



ELIZABETHTOWN  
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

PRACTICING PEACE, SERVICE AND OPENNESS TO ALL

*Great God, small screen,  
perfect family?  
Episode 2*

Genesis 37

By Pastor Greg Davidson Laszakovits

Message from June 23, 2019

777 South Mount Joy Street  
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania 17022  
717-367-1000  
[www.etowncob.org](http://www.etowncob.org)



## **YELLOW CARD**

---

Moving forward. This is a gem.: *Mom always wants me to come to church then gets mad because we act like idiots. Can't have it both ways mom.*

I love this. There's a lot of good stuff to unpack here. Mom is working to bring the family together. The kid and his or her sibling are participating, but obviously with some reservation. It's true to life. It's sometimes hard to bring our families together.

## **LET'S TURN THE CHANNEL. TOGETHER.**

---

As I've been thinking about this series one of the big questions I found myself asking is: *What does God wish for us and our families? Who is it that God hopes we will be, especially in life's inevitable struggle and pain? What is God pulling us towards as family units, no matter how those family units are defined or assembled?* We concluded that the perfect family has nothing to do with class, race, or number of parents, or even blood; and everything to do with love, support, commitment, and accountability with compassion.

Well, God wants a lot for our families: God wants them to be places of love, protection and support; environments where every member of the family can grow. But as I thought, I realized that none of that can happen unless there is some sense of togetherness. Let me explain what I mean by togetherness.

Part of togetherness is being in the same place at the same time. But there are several other ways to think about togetherness, all of which are important.

**Practical Togetherness.** Being on the same page, pointed in the same direction.

**Emotional togetherness.** Intimate, close feeling that we share with one another.

**Committed togetherness.** No matter how far away you are, or how long it's been, you know that they are *always* there for you, and that you can always come back together and reconnect.

# 2

As the parent child dedication this morning reminds us, we are meant for life together. As families, we are better together.

And a quick disclaimer: God does not wish for us to be together at all costs. If a member of a family is abusive or ripping out the seams of the family, space is necessary. As always, if you find yourself in a situation where your family needs help we pastors are always available to help and find help.

Another word of clarification here. Togetherness is not codependency, where one cannot function apart the others. Families should prepare us for flight from the nest.

## **GENESIS 37: ISRAEL, JOSEPH, AND HIS BROTHERS**

Speaking of dysfunctional families, let's think back to that scripture for a moment. Though we need to be careful to reading this as a straight up morality tale about family togetherness, we do see several of the mistakes that broke the family down.

- A father's favoritism
- Joseph's lack of sensitivity. If you are daddy's favorite and you have a dream where your older brothers are bowing down to you I suggest you keep that to yourself.
- The brothers' jealousy, greed, cruelty, and lying.

Serious threats to relationship and togetherness. If those are some of the things that break down family togetherness, what are the things that create family togetherness. This leads us to our TV clip from the show *Black-ish*.

## **BLACK-ISH**

*Black-ish* is a critically acclaimed sitcom created by Kenya Barris. For the last five years it has followed an upper middle class African-American family led by Anesthetist Rainbow Johnson and her husband, advertising executive Andre Johnson. The show revolves around the family's lives, as they juggle sociopolitical issues including some of the nuances

being a black family. But of course, at the heart of it, they are not a BLACK family. They are a FAMILY who happen to be black. They are a family. And of course that's where the comedy gold lies.

The clip we're about to watch, father Andre is trying to instill in his four kids a sense of family togetherness.

To create a sense of togetherness Dre buys his family matching t-shirts and forces them to attend the one son's baseball game—under threat of grounding and bare cupboards. Dad has assembled them physically together, but they are certainly not together emotionally. There will be times like this in family life.

Okay, the kids are getting there on togetherness, even if maybe not totally pointed in the right direction. Togetherness....

### **GOD WANTS FAMILIES TO BE TOGETHER**

A new United Nations report came out this week. The number of refugees and displaced people has hit an all-time global high, 70.8 million people and rising. Imagine having to make the decision to stay or leave your home. Imagine when a family decides that one or some should stay and one or some should leave. Then when communication is sparse or non-existent. Imagine when a family gets to an international border and then children are taken from parents. Regardless of the legality or illegality of a border crossing, separating children from parents is wrong. We know this.

This past Monday a group of 9 of us traveled to Washington, DC to share with the offices of Senators Casey and Toomey, and Congressman Smucker. It did not matter that we are a group that have voted Democrat, Republican and Independent. We shared our concerns about how current immigration policies affect people, and families. We care about families. Families belong together.

I never finished the story of Joseph and his brothers.

# 4

## **BACK TO JOSEPH**

---

In the end, we see that family togetherness saved the day. When famine gripped the land, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy grain. Unbeknownst to them, Joseph had ascended to become Pharaoh's right hand man. Long story short, Joseph saves his brothers and their families from famine, and the whole family is again together, not only physically, but also in spirit and devotion. Families belong together.

## **CONCLUSION**

---

Tutu quote on complementarity

OR

In next week's episode we are going to celebrate togetherness as a family of faith. We often refer to the congregation as a family. What does that mean?



