BREAK THE POWER OF OUR PAST

It's always a shock when someone says to us: "*You're just like your dad, or your mom!*" This is especially true if you had decided not to do what they did during your childhood. *In my case, I found my handwriting was similar to my mom's, and Shirley would point out that, when irritated, I pulled my mouth just like my mom did.*

Have you noticed that alcoholism or any chemical dependency suffered by one of the parents is often repeated in the children, or any physical abuse by the husband is often repeated in how the grown-up children treat their partners? I'm not trying to excuse this behaviour, simply pointing out how often this happens.

Of course, **we also see positive behaviour replicated**. My grandfather was creative and loved woodworking; his son was also very creative, painting, metalwork, and cabinet making and I have always loved working with wood. Shirley is musical, and our daughter and grandchildren play musical instruments and sing. Allistair has a very creative side in designing and manufacturing knives and other stuff.

Today, our '*Mission Impossible Made Possible'* subject looks at "**How we can break the power of our past!"** I want us to identify some of the problem areas in our lives and I will also provide some solutions to think about. This is part 1 of the subject and there will be even more answers next week.

THE PROBLEM:

Scripture and life teach us that there is an intricate, complex relationship between the kind of person we are today and our past.

We see this in repeating behaviour patterns (sometimes extremely negative) from generation to generation within a family. If you've heard the term "*generational curses or bloodline curses*" used during prayer ministry, it is these repetitive negative behaviour patterns.

My grandparents were excessively strict and harsh with my mom, and she was also very hard and strict with us, her children. (*Today they call this physical and emotional abuse!*) Then, as Shirley & my children were growing up, she would sometimes let me know that I was behaving '*just like my mom did*' in disciplining our children and in my actions. Even before we married, I had chosen not to be like my mom, but sometimes I still behaved like her!

Paul shows us this struggle in Romans 7 and says:

> ***Romans 7:19 (NLT2)***
> *I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.*

We see ourselves as individuals acting alone, but the Bible says each person is also part of a family system going back over many generations and the behaviour patterns that occurred in the past are most likely to be repeated in our lives today unless we are willing to do something about it!

One example is found in the book of Genesis, where Abraham, his son Isaac and grandson Jacob all show a similar pattern of brokenness.

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

The record of this family illustrates how sins and blessings are passed from generation to generation. We see how the blessings given to Abraham because of his obedience are passed to his son (Isaac), grandson (Jacob), and great-grandchildren (Joseph and his brothers). **At the same time**, we also observe a pattern of sin and brokenness in each of the generations:

A PATTERN OF LYING.

- Abraham lied twice about Sarah.
- Isaac and Rebecca's marriage was characterised by lies.
- Jacob lied to almost everyone; even his name means "deceiver."
- Ten of Jacob's children lied about Joseph's death, faked a funeral, and kept the "family secret" for more than ten years.

BROTHERS ISOLATED FROM ONE ANOTHER. *(They disagreed and then refused to talk to each other!)*

- Isaac and Ishmael were estranged. (they kept away from one another.)
- Jacob ran away from his brother Esau, and they didn't speak or see each other for 10 years.
- Joseph was isolated from his ten brothers for more than 10 years.

POOR INTIMACY IN MARRIAGES

- Abraham had a child with Hagar, who was not his wife!
- Isaac had a terrible relationship with Rebecca.
- Jacob had two wives and two concubines *(mistresses or 'common-law' wives*).

Also, in King David's family tree, the three generations of David, Solomon, and Rehoboam, reveal a pattern of sin and brokenness in each of the generations.

DAVID, SOLOMON, AND REHOBOAM

King David is referred to as "*a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22*) and he passed on enormous blessings to his son, Solomon, which continued for many generations. Unfortunately, at the same time, he also passed on a pattern of sin and brokenness that continued through the generations.

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL COMPROMISE.

- David tried to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba by murdering Uriah.
- Solomon mixes worship of the God of Israel with other gods. *(Interfaith!)*
- Rehoboam, Solomon's son, rejects wise counsel from the elders and follows the gods of surrounding nations.

SEXUAL SIN

- David had many wives.
- Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. *(mistresses or 'common-law' wives*)
- Rehoboam had eighteen wives and sixty concubines.

UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS

- David had a tense relationship with his seven older brothers.
- Solomon's half-brother Absalom killed his brother and tried to kill his father, David.
- Rehoboam disagreed with his brother and divided Israel into two.

WOW! Did you realize that reading through the Bible reveals more plots, sexual escapades, family sagas and relationship intrigue than many of the popular TV series?

God allows these real family experiences to be told so we can learn from them, and then take a deep, hard look at ourselves.

> ***1 Corinthians 10:6 (AMP)***
> *Now **these things are examples** (warnings and admonitions) for us not to want or crave or desire or lust after evil and carnal things as they did, (i.e. what happened in the past).*

Until we understand the power our past has on how we behave today, we will keep on repeating the negative behaviour patterns of our parents and grandparents in our own family and in the church family.

The Bible teaches us that **the consequences of actions and decisions taken in one generation affect those who follow**.

> ***Exodus 20:5b-6 (NIV)***
> *… For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, **punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation** of those who hate me, [6] **but showing love** to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

The best translation (from a Hebrew scholar) for the word, 'punishing,' used in the NIV and many other versions, would be "***tends to be repeated***." In other words, what happens in one generation tends to repeat itself in the next, whether it be alcoholism, addiction, depression, suicide, adultery, divorce, unwed pregnancies, mistrust of authority, or unresolved conflict.

The 'problem' is that **our past holds power over our present unless we take decisive and definite action** to break this powerful hold.

THE SOLUTION:

The Bible gives us all the direction we need to live out the solution:

1. Admit how the blessings and sins of our family—going back three to four generations—**profoundly impact who we are today**.
2. Recognize **we have been birthed into a new family**—the family of Jesus.
3. **Stop following the sinful patterns** of our family of origin and culture and learn how to do life in the new family of Jesus.

Let's look at how to do this:

1. Admit how the blessings and sins of our family—going back three to four generations—profoundly impact who we are today.

Generation	Time Frame	Age Now
The Silent Generation	1928-1945	79-96 years old
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We are born into families, but biblical writers have a different understanding of the word "family" than we do. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, one's family refers not just to a couple and their children (known as a 'nuclear family') but to the entire extended family over three or four generations. This table of generations gives us an example of the different modern generations so we can see where we 'fit in'.

My parents, grandparents and great-grandparents are the only descendants that I have been able to trace in my family tree. But it was only as Shirley

and I attended our marriage preparation course, that I began to discover and admit to some of the blessings, brokenness, and sins traceable throughout my family tree that were impacting my life. This included suicide, addictions, dealing in witchcraft, pregnancy outside of marriage and heart disease.

It's in a family that the individual's brokenness from the past is most often revealed. Perhaps this is why this is often called *generational curses* or *bloodline curses*. The **first step** to breaking these is having someone pray with you, for example, one of our prayer ministers or at the Healing Rooms!

2. **Recognize you have been birthed into a new family—the family of Jesus**.

The great news of the gospel is that **our family of origin does not determine our future. God does!** We are not only forgiven but freed from the power of sin present in our families over generations.

Romans 3:22-24 (NLT2)
22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. 23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, with undeserved kindness, ***declares that we are righteous****. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.*

God's very life—in the person of the Holy Spirit—now resides within us. We receive **a new heart, a new nature, and a new spirit**

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)
26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

When we place our faith in Christ, **we are spiritually reborn** by the Holy Spirit into the family of Jesus.

John 1:12-13 (TLB)
12 But to all who received Him, He gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust Him to save them. 13 ***All those who believe this are reborn!****—not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan—but* ***from the will of God****.*

We are transferred out of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Colossians 1:13 (NLT2)
13 For He has ***rescued us from the kingdom of darkness*** *and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son,*

When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, **we have a radical new beginning in our life!**

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT2)
This means that anyone who belongs to Christ ***has become a new person****. The old life is gone;* ***a new life has begun!***

The most significant change for me was the understanding that, as a Christian, I was adopted into God's family:

Romans 8:14-17a (NLT2)
14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God ***are children of God****. 15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when* ***He adopted you as His own children.*** *Now we call Him, "Abba, Father." 16 For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that* ***we are God's children.*** *17* ***And since we are His children, we are His heirs****.*

My inheritance is now freedom, hope, and glory, and, as I continue to follow Jesus, all the resources of heaven are available to me to fulfil my mission for Him.

I began to see the church as my family, brothers and sisters who would love me, and be loved, who would speak correction (and often did!) and who would challenge me to stretch in my faith and obedience to God's Word.

I read this passage which summarizes what I came to wholeheartedly believe:

> *"The church is the new family of God . . . Through spiritual rebirth, we each become a brother or sister of Jesus Christ through adoption into the family of God. Consequently, we are brother and sister to each other."*
>
> *Ray Anderson and Dennis Guernsey*

I truly believe that the local church, and the family of believers, are the true communities of brothers and sisters to each other where each one of us may be "re-parented" in doing life God's way, as we commit to follow Jesus and grasp the continuous act of dying to self.

3. Put off (STOP IT) the sinful patterns of our family of origin and culture, learning instead how to do life in our new family of Jesus.

Our willingness to admit to, recognise and understand how our past family life impacts our values, attitudes, speech, and behaviour, will have the most influence in how ready we are to break any destructive patterns in our lives. It is being willing and ready to pass on a positive heritage and Christian traditions to our children and grandchildren, allowing God to transform our lives through the renewal of our minds so that we are a gift to the world.

> ***Romans 12:2 (NLT2)***
> *Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Why are most people in our churches not radically different from their unchurched neighbours, even though they may pray, read the Bible, and attend worship?

The answer: Allan mentioned it last week, Jesus called on those who follow Him to die to self! Dying to self is the denial of the power of the past in our present-day life so that the righteousness of God's Holy Spirit in us shines through to others. We love the idea of heaven, but we are not prepared to face our cross to get there!

Soon after I was adopted into Jesus' family, I was also accepted into a local church. There I met people who helped me on the journey to overcome the power my past held over me. As I shared earlier, this included a pattern of suicide, addictions, dealing in witchcraft, pregnancy outside of marriage and heart disease.

Firstly, they prayed with me, helping me to break the hold of the past, and then they helped me discover the true behaviour of those who follow Jesus. And they kept on encouraging me to love and serve others, growing in maturity. I believed that '*in Christ, I am a new creation'*, but I also realised that there is something in me that tempts me to do what I don't want to do. When I deny that temptation, I am dying to self, and keep on being set free from the power of the past. But I have not yet been set completely free, as Paul says:

Philippians 3:12-14 (NLT2)
12 I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.
13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

The way to stop practising the sinful patterns we learnt in our family of origin and culture is to relearn to 'do life God's way' in our new family of Jesus. Success comes through our intentional, radical, and complete surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit in us, and by filling our minds with God's Word and willingly surrendering to God's transformative power in our lives.

This is hard work and takes discipline, but this is real discipleship, real emotional health in Jesus, and it is what real love does!

Amen!

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