

Series: Looking Back to Move Forward

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Exodus 34 v6 - v7

Generational Sin, Grace.

*And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."*

Exodus 34 v6 - v7

The most quoted scripture by scripture. It describes the character of God.

And these attributes of God are unchanging for thousands of Generations. As Joy was talking about generational blessings we communicated that God in his kindness has put blessings in each of our families. It is because of this. There is a part of who he is in all families because he carries his goodness and maintains his love for thousands of generations.

And even where we feel we came from very broken families where the brokenness may have overshadowed the blessing, the good news is (which we will explore further soon) is that Jesus comes to restore us to the Father's blessing.

Now there is a very disturbing line in this great scripture. **Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."**

Now I do not want us to lose the invitation here. Now if we take the whole counsel of scripture and the image of the Father that we see in Jesus, we can conclude that it is not that God is diabolical making you pay for what your parents did and instead, it is more like, "O by the way, sin itself pays you back. And the consequences of sin do not end with you."

All sin; sin done by you, against you, and around you impacts not just you but often for multiple generations. And even if you are not spiritual you see the evidence in psychology where your places of sin and brokenness are often found to be tied to

how your parents raised you up from their brokenness and sin and they from theirs and even their parents from their before them.

As a church community, we have been leaning into the intentional following of Jesus to see him do in us what on he can do and then to join him in his work in our world. And my contention has been that for that transformation to happen we need to deal with the baggage we come with.

The number one biggest impact on your following of Jesus is your family of origin. Who you are today is a byproduct of your family of origin, the culture you live in, your socioeconomic upbringing, key experiences in the early years of life both good and bad ones, traumas and triumphs. The death of a parent, the splitting of parents, abuse, and even great things such as being able to attend a school or being brought up in a family of faith, etc.

So following Jesus requires that we look back and get free from the lies we lean into from those places and even receive healing for the emotional wounding from our past. Emotional health and spiritual maturity go hand in hand.

Have you seen certain situations in your life or that of others where they profess belief in Jesus and then when certain storms come they react in certain ways that are just contrary but seem to make more sense in the light of their family's experience? They love Jesus but violence is how they live just like their father before them. You believe in Jesus but alcohol abuse is what you resort to just like your mother before you and hers before her. In some cases even, people resort to witchcraft when faced with serious issues of life after all that is how their family dealt with things anyways.

What we pick from our families of origin is not just genetic. And do not just think of mom and dad but up to 4 generations. There was a scientist who did a study at a hospital of holocaust survivors. She isolated a stress hormone found in the survivors of a concentration camp. Then she tested their children and their grandchildren and she found the exact same stress hormone.

Do you know what that means? There is scientific evidence that the trauma of an experience is genetically passed down from generation to generation. So this sin, in this case, done against them, impacted them for up to 4 generations.

And just because you ignore it, just because you did not experience it does not make it any less impactful. If it is not dealt with it keeps impacting you and generations after.

So for a moment just think about some of the key experiences in your life and that of your family. And note them down. both good and bad. Premature death, abortion, a recurrent strange illness, maybe participation in the occult.

The journey of discipleship is about us becoming what Jesus has already made us. We have to identify the patterns that we have inherited from our family and our culture, our coping mechanisms for dealing with emotional pain, and find out where it is out of sync with the way of Jesus and break them to move forward. How are those patterns or rather which are those patterns keeping us from becoming love?

Does this not belong to the therapy rooms - I am a new creation, why should I look back? I think there are so many well-meaning people who say this and honestly some people just don't want to take responsibility for the pain they cause. But for all of us when we do this it is often an issue of fear and shame.

Even as a new creation, for many of us, our past is still sitting with us because it has not been dealt with. And so it keeps rearing its head. Even for those who come from well-adjusted families, there is always something. Many of you learned this the hard way when you were getting married and realized that in your spouse's family, no one invites Uncle John to things, people only go home during burials and they cannot wait to leave, and no one talks about Aunt Margret's death.

So what if I become aware of all this? I cannot heal myself. Yes, you cannot. We learn to be patient with ourselves, we learn to be patient with others. We learn compassion even for our forefathers, which I think my generation needs a lot more of. And we learn to take ownership of the pain we have caused, which I think our forefather's generation needs to learn more of.

But most importantly, we then learn to sit with Jesus and let him bring healing to those deep wounds. Cast your burdens for he cares for you. It is his deep desire that the character of Jesus is formed in us. Paul writes that the Holy Spirit prays for us with groans too deep for words to see Jesus formed in us.

So whether you have struggled with lust or pornography or anger or your family has had a history of broken marriages and strife or premature death in some cases God's desire is to restore us to his image-bearing creations we were always meant to be.

So today, I want to take you to a story of a very famous family, the same family that Joy talked about last Sunday when she talked about Generational blessings. The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's family. The family is blessed that God entrusts this wonderful story of redemption to and even through which we get Jesus. But this time, I wanna trace something else. Ready?

**10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. 11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."**

**14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. 15 And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. 16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.**

**17 But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. 18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" 20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.**

Very odd story. Let's pick up some of what just happened.

1. He tells a lie to preserve himself at the expense of his wife

A few years go by and this happens

Genesis 20

**Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, 2 and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.**

**3 But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, "You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman."**

What do we see in the story...

1. Abraham lies for self-preservation and he tells the same lie. This does not seem to be a one-off problem. Abraham has a problem with the truth.

And yet God is working in this family's story. At this point, they have responded to God's calling and He has even changed their names from Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah.

Many years later, Abraham has 2 sons by 2 women and the women do not get along at all. See what happens

***8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. 9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking 10 and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."***

***11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. 12 But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you because it is through Isaac that your offspring[b] will be reckoned. 13 I will make the son of the slave into a nation also because he is your offspring."***

***14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba***

What do we see in the story?

1. Favoritism
2. Sibling rivalry

I wanna Jump forward a generation later. Isaac, Abraham's son is now married and an old man with 2 sons of his own

Genesis 25 v27- v28

***27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.***

So what's already happening...

1. Sibling rivalry right from the womb if you read earlier
2. Favoritism by the parents

Another story from this family

Genesis 26 v1 - v9

**26 Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham’s time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. 2 The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. 3 Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring[a] all nations on earth will be blessed,[b] 5 because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.” 6 So Isaac stayed in Gerar.**

**7 When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” because he was afraid to say, “She is my wife.” He thought, “The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.”**

**8 When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelek king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. 9 So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, “She is really your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’?”**

**Isaac answered him, “Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.”**

Wait what? Isaack tells the same lie to the King of the same country as his father. Now whether this was the same King or whether it was another monarch with the same regional name just like we have Charles the 3 of England because we had Charles the 1 and 2nd, I don’t know. The point is, the point is this lying to get ahead is now in our second generation.

And I wonder if Isaack after hearing stories of what his father before him had done to his wife promised himself to not do that himself and here he is caught up with what was never dealt with..

Now let us jump to the next generation and look at one of Isaack’s children called Jacob. The name itself means deceiver. Remember I told you in this culture your names spoke of your character. The parents prophetically spoke into this child’s life and said, “you will never tell the truth. You will deceive others to get ahead.”

And maybe they had just seen things in the family and said, “Oh this one will be like their father or their grandfather...” whatever it was people will live up to what those

in authority speak over them. So parents watch what you speak over your children, you are creating that in them.

So when you call your children lazy and say that they will be as dumb as Uncle Roger, they might just live up to what you are creating in them. Team leaders, bosses, and pastors, watch what you speak over your people, Learn to call out God's greatness in them.

That is why I speak well of George from this stage and when we are across a table from each other and when he is not in the room.

George, you're an amazing leader, you are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, you are gentle and you are a great speaker.

I am creating life in him and I have seen him grow each year into those truths.

Now back to this family's story...

Genesis 27 v21- v27

***21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not."***

***22 Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him. 24 "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked.***

***"I am," he replied.***

***25 Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing."***

***Jacob brought it to him and he ate, and he brought some wine and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me."***

***27 So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him***

Jacob just lied to his father and stole the brother's blessing. The lying problem is now in Generation 3

Then he goes away to find a bride. He gets deceived. So the deceiver gets deceived. He marries 2 women one of whom he did not want.

Genesis 29 v28- v30

***28 And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. 29 Laban gave***

***his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. 30 Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban for another seven years.***

So after his wedding, he finishes the customary required time with his first wife and immediately jumps into bed with the next wife whom he loves more.

Right there favoritism seems to mark his family just like his father and his grandfather before him.

And when kids come along,  
Genesis 37 v3 - v4

***3 Jacob[a] loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe.[b] 4 But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.***

This the 3rd generation now and the favoritism and severe sibling rivalry continue. It is running through the family.

Now, I have never been a parent but I think every parent has an easier relationship with one child over the other and these relationships also change with time. Because we bring out different things in each other just personality, experience all of it and children do that too with parents.

However, we all know of families where the brokenness caused very bad favoritism that all the children knew they were less loved than the others, and some even got mistreated. So it is not just a parent finding it easy with one child, this is a bad streak in this family and now we are in generation 3 and it is going on.

All siblings fight. My brothers and I had physical fights. One of us would always start crying to draw the attention of the parents. And who cares who. When my brothers visited in 2020 we had dinner with Bill and Chat and they started picking on me again. Picking up on some of the old teases. But they have never tried to sell me or kill me at least that I know of. Now don't laugh, it has happened in this country over land, over spouses, over nothing. Guess what, this is how it goes down with this family. They sell their brother into slavery as a better solution than killing him. That is how much they hated him.

Then



**31 Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. 32 They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?"**

**33 Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!"**

They go and deceive their father. The deceiver is deceived again. these kids have learned from the best or maybe the apple does not fall far from the tree. This family has a problem with lies and this is now generation 4. What makes you think you and your family are exempt? Don't you just love the honesty of the Bible?

And this goes on the kids keep lying and they are lied to. The cycle goes on. So for four generations from Abraham to his son Isaac, to grandson Jacob, and now the sons of Jacob, there is a continuing pattern of lies and deception, favouritism, and sibling rivalry. These sins and brokenness run in the family.

Now something begins to turn around...

Genesis 39 v2-v9

**2 The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. 3 Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did.**

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, 7 and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

8 But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. 9 No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

Someone in the family decides that he will choose faithfulness over lying for convenience and self-preservation. This would have been one of those situations where no one had to know, he would have gotten ahead and it is a private sin. But he decides that is where the lying ends. And this powerful moment keeps Joseph on his path to his destiny one that ends up saving his enter family.

But it does not end there. Many years after the family is reunited, the old man Jacob now called Israel was about to die and as is Customary he calls his children to bless them. He asks Joseph to bring his two boys so that he could bless them too. See what happens ...

**14 But Jacob crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys' heads. He put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, though he was the younger boy, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, though he was the firstborn.**

**17 But Joseph was upset when he saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim's head. So Joseph lifted it to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 "No, my father," he said. "This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head."**

For Joseph, this is where favoritism ends. With him. Someone has to rise up and say it ends with me. This is where it stops. We have to break the unhealthy patterns of sin and brokenness that have run in our families.

Now I wanna remind us of the first thing we read when we got into the story of Joseph. The Lord was with Joseph. Joseph wasn't necessarily special or better than his brothers. It is the presence of God in His life. He is able to break these patterns because the Lord is with him. And this is not even about God playing favoritism, why was He with Joseph and not with the others? I think we are all blessed and abled differently by God and then there is our part where we intentionally walk with God. Every time I talk about Spiritual Disciplines I have always said they are not an end to themselves, instead they are a way for us to practice the presence of God and let Him do in us what only He can do.

So even for those of you who will decide that it ends with you, your own willpower will not free you. In fact, I invite you to then take it to the feet of Jesus and surrender it. And do it as many times as you need to. And one day it will be said of you that the Lord was with you and your family was saved because of you.

But first, we have gotta identity. There were things I struggled with and even habits I had that until I sat down and looked keenly at my patterns and family's relational patterns I thought they were either normal or just impacting me. And I come from a wonderful family with so many blessings yet I realized that there was brokenness and sin that kept repeating itself in every generation even with people who tried so hard to make sure that is not their story and seeing them end up in the same places. But also became aware that I was carrying some of them on in my own life.

So after we identify them specifically we deal with them

So how do you identify these things?

1. Prayer... ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you things in your life that are probably generational. Some things are, but not everything is.

2. Talk to people you are in close relationships with, your spouse, your boyfriend, your community group, etc. They may point out patterns in your life that you have thought to be normal
3. Genogram - available

Then

1. Do not do the journey alone -community groups
2. Pray
3. Receive prayer
4. Get counseling

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*Let's Pray*