.

TENSION

- In one way or another, every family is fractured.
 - Maybe your family lives in constant tension.
 - Maybe you feel it in conflict with certain family members.
 - Maybe you've discovered that your family lives with secrets.
 - And for a lot of you, your family has experienced a fracture of some sort.
- Regardless of your family story, it's important to remember that every family is fractured.
- That causes pain, and that's typically when we respond one of two ways:
 - We either count our family out.

- We count ourselves out.
- We use our family members' mistakes as a reason or excuse to not listen to them or include them in our lives.
- We count ourselves out. Maybe we don't say it out loud, but we give up on our families.
- All of us have probably felt the pull of wanting to pull away from our family. And we probably know it's not the best idea, but what's the alternative?
- What if I told you that there's one idea you may have never considered that could change the way you see your family forever?

TRUTH

- Here's the good news: God has a long history of working with dysfunctional families.
- One of the most famous people in the Bible is a man named Abraham. God promised Abraham that his family would form a great nation.
- He had a son named Isaac, and then Isaac eventually had two sons—Esau and Jacob. And so, the family drama began!
- Jacob and Esau couldn't have been any more different.
- As the oldest brother, Esau was guaranteed to inherit a *birthright*. According to the customs of the time, he would receive special privileges that other children wouldn't get.
- One day, Esau was out hunting. And when he arrived home, he was hungry. He comes home and smells Jacob's cooking. He asks his little bro for a bowl of stew. And that's when things go sideways. (*Genesis 25:27-34 NIV*).
- Fast forward to when Isaac was dying, Jacob did in fact get the birthright blessing that was meant for Esau. And Esau was so bitter and angry that he decided his only course of action would be to kill Jacob.
- This is family drama at the next level! Despite all of that, don't miss this: Jesus came from THIS family!
- God knew their mess and saw how fractured they were, but He didn't run away from them. He used them anyway.
- The book of Hebrews in the New Testament records the story of Jacob and Esau, thousands of years later, as a *celebration of faith*. (*Hebrews 11:20 NIV*).
- The family is mentioned here to draw attention to who God is—a God who can take any dysfunction from any family, and bring good out of it.
- From God's perspective, there's no family you can count out, and there's no person in a family you can count out.

APPLICATION

- Knowing that God can redeem even the most dysfunctional of families might help change your perspective.
- Believing that God can use a fractured family could be one of your greatest acts of faith.
- Your family matters even when it's fractured.
- God is always working, even when it doesn't look like it. So, don't count the people in your family out.
- And don't count yourself out. You don't know what's going to happen next. So, don't check out just yet.

LANDING

- Redeeming and fixing things that are broken is what God does best. He takes dysfunction and uses it for good.
- What if we all went home today and treated our family like it mattered, even though it was fractured?
- As you head out, remember that God hasn't given up on your family, so you don't have to either!

INTERACTIVE

For this Interactive you'll need...

- A white board
- A dry erase marker
- A permanent marker
- An easel



TEACHING SCRIPT

Family Matters / Week 2

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

Your family matters even when it's fractured.

INTRODUCTION

2.5 MINUTES

I remember the first time I went over to my best friend's house in middle school. I took the bus home with her. And when we walked in the door, I could immediately tell that her family was different from mine.

To start, her mom had warm cookies waiting for us. My friend was the youngest of three girls, and she, her sisters, her mom and I sat around the table, ate cookies, and talked about our day. Her whole family listened to each other and seemed to actually like being around each other in a way that I had never seen before. It was one of the first times I remember thinking, "Not every family is like mine. And maybe, my family isn't perfect."

As kids, we tend to see our parents as superheroes and our families as being great—or at least as being normal. But then something happens and it changes things. It's the moment when we realize that our family isn't perfect. Or maybe we realize that our family is broken.

Some of you may have realized this a long time ago. In fact, some of your earliest memories might have to do with pain because of your family. Others of you discovered this later. Maybe it was in middle school or early in your high school years when you realized that your family had some dysfunction.

My family's imperfection became even more obvious to me when I was a sophomore in high school. I thought my parents had a pretty good marriage, but it turns out that it was a disaster. That was the year my mom moved out of the house. My picture of a whole and functional family was fractured.

TENSION

5 MINUTES



For this Interactive you'll need a white board, a dry erase marker, a permanent marker, and an easel. Before your message, write on the white board, the following series of words:

- "My family"
- "Me"
- "Tension, Secrets, Fracture"

(Note: Make sure all the words are large enough for the audience to see while still small enough that you can at least partially cover each word/phrase using your hand or a piece of blank paper.)

Have the easel set up on stage near where you will be speaking with the white board and markers nearby.

Say something like this:

Every one of us could probably go around and tell our version of a dysfunctional family story. We all have one. (Bring out the whiteboard and both markers). **Because in one way or another, every family is fractured.**

- Maybe your family lives with **constant tension**. You don't slam doors and yell, but you constantly feel the anxiety. You feel it when your parents talk about money or their jobs. You feel it around your brother or stepsister. You feel it when certain subjects come up that shouldn't cause conflict, but somehow, they do. And it makes your house feel like a pretty stressful place to live.
- For some of you, maybe you've discovered that your family lives with **secrets**. You never really saw it when you were younger, but now you know. Maybe you've discovered some things that you wish you never did about a relationship, a legal problem, or a bad decision. And now because of the secrets, you wonder if you can fully trust your family.
- And for a lot of you, your family has experienced a **fracture** of some sort. Maybe it was a divorce between your parents or a divorce after a remarriage. You thought once you got through the drama, things would be fine. But they're not. There's no "new normal" with your family. And now you wonder if family relationships are really worth the effort when they can possibly just go away.

Regardless of your family story, it's important to remember that **every family is fractured**. There is no pain like family pain. I think all of us know deep down that family SHOULD be better. It should be happier and more forgiving.

In our minds, most of us have an *ideal* family. It's the one we wish we had. But we don't have an *ideal* family. We have a *real* family. And the distance between our ideal family and our real family can cause a lot of pain.

And that's typically when we respond one of two ways: **we either count our family out, or we count ourselves out**. (Refer to the white board). And because of that, we like to think that the "Tension, Secrets, and Fractures" are written and in permanent marker, while you and your family are written in dry erase—easy to be counted out.

Maybe you count your family out (cover up the words "My family") because...

- After your parents divorced, you thought they lost authority in your life, so you stopped respecting them.
- You decided that your stepmom isn't a good role model, so you're not going to listen to her.
- You decided to shut out one of your siblings because of something they did.

Whatever the reason, we use our family members' mistakes as a reason or excuse to not listen to them or include them in our lives. We say things like, "I don't have to listen or be in relationship with you because of what you did or *didn't* do."

Or we count ourselves out (cover up the word "Me"). Maybe we don't say it out loud, but we give up on our families...

- We isolate ourselves.
- We stay in our rooms when we're home.
- We think, *"I'm done with my dad not showing up. I'm done with my mom nagging me. My family feels like a bunch of hypocrites, so I'm done. I'm going to count down the days until I'm out of here and never have to come back."*

All of us have probably felt the pull of wanting to pull away from our family. And we probably know it's not the best idea, but what's the alternative? What else are we supposed to do? Shouldn't our parents be the ones trying to fix this and not us?

What if I told you that there's one idea you may have never considered that could change the way you see your family forever? That's what we're going to talk about today!

TRUTH

8 MINUTES

Here's the good news: God has a long history of working with dysfunctional families. There are A LOT of them recorded in the Bible! And God has never written off anybody because of the family they came from.

One of the most famous people in the Bible is a man named Abraham. God promised Abraham that his family would form a great nation, and eventually a Savior named Jesus would come from that family line.

But before a great nation was formed, Abraham had to have one kid. He had a son named Isaac, and then Isaac eventually had two sons—Esau and Jacob. And so, the family drama began!

Jacob and Esau couldn't have been any more different. Esau was the older brother. He was a hunter and warrior—a man of action. Jacob, on the other hand, was more of an artist. He was a thinker and a poet. He was also a bit of a liar and a con artist. And so, the stage was set for some good ole family tension!

As the oldest brother, Esau was guaranteed to inherit a *birthright*. According to the customs of the time, he would receive special privileges that other children wouldn't get. He would receive double the amount of money. He would become the leader of the entire family tribe when his dad passed away. And maybe the biggest deal of all, he would get a *blessing* from his father, which also meant that he'd be blessed by God. So needless to say, birthrights were a big deal.

One day, Esau was out hunting. And when he arrived home, he was hungry. It's that moment when you're ready to CRUSH an entire large pizza by yourself! He comes home and smells Jacob's cooking. He asks his little bro for a bowl of stew. And that's when things go sideways. Check out the account in Genesis chapter 25...

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau,

but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:27-34 NIV).

This is CLASSIC older sibling/younger sibling drama. The Bible describes the rivalry in ancient times, but most of us have seen a modern version of this played out in some way. Yes, family dysfunction has always been a thing!

Fast forward to when Isaac was dying, Jacob did in fact get the birthright blessing that was meant for Esau. In response, Esau was so bitter and angry that he decided his only course of action would be to kill Jacob. When Jacob learned this, he ran away from home with no plans to come back. This is family drama at the next level! Despite all of that, don't miss this: Jesus came from THIS family! **God knew their mess and saw how fractured they were, but He didn't run away from them. He used them anyway.**

Not only did God use this family, the book of Hebrews in the New Testament records the story of Jacob and Esau, thousands of years later, as a *celebration of faith*. Their story is part of the lineage of people and families that God used to show us what His kingdom is like. Here's what Hebrews 11 says...

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future (Hebrews 11:20 NIV).

Here's what's amazing about this. The writer of Hebrews obviously isn't celebrating the dysfunction of this family. They aren't being held up as a model to follow—full of lying, deceit, and threats of violence. They aren't mentioned as people who give us a model to copy. **They are mentioned to draw attention to who God is—a God who can take any dysfunction from any family, and bring good out of it.**

There's no family story that can't be rewritten. There's no family situation that God can't ultimately use for good, incredible purposes. **From God's perspective, there's no family you can count out, and there's no person in a family you can count out.** God is never done. The story of Jacob and Esau tells us that even in our worst family moments, our family story isn't over. Even if we can't see it right now, we can trust that God has a plan.

My guess is that if you would've asked Jacob and Esau in the moment if God was doing something good, they both would've said "No." They never would've imagined that thousands of years later, God would've turned their family story into a story for the ages.

APPLICATION

3 MINUTES

For some of us in the room, as difficult as it is to believe, it would be a game-changer to know that God isn't done with your family. It doesn't mean things aren't difficult. But knowing that God can redeem even the most dysfunctional of families might help change your perspective. You never know what God has in store for you, your parents or stepparents, your siblings, or your entire family. In fact, believing that God can use a fractured family could be one of your greatest acts of faith. It starts by knowing this...

Your family matters even when it's fractured.

Everybody who lives at your house is a fractured person. But when they mess up, don't write them off and treat them like that's the end of their story. Because God is always working, even when it doesn't look like it. **So, don't count them out.**

- So, when your step dad never shows up, don't write him off forever.
- When your mom loses her temper, don't write her off forever.
- When your stepsiblings drive you crazy, don't write them off forever.

And don't count yourself out. You don't know what's going to happen next. So, don't check out just yet.

- When the chaos in your family feels like too much, don't isolate.
- When the arguing feels constant, don't run away.
- If you need to step away to keep yourself safe, *do it*. I'm not saying stay in a dangerous situation or a situation that is hurting you physically or mentally. There are times you'll need to take a breather or some time away. Here's what I'm getting at, there's a big difference between dangerous and annoying. And there are also times you'll be tempted to ignore, walk away, or isolate when you're not in danger, you're just aggravated or annoyed. In those moments, challenge yourself to hang in there, to keep talking, to act like the people in the room matter to you—because you know they do.

And, if you count yourself out, you may miss out on being part of an incredible story that God is writing in your family.

I ANDING

1 MINUTE

Redeeming and fixing things that are broken is what God does best. He takes dysfunction and uses it for good. Because even though a broken family is never God's plan, taking broken things and pulling good out of them is what God specializes in. So, take heart and have faith in what God can do.

What if we all went home today and treated our family like it mattered, even though it was fractured? What would change if instead of thinking of ourselves and our families as written in dry erase (hold up dry erase marker), we thought of our families as permanent (put down or toss aside the dry erase marker and hold up the permanent marker). What if we started believing that God could work, even in our biggest dysfunctions? I know it seems impossible. That's why we're going to small group—to give each other ideas on how to practically implement this in our own homes.

As you head out, remember that God hasn't given up on your family, so you don't have to either!



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
