

Dealing with Generational Strongholds

Biblical Foundation

The family we have grown up in is the primary and, except in rare instances, the most powerful system that will shape and influence who we are. In the Ten Commandments, God said,

“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, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Ex. 20:5-6).

As stated above, curses can be passed down to the third and fourth generations. Sexual sins affect up to the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:2), but the blessing of obedience to God is passed down a thousand generations (Deuteronomy 7:9).

We are not personally guilty of our ancestors' sins (Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:2-32), but we do live with the consequences of their sin—and will continue to live in the way we were taught unless we repent. When people repented in the Old Testament, they confessed their sins *and* the sins of their ancestors (Nehemiah 1:6-7; 9:2; Jeremiah 14:20; Daniel 9:10-11). We have the same responsibility to recognize our own sins and the sins of our ancestors, to confess them, and to refuse to be held in bondage to living these sins out in our lives.

Generational sin and its effects come to us in three ways:¹

1. We inherit our propensities to sin through our genes (personality, behavioral tendencies)
Heb 7:9,10 – And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.
2. By example
3. Through the law of sowing and reaping: the effects of sin multiply in the future
--Seeds of sin ripen to produce thirty-, sixty- or a hundredfold, Mark 4:8,20
--When David sinned, his child died, 2 Sam. 12:1-24
--The law of sowing and reaping was designed to bring blessing, but through sin brings destruction, Gal. 6:8

The lives of David and Abraham show how generational patterns of sin were passed down (adultery/a heart not fully devoted to God, sexual sin, and family division and sibling rivalry for David and a pattern of lying, having a “favorite” child, and sibling rivalry for Abraham).

Curses are stopped at the Cross of Christ according to Galatians 3:13.

¹ John and Paula Sandford. *Healing the Wounded Spirit* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Victory House, Inc., 1985), 373, 379-380.

How to Identify a Generational Stronghold

The presence of any of the following may indicate the presence of a generational stronghold.²

1. *Pressures within you that are being held at abeyance, and are not truly gone*
2. *Issues which come back regularly.*
3. *Any habitual or stubborn sin pattern.*
4. *Habitual weaknesses – mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical*
5. *Anything within that is contrary to peace, faith, hope and love*
6. *Anything within that lines up with any activity of Satan*
7. *Addictions or out-of-control areas*

Build your own family tree and look for sin patterns, personalities, fear, hate, envy, strife, bitterness, ways of earning a living, alcohol, drugs, pornography, victimization, rejection, abuse, and lack of nurture.

The following questions may be helpful in this process:³

1. *Describe each family member with three adjectives and their relationship.*
2. *Describe your parents' relationship.*
3. *How was conflict handled in your family? Anger? Tensions?*
4. *How were gender roles and authority worked out in your family?*
5. *How well did your family do in talking about feelings?*
6. *How would your family describe you? How do you think your family thinks about you?*
7. *How was sexuality talked or not talked about? What were the implied messages?*
8. *Were there any family "secrets" (such as a pregnancy out of wedlock, incest, or major financial scandal)?*
9. *What was considered "success" in your family?*
10. *How was money handled? Spirituality? Holidays? Relationship with extended family?*

² Mark and Patti Virkler, *Prayers that Heal the Heart*, (Gainesville, Florida: Bridge-Logos, 2001), 95.

³ Peter Scazzero with Warren Bird. *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), 95.

11. *How did your family's ethnicity shape you?*
12. *Were there any heroes or heroines in the family? Scapegoats? "Losers"? Why?*
13. *What kinds of addictions, if any, existed in the family?*
14. *Were there traumatic losses in the past or present, such as sudden death, prolonged illnesses, stillbirths/miscarriages, bankruptcy, or divorce?*
15. *How was spirituality expressed?*

Dealing with a Generational Stronghold⁴

1. Begin prayer by thanking and praising God for all that has come to us through our forefathers. Pray that even the good be filtered through the cross.
2. Whatever patterns have been identified, ask Jesus to destroy and transform on His cross. **It is through unforgiven sin and consequent descending patterns that Satan perpetuates his destructions on families.** Name each pattern, describing it, and calling specifically for our Lord to destroy it.
3. Sometimes it may be appropriate to rebuke the powers of darkness and command them to leave.
4. Ask Father God to send His angels to encamp about every member of the family (Ps 34:7), to protect each one (Ps 91:11,12), and to bring each one out of darkness into light (Heb 2:14). Call for the Lord to send forth His warrior angels to do battle for the family.

The following prayer is a suggested model:⁵

1. *I **confess and repent** of the sin of my ancestors, my parents, and my own sin of _____ and of my anger and resentment against You, God, for allowing this to happen in my life.*
2. *I **forgive and release** my ancestors for passing on to me this sin and for the resulting curses of _____ (be specific). I ask You to forgive me, and I receive Your forgiveness. I forgive myself for participating in this sin.*

⁴ Sandford, 388-390.

⁵ Virkler, 54.

3. *I place the Cross of Christ between my ancestors and myself, as a baby in my mother's womb. I command the sin of _____ and all accompanying curses to be halted at the Cross of Jesus Christ, and for freedom and release to flow down from the Cross of Christ to that baby in the womb.*

Principles to Keep in Mind⁶

1. Prayers for the cessation of generational sin, like prayers for conversion, are normally one-time prayers. However, as bits and pieces of history are newly revealed, specific prayers about those revelations are not redundant.
2. Whoever voices this prayer must know his authority in Christ as a child of the King. Powers of darkness do not yield territory to halfhearted mumblers.
3. Prayer to stop generational sin is not merely for healing. Nor is it only defensive. It is aggressive warfare on the march to recover lost souls from the grip of darkness.

⁶ Sandford, 391.