← Genesis	♣ ∷
Session 5: The Dysfunctional, Remarkable Family	
SESSION GOALS	
Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.	
Main Idea Manipulating people and circumstances lead to dysfunction and broken relationships while surrendering to God brings abundant life.	
Head Change To know that deception might seem to work for a while but will always lead to dysfunction.	
Heart Change To feel grateful for a God who will pursue us in our lowest moments to raise us again more aligned with his will.	
Life Change To trust God's work in our lives enough to avoid scheming ways to reach the "abundant" life and instead surrender to his daily leading with patience and trust.	
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OPEN	
Think about your favorite eccentric family member. What do they do to make family gatherings more memorable, for better or for worse? How do people tend to react to them?	
Jacob was the meddlesome, eccentric, drama-instigating person in his family. Between his sibling rivalry with his twin brother, his self-imposed exile, and his marriage to a pair of rival sisters, Jacob's life reads like a soap opera. But while God's chosen people are a mess, his plan is still on track and he is actively working through the dysfunction of Jacob's life.	
In this session, Charlie Dates will track Jacob's journey from doing things his way to learning to accept the God of his fathers as his own.	
READ	
Read Genesis 25:19–34; 27:1–46; 28:10–22; 29:13–30; 32:22–32.	
Note : We have made a daily reading guide for the book of Genesis so that you can read Jacob's whole story and understand the context of this book. You can find the reading plan at the end of this study in Go Deeper Section 3 .	
WATCH	
WATCH Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Charlie Dates's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.	
What is Jacob's typical reaction when faced with opposition?	
When in our lives does God often initiate change in our	

Show Session 5: The Dysfunctional, Remarkable Family . (10 minutes). rightnow MEDIA

character?

DISCUSS

Charlie opened with a humorous description of crazy uncles, lamenting, "There's one in every family. Two in mine!" Many of us have stories about our own dysfunctional families, or at least those members who	
tend to be at the center of relational drama. One of the beauties of the Bible is realizing that we are not alone. Family drama has been around since the beginning, and God still works through it.	
Read Genesis 25:21–23, 27–28. Isaac and Rebekah got an early hint that their twin boys would not be best friends. But their parenting styles unnecessarily deepened the rivalry between the two brothers. What	
role did parental favoritism play in the twins' antagonism?	
Now read verses 29–34. When faced with his brother's	
hunger, Jacob chose to take advantage of Esau rather than offering him simple kindness. How would you describe Jacob's character at this point in the story?	
How would you describe Esau?	
Read Genesis 27:1–17. Fear of the future seems to have driven Isaac to bless Esau well before it was customary. Rebekah knew that Jacob was the son through whom God had chosen to continue blessing Abraham's	
descendants. Even so, she "helped" things along through deception and manipulation. In what ways do you relate to Rebekah in her desire to "help" situate her son for	
advancement? Where did she and Jacob go wrong?	
Why do you think God chose to work through Jacob's life even though he deceived and manipulated his close family members?	
In Genesis 27:20, Jacob doesn't seem to have much	
regard for God. When talking about how quickly he had "killed" the game used for the offering, Jacob says, "The	
Lord <i>your</i> God made it happen." Jacob knew about God, but Yahweh was his father's God, not his. In what ways	
could this disconnect between what he knew and what he believed have contributed to his behavior with Esau?	
What does it look like when we try to use God for our	
own benefit?	

Read Genesis 28:10–22.	
After Jacob was exiled from his family, he stopped on the road to sleep. God appeared to him in a dream and confirmed his covenant with Jacob. What do God's words in this passage reveal about his character? How does Jacob's response in verses 20–22 give us insight into his faith?	
Why would God choose to bless Jacob despite how Jacob treated his family? What does it mean to you to know God chooses and works through imperfect people?	
Read Genesis 29:16–30.	
Much like his father, Jacob married for love but not before being tricked into marriage with his love's sister. He married two women and eventually had children with them and their two handmaidens. And yet, God used this dysfunctional situation to accomplish his purpose—to expand the family of Abraham as he promised in Genesis 17:6. Do you think God can work through your past decisions and dysfunctional situations? Why or why not? In what ways might Jacob's story change your mind?	
Read Genesis 31:1–13, 17–18.	
Jacob realized that his father-in-law had been cheating him. So, Jacob created an elaborate scam to gain back what he had lost. His scheme worked, and he escaped back to his homeland a rich man. But once again, his	
ambition damaged his family. Was Jacob justified in finding any way to take back what was stolen from him?	
Where is the line between justice and vengeance? In what ways can the effects of one sin ripple outward to	
affect others in our lives?	
Note : For more on Jacob's breeding scheme in Genesis 30, go to Go Deeper Section 1 below.	
Read Genesis 32:21–32.	
On his way back home, Jacob realized he needed to	
make peace with his past, specifically his brother, Esau. Have you ever taken the first step at reconciling a	
broken relationship? If so, what were you feeling	

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Note : To examine the tragic story of Jacob's only daughter in Genesis 34, go to Go Deeper Section 2 below.	
Before meeting Esau, Jacob sent his family away and spent a night alone. As Charlie noted, Jacob slept in a	
geographic low place, mirroring Jacob's emotional and physical lows at the time. There, Jacob encountered the	
God of his father and grandfather in a powerful way. What stands out to you about Jacob's interaction with God?	
Why?	
Jacob took the long road home, literally and spiritually. He tried life on his terms, manipulating people and events to	
further his ambitions. Sometimes those efforts worked	
out, but never without a devastating cost. When he finally met with God "face to face" and realized how powerless	
he truly was, God was ready to lift him up. God is ready to meet with us, too.	
What could it look like for you to surrender to his plan instead of taking your life into your own hands? What	
makes letting go of control in your life difficult?	
What would it look like to prepare yourself to meet with God this week?	
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LAST WORD

EAST WORD	
God's timetable often moves at a different pace than we would like. Rebekah encouraged Jacob's deceptive impulses, which he lived by for many decades afterwards. His manipulation damaged his family and did not end until he hit rock bottom.	
Through it all, God remained faithful to Jacob. God met Jacob at his lowest point and raised him up, a new, humble, surrendered man.	
Jacob and his family remind us we have to be patient and willing to trust God when everything in us wants to speed things along. Do we believe God's promises and his faithful character enough to surrender to him and his plan as we wait for him?	
Note : We have made a daily reading guide for the book of Genesis so that you can read these chapters and understand their context. You can find the reading plan at the end of this study in Go Deeper Section 3.	
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GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:	
 It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've 	
highlighted where each of the following segments	
could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As	
the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with	
this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.	
2. These sections can also function as short	
devotionals to carry you through the week until your	
next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Genesis.	
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1. Jacob's Scheme to Breed the Flocks	
Jacob didn't just deceive his father—he also cheated his	
uncle. Read Genesis 30:29–34. Jacob means "to supplant	
or trick another" in Hebrew—a name that he often lived up to. Despite the trouble he caused in his younger days	
dealing with Esau, Jacob had not changed. He felt	
swindled, so he reacted by swindling.	
After Laban swindled Jacob, Jacob used an odd method	
to breed the kinds of animals he wanted. He bred the	
best animals for himself, increasing the value of his flock and weakening his uncle's.	
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Why do you think Jacob used questionable strategies to defraud his father-in-law?	
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Sometimes we act like Jacob, scheming to accomplish our goals—even the ones we feel God has called us to. But	
attempting life on our terms instead of God's can cause	
ourselves and those around us heartache and unnecessary suffering. Let Jacob's life be a lesson in	
patiently waiting on God to make his will come to pass.	
When is it tempting to take your life into your own hands instead of trusting God's plan?	
What does trusting God look like for you right now? What's difficult about it? What questions do you have	
for God?	
What are you begins will begin in life? White	
What are you hoping will happen in your life? Write I'ldown that dream or goal, then ask God to work his will	

	in your life and to help you trust his timing.	
	2. Dinah and the Redemption of Shechem	
	A place often takes on the feel of the events that happen there. Shechem is one such place in the Bible. In the Old Testament, Shechem was a city associated with pain and sin.	
	In Genesis 34, Jacob's only daughter, Dinah, was assaulted by the men of Shechem. Her brothers slaughtered her assailants and plundered the town.	
	Decades before, Abraham had built an altar in Shechem, which we see in Genesis 12. In the aftermath of Dinah's attack, Jacob buried the idols his family had brought back from Laban's land, as if to say, "We're leaving the old ways behind and starting over."	
	In Genesis 37, Joseph was sold by his brothers at—yes— Shechem. Later during the time of the judges (Judges 9), the evil Abimelech was coronated in Shechem. Terrible events happened in Shechem.	
	The Bible does not shy away from difficult themes—God knows our lives are not free of pain. Dinah's story was recorded—God wanted her story to be remembered—but it ends without any sense of redemption. In what ways do your painful memories, trauma, or grief feel unresolved? As you reflect on past suffering, how do you think God sees you now?	
	In John 4, Jesus took a journey through the region of Samaria and stops in the town of Sychar—the site of ancient Shechem—at the well of Jacob. Here, it was no surprise that he met a woman struggling with the pain in her past. Jesus at and spent a long time talking with the woman. He saw her. He respected her. In fact, for the first time, he openly admitted he was the Messiah, the savior all Israel has been waiting for. He revealed his identity to a woman who was enduring a very difficult life.	
r	The woman at the well in Sychar/Shechem reacted with wonder, excitement, and action—she became the first evangelist, the first to tell others that Jesus is the Messiah. In choosing that well in that town to unveil his true identity, Jesus changed the story of Shechem from a place of pain to a city of redemption.	

Jesus changes our stories, too, when we realize the truth that he redeems all broken things. Do you believe he loves you and wants to make you whole again? What might be preventing you from trusting in God's ability and willingness to heal your broken heart? What habits can you cultivate to help you move forward into healing and wholeness?

3. Weekly Reading Plan

Genesis is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during each of these sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God's Word. Some weeks will have more reading than others, so feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to your group.

Session five focuses on Jacob's journey from deceitful brother to deceitful (and deceived) son-in-law, to defeated spiritual rebel. But his complicated family dynamics lead to another generation of dysfunction that brings sorrow and conflict. The saga will play out dramatically in his sons' lives.

<u>Day 1</u>: Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:19–34; 27:1–28:9)

<u>Day 2</u>: Jacob in Exile (Genesis 28:10-29:30)

Day 3: Jacob's Family (Genesis 29:31-30:43)

Day 4: Jacob Returns Home (Genesis 31:1–33:20)

<u>Day 5</u>: Jacob Establishes Himself in Canaan (Genesis 34–

36)