

“GENESIS: BOOK OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES”

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(transcribed from audio file)

So, Pastor Alex is going to be back in a few weeks. In fact, yes, 23 days, 12 hours and 39 minutes until she gets back. I've got a timer on my phone that's been going for several months now. But I thought, okay, we're into this last month, I'm just gonna preach on whatever I wanna preach on. So, you're stuck this month with Pastor Rob's favorites and the first topic I wanted to talk about was Genesis.

It's the beginning of our Bible. What's this book all about? I've got an idea as to what Genesis is really all about. It's the book of dysfunctional families. Yes! If you are part of a dysfunctional family, you will find a home in Genesis. If you are not a part of a dysfunctional family, you'll feel even better about your family after you read the book of Genesis.

These stories in here – what is going on with these people? I mean it starts off and you've got Adam & Eve. Adam & Eve, the beginning of humankind. God says, “I'm gonna give you one rule. Just one rule and they break it. They break it! One rule! This is who we are as a people. You could boil it down to one rule. We'd still blow it!

Then you get to their kids and in the second generation there is a 50% murder rate. Cain ends up killing his brother because his offering to God was accepted better. That is crazy! But he kills him for this. This is the second generation of human beings that are told about in the Bible. It's not looking good for us at this point.

Then you go several generations below Cain, and you get Lamech. His is the very first weird-flex in the Bible, because what happens is he marries two women and then what is reported about him in the Bible other than that he marries two women is that he then turns to the two of them and says, “Hey girls, you know the other day there was this young guy and he wounded me. I killed him!” The end! That's the story of Lamech. Space was given in the holy scriptures for this weirdo.

And then we go on a little farther and pretty soon the whole world of humanity that starts to develop is so wicked that God calls a do-over with a great flood. Like, I am done with this. We're pulling a do-over.

Now you're thinkin there was this one great guy, Noah, right? He built the ark and saved all the animals. That's the story they tell. Yeah, but if you keep reading, Noah ends up drunk and naked. Yeah! Your children's Bible may not include that page at the end, but Noah's great story ends up where he finds himself a great enjoyer of wine, so much so that he gets so drunk and passes out naked and then his kids have to play this kind of biblical rock, paper, scissors to see who is going to go in and cover up dad. NOAH! You'll never look at that biblical action figure the same anymore.

Then you go a little farther and you get the Tower of Babel. This is a story of what happens when human beings start to cooperate really well. When they start to cooperate really well, they start to think of themselves as good as God and they built a giant tower with the intention of it reaching up to the skies and they could reach right up to God above. And they're so full of themselves and we're told this story that the people were so full of themselves that God said, "That's it. I'm going to scatter you apart" and it's the biblical explanation for why we have different languages amongst different people, but basically once we start to cooperate, we start thinking we're just the stuff and we start messin' up.

We keep going in Genesis and we get to Abram and Sarai which later are renamed Abraham and Sarah, but at this point in your Bible they are Abram and Sarai. Abram has his wife and they need to travel around a bit, but Abram's thinking, you know what? My wife is really good lookin'. I know. I have one of those Sarah's as my wife. I'm not just going to preach what I want, I'm gonna get all the points I need up here, too.

So, they go into this foreign land. This is the part my wife won't like. They go in a foreign land, and they go, "Oh, is that your wife?"

"Ah, no. That's not my wife. She's my sister. You can be with her if you want."

That's what Abram did with his wife. An odd sister act to pull there but that's what they did, and then you go on a little farther in the story and then Sarai is not able to have kids, so she's like, "Hey how about you just have kids with my maid servant, Hagar." Now the thing is that like now-a-days this seems like really odd, but it must

have been pretty common cause it's all over the Bible. When people can't have kids, why not just go with the maid? So, this does not go today, husbands. Don't try that.

But anyway, Sarai says, "Yeah, go ahead. Be with Hagar" and the minute Hagar gets pregnant Sarai's going like, "You know what? She's getting a little too uppity. I think we need to get rid of her." And so, they get rid of her for a little bit, but eventually she gets back into the household and then a little bit later when Hagar actually has the child, once again Sarai is like, "You know what? Let's get rid of her again."

You were in on this plan and yet you change your mind. This is a messed-up family to be a part of. Then we go a little farther along and we get to Sodom.

In Sodom what's going on is, basically the men of the town when people would come to visit, they would attack them, and they would rape them. And this was not like a romantic tryst. These people are doing violent acts on others. Okay? And so what happens is this guy Lot has a couple of visitors come and the men of the town show up saying, "Hey Lot, we hear you got some new guys in town, and this is what we're gonna do."

Now what Lot does is Lot says, "Oh no. no. no. Come on guys. Don't mess with these new visitors. I think they're messengers of God, but I've just met them. Instead of messing with them, I've got two daughters you can have." What??? Yeah. Lot offers up his two daughters to the crowd. Yeah. This is not a family friendly book of the Bible. Just so you know.

Now the thing is, later on they actually escape from this, thanks be to God, but then the daughters are like, you know we're havin' trouble finding boyfriends, so how about we just get dad drunk and have kids with him. Yeah! That's in your Bible. That's what Lot's daughters did. Again, it's not a family friendly book.

Then we get to Abraham and Sarah, and they have to travel to a new land and we get sister act two back in the habit because Abraham is like, "Oh her? No that's not my wife. That's my sister" and it happens all over again. They go a little farther and you get Abraham and Isaac.

Finally, Sarah is able to have a kid, Isaac, and so they decide it's a camping trip gone wrong. You know? We're gonna offer a sacrifice to God and Isaac's like, "Where's the bull? Where's the animal we're gonna sacrifice?" And Abraham's like, "Don't worry. God will provide." Turns out the whole plan is, Abraham thinks that God

has called him to sacrifice his son, which he has, but admit it. If today you had a friend who thought they had to sacrifice their kid to God, you'd think there was something wrong in that family. But just before it happens God intervenes, stops them from doing it. I'm just thinking though that Abraham and Isaac probably didn't go camping again after that together. If you go a little farther along, we get to Jacob and Esau.

So, this is Isaac's son. Jacob and Esau are twins, but technically one of them is born before the other. Esau comes out first and Jacob is actually grabbing on to his heel. They are actually wrestling with each other, even in the womb and that's why he gets named Jacob, which means heel grabber. Yes, he was like grabbing at his brother and there is this rivalry that goes on and as they get older, one day Esau is out hunting and I'm just going to guess by the way the story ends, was that Esau was not the brightest between the two of them, because what happens is Esau is out hunting. Comes back. He's so hungry. Right? And Jacob's sitting there with a big ole pot of stew and Esau's like, "Oh good. You've got food. Give it to me."

And then Jacob's like, "Hold up. How about you give me your birthright? Since technically you're the older son, you get a bigger share of the inheritance, special blessings. I want your birthright. So, if I give you this bowl of soup, you'll give me your birthright."

And Esau's like, "Okay. I'm real hungry." Yeah. That's what's going on in that generation of people. And it just keeps going on and on and then we get to sister act three.

What happens is Isaac, son of Abraham, says, "good enough for dad, good enough for me." I'm out traveling with my wife Rebekah and then when these other people from a foreign land go "Hey, is that your wife?"

Isaac's like, "No. She's my sister," He does it too. And so on and on this goes in our Bible of these families acting like this with one another.

And I think Rebekah didn't take it well because then shortly thereafter you get Rebekah plotting with Jacob. "Let's take the full blessing away from Esau." You've got a mother plotting with one of the sons against the other son to trick her husband. So, at this time he's starting to lose his eyesight and Esau is like a hairy guy, so Rebekah is like, "Here Jacob. We're going to put this fur on your arms and then when your blind dad reaches out, he'll think you're Esau and he'll give his blessing to you, so you'll get the full benefits that Esau would have had as the older of the

two of you. She actually participates in this deceit of her husband and cheating out one of her kids in favor of the other kid. It's a messed-up family. It keeps going though, don't worry.

Then, we get Jacob and he's like traveling around and he's looking for a wife and he sees Rachel. Ooh, Rachel is beautiful. She is gorgeous. And then there was Leah, her sister who had delightful eyes. So, I think that's the biblical equivalent of nice personality. But Jacob is like, "Aw, I want to marry Rachel" and talks to dad Laban and says, "Uh, what can I do?"

"Well, you gotta work for me for seven years and then I'll let you marry Rachel."

And Jacob's like, "Done!" And so, he works for seven years and on the wedding night Laban escorts his daughter into the tent with Jacob. Jacob wakes up after their wedding night together, looks over next to him and goes, "Uh, it's the one with the eyes." Leah! It was Leah. The dad brought the other daughter in and Jacob's like, "What the? What the? I worked for seven years to marry Rachel" and Laban's like, "Hey, we got an order we do things around here, so um, um, how about you work another seven years for me and then I'll give you Rachel?"

Jacob's like, "OK"

So, he does and then he gets with Rachel, and you'd think that at this point, that's the end of the messed-up-ness between these people. No. It's just getting started, because then Leah is able to have kids first, so she's having several kids and so she's thinking if I keep having kids, he's going to love me better. Guess what? Leah was wrong. Right? So, she keeps having kids.

Jacob still likes Rachel better and then eventually Rachel's like, "I'm not getting' in on the kid thing so, hey Jacob, how about you get with my maid servant?" So now you've got Rachel hookin' up her husband with her maid so they can have a few kids and that's going well. And Leah's over here and she's like, "I'm not making kids anymore. Oh no. I'm losing the score on this. Here! Take my maid". And so, Jacob starts having kids with her maid servant.

Then finally Rachel is able to have kids with Jacob and guess who's the favorite kid out of all that mess. Rachel's kids. Yeah. So, there's that going on. It keeps goin.

All these kids grow up and one of them is Dinah. There is this guy, Shechem, who comes along, and he has his way with Dinah. He takes advantage and has his way

with her and then he's like, "Ok. You know what? I think I want to marry your daughter now after I did that to her."

And he goes "Okay. Sure, but here's the deal. We're worshippers of God and we believe in circumcision so all of you – you, Shechem and all of the men of your tribe, you all need to get circumcised as adults."

Do you know what a hard sell that is? That's a hard sell, but I guess Dinah was dynamite because boy he went for it, and they all got circumcised. And then that night, all of Dinah's brothers ran into the village and killed all of them while they were recovering from their adult circumcision. Yeah! That's what is going on in your Bible.

And then Jacob gets the new name Israel. God gives him a new name, so Jacob now becomes Israel. Remember, Joseph is the favorite son. Joseph doesn't have to do any of the hard chores. He's got all these kids. And Joseph's going to get the fancy coat. Joseph's going to get the primo treatment and that doesn't go over well. I don't know if any of you have ever had a parent try to pick a favorite amongst your kids. It doesn't go over well, and the Bible tells you that.

But then you just keep going and Joseph's brothers say, "Yeah. It's not going well cause you know what? While we're out hunting today it would be a shame if Joseph were to fall into a well, or get attacked by an animal. That would be a shame. Don't you agree? Yeah! That's what happened. You never know. You never know."

So, what they do is they tell the father that he was attacked but in reality, they threw him down into a well which they thought was empty. If you throw your brother into what you think is an empty well, you don't intend for him to land well. But by the grace of God there happened to be some water in there and he was saved from the fall.

But then some foreigners come by, and they are Ishmaelites. This is crazy. Remember Hagar, the one that got kicked out twice in the whole family chain? Well, it's her kid's kids that come on by and so the promise that God has been at work is still at work there and so they sell Joseph into slavery to these foreigners. Turns out it's the Ishmaelites and so Joseph is basically thought dead by his father and rejected by his brothers and sold into slavery. Great siblings!

Eventually Joseph gets a little power. Joseph becomes well known for being able to interpret dreams. Joseph is a great organizer. He's working for the Pharaoh and so

now the attack of the bros, turns into the revenge of the seph with Joseph who now has this power and ability to determine their fate. He has saved the land from a famine. In come his brothers begging for mercy and he messes with them a little bit and has the opportunity to have them all killed and they know it. When their father dies, they are sure that Joseph is going to take his revenge, but instead he forgives them.

And that's the book of Genesis. So, what is Genesis all about?

I think that part of this is just to show you, look if the great story of God begins with all these messed up people, then maybe there is a spot for me. I mean, imagine if the Bible is filled with all these perfect characters who always did everything perfect, you'd be intimidated. If this is the family of God, then I think I could do pretty well. I could do pretty well in that.

But there is one verse in particular that I think it would be worthwhile if every single one of you went home and got out a highlighter and opened up your Bible and you highlighted this verse because it comes at the end of Genesis and I believe it explains everything that came before.

Joseph is looking at his brothers. They think he is going to take revenge. Daddy has died and her comes Joseph's revenge and Joseph says to his brothers...

Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.

This is a story about forgiveness and grace beyond what is called for, what is measured. The book of Genesis begins with a God who can make everything out of nothing and then shows you that God can still make something out of anything that you do.

Joseph says, all that harm that you did to me, God was able to intend it for good, to preserve a numerous people. He used Joseph to make sure the people were fed during the famine and it's still having benefits up to this day. And I believe that the book of Genesis is able to tell us such a full story that I would argue that this verse alone summarized not just the book of Genesis, but the entire Bible. And the entirety of the good news because in the same way our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on the cross could have looked down upon us and said, even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve on numerous people as he is doing today.

The scriptures reveal to us the big and glorious and beautiful plan that God has for us and that it's to provide for us and to help us as messed up and dysfunctional and abusive and terrible and broken as we are, there is a God waiting with love and forgiveness and grace. And this verse tells us as much.

So, as we look to one another we're not expecting perfection, we're expecting that we need help. We're expecting that we need to be saved. We haven't even gotten out of the first book of this Bible, and we already know how it's going to go. This group of people, which includes each and every one of us is going to need the love and the grace of God. And when we see brokenness then we figure out how to participate and what it is God is intending in that moment, so that we might preserve numerous people as he is doing today.

To God be the Glory.

Halleluiah and Amen.