



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Reality Show / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

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GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

God can use a fractured family.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students see that every family is broken, but God can use your family anyway.

SCRIPTURE

It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau (Hebrews 11:20 NLT).

"Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die" (Genesis 27:4 NIV).

Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing." His mother said to

him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me" (Genesis 27:11-13 NIV).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau had anything but a healthy family dynamic. Jacob's theft of Esau's blessing illustrates how lies, deceitfulness, and malicious intentions permeated their family. But despite the fractures in their family, God used them. God used this fractured family to accomplish His purposes, and He can use ours, too.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Growing up, who was your favorite TV family?

TENSION

Maybe your family has a lot more reality show moments than perfect family moments.

Your family isn't like the family in your neighborhood or church that seems perfect, and maybe that's led you to think: *This isn't how it's supposed to be.*

Here's the truth: In some way or another, every family is fractured.

For most of us, the most messed up parts of families are things we can't control, and we typically respond in one of two ways: 1) We count them out. 2) We count us out.



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TRUTH

The family we're going to talk about today gives us some clues on what to do with our fractured family.

But right in the middle of these legendary people of the faith is this little snippet of a family story you might miss, even if you were looking for it.

God promised Abraham—who we now know as the father of all the Jewish people—that he was going to have tons of descendants.

Isaac's twin boys, Esau and Jacob, grew up fighting with each other, but they didn't forget God's promise to their grandfather.

Toward the end of Isaac's life, he called both sons to give them his final blessing.

Even though Jacob and Esau were twins, Esau was born first, so the biggest blessing would've gone to him.

Because Isaac was old and his eyesight was bad, Rebekah told Jacob to try and trick his dad into giving him the blessing instead.

Obviously, when Esau found out what happened, he wasn't happy. After some heated conversation, the Bible tells us that Esau planned to kill his brother.

How could *this* family be an example of anything having to do with God or faith?!

It was a way of believing that their family story, though difficult, wasn't over. God had a plan, and they trusted Him to come through for them.

APPLICATION

That may not seem like a big deal. But for some of us, believing this would be a game changer for our families.

In fact, for a lot of you, your greatest act of faith is to believe this . . . God can use a fractured family.

Don't count them out and don't count yourself out.

LANDING

What would you do or say differently if you trusted that God could still use your fractured family?

INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens during the Introduction. Ask a few of your students ahead of time who were their favorite families to watch on TV growing up. Show

a few images of these families in a quick slideshow during your Introduction, giving a shout out to the student who chose that TV family.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Reality Show / Week 1

PRELUDE

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BOTTOM LINE

GOD CAN USE A FRACTURED FAMILY.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Growing up, who was your favorite TV family?



INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens right here in the script. Check out the Communicator Guide that precedes this script to find out what to do here.

For me, it was the *Full House* family. I loved that family. They had a nice house, a cool uncle, a cute little sister, and a weird—but loveable—neighbor. And whenever they got close to having a fight, some emotional music would play and they'd all come to their senses and be happy again. It was magical. And even though it was super cheesy, I liked watching it, because it just seemed like that's how family is supposed to be.

In real life, my family couldn't have been more different. Mine was more like a *reality* TV show. There was yelling. There were slammed doors. There was throwing things—including a cordless phone that went through a window.

Yeah, never saw that happen on *Full House*!

And seriously, my family had some good moments, but we also had a lot of really messed up moments, too.

(Communicator Note: Tell a story of a time when you realized your family wasn't TV perfect.)

And every time things got crazy, I would think to myself: *This isn't how it's supposed to be.*

TENSION

3 MINUTES

Maybe your family has a lot more reality show moments than perfect family moments. And maybe, like me, you've begun to notice it more as you've gotten older. You've begun to pick up on some things that maybe you didn't notice as a little kid. Things like . . .

- **Tension.** Maybe your family doesn't slam doors, but there's an unspoken tension or stress you didn't see when you were younger. You feel it about to surface when your parents talk about money, vacation, grandparents, stepsiblings, or any number of other subjects. And it makes your house a stressful place to live.
- **Secrets.** Maybe as you've gotten older, you've discovered some things about your family that you wish you hadn't—secrets about relationships, affairs, legal problems, or bad decisions.
- **Fractures.** Maybe your family has some obvious broken spots. Maybe you previously experienced a divorce, remarriage, or re-divorce. At the time, it didn't seem like a big deal. But as you've gotten older, you've realized that it's affected you more than you initially thought.

Whatever the issue, you've probably started to realize just how messed up your family is. Your family isn't like the family in your neighborhood or at church who seems perfect, and that has led you to think the same thing I thought as a kid: *This isn't how it's supposed to be.*

If you've ever felt that way, you're not alone. Nearly everyone in this room has looked at their family and thought, *That's now how a dad's supposed to act, what a mom's supposed to do, or how siblings were meant to treat each other.* And we've all compared our family to someone else's (or some TV family) and felt like our reality just didn't measure up.

Because here's the truth: **In some way or another, every family is fractured.**

This isn't a Christian or church-family thing. It's a people thing. That's why, no matter what you believe about God, I think the next few weeks could be helpful for you. Because we all live in a family that—in some way, shape, or form—makes us feel like we're in a reality show.

For most of us, the most messed up parts of families are things we can't control. Because of that, we typically respond in one of two ways . . .

- **We count them out.** We decide that our dad isn't a good dad, or our stepmom isn't a good role model, and they probably never will be. So we use their mistakes as a reason (or an excuse) not to listen to them. We say things like, "I don't have to listen to you because you did this, or you *didn't* do that."
- **We count us out.** Most of us don't say this out loud, but we give up on our families. We stay out as much as possible. We stay in our rooms when we're

home. Maybe you've thought, *I've had enough. I'm done with my dad being late. I'm done with my mom nagging me. I'm just done. I'm going to count down the days until I'm out of here and I never have to come back.*

But even if your family is messed up, something inside of you knows this reaction isn't right, either. But what other options do you have? If you can't fix your fractured family, *and giving up on them doesn't feel right, what else can you do?*

TRUTH

6 MINUTES

The family we're going to talk about today gives us some clues on what to do with our fractured family.

At first glance, you're going to feel like you have nothing in common with these people. But trust me, they're not what they seem.

We're going to look at the book of Hebrews, a letter written to Jewish Christians who lived just after the time of Jesus. We don't know exactly who wrote the letter, but the purpose of the letter was clear: to help these new Jesus-followers stay strong in their faith during what would be a really tough time in their history.

One way the author does this is by reminding the readers of some of the greatest stories of faith among their ancestors. In fact, chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews is called the "Hall of Faith" by many people because, like any hall of fame, it's full of legendary people. For the Hebrew people, their legends included people like Noah, Abraham, and Moses. They all have powerful faith stories.

But right in the middle of these legendary people of the faith is this little snippet of a family story you might miss, even if you were looking for it. Here's what it says . . .

It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau (Hebrews 11:20 NLT).

Isn't that nice? It's like a TV family with a perfect dad who gives blessings to his kids while some cheesy music plays.

But for the readers of this letter, they knew better. They grew up hearing the story of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau, and knew this family story was anything *but* perfect.

But before we get to that, some history first.

God promised Abraham—who we now know as the father of all the Jewish people—that he was going to have tons of descendants. In fact, God said that the whole Earth would be blessed through him. Eventually Abraham had a son, Isaac, who got married and had children of his own.

TEACHING SCRIPT



Isaac's twin boys, Esau and Jacob, grew up fighting with each other, but they didn't forget God's promise to their grandfather. God promised that Abraham would be the beginning of a great nation, a promise passed down to their father, Isaac. So this great nation would eventually have to come through one of them, right? Well, that's where things got tricky.

Toward the end of Isaac's life, he called both sons to give them his final blessing. In their culture, this blessing worked a lot like a last will in ours. It was the legal passing of the family wealth from the parent to the child. It also determined who the next leader of the family would be. And, it would've been assumed that this person would eventually be the recipient of God's promise.

Basically, the blessing was everything, and typically the oldest child was the one to receive it.

Even though Jacob and Esau were twins, Esau was born first, so the biggest blessing would've gone to him. So Isaac said to Esau, his oldest son . . .

"Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die" (Genesis 27:4 NIV).

Simple enough.

But how's this for a plot twist? Esau's mom, Rebekah, had been eavesdropping. She thought the younger brother, Jacob, should be the family leader. So she told Jacob to hurry up and get the goats to make dinner. Because Isaac was old and his eyesight was bad, Rebekah told Jacob to try and trick his dad into giving him the blessing instead.

Jacob wasn't so sure, but not for the reason you might think . . .

Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing." His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me" (Genesis 27: 11-13 NIV).

Rebekah wasn't even trying to hide the fact that she had a favorite. Makes your mom look pretty good, right? Rebekah eventually convinced Jacob to trick his dad into giving him the family blessing (by putting on animal hair to make himself hairy to the touch!). And it worked! It was a moment that would've made reality TV history—and it's all in the Bible!

Obviously, when Esau found out what happened, he wasn't happy. After some heated conversation, the Bible tells us that Esau planned to kill his brother. So their mom convinced Jacob to go live with an uncle to keep him from getting murdered.

How's that for family drama? Does it make you feel better about your own family reality show?



TEACHING SCRIPT

That's why it's so fascinating that *this* family shows up thousands of years later in the letter to the Hebrew Christians as an *example* of faith. How could *this* family be an example of anything having to do with God or faith?! They were a mess!

Look at what the writer of Hebrews says about them . . .

It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons . . . (Hebrews 11:20a NLT).

In all of the drama, it's easy to forget what was really going on. God had promised Abraham and Isaac something for their family. Even though there were weird moments and bad situations, the very act of passing the blessing to Jacob or Esau was an act of faith. It was a way of saying, "I believe what God said about us is true. And I believe He has something good for our future."

It was a way of believing that their family story, though difficult, wasn't over. God had a plan, and they trusted Him to come through for them.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

That may not seem like a big deal. But for some of us, believing this truth would be a game changer for our families.

If you walked in here thinking your family is fractured and messed up, then you're totally right. **All families are fractured** because they're made up of fractured, broken people (including you).

But that doesn't mean it's the end of the story. Just like Isaac, Jacob, and Esau's family, God is right in the middle of your family story.

In fact, for a lot of you, your greatest act of faith is to believe this . . .

God can use a fractured family.

But what does that mean? How does this idea play out in real life?

- **Don't count them out.** Your family will mess up. 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 last thing they'll ever do. Their story isn't over. You can choose to believe the best about them, even when their actions aren't the best.

You have more influence than you think with your family members. Your belief in them can go a long way in helping them live out God's story. That's why this week, when you're tempted to point out their mistakes and think they're worthless, I want you to do something different: Believe the best about them. Believe that—

TEACHING SCRIPT

even if they messed up and hurt you—it wasn't necessarily intentional. Even if they let you down, again, it's possible they'll do better next time. Even if they're behaving poorly, believe that God hasn't given up on them.

- **Don't count yourself out.** You don't know what's going to happen next. So don't check out just yet. Don't ignore your family or daydream about the time when you can walk away. If you do, you may miss out on being part of an incredible story that God is writing in your family. So this week, when you're tempted to ignore them, I want you to re-engage with them. Talk to them, listen to them, and pray for them. Ask questions about the things they love, and stick around long enough to hear their answers. When you do, you'll be communicating not only that God's still a part of their story, but you are, too.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

So as you head out today, I want you to think about which members of your family you're tempted to give up on or walk away from. What would it look like for you to *not* count them out? **What would you do or say differently if you trusted that God could still use your fractured family?**

The reality is this: No family is TV-show perfect. In fact, most are more broken than anyone knows. But God can still use your family's reality for His purposes. So don't count them out and don't give up!



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
