



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

FAM / Week 2

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SERIES SUMMARY

A four-week series on family.

WEEK 1: Loving your family is how your faith can make an impact.

WEEK 2: Your family doesn't have to be perfect for God to use it.

WEEK 3: When your family changes, God is with you.

WEEK 4: Sometimes friends are more like family.

SCRIPTURE

When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father!"

But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."

Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"

Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So, what can I possibly do for you, my son?"

Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud (Genesis 27:34-38 NIV).

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

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- What's your favorite fictional TV family?
- When I was growing up, I wanted to be a member of those seemingly-perfect TV families because in real life, my fam wasn't perfect.
- Tell a personal story about a less-than-perfect family situation you experienced when you were growing up.

TENSION

- Sometimes we feel that our family situation is messier than other people's. But no fam is a perfect fam.
- Maybe for you . . .
- There's a lot of tension in your home.
- You've discovered some not-so-great things about your family.
- There are some serious (possibly illegal) situations happening in your home.
- Your family is facing big changes or other big problems.
- Sometimes we think that nothing good could ever come from an imperfect family. But that couldn't be further from the truth.

TRUTH

- There are a lot of imperfect families in the Bible, but God still did big things through them.
- In Genesis, we read about Isaac's twin sons, Jacob and Esau. As the firstborn, Esau was promised the family birthright and blessing, but with the help of his mother, Jacob successfully took both from Esau. As a result, Esau planned to kill Jacob, so Jacob fled and broke up the family. (Genesis 27:34-38 NIV)
- Although this family was far from perfect, God still had an important future planned for them.
- We read later in Hebrews that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau as an act of faith, demonstrating that he believed that what God said about their family and their future was true. (Hebrews 11:20)
- No family is perfect, but God works through them anyway.
- Your family doesn't have to be perfect for God to use it.

APPLICATION

- You don't have to be perfect for God to use you, and your family members don't have to be perfect for God to use them.
- Try this:
- Choose to believe God is working anyway. That He will use your family despite being imperfect.
- Stay connected to your family even when things get messy.
- If the best option in your family situation isn't to stay connected, then connect with someone who is like fam—a trusted adult, teacher, coach, or Small Group Leader—who can help you.

LANDING

- Your family doesn't have to be perfect for God to use it.
- Your Small Group is a place to connect with people who have stories similar to yours. You aren't alone in feeling that your family is imperfect, and your group is a great place to talk about it.

- What's one great thing you hope God will do in your family?
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THINK ABOUT THIS

Keep in mind that the word “imperfect” will mean a lot of different things to a lot of different families. For some, it simply means they argue with, get annoyed by, or just don't like being around their family sometimes. But for others, not having a perfect family could mean they come from a home filled with dysfunction and potentially even danger. Pay attention to the way your students talk about their families' “imperfections” this week. Small things they say could give you big clues about things going on in their homes.

INTERACTIVE: PERFECT TV FAMILY

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll show a photograph or video clip of a famous TV family you admired when you were growing up.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A digital photo or video clip of a famous TV family you wanted to be a part of when you were in middle school. Be sure to pick a family from a TV show that's appropriate for middle schoolers since some of them will watch the show after you talk about it.
 - A computer and screen large enough for everyone to see the photo/video
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INTERACTIVE: TWIN RIVALS

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll use cardboard cutouts and props to help tell the story of Jacob and Esau in the Truth section of your talk.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 large cardboard cutouts of people/characters that look different from each other
- A bold, permanent marker
- 2 different props that can easily be put onto the cardboard cutouts. One prop will represent the birthright promised to Esau, and the other will represent the blessing. Some prop ideas include a crown, a medal, a Hawaiian flower lei, a scarf, and a fancy necklace or hat.

HOW-TO

- With the marker, label one cardboard cutout “ESAU” and the other “JACOB.”
 - Put the cardboard cutouts and props on stage, but away from the audience's view.
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TEACHING SCRIPT

FAM / Week 2

PRELUDE SOCIAL WORSHIP STORY GROUPS HOME

BOTTOM LINE

YOUR FAMILY DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT FOR GOD TO USE IT.

INTRODUCTION

4 MINUTES

What's your favorite fictional TV family? *[Give students a chance to shout out their answers.]*

INTERACTIVE: Perfect TV Family

This is where you'll show a photograph or video clip of a famous TV family you admired when you were growing up.

When I was growing up, I wanted to be a member of one of those seemingly-perfect TV families. For me, I really wanted to be a part of *[insert name of TV family and display the photo/video]*. This was the kind of family that always sat down to dinner together, always helped each other out of tough situations, always supported each other, and always stayed together no matter what. *[Share any additional things you loved about this family.]*

Of course, part of the reason I loved *[name of TV family]* is because I loved the show they were on. But I also loved watching their pretend lives because at times, it was a lot better than my real life. In real life, my fam could be a lot more like a messy reality TV show than a picture-perfect TV show.

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following ideas . . .

- Share a story about a less-than-perfect situation in your family.
- Maybe it's about a big fight you had, or a tough circumstance you dealt with, or just a frustration with a family member that never seemed to get resolved.
- While you want to set up the idea that your family life hasn't always been perfect, avoid sharing anything that's too heavy or not relatable for a middle schooler. The goal is simply to show that all families have less-than-perfect moments!

TENSION

2 MINUTES

Maybe you can relate because your family has had a few less-than-perfect moments of their own! Maybe, like me, you feel like your family situation is a lot messier than other people's. But can I let you in on a secret? We all feel this way at some point! You aren't alone! This is true for every single one of our families. Because **no fam is a perfect fam.**

Maybe **there's a lot of tension in your home.** Some families slam doors, argue a lot, or yell. Some families have a lot going on, but never actually talk about it. You just sense it. You feel the stress in the room when your family talks about money, vacation, holidays, step-siblings, or any number of things. And that tension makes your house a stressful place to live.

Or maybe **you've discovered some things** about people in your family that you wish you didn't know. Secrets about relationships, affairs, legal problems, or bad decisions. Secrets that have hurt people and caused problems in your home.

Maybe for you, the problem in your family comes from **something really serious.** Something like abuse, or neglect, or addiction, or abandonment. You may feel really alone in those situations, and if you are, I want to encourage you today to speak up. To open up to an adult here like your Small Group Leader who can help you navigate that in a healthy way.

Or maybe **your family is facing other big problems.** You're dealing with things like divorce, remarriage, a parent who left and never looked back, siblings who are always in trouble. Maybe it's even something like illness or death. Things like that can certainly leave your family feeling less than perfect.

Honestly, no matter what it is you're dealing with at home, I think that's true for all of us. In some way or another, **no family is a perfect family.**

What's difficult about this is that sometimes, we think that nothing good could ever come from an imperfect family. That God couldn't use a family like that. That God couldn't use us if we come from a family like that. But as we'll see today, that couldn't be further from the truth.

TRUTH

10 MINUTES

Here's the thing about the Bible: Some of the people in it are kind of messed up. Their lives weren't perfect, and a lot of their families weren't either!

In fact, there's one family in the Bible whose story I love. Not only was their family totally dysfunctional, but God still did big things through them. I think the same can be true for us.

The story starts with a man named **Abraham.** God promised Abraham a lot of descendants, and He promised to use that family in a big way. Pretty cool, right?

INTERACTIVE: Twin Rivals

This is where you'll use cardboard cutouts and props to help tell the story of Jacob and Esau.

Abraham had a son named Isaac who had two sons—twins named **Jacob** [bring out the cutout that represents Jacob] and **Esau** [bring out the cutout that represents Esau]. Even though they were twins, these two guys were very different from each other. They looked different, they

acted different, they had different interests. And all these differences caused a lot of drama between the two boys.

Now, here's where it gets crazy. Even though Jacob and Esau were twins, Esau was born first. *[Motion to the Esau cutout.]* Being the firstborn was a big deal. For one, being the firstborn meant that Esau got the birthright *[hold up the prop that represents the birthright]*; he would be in charge of the family wealth and property when their father Isaac died. *[Put the birthright prop on Esau.]* And second, being the firstborn meant Esau got the blessing *[hold up the prop that represents the blessing]*; he'd receive the family's future wealth and prosperity. *[Put the blessing prop on Esau.]* Since this family came from Abraham, Esau's blessing also included all of the promises that God had made to Abraham. Promises to make their name great, to do big things with their family, and to bless all people through this one family.

As you can imagine, Jacob, the younger twin, didn't love his situation because as the second born, he wasn't going to get the birthright or the blessing! *[Motion to the Jacob cutout.]* Now their mother, Rebekah, favored Jacob over Esau. So together, Jacob and his mom came up with a plan.

First, Jacob convinced Esau to promise the birthright to him. And honestly, it didn't take much convincing. Esau was starving, so Jacob offered him some food in exchange for his birthright. *[Move the birthright prop from Esau to Jacob.]* Doesn't seem like an even trade to me, but haven't we all made some crazy decisions when we're hungry?!

With the birthright now his, all Jacob needed was to trick his father Isaac into giving the blessing to him instead of his brother Esau. Now because Isaac was older and toward the end of his life, his eyesight wasn't so great. When it came time to give Esau the family blessing, Jacob's mom helped disguise Jacob as his brother, Esau, so that Isaac would give him Esau's blessing.

And here's the crazy thing . . . it worked! Isaac gave Jacob the blessing that was promised to Esau! *[Move the prop blessing from Esau to Jacob.]* Of course, when Esau came in a few moments later, he had no idea what his brother Jacob had done. When their father, Isaac, realized what had happened, look at how it played out:

When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father!"

But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."

Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"

Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?"

Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud (Genesis 27:34-38 NIV).

Trust me, it only got worse from there. After some heated conversation, we find out that Esau planned to kill his younger brother Jacob. Their mother sent Jacob away to protect him, breaking up their family completely.

What's the point of this insane story? Well, it's that the story didn't stop there. Sure, this family was a mess. *[Motion to the Jacob and Esau props.]* But in spite of all that, God still had an important future planned for them. He had promised something great to Abraham, and a messed-up family wasn't going to change that. **Their family didn't have to be perfect for God to use them.**

Hundreds of years after this happened, the writer of a book in the Bible called Hebrews looked back on this story. And there, the writer didn't talk about the mess, or the bad choices, or the pain in this family. Instead, they wrote this:

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

See, Isaac did eventually pass on a blessing to Esau. It wasn't the same as the original blessing that Jacob stole, but it was something. It was an act of faith. Even though there were a lot of really bad moments in their family, the very act of Isaac passing on a blessing in his family was an act of faith. It was a way of saying, "I believe what God said about our family is true. I believe He has something good for us in the future."

God had a plan for this imperfect family. *[Motion to the Jacob and Esau props.]* And even in the middle of so much pain and so many problems, they trusted Him to come through. And that's what I want for each of us. You see, **your family doesn't have to be perfect for God to use it.**

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Seeing how God didn't forget about a less-than-perfect family back then can give you hope that He'll do the same for your family today. In fact, for a lot of you, the most hopeful thing about this lesson is that no family is a perfect family, but God works anyway. Being imperfect isn't the end of the story, which is a huge relief. **You don't have to be perfect for God to use you, and your family members don't have to be perfect for God to use them.** You don't have to come from a perfect family to be able to do amazing things. What a relief, right?

Here's what I want you to try:

1. Choose to believe God is working anyway. Your family will mess up. They aren't perfect. Your siblings will borrow your stuff without asking. Your step-mom will yell at you. Your dad will disappoint you. No matter what your fam looks like, they aren't going to be perfect. The next time that happens, instead of getting frustrated and shutting down, have faith that God will somehow use your family anyway. That He's working for your good. That He's with you in the mess of your fam. And that He can still use your fam for His good.

2. Stay connected to your family. Most of us tend to want to avoid our families when things get messy. We stay in our room, we put our ear buds in, we keep our eyes glued to the screen. We just ignore everyone and everything. But what if instead, you made the choice to stay connected? What if you tried to talk to your mom, or hang out with your grandpa, or forgive your siblings? Trust me, you don't want to miss out on being part of the incredible story that God is writing in your family. So this week, try to stay connected to your family even if you don't feel like it.

Now here's the thing: For some of you, I know that staying connected to your family isn't the best option. In fact, it's not an option at all. Because the stuff that makes your family imperfect is more than just frustrations or annoyances. It's abuse, neglect, alcohol, drugs—it's the kind of stuff that makes staying connected to your family simply not safe. If that's you, I want to encourage you to instead, connect with someone who is like family. Open up to a Small Group Leader, a teacher, a neighbor, a coach, or any trusted adult in your life who cares about you. Connect with them about what's happening in your home so that they can help you take the best next step. I know that may be scary, but adults like your Small Group Leader are here for that very purpose: to connect with you when you need it the most!

LANDING

1 MINUTES

Remember, **your family doesn't have to be perfect for God to use it.** God uses imperfect people and imperfect families for His good. I believe that's true in my family, and I definitely believe it can be true in your family, too.

Now, as you head to Small Group—the fam you have here at church—hopefully it's comforting to know that you aren't the only one who has an imperfect family. That maybe the person sitting next to you has a story similar to yours. It's normal to feel like you're the only one going through something, but what's great about your Small Group is that you can connect with someone who knows how you feel. And in the process of doing that, you get a chance to learn about all the things God is doing in your lives.

As you head to group I want you to think about this question: **What's one great thing you hope God will do in your family?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
