



Anything But Ordinary: A series about being family

Have you ever looked at your family and said, "These people are nuts!?! Like, they should be locked up!?!"? Has your spouse ever said to you, "I don't know how you turned out so normal having grown up in a family as crazy as yours!?!"? Do you ever look at your family and say, "We are so not normal!?!"?

Here's what is true about your family: Your family is "anything but ordinary." It's true about your family. It's true about my family. It's true about every family... And, it's true about all the families of the Biblical narrative.

You see, **families are complicated because families are made up with humans and humans are complicated.** Family doesn't always live up to our expectations. Other times, we can't understand why they don't see things the way you see things. And, every family has hurts, pains and tensions that live just below the surface and never seem to find resolution.

During this series we'll use the Abrahamic family story to show how it's the "anything but ordinary" that God came for!

Anything but Ordinary Series info from Sanctified Art:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BmZGsOO_o1K2HLTI-24_Tvs2vW-IYjWE?usp=sharing

Graphics:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/5ucwd9buqz82g0emch01g/h?dl=0&rlkey=rmd179og872b5ur6l1ntos9e1>

Week 1: When they don't see it my way.

Anyone ever disagreed with another family member about anything? About money? The future of the family business? How to best care for your parents? How to best care for your kids? Parents, step parents and step siblings don't see things eye to eye. Family members might disagree about what you should do with your future? About their choice in a spouse? About your lifestyle? Is there a family that doesn't disagree about politics?

Most families have experienced some measure of separation because somewhere along the way they don't see things eye two eye. In fact, two siblings can grow up in the very same home, experience the very same things growing up, but one remembers it this way and the other remembers it completely differently.

When Sarah can't have kids and Abraham decides to have a child with Hagar instead. Sarah projects onto Hagar her anger of not being able to conceive. Hagar is used and abused by Sarah. Ishamael is just caught in the crossfire. In this scripture, God sees Hagar, but if we keep reading, God sees Sarah too.

How can we see what the others in our families experience with empathy?

Genesis 21:8-21 - Hagar & Ishmael are Cast Away

Week 2: When family disappoints.

What do you do when your family doesn't match what you imagined your family should look like? When we get married we have this vision of how we think our family should look like, what if it turns out nothing like that? When we're kids, we imagine our parents growing old together, but what do we do when they separate? When we can't have children? When we're not where we thought we'd be financially? What do you do when your family doesn't live up to your expectations?

Abraham and Sarah were late in their years and their family didn't look anything like they imagined. They were well beyond their childbearing years and had no children, even though God had promised to Abraham that he would be the "father of many nations!?" Their family didn't look anything like what they thought it was going to be. God said God would bless them with descendants beyond the stars, but then they struggled to even get pregnant.

Genesis 18:1-15, (21:1-7) - A Child Promised to Abraham & Sarah

Week 3: How do I survive the holidays?

Family life can feel tremendously difficult. Because of the unavoidable intimacy and interconnectedness of family, sometimes we get held hostage to the personalities, agendas and struggles of everyone else in the family. It's especially difficult with all the expectations and all the heightened emotions of the holidays.

So, what do we do when we gather and it's just plain hard to get along?

How am I going to survive my difficult family over the holidays?

Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel (great grandson of Abraham and Sarah), was despised by his brothers. Of all the 12 sons, Joseph was preferred by his father, who gave him a "long coat of many colors". His brothers despised him so much they threw him in a pit, then sold him into slavery, taking his coat and bloodying it with animals blood, they told their father Joseph was dead. Talk about a sibling rivalry.

Fast forward, and what I love about the story is that it ends in reconciliation. Somehow, some way, they mend the relationship.

God invites us into this hard work. Joseph realizes his arrogance, and his brothers realize their jealousy. How might God be inviting us to reconcile those wounds that run deep?

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 - Joseph's Brothers Sell Him into Slavery

Genesis 45:1-15 - Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

Prayer of the day:

God of grace, we thank you for our families, for people to love and care for. We know that sometimes these relationships can be complicated, so lead us and guide us in your extraordinary love. In your Son's name, Amen.

Prayers of the church:

Abundant Creator, We thank you that you are a God of relationships. Help us to work towards peace, kindness, humility, forgiveness and compassion in all our relationships. Lord in your mercy, HOP

Generous Lord, We remember and give thanks for all the people who have influenced our lives, faith, wisdom and vocational decisions, and who have left an imprint on us through their example. We pray for people grieving the loss of someone significant in their lives, that they will be comforted by you. Lord in your mercy, HOP

Lord God, You are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. We pray that, in every challenge we face, you will increase our trust and confidence in your presence, care, and help in our lives. Lord in your mercy, HOP

Holy Spirit, Be with our church family. Help us to work together to care for those in our community who feel lonely or lost. Guide us to connect and care. Lord in your mercy, HOP

Thank you God for being for us. For hearing and responding to our prayers both those we dare to speak out loud and those that remain silent in our hearts. Thank you for your abundant grace, your unconditional love, your unending mercy. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.