

next gen



Getting Started

Did you ever wear hand me downs as a kid? If so, did you have a favorite and a “most embarrassing” thing you had to wear?

- Much of who we are is learned from our parents. Take a moment to talk about some of the “hand me downs” we got from the previous generation.
- What generational traits did you inherit from your parents that you especially value in yourself?

What generational traits did you inherit that you wished you didn't?

- Have you ever had a moment in your life where something happened and you responded and then thought afterward, “I sounded just like me father” or “I reacted just like my mother?” Take a moment to share the story with your group

Going Deeper

This idea of a generational curse is as old as time. As long as there have been people we have been passing off our hand me downs to the next generation. Take a moment to see what generational curse Abraham handed down to his children

[Genesis 12:1-4](#)

[Genesis 12:10-19](#)

[Genesis 26:1-10](#)

Lying and deceit weren't the only dysfunction that Abraham handed down. He also played favorites. He had two sons and he preferred his son Isaac to his son Ismael. Later in life Isaac would play favorites and preferred his son Esau to his son Jacob, while his wife favored Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons but preferred his two youngest sons.

Unfortunately, the consequences of parental favoritism are what you might expect - they're mostly bad. Disfavored children experience worse outcomes across the board: more depression, greater aggressiveness, lower self-esteem, and poorer academic performance. Many of these consequences persist long after children have grown up and moved out of the house. People don't soon forget that they were disfavored by their parents, and many people report that being disfavored as a child continues to affect their self-esteem and their relationships in adulthood.

-Psychology Today

Was there favoritism in the family you grew up in? How did it effect you?

What are you doing in your family to make sure that favoritism doesn't impact your children?

On Sunday Jack talked about Three ways to break a generational curse.
Lets take a moment to review them

1) Own your own stuff

How much of your life is spent thinking about other people's mistakes rather than focusing on personal growth? How can you change that pattern?

2) Confess your stuff ([James 5:16](#))

Being honest about your own mistakes and weaknesses diminishes the power of those old habits in your life. Read the following quote and talk about the role that confession can play in your life in overcoming a generational curse

*Shame hates it when we reach out and tell our story. It hates having words wrapped around it—it can't survive being shared. Shame loves secrecy. The most dangerous thing to do after a shaming experience is hide or bury our story. When we bury our story, the shame metastasizes. I remember saying out loud: "I need to talk to someone RIGHT NOW."
-Brene Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection*

3) Deal with your stuff harshly

Read [Ephesians 4:22-24](#). What harsh steps do you need to take to get rid of the generational curse you've been handed down?

It falls upon us to break the generational curse that we've been handed down. But the reality is we will all hand down some generational junk to our kids. Fortunately God can fill in the gaps. Read [Deuteronomy 5:9,10](#) and talk about how God can fill in the gaps for our mistakes.

One last thought...

How powerful can the generational influence of parents be on their own family and descendants? In 1874 a member of the New York State Prison Board noticed that six members of the same family were incarcerated at the same time. The board did some research, looking back a few generations to try to find the original couple who initiated this tragic family legacy. They traced the family line back to an ancestor born in 1720, a man considered lazy and godless with a reputation as the town troublemaker. He was also an alcoholic and viewed as having low moral character. To make matters worse, he married a woman who was much like himself, and together they had six daughters and two sons.

Here is what the report revealed about the approximately 1,200 descendants of this couple who were alive by 1874:

- 310 were homeless.
- 160 were prostitutes.

- 180 suffered from drug or alcohol abuse.
- 150 were criminals who spent time in prison, including seven for murder.

The report also found that the State of New York had spent \$1.5 million—a shockingly high number at the time—to care for this line of descendants, and not one had made a significant contribution to society.

Sadly, we can see by this example how the harmful dysfunctions of parents can be passed down from generation to generation.

In contrast, another family heritage was studied involving a couple who lived about the same time. This second family study began with the famous preacher Jonathan Edwards, who was born in 1703. A deeply religious man, he lived a life of strong moral values and became a minister and a dedicated family man.

He married a deeply religious woman named Sarah who shared his values, and together they had 11 children. Eventually, Jonathan Edwards became the president of Princeton University. Here is what researchers discovered about the approximately 1,400 descendants of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards by 1874:

- 13 were college presidents.
- 65 were college professors.
- 100 were attorneys.
- 32 were state judges.
- 85 were authors of classic books.
- 66 were physicians.
- 80 held political offices, including three state governors.
- 3 were state senators.
- 1 became vice president of the United States.

What a difference it makes in the kind of example and values that are passed down to the next generation! Strong moral values can indeed bring blessings and opportunities for generations yet to be born!

