

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 30 2019

family fiascoes

Scripture Story: Genesis 34; 35; 37.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 19.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Jacob's family continues to be a source of great pain during this era of his life. First, there is the fiasco involving his daughter, Dinah. After Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, violated her, Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, attacked Hamor's city and slaughtered every male.

Next, Jacob's family proves to be a source of great personal pain. After returning to Bethel, Deborah, the nurse for Jacob's mom, died. This loss was followed by Rachel's tragic death—which occurred while giving birth to Benjamin. Then Jacob's father, Isaac, died. To make matters worse, during this period Reuben, Jacob's oldest son, slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah. She was the mother of two of Reuben's half brothers, Dan and Naphtali.

Jacob's family woes only intensified as he showed blatant favoritism toward his son Joseph. This sparked intense jealousy among Joseph's brothers. A dream that Joseph's brothers would someday bow to him only fueled the inferno of envy. The sibling rivalry grew until Joseph's brothers betrayed him, selling him to merchants. Then Jacob's sons deceived Jacob by bringing Joseph's coat covered in blood, suggesting that Joseph had been killed. There is great irony in their act, for now Jacob was deceived in a fashion similar to the way he had duped his dad. Clearly there is plenty in this story to perplex even professional family therapists.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the ugly consequences of sin as they are played out in the context of family. (*Know*)
- Experience the healing grace that God offers to His children. (*Feel*)
- Have the opportunity to trust God in all family matters. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Family dynamics
- Peer pressure
- Anger

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

You come home from school and plop yourself on the sofa. Your thoughts drift to fond images of your close encounter with "Blue Eyes" in chemistry class.

Suddenly your mom interrupts your fantasy. "I think we met the perfect match for you today—Leslie. Yes! We've decided it's Leslie for you."

Not that your opinion matters, but you saw Leslie once at a youth rally, and your heart didn't flutter. Not that Leslie's ugly, but freckles and braces aren't your thing. Also, you would prefer someone at least as tall as you.

But your parents have been scouring the social circles for years, and they're convinced Leslie is the one. So after the formal introductions you and Leslie get married and move in together, even though you are strangers.

Does it seem too ludicrous? It's not unlike a number of situations in which you already find yourself.

Think about it. You had no choice in who your parents would be. Did you choose your brother or sister? Chances are you didn't choose your teacher. Yet you are forced to live with these people whom you did not select. The results can be as disastrous as an arranged marriage—but not necessarily.

Even today half of the marriages in the world are arranged. Many of these relationships flourish. Likewise your “arranged marriage” can work. Your family connections can be healthy and gratifying. What makes for a healthy family? The key is not in finding the perfect home or getting linked up with exceptional siblings. Rather, functional families result when all the members make choices to support and build up the family unit. By doing this, you can contribute your vital part to building a God-honoring family.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The Bible gives this promise for young people: “Obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. . . . If you honor your father and mother, yours will be a long life, full of blessing” (*Ephesians 6:1-3, TLB*). In this week’s lesson we observe a family that failed to follow such advice. Our case study features a family that is dysfunctional enough to merit their own reality TV show (similar to *The Osbournes!*). This takes us back to an era when most marriages were arranged, and yet many of the factors that sabotaged Jacob’s family are just as prevalent today.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- This season of Jacob’s life is filled with many family traumas. Underline each one, then rank them in order of difficulty.
- What picture of God do you get when reading

these stories from Jacob’s life?

- Circle the phrases that suggest dysfunction in Jacob’s family.
- What can we learn from this season of Jacob’s life with regard to the following issues? Identify a part of Jacob’s story that informs our understanding of each issue listed below, then write down the principle we learn from the biblical account.
 - ❖ The consequences of sin: _____
 - ❖ Sanctification (growing to become like Jesus): _____
 - ❖ Uncontrolled anger: _____
 - ❖ The dangers of being aligned with the world: _____
 - ❖ Peer pressure: _____
 - ❖ Community: _____
 - ❖ Revenge: _____
 - ❖ Human nature: _____
- If the following stories were produced into Hollywood movies, what titles would you give them?
 - ❖ Dinah and the Shechemites (*Genesis 34*) _____
 - ❖ Jacob’s return to Bethel (*Genesis 35:1-15*) _____
 - ❖ The deaths of Rachel and Isaac (*Genesis 35:16-29*) _____
 - ❖ Joseph’s dreams (*Genesis 37:1-11*) _____
 - ❖ Joseph sold into slavery (*Genesis 37:12-36*) _____

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share in your own words.

There are many details worth exploring deeper (with the help of a good commentary) in this lesson. Here are some cultural insights that illuminate the major stories in *Genesis 34* to *37*:

Dinah and Peer Pressure—In his treatment of the story of Dinah’s rape, Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, mentions the ancient custom for the girls of Shechem to participate in wild festivities. Dinah, believed by scholars to be about fifteen years old at the time of the incident, was likely in the habit of hanging out with the Shechemite women. *The*

Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 1, offers this insight: "Dinah was curious to know the ways and customs of the surrounding people. This led to unguarded intimacy with them and ended in her disgrace. Her danger came from seeking to be free from parental control and supervision, and from disregarding the admonition to remain separate from idolaters and their evil habits" (pp. 412, 413). In ancient times, as well as today, peer pressure is an important issue for teens. "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV).

Jacob as a Father—There are numerous hints in the text that Jacob was far too passive in his role as father and spiritual leader in his family. For example, when Jacob learned that Reuben had committed incest with Bilhah, the mother of two of his half brothers, Jacob failed to confront the sin. Notice in Genesis 35:22, 23 when the writer discloses the sordid affair, he then drops the story and goes on to list the names of Jacob's twelve sons. Another example of Jacob's passivity is recorded in Genesis 34 when he failed to do anything after his daughter was raped. Understanding this character defect in Jacob helps to explain the deception, the anger, and the out-of-control jealousy that poisoned the ranks of Jacob's sons—all of these attributes were modeled by the father.

Joseph's Coat of Many Colors—Old Testament scholar, H. C. Leupold, points out that Joseph's coat of many colors was sleeved and extended to the ankles. His conclusion is based on the Hebrew word used to describe Joseph's coat, *passeem*, which



Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Group Investigation

"Group investigation" is an effective technique that can be used in teaching a Sabbath School class. This approach comes from the social model of learning and is based on John Dewey's educational theories. It encourages cooperative inquiry and group learning. To use this approach, have students form small groups and work toward accomplishing a shared goal. For this lesson, the goal might be to design a calendar that facilitates more family time. Another goal might be to plan and present a seminar to the rest of the group or the church on how to improve family communications. The possibilities are endless. The point is to facilitate students learning in community.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Have the students write modern paraphrases of the following passages:

Proverbs 6:20-22

Romans 12:9-13

Ephesians 6:1-4

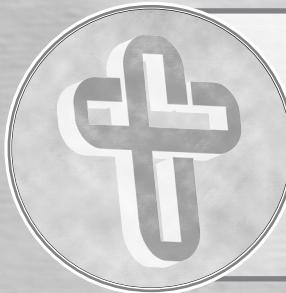
In closing, remind the students that no family is perfect. Parents are far from perfect, and kids are just as flawed. However, every family can improve if each member is willing to invest in making it better. The late President John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but instead what you can do for your country.” The same principle rings true for families. Challenge the students: “Ask not what your family can do for you, but what you can do for your family.” Let students know that you are willing to support them in their quest to improve less-than-ideal home situations. Remind them as well that God is a ready help through any trouble.

Summary

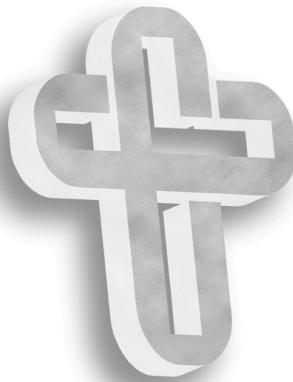
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

While families have changed through the years, in many ways they remain the same. Jacob’s family lived around 4,000 years ago. Although the culture has changed, some of the moral failures and relational challenges prevalent in Jacob’s family are still common today. From Jacob’s experience, it is important to remember these principles:

- The consequences of sin can plague a family for many generations.
- Sin must be confronted in the family. Ignoring issues only exacerbates the problems.
- Peer pressure and friendships outside of the family have great potential for good or evil.
- Left unchecked, rivalries, envy, and anger can destroy a family.
- You were created for community. It is the one nonnegotiable condition for flourishing as a human being.
- God can bring grace and healing—even to the most horrific and dysfunctional families.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 19. A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Genesis 34; 35; 37.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 19.

family fiascoes

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flashlight

"There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life' " (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 207).

keytext

"And God said to him, 'I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. . . . The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.' "

(Genesis 35:11, 12, NIV)

what do you think?

Circle three words that best describe your family:

Busy	Loving	Stressed
Critical	Caring	Noisy
Cheap	Happy	Funny
Dysfunctional	Growing	Outgoing
Clueless	Peaceful	Close
Fractured	Christian	Disconnected
Embarrassing	Conservative	

Allowing for the possibility of a "perfect family," finish the following statements:

"A perfect family would always _____."

"A perfect family would never _____."

did you know?

By the time Joseph turned 10 years old, here's the situation in his family: The father is a polygamist, fathering 12 sons from four women (two of whom were sisters and he loved some more than others) who lived in the same household, as did all of the brothers and half brothers. His only sister has been shamed. His older brothers were guilty of murder, plundering, theft, and gross immorality. His half brother Reuben committed a crime that caused him to lose his birthright. Here's a family that is in conflict, yet not beyond God's reach.

he made an ornate robe for him.

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

"Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more."

"So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern."

"Judah said to his brothers, 'What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.' His brothers agreed.

"So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt."

"Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, 'We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe.'

"He recognized it and said, 'It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.'"

(Genesis 34:1, 2, 24, 25; 35:1, 8, 16-19; 37:3-5, 23, 24, 26-28, 31-33, NIV)

INTO THE STORY

"Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her."

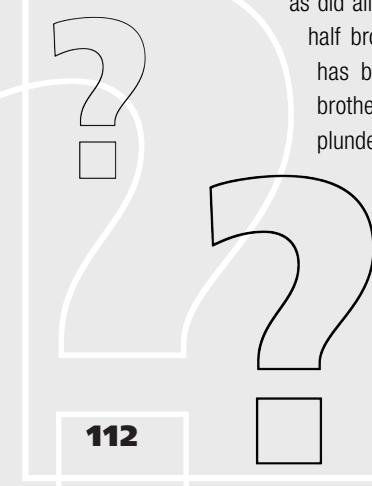
"All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised. Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male."

"Then God said to Jacob, 'Go up to Bethel.'"

"Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died."

"Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. . . So Rachel died."

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, . . . and



OUT OF THE STORY

This season of Jacob's life is filled with many family traumas. *Underline* each one, then rank them in order of difficulty.

What picture of God do you get when reading these stories from Jacob's life?

Circle the phrases that suggest dysfunction in Jacob's family.

What can we learn from this season of Jacob's life with regard to the following issues? Identify a part of Jacob's story that informs our understanding of each issue listed below, then write down the principle we learn from the biblical account.

The consequences of sin:

Sanctification (growing to become like Jesus):

Uncontrolled anger:

The dangers of being aligned with the world:

Peer pressure:

Community:

Revenge:

Human nature:

If the following stories were produced as books, what titles would you give them?

Dinah and the Shechemites (Genesis 34)

Jacob's return to Bethel (Genesis 35:1-15)

The deaths of Rachel and Isaac (Genesis 35:16-29)

Joseph's dreams (Genesis 37:1-11)

Joseph sold into slavery (Genesis 37:12-36)

punch lines

"**Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife"**
(Proverbs 17:1, NIV).

"**Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honor the Master. Husbands, go all out in love for your wives. Don't take advantage of them. Children, do what your parents tell you. This delights the Master no end. Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits"** (Colossians 3:18-21, *The Message*).

"**May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God**" (Romans 15:5-7, NIV).

"**A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones**" (Proverbs 14:30, NIV).

"**But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth**" (James 3:14, NIV).

further insight

"The husband and father is the head of the household. . . . The children look to the father for support and guidance; he needs to have a right conception of life and of the influences and associations that should surround his family; above all, he should be controlled by the love and fear of God and by the teaching of His word, that he may guide the feet of his children in the right way."—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 211.

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Sabbath

Read Proverbs 17:1.

Do the *What Do You Think?* activities listed in the beginning of this week's lesson and respond to the questions given. While the "perfect family" may be hard to find, sometimes knowing what is most important aids in evaluating whether a family is functional or dysfunctional. What do you think about the words of the wise man in our reading today?

My paraphrase:

What do you think is the central truth in this passage? How do the words of the wise man relate to your family?

Sunday

Read Proverbs 14:30.

Read the snapshots of Jacob's family traumas in the *Into the Story* section. As you read each passage carefully, how do you feel about some of the unsavory stories (such as that of Dinah) that are included in the Bible? Why do you suppose God included such sordid tales in the Sacred Record?

Respond to the questions in the *Out of the Story* section as they guide you into a deeper understanding of the family issues of this Bible story. What do you think God is trying to say to you in the snapshots you have read?

In a relatively short time Jacob lost three close companions (Deborah, Rachel, and Isaac). What's the best thing you can do for somebody like Jacob who is grief-stricken with loss?

Monday

Read Genesis 35:11, 12; Philippians 1:6.

Read the *Key Text* for this week and reflect on why this promise is significant. One important reality to consider is that from the promise of a Savior in the Garden of Eden to the time of Jacob, people were waiting for a Savior to come from within their family line—family dynamics are extremely crucial! It must have been frustrating for Jacob to watch the way mistake after mistake marred the family peace and to still believe that God could truly fulfill His promise. Compare the two promises in today's reading. How can God fulfill this promise in your life?

Tuesday

Read James 4:7, 12.

Ellen White reveals a masterful insight on the power of choice in the *Flashlight* quote. Examine this statement and think about two people you know: one who may be resisting the promptings of God's Spirit in their life; another who is aligning their life in harmony with God's plan for their salvation. Both have a choice to make. Pray for them, as well as yourself to deepen your commitment to God's work in your lives.

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* and choose the verse that seems to speak to the scenario in which you live today. Of all the passages offered in this section, which do you think would make the biggest difference in families today if taken to heart and applied? Why? Share this scripture with your parents or others you know who might need a helpful word from God in their daily struggles. Be sure to let them know you are praying for them.

Thursday

Read Colossians 3:18-21.

Read chapter 19 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and try to glean from this reading three insights that open your eyes to aspects of Jacob's life that are like your own. Write them in the space below:

Like Jacob/Like Me

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What lesson in this chapter do you think would benefit families and believers in any generation?

Friday

Read Romans 15:5-7.

In today's reading Paul offers a prayer for believers. As you look at the way you relate to your family members, do you see a message God might have for you in the above text?

Go out of your way this week to be a peacemaker, and God will go with you and bless you!

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 19.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.