

# Family Function & Challenges by Shannon Shaffer

(Read Genesis 29—33 for background)

Families function, one way or another, in good ways and bad. The determination of how a family functions may be deemed, by those on the outside looking in, as dysfunctional. For every family it is challenging.

Put people up close to one another and they have plenty of challenges. Like too many cooks in a crowded kitchen, they bump into each other, spill stuff, expect someone else to clean it up and, stumble over the one who finally stoops down to do the cleaning. Of course, one person wants to be the chief cook giving the orders and organizing it all. Challenging.

Dysfunction in families has been around since family began. In Genesis 29 through 33 we get a glimpse into the family of Jacob, Isaac's son. Jacob stole a birthright and promise by deception. There had been plenty of problems in this family.

At that point wives are found, children are born and the plan of God is "helped along," by giving female servants to Jacob to bear children. People bump into each other and within the "function" of this family there was constant jealousy, envy, competition among wives, deception, lying, lack of care, broken financial deals, and much more which plagued the family of Jacob.

It was all a problem. Jacob had been a "deceiver" to Esau and Isaac and now was being "deceived" in a number of instances. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah and has Jacob work more years for Rachel. Laban changed Jacob's wages and sought only to gain flocks and herds to benefit himself, but it didn't work.

The problems between Jacob and his father-in-law Laban seem to be brought to an end when a covenant of peace is agreed upon by Jacob and Laban at the end of Genesis 31.

As Jacob travels back to his homeland the dysfunction of the home he grew up in is realized. Jacob has grown a lot, learned plenty about the challenges of a family and realized the poor choices in his past.

He is going to see Esau. It's inevitable, because he is traveling through Esau's land. Jacob is concerned how this reunion will go. Jacob fears Esau's response or possible angry reaction. With gifts of animals, humble greetings and a plan to try to save some of his family Jacob makes plans and travels, in fear of his twin brother.

Esau had changed too. He has grown up and learned some things about relationships. Esau had a family, servants and plenty of his own stuff. None of that was really important now. Scripture tells us, "*But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept*" (Genesis 33:4).

In spite of all the challenges and problems of the past these twin brothers came together and renewed their relationship. Forgiveness was the key to it all. There had been lots of headaches, deception and poor relationships in Jacob's family. Family is a challenge. We have all experienced it.

Through it all the best way to deal with family relationships is to love, tell the truth, treat others the way you desire to be treated and forgive.