

Functional Not Dysfunctional!

Genesis 28:14-15 and other Genesis texts

Intro. – Gilda Radner, author/comedian of SNL fame loved dogs. She wrote of a particular dog that was about to give birth to six puppies. It seems this expecting mother dog was playing with her owner while he was mowing. She got too close to the mower in her rambunctious manner and couldn't stop. She slid under the mower and whacked off her two hind legs. The owner scooped up the dog and the severed legs and rushed them to the vet. The veterinarian reattached the dog's hind legs and sent her home to recover. This dog was forced to learn a new trick: how to walk again. The problem was she couldn't get the hang of the newly sewn hind quarters. She would put one front leg forward, then the other, but do nothing with the reattached rear legs. I.e. she'd take two steps, flip up her rump, and move forward. A couple of weeks after this, the puppies were born. She was a great mother dog to them, but when it came to the six dogs learning how to walk, guess how they all ended up walking? Here were six perfectly healthy dogs with four good legs a piece using only their front two legs and flipping up their rumps and not using their back legs.

Here's my point. Parents too often pass on their dysfunctional traits rather than *train up a child in the way they should go*. It may be difficult to teach an-old-dog-new-tricks, but it is possible for parents to overcome the dysfunctions in their lives and be the parents kids need. History is full of examples of poor parenting. More than 12 million people died in WW II, in part, at least to the fact that Adolph Hitler was raised by inept parents. But as many inept parents there have been in history and are today, there are examples of those who have taken God at His Word, relied on His strength and raised up human beings becoming of the glory and majesty of God.

It is *not* my intent to guilt anyone into being a better parent. Frankly, I think such is irresponsible, counterproductive and not becoming of our Lord. It *is* my intent to simply point out Biblical principles that need to be embraced/practiced. I'm no expert. I've made and continue to make mistakes in parenting, but I do know this, God's Word is truth and in His Word is all the instruction needed in being the parent my kids need.

Since the advent of television, we have been exposed to various depictions of families. We've gone from Ozzie and Harriet to Ozzy and Sharon. Clinical psychologist Dr. Jessica Simmonds of Los Angeles wrote recently of the Osbourne family: "The Osbournes live a very normal life in this upper-middle-class environment, mixed with a really strange mentality and dysfunction... It's not all funny... There's a lot of sadness here." News flash, Dr. Simmonds, there's a lot of sadness in dysfunctional families everywhere.

If I were to ask you what does "dysfunctional" mean what would you say? The prefix *dys* literally means *dangerous*. Thus, a dysfunctional home/family by definition is one that functions *dangerously*: dangerously for the kids involved, the parents and for society as a whole. Between the years of 1965 to 1998, as families throughout the US imploded, the nation's juvenile crime rate soared up 175%. Make no mistake, the dysfunctional family is symptom of a sin problem in the world. You see the world today has a formula for building functional families: $N + E + P = FF$ (Needs + Education + Pleasures = Functioning Family). But the record of our affluent society proves this formula doesn't work.

Purpose: to better understand the Biblical definition of a function family

In this message, I want to propose we do *the math* and better understand the Biblical equation for a functioning family as $C + BP - SS = FF$ (Christ + Biblical Principles – Sin Sickness = Functioning Family).

I BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS RESULT IN DYSFUNCTION (Adam and Eve)

A. A Broken Relationship with God

1. In Garden of Eden the first family functioned in perfect unity: unity between God, Adam and Eve, which led to unity between Adam and Eve, which led to unity between man and nature...
 - a. note: unity with God is foundational for all other unities – not right with God...
 - b. this first family was created perfect and intended to be perfect...
2. Sin was introduced and its effects were immediate:
 - a. as fellowship with God is broken, people try to hide from Him – Adam/Eve once yearned for time with God, but when sin entered they ran/hid from One for whose presence they longed!

- b. today we see mankind trying to hide from God – e.g. excuses for not attending or involving one’s self in a faithful local church... biggest reason people avoid faithful church they simply are hiding from God. They don’t want to know God and they don’t want Him to know them...
- 3. The foundation of a functioning family is a relationship with God, through which He alone controls the home. When that core relationship is broken, dysfunction is inevitable.

B. A Broken Relationship with Ourselves

- 1. Another effect sin contributes to family dysfunction is the change in relationship to ourselves
- 2. Two psychological terms will illustrate what I mean by this: *psychotics* are those who see others as the problem... *neurotics* are those who see themselves as the problem
- 3. Prior to sin, Adam/Eve had healthy self-image, but as soon as they chose to sin we see them both being psychotic (“...*Lord, it was the woman you made for me...*”) and neurotic (*personal shame*)
- 4. So many homes made up of people who are psychotic or neurotic or both.
 - a. we all know too well how to play the blame game with sparks flying & “fussin and fighten”...
 - b. or we seek to hide by filling our lives with distractions (unimportant business)...
 - c. none of which covers the pain and emptiness because of a broken relationship with God

C. A Broken Relationship with Others

- 1. Adam/Eve tried to blame each other, Satan and then they sought to blame God
- 2. All of the dysfunction taking place in homes today is a direct result of a broken relationship with God. Can’t have a good relationship with anyone if your relationship with God is non-existent.

All of these affected or broken relationships result in homes being dysfunctional = functioning dangerously

II RESTORED RELATIONSHIPS RESULT IN FUNCTION (Jacob and Joseph)

- the first element in building a functional family is to be restored in relationship with God. This is only possible through His gift – GRACE = forgiveness of past/present/future sins... sanctification... H.S
- equation: C + BP – SS = FF simply means without GRACE it impossible to have functional family. Jacob/Joseph of the O.T. illustrate what I mean:

A. Jacob Was Restored in His Relationships (3 Great Encounters)

- 1. His encounter with God at Bethel (House of God)
 - a. Jacob had left his parents supposedly to find a wife, but the real reason he left was to flee from his brother, Esau, whom he had cheated.
 - b. night fell, and young Jacob far from home was scared. In desperation, he prayed and as he did a dream unfolded = stairway to heaven with angels going up and down = prayer going up answer coming back down... Though Jacob a cheat all his life... God = text...
- 2. His encounter with God at Mahanaim
 - a. approaching the Jordan River, Jacob was reminded Esau vowed to kill him, so Jacob decided to check his brother’s frame of mind by sending scouts - Genesis 32:6 “...*We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.*”
 - b. Jacob was terrified – sought God in prayer but also hedged his bet and proceeded to buy his brother off by sending lavish gifts ahead AND in case prayer and bribery didn’t work he divided his family into two groups and sent them across river Jabbok
 - c. now alone, Jacob wrestled with “a man” whom he latter learned was God = supernatural smack-down where Jacob gets his name changed and his hip out of joint – ready now end the dysfunctional manner of living – that same day Jacob/Esau restored as brothers – Why? Jacob finally surrenders control of his life to God – God brings restoration to broken relationship.
 - d. application – in building functional families, one of greatest things we can do is accept our lameness, our weaknesses, our inabilities to sustain and keep relationships healthy on own...
 - e. 2 Corinthians 12:10 “*Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*”
- 3. His encounter with God at Home – i.e. through his own kids (Joseph in particular) = functional f.

B. Joseph Was Restored in His Relationships

1. Jacob had a tent full of sons, but one of these was his favorite – Joseph and it showed (note: you would have thought Jacob would have known better...)
2. Joseph didn't help matters by bragging about his *special dreams* which had them bowing to him!
3. During this dysfunctional period of family life, Joseph became the object of growing resentment and jealousy amongst his brothers, to the point they sold him and told Jacob he was killed by beast
4. Joseph's story in Egypt started off strong, but soon went south because of Potiphar, his master's wife... eventually ended up in prison for two years... supernaturally released... Prime Minister...
5. Meanwhile in Canaan, a famine had swept through the land. Jacob sends his sons to Egypt for food... Ended up in front of guess who? Prime Minister... Joseph helps brothers to repentance:
 - a. the struggles of Joseph established his trust/confidence in the Lord... wanted same for bros.
 - b. after helping his brothers realize their dysfunctional ways, Joseph revealed himself
 - c. one of hardest lessons in moving family from dysfunctional to functional – sometimes people have to be allowed to experience the full brunt of their dysfunctional behavior before healing can begin... such certainly case for Jacob, Joseph and rest of this family.

Conclusion: Let me use following statistics to summarize this message. These come from a Josh McDowell publication and are a little dated, but effective in making my point:

“In the next twelve months, 500,000 children will attempt suicide. More than 1,000,000 kids will run away from home; 275,000 teenage girls will give birth to illegitimate babies; 418,000 girls under nineteen will have received an abortion to end an unwanted pregnancy; 12,000,000 teenagers will take some form of narcotics and *regularly* use drugs; 3,300,000 young people will experience a serious drinking problem; 5,000,000 young people will become victims of broken homes; 4,000,000 will be beaten, molested, or otherwise abused by their parents. More than 50% of the 21,000,000 teens between the ages of 15 and 19 are sexually active. Another 2,000,000 between the ages of 13 and 14 are believed to be sexually active. 60% of all teenage marriages end in divorce within the first five years. The annual number of teenage pregnancies has doubled since 1973, now totaling 1,100,000. More than one in ten teenage girls become pregnant each year. Two-thirds of all teenage pregnancies and one-half of all teenage births are unintended...”

CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) 2005 Surveillance Report “Sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) remain a major public health challenge in the United States... CDC estimates that 19,000,000 new infections occur each year, almost half of them among young people ages 15 to 24. In addition to the physical and psychological consequences of STD's, these diseases also exact a tremendous economic toll. Direct medical costs associated with STD's in the United States are estimated at up to \$14.1 billion annually.”

All the above and more is all about dysfunctional family living. It's all about sin, rebellion and estrangement from God. It's all about ignoring *the truth* and embracing and living *a lie*.

Zig Ziglar writes in his book *Raising Positive Kids in a Negative World* the following: “*It is true that by the time the child becomes an adolescent, he/she knows exactly what their parents believe. But he/she does not always comprehend the reasons behind the beliefs. And that's why it's important to take time to communicate to your kids why you believe what you believe.*”

May we communicate to our kids we believe and practice God's Word and let our actions match up with our words. I pray that you see with me this is what makes for functional not dysfunctional family living!