

The Myth of the Dysfunctional Family

A jealous brother murders his brother. A power-hungry son subverts his father's authority because he wants his throne and his concubine. And another set of jealous brothers sell their brother into slavery.

Welcome to the families in the Bible! These families have murderers and kids that rebel way beyond having an all-night party while you're out of town or taking the family car on a joy ride. Cain killed Abel. Absalom wanted his dad's concubine and his throne. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and faked his murder.

Despite the murders and the corruption, God walked with them and talked to them. He warned Cain to not be overtaken by sin. God was a part of their family and He included them in His family. Out of this line of murders that makes a mob family look like a Little House on the Prairie family, comes the Savior of the world, Jesus the Messiah.

I love how God doesn't hold back the dirty, gritty details of the line of Jesus in the Old Testament. I know that I have glossed over my biological dad's infidelity and propensity to drunkenness because I want to make my family look like a ho-hum average family. Or reinvent my mom's early years in my childhood when she was prone to taking drugs and having wild parties. I thought I was such a mess because of those early years.

Then I read in the Bible about Cain and Abel, Joseph and Absalom, and I think I've lived a pretty good life! At least my brother Leo didn't try to murder me or sell me into slavery. I'm sure he has wanted to do that a few times.

The dysfunctional family is a myth created by psychologists or

sociologists to get more clients and more attention and to cast us as victims. I was not a victim of my mom's wild parties or dad's foray into drinking alcohol. They both recovered from those seasons in their lives and became followers of Christ.

The dysfunctional family is the normal family in the Bible. This is the family that desperately needs His presence.

How we can be a family without the power of the Holy Spirit working in us is beyond me. I can't love or lay my life down for my family without the power of God.

In Matthew 1, these women were named as part of Jesus' ancestors: *Tamar*, who posed as a prostitute to sleep with her father-in-law; *Rahab*, another prostitute who hid the Israelites when they were scouting the city for an invasion; and Bathsheba, who committed adultery with King David, who also had her husband killed. Clearly their past indiscretions don't shut these women out of the pedigree of Jesus.

David on his death bed cries out these words:

"Is not my house like this with God? For He made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it flourish?" (2 Sam. 23:5).

God chose David's family and made a covenant with them. He desires a covenant with your family. Whether good, bad or ugly, He longs to be on the scene. My 17-year-old son preached to me on the way home after church. The next day, we got into a knock-down, drag-out fight. We both need God to help us relate to one another.

I don't expect Christian perfection from my son, who is a worship leader. He doesn't expect perfection from his mom, who is an editor of a Christian publication. We know that we both

need God to keep us together.

I've seen families leave the church because of the shame from a wayward son or daughter. We need to quit judging struggling families and disqualifying ourselves from serving God because of a son or daughter who decides to leave their faith. Ultimately, in this walk of faith, we belong to His family. We are grafted into the same family that comes from a line of prostitutes, swindlers, murderers and many others who had issues that would put them on the *Jerry Springer Show*. He is part of our family and we are part of His. The only functional family is a family with God involved.

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20).

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