

1. Will you take a stand?

Bloodlines – Series

Ps. Wareru – 3rd September 2017

Sermon Notes



Problem statement: The issues in your family will not go away by themselves!

Thesis: Every family has issues. These issues will continue until one of them takes a stand and says 'enough is enough'!

QOD: **What's one thing about yourself that you like that you 'inherited' as a trait from your family?** *I'm using inherited here lightly because it may not be something that was in their DNA but a behavior.*

However rich or poor, whatever race or ethnic group we belong to, one thing we all have in common is that we all belong to a family. Over the next few months, we're going to be going through a series called **Bloodline: Winning Freedom for My Family**. You see, families are of critical importance. God created the first family, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden after noting that it is '*not good for man to be alone*'. Right from the beginning, family was God's idea! **None of us was created to be alone, but rather all of us were created for family**. Right from the start, God's blessing to the first family was that they would '*be fruitful and multiply*': In other words that they would expand and add to their family. And a little later in the book of Genesis, God appeared to one of their descendants, a man called Abraham, and committed to bless him so that through his family, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The rest of the bible is the story of God fulfilling this promise to bless the earth through the family. God loves families!

God created families to give us a sense of companionship, acceptance and belonging. It's not a coincidence that you belong to the family you grew up in. However, we all have very different impressions when we think of our families. Some here grew up in homes where your parents openly expressed love to each other and there's nothing you enjoy better than being with your parents and your siblings. Others grew up in homes where you wouldn't say you were that close but you still felt a sense of security and belonging, and while it may not be your first point of reference, you don't mind hanging out with your family. And then there are others who grew up in situations where your family was actually a source of great pain to you and you wished many times that you had been born in a different family. Whenever you hear Mavuno's doing a series about family you want to move to another church for a while until it's over. So there are all those categories and there are people all in between – sometimes you enjoy your family and other times you can't stand them - they drive you crazy!

Wherever you fall however, I know you will agree with me that every family has its issues. Even the most 'normal' and happy looking family! Some of the issues are obvious and others are more hidden but they are passed on from parent to children down the generations. For example, it's only after I got married that I realized that my family are generally not good listeners! It took my wife pointing it out to realize that what we took for granted was not necessarily the best way. And that's just one of the issues in my family! **All our families have issues or dysfunctions that are symptoms of our deeper brokenness**. And when we take the time to observe, we notice these sinful patterns. It could be selfishness or gossip. It could be kids out of wedlock. It could be

addictions e.g. in some families, all the men are prone to alcoholism. It could be divorce in marriages or siblings who never talk to each other. Whatever the issues in your family are, my prayer for you is that the next ten weeks are going to be extremely revolutionary for you as we take this journey together.

Today we want to begin by looking at Jacob, a man whose family was extremely blessed: A good family. So please turn with me to **Genesis 32:22-30**. For some reason, God had chosen this family and determined to bless them. Because of that, whatever they did seemed to prosper. However hard things were, they always seemed to come on top. His grandfather Abraham was extremely wealthy. His father Isaac was even wealthier and the bible tells us that even when he planted crops in a year of drought in a foreign land, he got 100 times return – why? Because God was with him! Don't you wish your family could be blessed like that? And despite growing up as a rich kid, Jacob was able to leave all that behind and go out, start from scratch and build his own fortune. This was an amazing family.

But like many of our families, they also had deep issues! If you read through the book of Genesis, you will quickly realize that they often displayed favoritism, jealousy of each other and fear. But one of their biggest issues was deceitfulness. Jacob's own name means 'he grasps the heel' or 'he deceives'. In other words, 'the conman!' What a name! In other words telling everyone he met, 'be careful, this one is a hustler; he can take you anytime!' And the sad thing is that it was his mother who gave him that name! It wasn't even seen as something bad in their family! But you know, he was not the original liar. We first notice the pattern with his grandpa Abraham, who happened to be married to a very beautiful wife. In **Gen.12**, he lied to the king of Egypt that this beautiful wife was his sister. Why? To protect himself - so that jealous men wouldn't kill him to take his wife. How many ladies here would love to have a guy like that? He was like, 'I'ma look after myself! Wee, sista, jlsort!' And then years later after Abraham himself had died, if you flip over to **Gen.26**, you see a strange thing. His son Isaac lied to a different king in a different country, that his beautiful wife was his sister. Why? To protect himself - so that jealous men wouldn't kill him to take his wife. As they say, like father... like son!

But that was only his dad's side. Mom's side was much worse! His mom, Rebekah, came from a family of serious crooks! For example, he was her favorite son because he preferred to stay indoors with her and cook, unlike his older brother Esau who was all over the place. So she conspired with him to con his own father, her husband, into leaving the family inheritance to her favorite son! It worked but it resulted in great strife between the brothers. When their mom heard Esau was plotting to kill his younger brother, she conned her husband into sending Jacob off to her relatives, on the pretext that he needed to find a wife.

That's how he fled from the chaos caused by his con games and went to live with his mother's family. But he found his mother's brother, uncle Laban, to be an even greater conman than his mother! Jacob worked for him 7 years to marry beautiful Rachel, only for his uncle to con him at the last minute and give him the rather plain older sister, Leah. He was forced to work yet another 7 years to finally get the girl of his dreams. The next 6 years after that were a battle of wits between Jacob and his uncle. Uncle Laban was the boss from hell, changing his contract and cutting his salary 10 different times! (about once every 7 months!)

Meanwhile, this hustling and conning had spilt over into Jacob's own family. His two wives, who were sisters, were competing in having babies to win his affection. They did everything, including bringing their maids for him to have children with and on one occasion, one of them even had to bribe her sister so she could sleep with their husband! What a messed up competition! The negative effects of the sin of deceit were being passed on as bondage from generation to generation.

Now despite working for a boss who was nothing short of a conman, Jacob continued to succeed greatly. Remember, he came from a family that was greatly blessed. But his financial success caused his cousins to

despise him and they were giving him dangerous looks. So after 20 years in diaspora, Jacob decided it was time to escape from his uncle and go back home to his family, even if it meant risking being killed by the brother he had conned so long ago.

We catch up with this story when everything seems it was finally crashing down on Jacob. He had missed his father's funeral, he had not seen his mom for 20 years. His wives were constantly fighting and his uncle thought he was a crook. His own brother had put out a 'wanted dead or alive' sign for him and yet he had nowhere else to run to. Talk about family issues! And that's where our reading finds him.

READ GEN.32:22-30 *22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."*

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,[a] because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." 29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel,[b] saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

It seems at some point during the wrestling match, Jacob came to believe his opponent was God Himself. It's not quite clear whether it was God or if it was an angel that Jacob fought with that night. But there are several things I find strange about this fight. Firstly, whether it was God or an angel, don't you find it strange that Jacob was able to wrestle with him the whole night? If all he needed to do was touch his hip and it got dislocated, surely, he could have ended the fight a lot earlier, as opposed to letting it end in a draw? Why did this mysterious being let it go on and on?

I believe that it was because this struggle was necessary for Jacob's growth. Through it, he came to the place where he realized his strength could not save him. His smooth tongue could not bail him out. He couldn't con his way out of this one! And so he hang on for dear life and begged for a blessing. Many years later, the prophet Hosea would describe the fight in Hosea 12:3-4, *'in the womb he grasped his brothers heel, as a man, he struggled with God. He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor'*. Now the reality is that he didn't win the fight, but he overcame. There's a big difference; and we'll come back to that in a bit.

The second thing I find strange is that this mysterious being asked Jacob for his name. Again, if this was God or an angel, he should have known whom he was wrestling with! I believe God asked Jacob his name not because He didn't know it . . . But because he wanted to know if Jacob knew it. He wanted to know if Jacob was ready to come to grips with who he really was. By answering 'Jacob', Jacob was reaching a point of self awareness. He was admitting the truth about himself. It's me Jacob, the conman, the schemer, the manipulator, the deceiver. It was only after he confessed this that God now blessed him. V.28 says *'your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and men and have overcome'*. Jacob had not overcome God, he had overcome himself... Jacob means 'the deceiver'. Israel means 'the one who struggles with God'. He would no longer be one who fought his family, but he would become the one who fought for his family.

This is the choice that is facing each of us over these next ten weeks. You can either fight your family or you can fight for your family. You can choose to **ignore** the issues in your family – after all, other families have far greater issues than ours and you’re in a pretty comfortable place. You can choose to **hate** the issues in your family – “I wish I was born in another family that didn’t have such issues!” You can even choose to **cut off** from your family – move on, and act like those who hurt you never existed – “too many issues, I don’t want to engage”. **OR** you can choose to wrestle with God on behalf of your family and overcome. My one point in this message is this – **don’t fight your family, fight for your family!**

My own parents were the first in their families to come to Christ. My mom came from an extremely poor family. The only way she could afford to go to school was being adopted by her teacher’s family and staying with them during most of her schooling years. But from the time she started to follow Christ passionately, things began to change around her. In her family, the men had never amounted to much. They would quit their jobs and end up doing manual work, just surviving. And yet as she has dealt with the issues in prayer, they have not passed on to her own children, even though they are there in the extended family. My brother and I have no expectation of failure, but we fully expect to succeed in life! My dad’s father threatened to disown him when he became a Christian, and he was even kicked out of school. But with time, virtually all his family members are Christians today, including his late dad, despite the fact that he was the lastborn. Because of my parents, we have not had to deal with most of the issues that they did in their generation. All my siblings are believers! But it didn’t just happen. It’s because somewhere along the way, someone had to draw the line in the sand and fight for their family! **Don’t fight your family, fight for your family!**

The last thing we see in our passage is that because he wrestled with God, Jacob got a new name. Names in the bible indicated your destiny. No longer would he be ‘the deceiver’, but he would be called ‘the overcomer’. Even the nation that had been promised to his grandfather Abraham would be named after him! The modern day state of Israel gets its name from guess who? This same guy. What a powerful destiny!

Explain Simama – each week we’ll discuss the sermons and pray freedom prayers for ourselves and for our families. In fact each week, we’re challenging your group to fast together on the day before you meet and to open that fast together. We’ll be wrestling with God for our families. At the end of the ten weeks, we’ll commission you to visit and pray for each other’s families. I believe as we stand with each other in this way, we’ll see amazing freedom coming to many of the families that are represented here. Some of you are the lastborn in your homes. Some of you – no one refers to you or looks for your advice. And yet I believe that through what will happen, you will become a reference point for your family. You will have a completely new name within your family. And your family’s future will be changed because of you, your children will grow up in a far better reality than the one you grew up in. Remember, **don’t fight your family, fight for your family!**

Every family has issues. Even the most ‘normal’ looking! It’s just that some issues are more obvious than others. But we are not doomed to repeat those patterns! God is looking for one person to say ‘enough is enough’ on behalf of that family. No one’s going to force you to do this. But will you stand up and be counted on behalf of your family? THIS IS A DECLARATION OF WAR! **Don’t fight your family, fight for your family!**

PRAY

As we start Simama