



May Theme: Instafamily: Snapshot of a Thriving Family

Message #1 – Living Faithfully in an Imperfect Family

Getting the Nod

Reality Check on Growing Up in a Christian Home: A religious family was driving home after church and they noticed little Johnny was sitting in the back seat crying. Mom asked him several times what was wrong, but he just kept crying. Then finally he sobbed, "**The pastor said he wants us to be brought up in a Christian home. but I want to stay with you guys!**" **Could Johnny be telling us something? Unfortunately, when it comes to families... things aren't always what they appear to be. Messed up Church families aren't so funny.**

George Barna's Research Shows That... 35% of Americans claim to be born again...

- But only 11% of the born again crowd believes that that experience should change their lives dramatically.
- But 35% of us feel cohabitation for marriage is okay.
- But 30% of us are okay with consensual sex before marriage.
- But 1 out of every 5 Born Again believers morally accept pornography.
- And 1 out of every five professed Christians morally accepts the misuse of controlled substances that seriously alters their behavior.
- (Research from the book *America at the Crossroads* by George Barna. Baker Book, 2016)

Does Johnny see something we all need to see? Do we all see that families are suffering in America... and sadly in the church? Over half of all families in America are called dysfunctional. Here's an example of a dysfunctional family...

Illustration of the Tater Family: Have you ever heard of the Tater Family? They're a dysfunctional family **notorious for constantly imploding.** Here's the reasons why...

- First there's **Dick Tater**, who insists on running and dominating everything in the house.
- His brother **Ro Tater** lives a life that keeps everything spinning out of control.
- **Then there's Aunt Agi Tater** who has a knack for stirring up trouble; and her husband, **Irri Tater**, is always getting under someone's skin.
- Then you have **Hesi Tater** who would just as soon wait until next year to fix the issues.
- Then there is **Imi Tater** who loves to tell everyone else how much better the Smith family is.
- And of course, there's **Devas Tater**. He's the one who constantly shouts, "the sky is falling!"

Transition: What's my point? Do any of you live in a messed-up house with a messed-up family... and want to know how to live faithfully inside that house and inside that family? God says you can!

Connecting Us

Snapshot of Dysfunction: It's picture of... Something Disintegrating ; Something not functioning properly; Something that sadly calls abnormal normal; Something that hinders emotional and spiritual health. **Let's take time to watch a video that appears to be a family picture perfect...**

Show Sermon Video: Picture Perfect

In the Bible we can find many forms of dysfunctional families: Isaac, Jacob and Esau; Noah's family; Lot's family; King David's family; etc.

Transition: Today I want to explore a family found in Genesis 37... Joseph's family. They were far from perfect.

God's Take

NKJV | Ge 37:1-11 Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.² This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also, he made him a tunic of many colors. ⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. ⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶ So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed, your sheaves stood all around and **bowed down to my sheaf.**" ⁸ And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So, they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. ⁹ Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." ¹⁰ So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" ¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Joseph's Imperfect Family:

1. The Imperfect Parents

- **There were four unhappy women.** Three step-mothers and a step sister living with a Polygamist. Jacob's wives were jealous and insecure.
- **Jacob was a weak and ineffective father.** The classic passive parent. When his daughter was raped by the son of the Mayor of Shechem... he did nothing. And when his sons devised a plan to punish the men of that city... he did nothing. When he learned about his son committing incest... he did nothing. Jacob was more concerned about public relations than ministering and leading his family
- **Favoritism was heavily broadcasted.** Not only was Jacob a passive parent, but for seventeen years his children had watched as he played favorites with Joseph. In verse three we learn, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age..." Joseph, now seventeen, was the first-born son, of his father's favorite wife, Rachel. In no way did Jacob try to hide his partiality. The later part of verse three says, "...Also he made him a tunic of many colors." This term "tunic of many colors" is variously translated as "many colored or richly ornamented",
- **Hatred was ignored.** Because of Jacob's behavior, every time the brothers saw the coat they were reminded of the contrast between Joseph's life and their own. Joseph's brothers came to hate him for being all the things that they were not!

Winston Churchill's We Shall Fight: Who can ever forget Winston Churchill's immortal words: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills..." One man heard that quote and said, "That sounds exactly like our family vacation."

2. The Imperfect Brothers

- **They hated Joseph because of Jacob.** The story repeatedly reveals that Joseph's brothers hated him. First in verse four we are told that the brother saw how Jacob favored Joseph they "hated him and could not speak peaceable to him." That is pretty bad when you hate your own brother so badly that you cannot even be civil.
- **They hated Joseph because of the dreams.** In verse 5 (five) when Joseph tells of his dream the reader is again informed that his brothers hated him. When Joseph has his second dream and relay it to his brothers, we are told "they hated him even more."
- **They envied Joseph.** Finally, it is revealed in verse eleven that his brothers envied him. They envied him for his coat and position of privilege... they envied him because of his father's affection... they envied the fact that even God seem to have a special place in his heart for Joseph because of his dreams. Probably all of these things are a part of their envy and hatred of Joseph. **And of course...**

3. Joseph was Imperfect

- **He was immature and naïve.** Joseph, who was seventeen at the time, was probably a normal adolescent. I doubt very much that Joseph understood everything that was happening in his life. Joseph was at the very least naïve and possibly a little arrogant.
- **He was arrogant about the coat.** He wore his new special coat into the fields to check on his brothers. This would be like wearing a tuxedo to work on the lawn. It was hardly appropriate and perhaps just a little proud.
- **He had a sense of superiority.** Joseph also related his dreams of superiority to his brothers (vv 5-8). It does not take too much insight to understand that this could only further fan the flames of his brother's animosity toward him.

Transition: What a mess!!! Yet he became one of the two men whose lives are recorded in the Bible about whom there is not one word of criticism. Joseph was faithful in an imperfect family... so, we want to examine his life today and see what insights we can gain for our own lives.

Our Response

How Do We Live Faithfully in an Imperfect Family?

1. Prioritize the long-term.

- Joseph went through so much trouble in his life... with both family and those he connected with in his captivity. But in this very imperfect story... GOD ORCHESTRATED the saving of His people and the place of blessing that Joseph would eventually find himself in!!! **Don't forget that there's reward in staying faithful!**
- **Listen: What the devil means for destruction, God can use for construction!**

- **Don't give up!** And become the living example of faithfulness and trustworthiness!
- **The decisions we make** today affect not only ourselves but all those who care about us. The course of action you choose today may affect your children, your grandchildren, and even your great grand-children.
- **Illustration of the Bologna Sandwich:** A construction worker took his lunch out and exclaimed, "Bologna sandwiches again. I am so sick of bologna sandwiches if I see another one I'll just die." A co-worker asked, "Why don't you ask your wife to pack something else for you lunch?" To which he replied, "I'm not married, I pack my own lunch." Just maybe... some of the bologna in our lives we put there ourselves.
- **The Challenge?** Perfect the art of prayer! Pour into your soul the Word that brings life! Commit yourself to the community of believers who experience the same things you do.
- **Remember that WE ARE NOT ENOUGH! We will never be faithful unless the One we are faithful to is close by!**

2. Be faithful without excuses.

- We must be faithful regardless of your family situation. It can be very easy for us to look at our family background and make excuses. My parents are divorced; I can't help being this way, I was abused as a child, My father was an alcoholic, and the list goes on and on.
- **Listen: Don't let a negative background stop you from finding what's God's made profound!**
- **The Challenge?** Beware of the gravitationally challenged people. Those who pull you down to their level of criticism and pessimism.

3. Choose God's elevation plan.

- God understands our particular circumstances and He wants to help us rise above the negative influences in our lives.
- NLT | Is 41:10 **Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.**
- **Remember: Dysfunction doesn't have to mean a permanent malfunction!**
- **The Challenge?** Give God permission to take you higher... and that requires you to give God permission to take you deeper. **You will always go higher the more you go deeper.**

4. Be conformed to the image of Christ.

- God specializes in changing us and conforming us into His image, no matter what our family background.
- Regardless of our past we can know the love of the Heavenly Father when we surrender to Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Maybe your parents were not perfect. Maybe your home life was less than ideal. Perhaps you have made mistakes as a teenager or even later in life.
- **The Challenge?** God wants to forgive you and help you to start over.
- **Remember: By being conformed to Christ, God can transform your life... no matter the circumstances.**

Transition: So, anybody living in the land of the imperfect? Want to be faithful there?

Drawing the Net

Then be faithful...

- For the long haul
 - Don't make excuses... move up
 - Give God permission...
 - Be conformed to the image of Christ!

Why?

Because we are not enough! We need Him