

Family Systems and Generational Bondage

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In the Bible Study series Breaking Free, Beth Moore challenges participants to have their generational ruins rebuilt by Christ Jesus. Beth states that “even Christ had a blend of the negative and positive in His lineage” (Rahab the prostitute and Manasseh the king) and no one can boast a spotless, blameless family line.” In my work with families and in my own life, I know these words are truth. I also know that the Lord tirelessly watches, protects, and heals those who bring these bondages to Him.

One way that a generational bondage can reveal itself in an individual, is through symptoms of anxiety or depression. Sometimes God can help an individual trace this depression or anxiety back through the family lineage. If these symptoms are uncovered in the family lineage, the next step God often uses is to pinpoint a particular event or a pattern of sinful behavior. Over time, this event or patterns can evolve into bondage within the family system.

I once knew a young mother who struggled with a clinical depression after the birth of her second child. Postpartum depression was a part of this, but the feelings of worthlessness and inappropriate guilt were excessive. Her oldest child, a daughter, was five years old. Upon exploring her family history, we discovered that this oldest daughter was the same age as this mother, when the mother was abused by a family member. The depression could then be understood from this generational context. Once understood or defined, the mother could then ask God to begin to break the bondage that this sin was causing in her life.

Psalm 139 assures us that God intimately knew us before we were born. He created us and His eyes saw our unformed body. Generational bondage is not a surprise to God when we bring it before Him Christ desires to set the captives free, and this includes the family system. Beth Moore states that we have a “goodly heritage” in Christ (Ps. 16:6), and she proclaims Galatians 5:1: “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”

It can be frightening to uncover the past. Ironically, sometimes the thought of spiritual and emotional freedom is also scary, because it is new and unfamiliar. Allow Jesus to “hem you in behind and before” (Ps. 139:5). He can hem in our past and stitch up our wounds. He is already before us; He is our anchor in the future.

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