

<b>Topic</b>	Identity and Family Relationships
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We are continuing on with the book of Genesis, but what we do every month for the last few months is that we are going to fix in general themes in Genesis and last time we spoke, we look at how Genesis had a lot to talk to us about identity. And I want to stress my personal conviction, Identity is one of the key most understated things that a believer needs to understand and to grasp, because this affects us so much in our behavior.

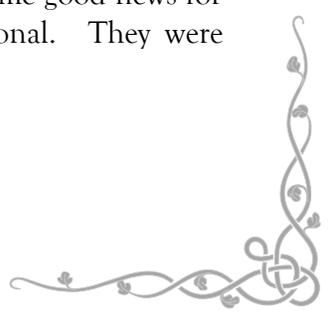
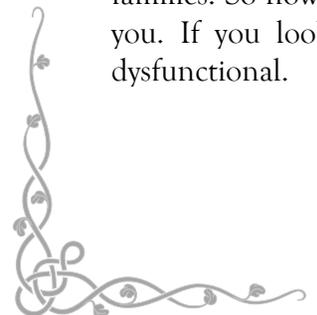
Science tells us this, scripture tells us this and last time I spoke, we look at Jacob and his identity was very much what he was a deceiver. And so God taught him, just basically some recap, what you are and what you should be. What you are, the world has impressed an identity onto you as a deceiver, is your past. Some of us is social pressure, is family pressure, a lot of things, but this is what God wants you to be. This is your new man. And so God changes his name.

Secondly, we learned that we all have a shared identity and it is important shared identity, what it is. 1 Corinthians 7 tells us it is this, we belong to Christ. And 1-Corinthians 7, it doesn't matter whether you're a slave or you're free man or you're circumcised or uncircumcised, married or single or divorced or widowed, we are all in Christ. That is our security and lastly we learn this, who am I? Who does God want me to be? We understand this. God knows us better than us. He knows us by name. He knew Jacob by name. We don't know God by name because we are not God. I mean, we cannot, we know now he is Yahweh, but during that time you cannot put him on an equal platform as you.

So God knows us and he tells Moses the same thing, I know you by name. And so God guides us in our daily journey in the same way he guided Joseph from being in enslavement to prison to King. And so today we're going to continue the idea of identity and we're going to look at one identity marker that really shapes all of us. And that is families.

Families probably play the most crucial identity marker in shaping us because we were all brought up, we were all children, most of us were wives or husbands, and then we became parents. So this shapes, this transformative journey shapes us and you find that scripture has a lot to say about this. So this morning, we're going to look at identity and family relationships.

What are we going to do today it that, we're going to take a wide scope of a lot of the chapters we have studied before, I am just going to pluck a few of it as a refresher and we are going to do what is known as systematic theology. Don't be afraid of the big word. It means we're going to look at some themes in families. So now you might say that, I didn't come from such a good family. So here's some good news for you. If you look at all the families in the New Testament, boy they are dysfunctional. They were dysfunctional.



Abraham lied about his wife to the two Kings. His son Isaac does exactly the same thing, learning from the dad, and then you have of course the children, you know, you have favoritism. Isaac love Esau and the wife love Jacob, that went on later on. So when Jacob got older, he loved Joseph. You notice the things going on and let's not talk about the sibling rivalry. The fights that are going on. And by the way, you're not you, don't just the men, the women don't get on either. Yeah. I know the two sisters don't get on, you know, you find the wives don't get on and lets not start about all the sexual sins that happen in families.

Boy does Genesis talk about daughter sleeping with their fathers, you know, fathers treating your daughter-in-law like a prostitute. Very R-rated. The families in Genesis are dysfunctional yet God uses them. So, if you are tuning in this morning and you say that you had a bad family background, scripture is talking to you.

Here's the opposite. You can come from a good family. You can have a good inheritance. You can have great things that doesn't mean you will turn out right and that's something we're really going to talk about today. Let me just give you a few, what we call ground rules for what we're going to do today. We're going to go through a whole series of scripture. I'm going to suggest you're going to go back and read those texts. We have all gone through all this sermons and what I'm going to tell you right now, we're going to look at certain things that Genesis has. Genesis had this thing called a motif, there are themes.

I mean, they have certain things that reoccur. Let me give you one that you would have picked up. They're always twos. And in fact, this motive of two is all over scripture. It starts off with two people, Adam and Eve, after that two sons. Cain and Abel. Later on Abraham two wives, Hagar and Sarah. And then afterwards you go on two nations become will come out. First Egypt and Israel, Babylon and Israel, and then later on in the New Testament two ways to live, narrow gate, big gate, sheep and goats. And this theme of two carries all the way down. Why? Because the motif is telling you something. The Bible basically says the cross device everybody into two camps. There are two ways to live. You either live under the Lord or you live under self. So there's a motive.

I'm going to carry this motive of two into a deeper motive. They call this the younger brother, older brother motive, and every scholar has picked this up. Let me explain a little bit of Jewish history in the Old Testament, during this time and especially for the readers who read this, because it was written during the Exodus. If you were a Jewish Hebrew, the oldest brother was entitled to a lot of things, very much like Chinese families. The older brother had double portion of inheritance. Those of you who are Chinese, I believe Indians have the same thing, the older brother carried more responsibility. The older brother took on, if you have a company the business goes to who, the business always goes to the older brother.

So the older brother got the bigger thing. So you are the oldest, you had a lot of stuff. History shows this, if you're a King, who succeeds the throne, the older brother. That is why everybody wants to kill the older brother. So the older brother was very empowered and that is something that history tells us, that is something Jewish, Deuteronomy law says it. He gets double inheritance, but this is interesting what Genesis does. I am going to just show you a broad picture. The first, older brothers Cain and Abel, who does God favor? Older brother, younger brother. Younger brother, Able. Next one, Isaac and Ishmael. Older brother Ishmael, covenant goes to who? Isaac. Third brother, Jacob and Esau. This is the most obvious, most blatant. And from the day go off, the prophecy is the older shall serve the younger, favor

goes on Jacob. And then you have Joseph and his brothers and who becomes King? Joseph. He is second youngest by the way. Okay. And then of course, the last one that really basically completes the whole picture is this story that most of us don't read. It is about Ephraim and Manasseh and they are the children of Joseph and the younger is Ephraim and the blessings goes to Ephraim.

And so scholars have picked this up to say that there's a motive here what is God trying to tell us? So what we're going to do there, we're going to go through all these five families, learn something about family dynamics and then I'm going to give you a big lesson about what the younger brother, older brother motive means because it carries through to the New Testament. But a lot of things we're going to learn about families here.

Let's start off with Cain and Abel. Genesis 4:1-5. We know this text. It basically gives us the first narrative that there were two offerings and older brother brought an offering, younger brother brought an offering and God's favor went on the offering of the younger brother. I have preached on this text before. I want to just take it on a few other details that I didn't have time to do last time. To really understand this text, you got to go back to Genesis chapter 3, the chapter before this and of course, when sin entered the world, God put a curse. He put a curse on a snake, the devil, and he says, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

So what do we learn here? We learn that there is going to be war. So, there will be a war and so if you're an Israelite, you will be saying, look, there's going to be a war. There are going to be two armies, one, the army of the snake, the offspring of the snake, another one, the army of the woman. That's going to be the offspring of the woman. So in your mind, you start to think war and then you begin to say, okay, right. we are, we are on the Exodus. This is where the Moabites came from, this is Canaanites. This are where the enemies of God came from. Where did it come from? You begin to see where did the Israelites come from and so the next verse says,

Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord that brought forth of man."

What do you think the Israelite will think? He will think, Ah Cain offspring of who, offspring of woman. For an Israelite reading this, he thinks Cain is on the side of the woman. Then the story takes a twist and a very famous Bible scholar says this, the story does like Cain switch sides. Because later on, we find God telling him the devil is there. You must struggle against your sin. He says, the Lord says this in verse eight, six, why are you so angry if you do what is right? Will you not be accepted. If you do not do what is right, Sin is crouching at your door.

And that again is a connection with the serpent, but he gives in and so Cain switch camps. Now that's a very simple story here. Because when an Israelite reads Genesis 3:15, he begins to see where did the war start. He begins to imagine land and the people fighting, guess where the war begins. It begins among brothers. It begins in the family and so the first thing you learn is this. Take care of your family. Above your work, above your church relationships, your family is paramount and Deuteronomy 6 will pick this up. The war begins in a family.

How does the war go? Now how can you say, someone who say theologically, how can you say that? You know, Cain is the line of snake, because later on when we go to chapter 5, we see this, because what happens in the line of Adam? You find that there will be two lines. There would be two lines, at the end of chapter 4 Eve says this. look at verse 27.

**God has granted me another child in place of Able.**

Meaning, in place of Abel, Seth is basically the replacement of Abel. This is the continuity of the line of the woman, and so two lines come out and I put it up there for you to have a look. And then after that, you look the verse says this that defines the line of Seth. At the end of chapter four it says,

**At that time men begin to call on the name of the Lord.**

Then after that, the lineage of Seth comes in. Now, we all don't like genealogy, very boring one, only scholars that will read it, but I wanted to give you some simple things, not to complicate it, but look at what's been interesting. There numbers here, if you look at chapter four, the number seven occurs again again, again and again, alright. We talk about the punishment, seven times, seven times seven. We find that Lord says in verse 19.

**Anyone kills Cain he will suffer vengeance seven times over Lamech.**

Then says, well, I'm going to increase and distort it to seven times seven times. What do you have here? You have seven. So God is trying to tell you something. In the six lineage, he becomes really bad news. Now, what is the line of Cain tell us. You read it. They were entrepreneurs. They invented the arts, they were doing agriculture. They built cities. They were like, you know what you want your children to be right. They were all graduates. They were all professionals. They made a lot of money, but they were evil people and the line tells you, at the sixth line Lamech is the worst of the worst. He was the first polygamist and he will kill people. And then the line of Seth the sixth person of Enoch, and what is Enoch known for only this.

**He was commended as one who please God**

And later on the same story goes with Noah. That same language. Enoch walked with God. Noah walked with God. And after that, the line splits again. Out of this Ham becomes the father of the Canaanites and so the line splits again, this is the line of the woman. This is the line of this snake. So what we're learning here. The author is telling you the importance of what do you pass on to your children? What do you pass on? Now what do Asians like to pass on to their children? If you ask an Asian father, right? He said, how will you as a parent? They say, you know, I spend money. You know, I brought them through education, spare time, go for piano classes, go for ballet, go learn the violin, do all these things.

Asians to them that is important. You ask them how about Bible study, Oh ask Sunday school lah. They will invest in all these things because to a Asian family success is defined as what, success is this. Nowadays you must have more you know computer related skills, but in the eyes of the Lord, what is success. In the eyes of the Lord, is this. Notice in this line, there is no mention of whether you got degree, no degree.

There's only one thing that lineage has, the all dependent on the Lord. So I'm going to start off with lesson number one on family dynamics.

What's the most important thing you can passed on to your children. To teach them to walk in the Lord. What's the best way of doing it? By them watching you. It doesn't matter how successful you are. It doesn't matter even if you have a lot of struggles, if they see you walk in the Lord that will follow soon, because later on you find one thing Genesis does is that lot of things are passed on from generation to generation.

Let me go onto the next pair, Isaac and Ishmael. Now this one is quite interesting. I will read it for you. We find Genesis 17, God when he does his covenant with Isaac, he says that

**20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him;**

Now this is interesting because both sons are blessed. Unlike Cain and Abel where one is cursed, both these two both are blessed.

**I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.**

Now there is a parallel here. So Ishmael will have tribes to come out of him and so were Isaac. So we are having equality here. Two sons again and Ishmael is the oldest

**21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac,**

The younger brother gets the covenant. Now this story gets his roots as you know, we read it before in Genesis 16 and is a fascinating story about family dynamics, and we know she waited and she waited and she waited and she struggled like most parents struggle. And at one point she gave up. And she said this this,

**The lord has kept me from having children.**

She has no rationalized her view and now she takes things into our own hands, go sleep with my slave. By the way, that's also a recurring motive. Women who don't have children, making their husband sleep with other women is a motif. Jacob will get that tool with his two wives, and of course he doesn't go right. And of course if we read it, later on, this you can really sense the family dynamics. Sarah says to Abraham,

**You are responsible the wrong on doing.**

Wow you can only see Genesis three where Adam says it's the woman's fault, the woman you placed with me. So you get the first one, shifting responsibility. Your fault, you are responsible, made a lord judge between you and me, and of course, to add spice to it we use God's name into it. She did it before the Lord kept me for having children, now the Lord will judge you.

One thing we do in family struggles, among Christians that we like to pull God's name in. Why? Because legitimizes our position. God wants you to change. You got a temper, you got this problem. Abraham does the same thing like what Adam does. Do you hear whatever you think best. So let me tell you a question. Who is the central character in narrative? People see it is Sarah. Some people see it is to Sarah and Hagar.

I suggest to you, it is not, because in this story arch there is only one main character, who is it, it is Abraham. So, what is the text teaching us. Number one, Abraham abandoned his Hagar and his unborn child. Wow, great father. This is our patriarch you know, you slept with a woman so that your line can continue. Your wife doesn't agree with it, you abandon her. The second thing very obviously is he abandoned his role as head of the family and we see this now this a lot with Asians, you know, because Asian fathers are spending time at work. They keep saying, go do so many things and they have basically subcontracted the work to their wives, to the mothers. And I think there is a very big need now for men to reclaim their roles in the family.

So I want to give a simple thing. How much time do you spend with your children? Are you too busy at work? Do you spend time to understand them? But what's quite interesting is this narrative. It is you find another motive that occurs in Genesis. Whenever things are done, which God doesn't approve, what happens is that, the text is silent about God. You find that later on with Jacob and the mother trying to deceive the father. The text is silent about God. Why? Because it means you abandoned seeking God in difficult family issues. And it adds something else, you use God's name to rationalize your decision-making.

I say this in love. I think one thing this year the trend is to be vulnerable. I mean, we saw that with what the brother Samuel did with his admission on his struggles, which a lot of men have. I spend time with families and I want to see a, not speaking to anybody in particular, and I noticed one thing when families approach us in family life for help and they tell us have this struggle, they are always saying the same thing. They basically are saying I'm right, the other side is wrong. Arnold you go and talk to them. They're basically not asking for help. They are asking for what basically they want you to basically affirm their decision. So when you tell them, you know, what is the issue? Isn't your spouse? What the issue, isn't your children. What if you have an issue you have not sought out God.

No, Arnold it is not my problem. It's their problem. Tell my son to take care of me. My son has to take care of me and I say brother what if the Lord is saying, your son has been taking care of you too much, he can't go on. You need to find support with other people and then they get worked up.

So the question is abandonment. Have you abandoned God in your family dynamics? And so the other thing coming out is one of the beautiful stories that goes through the New Testament. It is God's grace extends to all those who are abandon. We have in Hagar, she runs away. God speaks to Hagar. Leah, the unloved wife, God speaks to her and bless us with children. Tamar, step daughter her two husband died and yet God allows her to have a child through very unusual ways, but God's grace extends to all these people.

So let's go through now, we learned about how the most important thing is to depend on God in your family. There's a most important thing you teach your children, it is great to give them good education, it

is good to provide a roof over their head and Chinese family love to say this. You know, I suffer a lot. I want to make sure you don't suffer. There's classically Chinese, but the most important thing is children must see that you depend on the Lord and when it comes to difficult decisions you don't abandon God. You don't use God as a template to want your way. And here, the third story really picks this up. In

In Jacob and Esau, the story is very clear. Genesis 25:23, it says this with for the two sons. We have here, the older was serve the younger and the motif becomes front and center. And of course, Jacob really personifies this and we have studied a lot of this. I preach about this in the last sermon. I wanted to pick up a few points. One is this, do you face your deepest fears in your family issues or are you running from them? Because the story of Jacob has to pass, one him running. The mother teaches him to run.

He is always running and he is a guy who can plan. Finally, he stops running. With a limp he faces front and center his deepest fear. We all have fears in our families. Some of us, we have double lives. We have things we keep from our spouse, again this morning we want to be vulnerable and speaking of no one, speaking to everyone and we are very afraid if our wives find it out or our husbands find it out we will be rejected, so we hide them and we put this away. Whenever a sermon comes up and speaks about this, we get uncomfortable. We want to reach out there and switch off the screen. Some of us we are very afraid of being lonely. So, we put devices in our lives. Sometimes we weaponize things like our health or this to ensure that our children feel so guilty to take care of us, because why our deepest fear is loneliness.

We all have that, and the thing is sometimes we bury it down. Some of us have hurts that we buried deep inside and so what is this text saying. The text is saying, you have to face it, but here's the good news. You don't face it yourself. You face it with the Lord. You wrestle with the Lord. You take it before the Lord and say, you know I struggle with this. I'm really fearful. But Lord I take it to you. I wrestle you. And here's the good news. The good news is this Genesis 31 says, Jacob replied,

**I will not let you go unless you bless me.**

And what's the great news here. The great news is blessings to you and your family will only come after you wrestle with God. So this continues on with a story about the earlier one we had about Isaac and Ishmael. The idea is that God would test your faith all the way. If Sarah had just wrestled and said, you know, I find it difficult, we all have this right now in this CMCO families are struggling. Some have no money, some relationships are bad and it is very tempting to rationalize our way and go our way. Two ways to live, go the way of Cain, go and rationalize our things, hide our sins and hope things will go okay.

Or you take it before the Lord, wrestle with the Lord, I struggle I don't know how no one else knows this. My wife does this. I have a temper issue. I have an issue with my mouth. I say this thing, a trigger my partner. I feel guilty over how I treated my children. I feel sad and disappointed. I wrestle with this. All of us out there, you are watching this, you have your struggle. You wrestle with God, you don't bury it. And when you wrestle with God, God will bless you. That is a promise of scripture. How does he do that? We will go now to this story arch, and this is probably the centerpiece and the next week, Leon would speak on this.

I'm just going to do a little bit at home. I'm not stealing his thunder. And this one, we're going to read a little bit again, the motive is there. Let's read a bit of Genesis 37 verses five to eight.

5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: 7 We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." 8 His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

The reality is this, arrogant, young upstart immature, he is speaking prophetically through the spirit. He, his brothers will submit to him. He will be King. Again, the motive is reinforced here. All the older brothers from Jacob to Simeon, to Ruben, all of them and they have a big family will bow literally to this young upstart. Again, younger older brother motive. Now this story arc is so long. It's probably one of the most major stories, why and many reasons because people think Joseph basically personifies, what we call is a foreshadow of Jesus, but in many part of the story we want them to go through. Now we have been going through a sermon series.

Jacob was sold into slavery by his brothers. So that's the first thing about family dynamics, you know. Some people say, you know, I know you don't understand my problem. I can't get on my sister. I can't get on my brother. I can't get on. Do you know, my father did this. Do you know my brother did this? Do you know my sister did this? Well, then the question the Bible says is did your brother try to kill you. Did your brother try to sell you into slavery. That's how the story starts and then there is the journey of Joseph into Potiphar and then through prison and then King and so here is the new story, he is now from humiliation to exaltation. And now he is King. Of course, we will read later on, um, the land has famine. The brothers come to see the King and he is the motive and they cannot recognize the King. King Joseph, their own younger brother drops hints. What does he do? He lines them up in the chronology of the age. They still do not recognize the king. And then he does something. He puts a test. The youngest son Benjamin is given five times the portion to eat when they come to meet them and to try to get food, to bring back to their starving countrymen, because he wants to see whether they will react the same way with favoritism.

The story begins with the brothers not happy because the dad has favoritism over Joseph. So now Joseph does a test. He gives five times the amount of food to Benjamin five times a portion in Egyptian culture is royalty and he wants to see whether the brothers will start to get jealous. The brothers passed the test and in the end he has another test. He frames Benjamin for theft and he says, well, all of you can go back with the food, but Benjamin will stay as a slave. So here is the background of story. Benjamin is the youngest and Jacob the father loves him deeply.

So basically, it's payback time. You know, you made me a slave. I'm going to make my brother a slave. Let's see what you guys do. Now, this test is really revealing on family dynamics, and so who steps up to the plate. Of all people Jacob, this is the son who married an outsider, sleeps with prostitutes, was such a bad father, both his sons, the Lord took away and then slap me with his daughter in law, he is bad news. So here, the story is, as we lead towards reconciliation with Jacob, it tells you about how God can change a

person. So read this what Jacob says. It is a wonderful tax. And Jacob, pleads with the King, keyword is the King.

27 “Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons. 28 One of them went away from me, and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces.” And I have not seen him since. 29 If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.’

That means. Jacob would die of sorrow if Benjamin doesn't come back. So Jacob makes a proposal. Look at me what he says,

30 “So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, 31 sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. 32 Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!’

Here he stands in the gap. And then makes a plea.

33 “Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy

He puts himself on the behalf of the sins of the brothers as a sacrifice and let the boy return with his brothers.

34 How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father.”

Fourth time he mentions about the fonder. Yes, in one way. Joseph personifies Jesus. He is the King who rescues his people out of starvation in this case. He was humiliated and exalted, many scholars have picked it up, but Jacob in many ways personifies what God wants us to be. Who we are, whether you are Jacob, the deceiver, or Judah who is such a bad news and then now changing, this is what God wants us to be, who you are, who you want you to be, because the story here is a story about the most critical thing in family dynamics. What is that? Forgiveness and reconciliation. Because every family will have this one, you know, they have some member they cannot forgive, they struggle. How do you bring about that? Some of us have gone through a divorce. We cannot forgive our ex-partner. Sometimes we feel our children hurt us. Sometimes you would think of parents heart us.

I want to talk about the anatomy of reconciliation and there are three things we learn from Judah. The first is empathy because Judah understands the pain of the father. So, in any reconciliation in a family, you always look on the other side because we are so filled with pain, we always see our pain, we never see the pain on the other side, and Judah looks at the pain of the father. The father thought one son had died, if this other son is taken away he will die of sorrow. The first is empathy. The second is covenant. He covenanted to the father, Judah to the father. You know what, I will bring Benjamin back no matter what.

I will keep my word, to put it in other words, I will bring Benjamin back even if it costs my life. And so God asked you today, you have covenanted that we him to live a certain way. Do you have that covenant in your family dynamics or do you need to do that in church. In family, you will lead your family your own way. Two ways to live. Are you falling the way of Cain? Are you following the way of Esau or will you wrestle with God? Will you not abandon God in your family issues? And the last one of course is godly sacrifice. Isn't it. He stands in the gap and says, you know what don't take Benjamin take me. And this is not exclusive but it really shows you how we should live in families, how children should be sacrificial to their parents.

In many ways, it's about children. And what happens after this? The King, the King weeps, there is another motif. He weeps privately and publicly and then he reveals himself. You want God to reveal yourself in your family, this is the way to do. Remember your covenant with God, have empathy for your family members. Show sacrificial love, the way Christ did it for us on the cross and God reveals himself to us.

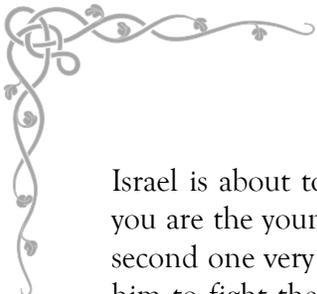
Let me end with us, Ephraim and Manasseh because most people know the story. Let me just tell you who they are. They are the children of Joseph, they are actually half Egyptian because his wife is Egyptian. Now that is interesting because I am an Israelite when you read this, you are not purely an Israelite. The Israelites reading this have just come out of bondage from Egypt. So, they don't really like Egyptians. So, these two sons are half-breeds.

Joseph brings his son to Jacob for blessings. Jacob is 130 years old and he is about to pass away. And what happens is this? He brings the two sons. He takes the oldest boy and brings it towards Jacob to be blessed. And then he takes the youngest son later on, and then Jacob does something interesting. He crosses his hands, you know, you know what he does he blesses the younger boy. And here the motive is full-force verse 17.

17 When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." 19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations."

And Hebrew tells us by faith, Jacob when he was dying blessed each of Joseph's son and this was an act of worship and worship as his lien on the top of his staff. Now there's so many things we can learn here. Number one, what Jacob did was he literally adopted the two boys to be the 12 tribe. So, it is about adoption and who did adopt. He adopted half Egyptians by the way. They are the outsiders, you know, and out of the two half Egyptians. He took the younger boy and said, through you the older boy will be blessed. Unlike Esau and Jacob, unlike Ishmael and Isaac, unlike Cain and Abel, unlike Joseph and the brothers where there was always tension, in this story there is no tension among the brothers, but the story is the younger boy will bless the older boy, and they are both outsiders who are now adopted into family.

So let me close with this. I want to give you a big picture. We read all of this, what it is telling us and what it does particularly the last story tells us. Number one, it tells about Israel and the surrounding nations As



Israel is about to enter they see Canaan, they see all the enemies and they feel small and God tell them you are the younger brother in a sense. They are bigger but you will prevail as you enter. That's one. The second one very obviously is David. David is the youngest of the sons of Jesse, the smallest yet God chose him to fight the Philistine and to become Kings. Later on there are two kings, Saul and David and the younger man, the one that doesn't look big, the one that is not strong with prevail. That goes on again. The New Testament has two sons, the prodigal son and the older brother and who is really the one favorite in the end.

The prodigal son is like Judah. He liked Jacob, the deceiver, who he was and who God wants him to be and it end what does the father say? Bring on the signet ring, bring on the rope, put him on this royalty. And lastly, what does it say? It tells us about the church because in the book of Romans, we are the engrafted brunch. One side I will tell you the blessings to Jerusalem, the blessings to the Jews will come from the church, will come from the gentiles. We are the younger brother, we are the engrafted brunch, and prophetically it is my own theology, Salvation to the Jews will come from the Gentiles. We will lead the way, but what am I trying to tell you all of this.

What am I trying to say this about your family? What is this identity that we have? So if you are there right now and you feel that, you know, you are struggling through family motives, family issues you feel you are struggling through family trouble. How does this play your identity? Let me just end with the words of Paul. He stays in 1-Cor 1:27

**But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.**

Later on he says the last shall be first. So, where is your identity? Your identity is in Christ. No matter what your family struggles are, if you're struggling with it and you feel very overburdened, bring it towards God, wrestle with God, learn to find reconciliation, why, because God has chosen you, even though you're weak to shame the strong. What if your family dynamics are great? What if you are just, you are like the first born and then scripture will tell you live by grace, do not be arrogant, do not take it for granted that you have all of this and learn to bless everybody. Especially during this time of the CMCO when many suffering. God bless you and your families and may you then be a blessing to the church and made the church be a blessing to the nations. God bless you all this Sunday.