

## How Can God Reunite a Broken Family?

- We're in a great book of the Bible, Genesis, we're almost done with this sermon series, just a few weeks left. And this week we're in Genesis 33. And the question is, kind of an emotionally loaded one, how can God reunite a broken family? And since we've been in Genesis, we saw that God made everyone and everything good and very good. And then sin enters the world and the first two things that sin attacks is marriage and family. Satan goes right after the marriage, and then he goes right after the children. And his effort is to divide, to destroy family. God loves relationships and Satan doesn't. God loves unity and Satan doesn't. God loves legacy and Satan doesn't. And as soon as sin comes into the world, it starts to cause great pain and harm in relationships, especially with our closest family members. And that brings us to Genesis 33. We're dealing here with a case study in a broken family. And in this instance, it's two brothers. This can be anyone in your family or anyone that you love like family. It could even be someone in church family. But what we have here is we have a case study in a broken family, and it's a conflict that has existed for the entire life of two brothers, Jacob and Esau. They were twin boys and they started fighting in their mother's womb, they didn't even make it into the world, they were fighting before they were born. They fought all the way through their life. And with Esau, he was more of a bully, domineering, overbearing, big personality and threatening. Jacob was a little more conniving, a little more covert, a little more manipulative, a little more sneaky. But they were always doing damage to one another. And the parents made the case worse because Esau was favored by his father, Jacob was favored by his mother, so now the division includes the parents. And so this exists throughout their entire life. Well, eventually Jacob gets the blessing and the birthright from Esau. The birthright, Esau gave it to him for a meal, it was a bad deal, but Esau didn't care. And then the blessing, Esau really did care and Jacob lied, not only to his brother, but he lied to his father. His father was losing his sight and not doing very well. And he went in and he tricked his dad into thinking that he was Esau and he stole his brother's blessing. Well, that was the last straw, that was the end for Esau. So he made a vow that he was going to murder his brother, right? And sometimes the family conflict can get so intense that you start to have a murderous spirit, you start to think murderous thoughts. And if it wasn't for the police, you'd start to make murderous plans, that's where they find themselves. His mom, Jacob's mom says, run for your life, your brother's gonna kill you. He'll calm down, it won't take very long and then you can come home. Go to my brother's house, Laban, your uncle he'll take care of you. So Jacob does what he said. He's not a mature responsible grown man, he's still being over mothered and he's not taking responsibility for his own life. So he does exactly what he's told and what happens then is he's not gone for a little while, he's gone for 20 years. And Laban is at least as bad as Jacob had with Esau, Laban's at least as bad as Esau. He tricks him, he manipulates him, he controls him, he works him for 14 years on a honeymoon night. He swaps out his two daughters so that Jacob wakes up and after seven years of working to marry his dream girl, he has a nightmare and he wakes up with the wrong girl. And then he's gotta work another seven years to marry the sister, his whole life is a disaster. And then he finally comes to faith and he finally starts to get some courage. And he finally starts to stand up for himself. After 20 years, all he's ever gotten is abuse and grief and conflict and control from pretty much everyone in his family. And God tells him, leave Laban's house, take your family and go back to where you grew up. And that place that we now know is the promised land that

was promised to your grandfather, Abraham, where your family still lives. So Jacob in faith is leaving his family, and he's going to have that conversation with Esau. His brother, he's not seen in 20 years, imagine not speaking to a family member or friend or someone you were once close to for 20 years. But the last time that they said anything to you, here's what they said. I make this vow, that I'm gonna slit your throat, that's the last thing that he said. And it's 20 years later. You're wondering, is that still in effect? Have we forgiven and moved on? What's gonna happen? And so Jacob has a lot of fear and anxiety, we're gonna talk about faith versus fear. We're gonna talk about forgiveness. We're gonna talk about friendship. But now he doesn't know what is going to happen when he has this conversation, perhaps a collision, maybe even a conflict with Esau. So in chapter 32, he stopped, we saw this last week and he prays. And he basically said, God, I'm scared. I'm scared for me, I'm scared for the women, I'm scared for the children, I don't know what I'm getting into. You've told me to go home, so I'm gonna obey you, but I don't know what's gonna happen and I'm scared. And what we're gonna see this week is that God answers that prayer. Here's the encouraging thing. Sometimes you don't know what you're gonna get with someone that you've had a conflict with, you have a broken relationship with, a friend or family member that you're estranged from, but you can pray. And what prayer will do, prayer will prepare your heart to have a healthy relationship. And it could prepare their heart to have a healthy relationship. The point is, just because you're unable to speak to them doesn't mean you can't pray for them and God can speak to them, okay? And so he prays and here we see what happens after he prays for his family members, keep praying for those people, keep praying for family and friends, former close relationships, broken and strained relationships, keep praying for them because it will prepare you to be a healthy person. And perhaps God would answer that prayer and prepare them to have a healthy relationship. So the first thing we see is faith. Genesis 33:1-3, "Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked "and behold Esau was coming and 400 men with him." That's either really good or really bad. That's either a welcome party or a war party. "So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel "and the two female servants. "He put the servants with her children in front, "Leah with her children and Rachel and Joseph last of all." He's separating the family, so if it is a murderous attack, maybe somebody can live through this. "He himself went on before them "bowing himself to the ground seven times "until he came near to his brother." So here's what he does, spreads the family out, and he comes out front. What he is doing here, he's getting everyone else out of harms way. He's gone from being a coward to being courageous. He spent 20 years running from his brother, and now he is walking toward his brother. And so a couple of things I wanna make note of, number one, part of the problem was that the family had a conflict, but they didn't go outside of the family for wise counsel to resolve the conflict. If you've got a family, you know what this looks like. Sometimes we only talk to our family, but the problem is what if the problem is in the family, then you probably need to go outside of the family to get wise counsel, to heal some things in the family. Mom and dad were divided. Brothers were divided and rather than getting wise counsel, mom tells Jacob what to do. Here's what I want you to know. You can love your family, if they love the Lord they should be praying for you, and as much as they're able to give you wise counsel receive it. But sometimes you gotta go outside of your family to get perspective and wisdom to deal with your family. If all you do is just tag your family into your family problems, you don't make things better. That's what they did wrongly. He has a family

drama and conflicts. Mom, tell me what to do. She's like, well, go tell what uncle tells you to do. And 20 years later, he is like, that was the worst advice I ever got in my whole life, everything was wrong. What we see as well, previously Jacob's whole life, the decisions were made and governed by fear. Now here he is starting to respond in faith and fear is where we look to the future, and there's reason for anxiety, for concern. And then when we look up, we see that there is a God who is over it and he can navigate us through it. And so we're all gonna look out with fear, and at some point you've gotta look up in faith and say, okay God, this doesn't look good, I need some help here. Now what happens with fear, he is operating out of fear for 20 years, and as soon as he is about ready to meet his brother, what do you think he's sensing, fear. But he's honest about it and he brings it to the Lord. He says this in his prayer just previously in Genesis 32:11, he says, "God, please deliver me "from the hand of my brother, Esau, for I fear him." And he says, "He may come and attack me "and the mothers and the children." He's honest, he's like, God, my whole life, I've been a fearful person and I sense danger and I run and I flee and I avoid conflict and I'm usually scared and I'm usually a little anxious and I'm usually a little nervous and I'm feeling that again, he's honest. So God give me the faith to do what you're telling me to do, not doing what the fear is demanding that I do. Let me talk a little bit about fear. Fear doesn't exist until sin enters the world. We've been in Genesis for a long time. God made everyone and everything and it was all good and very good. Sin enters world in Genesis 3, God shows up, ask our first father, Adam, where are you? Why are you hiding? What have you done? And he says, well, I was hiding because I'm afraid. Fear doesn't exist where there's no danger. There was no fear until sin entered the world 'cause there's nothing and no one to be afraid of. There's you and God and life, and then satan comes with sin and death, now there's a lot of things to be afraid of. The first time that sin is spoken of in the Bible in human history is after sin enters the world. In a broken fallen world, a cursed world, a demonic world, true or false, there's pretty much always something or someone to be afraid of, always. Let me talk a little bit about fear. Fear will come upon you, but you can't let it in you. Fear's gonna come upon you, you're gonna feel it. You're like, I'm anxious, I'm scared, I'm worried, it's going to come upon you. But the problem is when you let it in you. When you let it into, now fear takes over your emotions. Now fear takes over your thoughts. Now fear takes over your body. Now you can't sleep, now you're anxious. Now you're stressed, depressed, oppressed. You're not yourself. And if fear is in you, you've gotta bring it to the Lord and say, God, I have fear and I need you to take it, it can't live in me. See faith is what God wants to exist in you and faith and fear don't coexist. So if you let the fear in, it's going to push the faith out, okay? Jesus says it this way, he says, if you get rid of a demon and you don't replace with the Holy Spirit, you get seven more demons. Sometimes if you're like, I'm afraid and they don't bring faith and the Holy Spirit in and then it's just seven more demons of fear. This is where people get very unwell, this can lead to significant mental health, this can lead to the breaking of a human being. It's gonna come on you, you can't avoid it in a broken, flawed, fallen curse demonic world. It's gonna come on you but the key is, don't let it live in you, don't let it live in you. For 20 years, he's let it live in him, Jacob has all of his decisions are not running for God's will it's running from danger. And let me tell you if all your decisions are, that might hurt, so I'm running, you're probably not going to end up in a better place. So he was afraid that his brother was gonna kill him, he ran for his life, he got used and abused by his uncle for 20 years. At least if he had stayed home, maybe his

dad could have talked his brother out of murdering him. Sometimes we run from the person or thing we're afraid of, but we run into a person or thing that's actually more dangerous than what we're running from. We do this all the time. This is where people will go from this job to that job. From this dating relationship to that dating relationship. From this church to that, where are you going? I don't know, I just got scared so I ran. But where are you going, I don't know. I just am running from what I think might not be good for me. Are you running to what would be good for you? Oh, no. 'Cause see, when we have fear, it's not about getting to the place that is going to be good for us, it's getting away from the place that we fear will be bad for us, but this is the deceiver satan and this is his plan. You're in danger, go, move, run, make a decision, okay. And then he puts you in a place that's worse, that's worse. That's worse than the place that you were running from. That's what happened to Jacob for 20 years, as fear makes his decisions his life gets bleaker and darker. Let me say this as well, sometimes the fear does more damage to you than the person or thing you're afraid of, right? I've seen people that have a fear of someone or something and all of their ways of controlling life and not being hurt and managing the situation or avoiding, you're doing more damage to yourself than the person or thing that you're afraid of. You meet someone who has lived for an extended period of time, under fear, they're breaking themselves, they're damaging themselves, they're hurting themselves. You say, well, gosh, why is life like this? Well 'cause I'm afraid of that person or that thing or that experience, I don't wanna endure that, I don't wanna have to face that, I'm scared of that. Okay but do you understand that what you're doing to yourself is worse than what you're afraid of. And this is where fear can come with a demonic spirit that oppresses you and causes you to be unwell. Timothy says that this, 2 Timothy 1:7, God, didn't give us a spirit of fear. With fear literally comes a demon spirit. Just like with faith comes the Holy Spirit, everything God creates satan counterfeits. So you say, okay, I wanna live in faith, I need the Holy Spirit to be the spirit of faith. I'm gonna live in fear, satan will send a spirit of fear. When a spirit of fear comes, it literally oppresses you. And this is where you can, how do I say this? I love you, I'm trying to help, and sometimes words are a limiting factor. Let me say it this way. Have you been around somebody that there's just a spirit of fear on them and you just sense it. It's less about, let me give you the words to explain, and you're like, I just perceive it. There's a spirit of fear over you and you're oppressed and you're scared and you're not well, and you're anxious and you're, and these people they manifest with, high control, high control because they have people and things that they love and they don't want them to get hurt. And so they're trying to make sure that they don't hurt them, but then they break themselves by trying to control people and things, it's a spirit of fear. There are certain people that you could just tell it on their face and their cowardice. They've sort of reached a point in life where, they're just trying to be invisible, they're trying to disappear, they're trying not to get in trouble, they're just, there's a spirit of fear on them. Jacob has lived under a spirit of fear for 20 years. He let his mom boss him around. He was terrified of his brother. He let his father-in-law and uncle abuse him for 20 years. Let his wives trick him and manipulate him and control him and disrespect him. He's just lived under a spirit of fear for 20 years. And what fear does, fear turns us into a false prophet, a false prophet is someone who says, this is what's gonna happen and then it doesn't happen. When a spirit of fear goes from being on you to being in you, you become the false prophet in your own life. Why are you doing that, 'cause this is gonna happen. I don't think so. I'll give you a case study here, back in

Genesis 27, for those of you who were with us, his mom said to Jacob, your brother's gonna kill you, that is a false prophecy. It's 20 years later, he's still here. And she told him, go to my uncle's house, that'll make it better. Did it make it better? Nope, that was a false prophecy. And she said, your brother will calm and cool down and you can come home soon. That didn't happen either, all false prophecy. Now it made sense to her and it made sense to him because they were under a spirit of fear. When there's a spirit of fear that's suppressing someone, they think they know exactly what's gonna happen, and it's a false prophecy. So now they build their whole life to avoid it, and they're certain, but it's a lie. Let me say this one, how many of you, there's someone or something in your life that you are terrified of and it never happened. Does this ever happen to anyone else? Yeah, happens all the time. All the time, and the anxiety and the stress and the unhealth and the brokenness can do more damage to us than the thing that we were afraid of that doesn't even happen. So my question would be, who do you fear, what do you fear? So for Jacob, who he feared was Esau and what he feared was dying. Who do you fear and what do you fear? And Jacob, after 20 years of being away from home, he's returning home and he's starting to act in faith. He is now a believer, we've seen him praying and worshiping and building altars, which is going to church. And he's like, I need to talk to God. So when he's feeling the spirit of fear on him, we saw in Genesis 32, he stops and he prays. God, I gotta talk to you about this. When he doesn't know what to do, he stops, he builds altar and he meets with God. And now we see that God is speaking to him. He gets dreams, angels, visions, God speaks to him. So now he's being led by the spirit of God, not the spirit of fear, he's operating in faith, not fear. He's like, God, this is what you said to do, so I'm gonna do it. And I'll be honest, God, I'm kind of freaking out, I'm a little scared, I'm not sure what's gonna happen, but I'm not gonna run. I'm not gonna try and control. I'm not gonna think I can manipulate Esau. But I need to be honest with you, I'm not doing so good today and I need your help, that's faith. And you know that you have faith when you're trying to do what's right in the sight of God and not control the outcome. Fear causes you to wanna control the outcome. Faith says, I can't control the outcome, but I wanna try and do what's right in the sight of God. Just like, let's say you're a married couple and you're in a bad place, I wanna save my marriage. Well, no, you wanna do what's right in the side of God. 'Cause you could save your marriage and not do what's right in the sight of God and if God doesn't bless your marriage, then it's not gonna be a great marriage anyways. See what happens is you know that you trust God and you're like, God, I don't know if this is gonna work. I don't know if this is gonna end up producing the result that I want. I don't know if they're gonna do what I wish they would do. But here's what I know, it's the right thing to do. So I'm gonna try and do the right thing and then I'm gonna trust you for the people and the circumstances that are out of my control, and I might not have the outcome that I want, but that's your decision not mine. He's starting to operate, not out of fear, but out of faith. And at some point, at some point in life, you've gotta confront your fear. 20 years, every day he woke up, he's like, I'm gonna avoid Esau. And then one day he is like, not today. Took 20 years and now he's gonna come face to face with a person and thing that he fears the most. At some point you've got to face what you fear in faith, you have to. And it was interesting this week, there was a study put out by Boston University, said that in the last eight years, for college students, anxiety is up 135%, depression is up 110%. Here's what you're seeing, a few years ago the entire planet decided to submit to a spirit of fear. And every day everyone was constantly getting

information that caused a lot of fear, and a lot of it was false prophecy, okay. And now we have a bunch of people that are having emotional, mental health issues. They're like, I spent two years living under the spirit of fear and I'm still stuck in the spirit of fear and they keep sending me information that kind of re-triggers my fear. And it seems like the more I know there's more to be afraid of. And if you're 20, you're gonna do this for 60 years. You're 20, let me tell you you're 20, you should be happy, all right, you should be happy. You don't have a mortgage yet, you don't have kids to feed. You're still on your dad's payroll, you're doing great, you should be so happy. If at 20 you're stressed, wait till you're 51. But see what happens is just because circumstances change, if you're living in fear instead of faith, nothing changes for you. You interpret all information in the worst apocalyptic scenario. Everything becomes cause for fear. And at some point you've gotta just run to your fear, you've gotta face it, you've gotta confront it, and say, you know what, I just, I need to figure out that relationship. I need to tell that person where we're at. I need to break up with them. I need to quit that job. I gotta just stop worrying about the outcome and I gotta start worshipping God through the process. Faith, so here he is gonna come, he's finally gonna confront the person and thing he fears the most and here's what happens. "Esau ran to meet him," at first this had to be a little, he's like he's running. Okay, this, not sure he can't wait to kill me or he can't wait to hug me? Either way, we're gonna know in a minute. Let me just, let me break here. In the story, if Jacob allows the spirit of fear to control him, he's gonna start the fight. If you have the spirit of fear interpreting all the data it's gonna cause you to be a very defensive person. You're gonna see here in a moment, Esau's running to give him a hug. But if he allows the spirit of fear to determine his response, he's probably gonna fight his brother and his brother will be like, I came to give you a hug and they're gonna go right back to where they started. Here's what happens, "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him "and fell on his neck and kissed him," and they cried like beauty pageant winners, it's amazing. This is going really good, amen? "And when Esau lifted up his eyes "and saw the women had children, he said, "who are these with you," what a beautiful family. "Jacob said, the children whom God has graciously "given your servant," these are my kids, you're their uncle, you're meeting your nieces and nephews. "Then the servants drew near, they and their children "and they bowed down. "Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down," that's respect. "And last Joseph and Rachel drew near and they bowed down. "Esau said, what do you mean by all this company that I met? "Jacob answered, to find favor in the side of my Lord." Let me say this real quick, that word favor, is a Hebrew word for grace. He's looking at his brother and here's what he's saying. Esau, I need grace. I'm not a good guy, I wasn't good to you, you have every right to be mad at me, I'm asking you to put grace on it. But Esau said, "I have enough my brother "keep what you have for yourself." He's like you, don't gotta give me a bunch of gifts, I'm loaded, I'm doing good. Jacob said, "No, please, if I have found favor," grace. Here's the big idea, where there is no grace, there is no relationship. Where there is grace, there is relationship. God reminds me this all the time, my wife's name is, Grace, yes. "Then accept my present from my hand "for I've seen your face which is like seeing "the face of God." He knows that his God is a God of grace. And now his brother has a face of grace. "And you've accepted me, please accept my blessing "that is brought to you because "God has dealt graciously with me." He gives God credit for all the grace on his life. He's like, my God gave me grace, and now my brother's giving me grace. "And because I have enough, "thus, he urged him and he took it." So finally, 20

terrified years, they come face to face, it's beautiful. Is Esau a believer, no. And here's what's kind of shocking, an un-believer gives grace to a believer. Even if the person that you've had a strained or broken relationship with doesn't get saved and meet Jesus, God could still work on their character and they may still be able to forgive, give grace so you can have a relationship. There's a lot of hope here, 'cause there's like, well, they need to get saved, and then they need to repent and they need to read the Bible and then they need, da da da da. Or God's like, actually they're still not saved and they don't believe the Bible, but they could forgive you. They could love you. They could bless you, that's what Esau does. Somehow, as an un-believer, to me, this is mesmerizing. How many of you as a believer, we're the Christians, we're the forgiveness is our thing. And you're like, yeah, not very good at it, right? It's possible that even a non-Christian could in as much as they are able forgive and give grace and Esau does that. Jacob, he's not perfect, but he's making progress. When he looks at his brother and he says, I'm asking for grace, what he's saying is, this broken relationship, it's my fault, it's my fault. We always fought and he could start with his list. Esau, let tell you all the bad things you did to me. If you have a brother they've done evil against you, amen. Yeah, brother is the Hebrew word for demon. If you have a brother they're just gonna do some nasty things to you. He doesn't go to Esau and say, here's all my grievances. And he doesn't come and say, you ruined 20 years of my life 'cause I was scared. He comes, he's like, let me own my part, he says, I'm asking for grace brother. There's something very powerful in a relationship when you don't say, hey, let's go over everything. Sometimes you just look at somebody, and you're just like, you know what, I was wrong, I'm asking for grace, I'm not gonna argue, not gonna defend, not gonna fight, not gonna blame shift. Just, I'm sorry, I was wrong, I'm asking for grace. He asks for grace and he gets it. He's not perfect, but he's making progress. He's being honest about his sin and shortcoming. And he is asking for grace and he's demonstrating humility. He bows, the family bows, this is literally face down. It's his way of saying, I'm not here to fight, I'm not here to argue, I'm not here to win. I'm just, I'm here asking for grace. In addition, what we see now is the grace that is shared between these brothers spills over to all of the extended family. Well, you've got here, you've got uncles that have never met their nieces and nephews. You've got brothers who have never met a brother's wife. You've got kids that are cousins that have never met each other. It's amazing how two people that have a broken relationship can separate and divide so many other people for so long. Of course, each wife would side with their husband and then the kids would follow mom and dad. And so if the men are not reconciled, there's no reconciliation, but now they are. I want you to see this, this is what heaven's gonna be like. God just reminded me of a conversation I had many years ago. There was a guy him and his mom always had a really broken relationship. She was a troubled woman, very religious, very angry, very controlling, very fearful. And he loved her, he just didn't connect with her, and their whole life was just a lot of pain and she died. And I remember I asked him, I said, "How are you doing?" He's was like, "I'm doing great." I was like, "Why?" He said, "Next time I see my mom, "we're gonna have a perfect relationship," okay? So here now you've got cousins that are playing together and wives that are meeting each other and it's a little bit like heaven, it's a big family reunion and everybody's let it go and there's grace on it and we're glad to be together. And in this, God has been good to who, everyone. Was God good to Esau, yeah. He is not a good man, but God is a good God. Was he good to Jacob, yep. They're both so blessed that they're

like, I don't need the presence, I got a storage unit, I got so much extra stuff. They're both blessed, so God blesses everyone. Here's what you need to see, God is a good God and God even blesses those who are unbelievers, he blesses Esau. So we move from faith to forgiveness, to friendship. Genesis 33:12-20, "Then Esau said, let us journey on our way." Hey, welcome home brother, let's go together. "And I will go ahead of you," I'll prepare the way, let everybody know you're coming. "But Jacob said to him, "my lord knows that the children are frail." We've been gone a long time. "That the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me." He's like, man, we go slow. "If they are driven hard for one day, the flocks will die." So here, brother thank you for wanting to be with us and take care of us but why don't you go on ahead, we're gonna move real slow, "At the pace of the livestock that ahead of me "at the pace of the children "until I come to my lord in Seir." Why don't you go ahead, we're going slow, but we'll get there. "So Esau said, let me leave you with "some of the people who are with me," let me leave some staff and some family, we're here to help, we're here to serve, what? We're gonna bless you, we're gonna serve you. "But he said, what need is there? "Let me find favor in the side of my lord. "So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. "But Jacob journey to Succoth "and built himself a house and made booths "for his livestock." Basically temporary shelters to protect them from predators. "Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth," means booths, we would say tents. "And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, "which is in the land of Canaan "on his way from Paddan-aram," he's headed home. "And he camped before the city. "And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, "he bought for 100 pieces of money," buys land, "on which he had pitched his tent. "Thus he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel," And it literally means, the God of Israel. He stops as he's entering into the promised land, he builds altar and he worships and he prays. And what he says is, our God is the God of Israel, is the God of our nation. He's dedicating himself, his family, his future, the nation that's gonna come from him. He's now got 11 sons, a 12th will be born, they're gonna become the 12 tribes of Israel. Just let me hit a few things quickly. Number one, where are the parents in this reunion? They're not, which is a really good sign. There's a point where conflict, especially between siblings reaches a point that they're adults and they got to sort it out. It's not like, they're like, all right, let's go see what dad says, they're figuring it out. So, and this is a new season for them. If they've already figured out their biggest conflict, guess what they can do going forward? As other conflicts come up, because they do, they can work it out and put some grace on it. When you're little and you're fighting, your parents are like, gosh, I gotta, knock it off, stop, please, don't knock, put the toy down, don't hit him, stop, knock it off, knock it off. And if any you have children and I just explain your morning, right? But when they get bigger, it's like, you guys got to figure this out. You need to have your own relationship and you got to figure out to resolve your conflict. When Jacob left, there were one big dysfunctional family, and now they're three. Dad's got his land. Son's got his land. Other son's got his land. They've all got their own business, their own livestock, their own family, they've got their own life, they've differentiated. Part of the reason that this family exploded, they were all together is one big dysfunctional family and it blew up, now there's three. You live here, I live here. Jacob wisely doesn't say, hey Esau, we're gonna come live with you. It'd be murder again. Doesn't say, hey, let's put all our livestock together and fix all our assets into one portfolio. Nope, there's differentiation. And there's great progress here. So in your life, there's gonna be three kinds of people, positives,



negatives and neutral. Positives, they love you, they're for you, okay. For me, this will be my mom. My mom called me this week. Marky, still calls me, Marky. Marky, just wanna encourage you love you, praying for you, keep preaching, my mom is a positive. If my mom ever calls me and lights me up, I did something horrible, 'cause my mom's a positive, okay. Some people are negative, it doesn't matter what you say or do, they're against you, it just doesn't matter. You're like, well, I'm sorry, you don't seem sorry. You're like, well I'm really sorry. I don't think you're really sorry. Well, let me pay you back. That's not enough. They're negative, everything is negative. And then there are people who are neutral, they're not for you or against you. They don't have a lot of passion for you or against you, just kind of indifferent. Previously, Jacob and Esau, what were they, negative. They were both against, and now they've moved to, positive. Now they're both for each other, this is huge progress. And let me say this, they don't have a wonderful relationship, but they don't have an awful relationship. They have a functional relationship, okay. A wonderful relationship would be, as Jacob was coming to town, Esau and he's like, I got saved, I got saved, hallelujah, I love Jesus too. Hey, let's build altar together, and I've got a few songs, I'm a worship leader. That would've been wonderful, but Esau doesn't get saved. They don't have an awful relationship, they did for 20 years, what they have now is a functional relationship. Let me give you the good enough principle. Sometimes some of you, you need to come to the point with certain relationships, you're like, it's good enough. How many of us have, our relationship was functional, it was good enough, but we wanted more. We kept picking at it, we kept pushing, we kept pressing and it made it worse, it's good enough. There are certain times a relationship, you just gotta come to the point, you're like, that's pretty good, it's good enough. If Jacob and Esau don't accept that they have a functional relationship, but they're pushing for more, they're gonna end up in another fight. It's good enough, I put grace on you, you put grace on me. You live there, I live here. You worship that way, I don't worship at all. That's your business, that's my business. That's your kids, that's my kids. We love each other, we put grace on one another. Good enough, good enough. Now, one thing I wanna say and then we'll move on. He builds an altar at the same place that his grandfather, Abraham built an altar back in Genesis 12. He's worshipping Jesus Christ, who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But there's an ominous hint in the story. Previously, God told him to go to Bethel and to live there. He stops in Succoth and he moves there. Now he should have known it wasn't gonna work. It's called Succoth, I mean he should know. Now if you come back next week, I'm gonna preach my least favorite chapter in the whole Bible that emotionally destroys me every time and I have a very hard time going through it. So if you think about it, just pray for your pastor. Even as I think about doing Genesis 34, I just am not so good. And what happens is he was told to go to Bethel, he stops in Succoth, he's in the place he's not supposed to be with his family and something happens to his daughter. The point is this, you can obey God. But if you miss one thing, it could be a devastating thing. Let me summarize this story, I can feel it. Let me pray for you first, I can just feel it in the room. Holy Spirit, I just invite you into this moment. God, I can just sense it with people, whether it's family or extended family or friends or church family, or believers or former business partners. God, there's a lot of broken relationships and we carry the weight of that. And so Holy Spirit, I pray that you would guide my words now to be the most helpful that I could be. And Holy Spirit, I pray that you would overwhelm people with your love and your presence and your goodness. And I pray against the spirit of fear. And I pray for the

spirit of God as we talk about how to take what we're learning from this story and make it part of our story, in Jesus name, amen. So as we learn about faith and forgiveness and friendship, the themes here all point to Jesus Christ. From this family is gonna come the nation of Israel, from the nation of Israel is gonna come Jesus. And when he stops and he builds an altar and he dedicates it to the God of Israel, it's Jesus. Jesus is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And so through this family and ultimately through Jacob's side of the family is coming, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the son of God, which means he also is, our big brother. And Jesus comes to the earth and how do we treat him? We treat him like Jacob and Esau, that's how we treat him. Some people try to trick him, use him, abuse him, manipulate him. Other people threaten him and murder him, okay. As we read the story of Jesus, you need to know that we're Jacob and Esau, that's who we are. Jesus goes to the cross, he is dying, and he says this in Luke 23:34, he's dying, here's what he prays. One of his final words while he's being murdered, "Father, forgive them," who's them? The people that are murdering him, and if you're a sinner that would include you, 'cause he died for the sin of the world. What he's doing there, he's praying that you and I could be forgiven, 'cause there's no relationship without forgiveness. Let me say this, if you won't forgive, you will not have a relationship. If God doesn't forgive, we can't have a relationship. So Jesus prays, "Father forgive them," and then Jesus dies to answer his own prayer. He died in our place for our sins so that we would have favor or grace. That he would be punished rather than punishing us. That he would suffer rather than making us suffer. That he would die rather than causing our death. And this is what makes Christianity different than everything else in the world. Right now in our world, if you say or do something, literally people will pour out their wrath on you and they will crucify you with a murderous spirit, it's called cancel culture. There's no forgiveness, there's no second chance. If you believe in karma an Eastern religion, there's no forgiveness, you gotta come back and suffer. God or the Gods are gonna put the screws to you until you've heard enough that they feel like you're even. It's not forgiveness, there's no grace in that. If you believe in works oriented religion, if you do something bad, you gotta go do a lot of good and you need to pay back what you failed to do. In Christianity, Jesus puts grace on it. He's like, you know what, I'll pay not you. I'll suffer not you. I'll have the wrath of God poured out on me rather than pouring my wrath out on you. This is amazing. The only reason that Jacob and Esau could have a reconciled relationship is because they put some grace on it. The only way you can have a relationship with God is if he puts some grace on it. So here's what I need you to know, you need Jesus. Some of you be like, Mark, you need Jesus, oh I know, for sure. We all need Jesus. There's no forgiveness apart from Jesus, there's no forgiveness. Jesus died then he rose, he's alive and well, and he will forgive you right now. And I know that for some of you, you're haunted by things you've said and done or things you failed to say and failed to do. I know that there are moments in your life, you're like, I wish I could do that day over, I wish I could take those words back. I wish I would've made a different decision, but you didn't, but he'll forgive you. Forgive you past, present and future, forgive you. Would you receive Jesus? Would you trust Jesus? Would you believe in Jesus? Would you turn to Jesus? Just look at what he did in the life of Jacob. If he could do that in Jacob's life, he could do that in your life. And here's what I need you to know, if you're forgiven by Jesus, God doesn't hate you, he loves you, he loves you. God doesn't see you as dirty for all the things you've done, but clean because of what Jesus has done for you. If you're forgiven, you're not rejected

by God, you're adopted by God and he never changes his mind. And if you're forgiven by Jesus, you're not old, you're new. You're not perfect but you're making progress, when he's done with you, you will be perfect. That's what we see in the life story of Jacob. He gets forgiven and he gets Jesus and he gets better. So here's first and foremost, this grace, this favor that Jesus gives, he's the God of Jacob, I need you to receive it, I need you to receive it. And if you receive it, you need to share it. This is where some people will be like, oh, Christianity's too easy, just grace, grace, grace. Okay, grace is sometimes easy to receive and very difficult to share. Because I don't mind God blessing me, but I don't want God to use me to bless my enemy. Paul says it this way, Colossians 3:12-14, "Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, "compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, "meekness and patience bearing with one another. "And if one has a complaint against another," here's the pregnant line, "forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you," so you also must forgive. "Above all these put on love, "which binds everything together in perfect harmony." What he's saying is this, if God gives you grace need to share that gift with them. If God forgives you, God wants you to forgive them. That forgiven people should be forgiving people, that people who receive grace should be people who share grace, 'cause God doesn't just give it to us, he gives it through us. So that ultimately what was your greatest misery becomes your greatest ministry. You're taking what was evil and you're putting grace on it hoping that God would use it for good. So let me talk about, here's what most, I really love you and I'm trying to help, just hang there with me, let me be your pastor for a few more minutes. Most people, I like being forgiven, and I don't mind forgiving but I can't forgive that person or that thing. Let me explain why forgiveness is so important, it allows you to move on with God's will for your life. Previously, Jacob was 20 years just conflict with Laban and then he leaves, he's like we're done. So he can move in the destiny that God has for him, he's walking in God's will. When you forgive someone, you're like, I'm not gonna fight anymore, I'm not gonna argue anymore, we're not gonna have the conversation for the thousandth time. We're not gonna do an archeological dig and just go bring up everything again. I'm putting grace on it and I'm moving forward and if you wanna come with me, I'd love to have you, but that's your decision. It's like Paul says, forgetting what lies behind, I press forward to the upward calling that God has for me. Some people, they're just broken and they just wanna break you and God wants to heal you so you can move forward. Forgiveness is, your forgiveness is not God's forgiveness. Your forgiveness is, I'm gonna put grace on it, right? I'm gonna let it go. Now God, he can try the case, he can render a verdict, he can do whatever he wants. Just because you forgive them doesn't mean God forgives them. Just because you forgive them doesn't mean they're not going to hell, it just means you're not bringing hell to them. You're getting yourself out, you're saying, you know what, this is between you and the Lord and I'm in the middle, I'm gonna forgive you and you and the Lord are gonna have to figure this out. Forgiveness starts one day but it oftentimes takes every day. There's a debate, they come to the Lord Jesus, they're like how many times we gotta forgive? And some said, once and then the most generous, loving, merciful people said seven and Jesus said, 70 times seven. You're gonna have some people in your life that are the 70 times seven people. I feel like you resonated with that point, right? Because sometimes they keep doing it. Because sometimes you forgive them for what you know and then you learn more. You're like, okay, now I gotta forgive again. Or sometimes what they did causes so much collateral damage that years later there's still people

and things that are suffering. You need to forgive again, it's the 70 times seven. Forgiveness is choosing to heal so that you don't start hurting others. There's this little line, it's simple but it's a truism, hurt people hurt people. Like somebody hurt me and so I'm hurt, so I'm gonna hurt people, it's like, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. If they hurt you, why don't you have him heal you? And maybe then instead of hurting other people, you could help with the healing process in other people. This is where some of you have someone you love very dearly, but you don't know have a relationship with them because they're so broken and they're so bitter and they're so hurt and they're so jaded and they're so gripped by a spirit of fear that all they do is just cause a lot of hurt. And behind it, you realize that they're hurting, but ultimately they need to be healed. In addition, forgiveness opens you up to then bless your enemy. Jesus says to bless your enemy. Blessing your enemy is the test of whether or not you've forgiven your enemy. It'll be like, I've forgiven but I can't bless them, well then you're not there. In this story, did Esau forgive Jacob, yeah. Did he bless him, he did. Sometimes blessing is just not saying anything. Oh, you know so and so tell me about them, you're like, Holy Spirit just keep my lips closed, right? Oh, I got a lot to say and I'm not gonna say it. You know what, or I'd like to seek vengeance. How many of you, you've got kind of a dark thought life, those people. You're like, I'm not saying I'm gonna do it, but I would like to. It's like, you know what, I'm gonna pray for them, I'm not going to plot against them. And sometimes blessing someone, they don't even need to know about it. You could send a, just a simple anonymous letter, just wanted you to know that somebody loves you and is praying for you, write anonymous. You don't have to let them know, but you know that you... Because here's, okay. Does Jesus forgive you?

- Yes.

- Does Jesus bless you?

- Yes.

- Were you his enemy?

- Yes.

- That's how it works. That's how it works. And here's the big idea I wanna close with. A lot of times you're like, forgiveness, grace, love, mercy, I can't give that gift to them. But here's what you need to know in the story, did God bless both?

- Yes.

- If you will give grace and love and forgiveness, your fear is, that's gonna bless them. But here's how good God is, he's gonna bless you too. It's not subtraction, it's multiplication. It's not like if I give them grace, then they've got grace. No, God's like, actually I multiply the grace. It's like the fishes and the loaves with a little boy, it's just, there's an abundance. When you forgive someone, when you put grace on it, you're not only giving them a gift, you're giving yourself a

gift. This is why some of you suffer physically, you have stomach issues and headache issues and blood pressure issues and sleep issues. And physically, that bitterness, that hurt, that vengeance, that brokenness, it's breaking you. It'll bless you mentally, you don't have to think about it all the time. You don't need to be constantly upset and triggered by it or them. You can start to think on that which is pure and lovely and good. It also will bless you emotionally. You can start to heal up and it'll heal you up relationally. Friends, here we are on earth and there's heaven and there's hell. And one day the culture we live in goes away and there's only two cultures left, heaven and hell. All the forgiven people go to heaven, all the unforgiving people go to hell. Two cultures that exist forever are dominated by either forgiveness or unforgiveness. And what happens, we live in the middle. And so when they say or do something that really pains and hurts you, you've got two choices. I'm gonna forgive, put grace on it, I'm bringing heaven down. Or I'm not gonna forgive and I'm not gonna put grace on it. I'm gonna pull hell up. I love you, I'm sorry for what they said or did. I'm sorry for all the pain that it's caused. I'm sorry for all the expense that it's cost. I'm sorry for all of the sleepless nights and the tears and the frustration, but I want the best for you. And the best thing for you is to forgive them and to forgive it. So I'm gonna ask if you would be brave enough, if the Holy Spirit is prompting you, if God is speaking to you, if you're hearing this sermon and you're feeling uncomfortable, that's God. I'm gonna ask you, if there is someone and something that you need to forgive, put some grace on it. I'm gonna ask you to stand and I'm gonna ask you to pray with me right now. Is there anyone that you need to forgive? Is there anything that you need to forgive? I'm gonna ask you to stand up, okay. And I'll make one last call, if you're hearing the sermon and you're seeing the face of someone, you're remembering the name of someone. There's a haunting moment that you're revisiting, I want you to stand and forgive them. So for all of you who stood and you're welcome to stand if you like, want you just to look at me, I want you to put two hands out like this, okay. In this hand, my question is, who is it? Don't say their name out loud, but God knows your thoughts. Was it your dad, was it your mom, was it your brother, your sister, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your coworker, your abuser? Who? And then in this hand I want you to silently 'cause God knows your thoughts. I want you to name what you're forgiving, who you're forgiving and what you're forgiving. That was adultery. That was abuse. That was stealing. That was lying. That was rape. That was molestation. That was trauma, name it. Now here's what I want you to do, look at me. Who is it and what is it? Guess what we're gonna do now, here's what I want you to do. Lord Jesus, I forgive them. Lord Jesus, I forgive what they did. Lord Jesus, I let it go, it's out of my hands. Lord Jesus, it's in your hands. Lord Jesus, please bless me, please heal me, please restore my relationship with you. I want you to keep your hands open and empty. Holy Spirit I pray that you would fill and flood these people. I pray that they would know the joy of their salvation. I pray that you would renew a right spirit within them. We pray against the spirit of fear, we pray against the oppression that comes on broken and hurting people. We pray against the night terrors and the traumas and the triggers and the hurts and the fears and the pains. And we say, in Jesus name, in Jesus name we forgive. In Jesus name, we choose healing. In Jesus name, we choose life. In Jesus name, we invite heaven down. Lord God, thank you that I get to teach your word. Thank you for these dear people. Thank you for these courageous saints. And God, we now come all of us to open our hands and to lift our hands and to worship Jesus because we're forgiven in Jesus name, amen.