

Breaking Family Ties

How your prayers can Destroy generational Strongholds



We all know we can inherit our mother's eyes, our father's nose, or the color of our grandmother's hair. But did you know that we can pick up character qualities from our parents, such as a bad temper, a propensity for lying, depression, self-pity, envy, unforgiveness, perfectionism and pride? These and other characteristics that have a spiritual root can be passed along from our parents to us, and from us to our children. In a particular family there may be a tendency toward such things as divorce, infidelity, alcoholism, addiction, suicides or depression all mistakenly accepted as "the way I am."

The Bible talks about the influence our parents can have on us. It says God will visit "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Ex. 20:5). This Scripture is referring to people who don't walk in a loving relationship with God. However, a parent who is a believer and loves God can still choose to sin. And his sin will profoundly affect his children.

The Bible says "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). That doesn't mean that when we receive Jesus we are suddenly perfect and incapable of sinning. It means we have been freed from the consequences of sin, which is death, and we have been given the power to resist it. But we must make choices every day about whether we will live in that freedom and power or not.

The Bible also says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). If it is not possible as a believer to become entangled again with a yoke of bondage, why does the Bible warn us about it? The answer is, even though Jesus set us free from sin we can still make choices that put us back into bondage to it.

The point is, sometimes we accept certain tendencies toward sin in ourselves and we don't have to. Sometimes we carry on a family tradition that we shouldn't and it affects our children. Unlike physical traits, tendencies toward sin are something we don't have to receive as an inheritance from our parents. That's because these tendencies are nothing more than the unquestioned

acceptance of a firmly entrenched lie of the enemy. He wants us to believe that we are not a new creation in Christ and that we have not been set free from our old nature. He wants us to think that because dad or grandpa drank too much, or was a complainer, or cheated on his wife, or abused his family with his anger, or got divorced, or was dishonest in his business dealings, that's the way things are done in our family. But we can choose to break away from these old familial habits through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. And when we see things we don't like about ourselves reflected in our children, we can pray for them to be set free of that tendency as well.

"If God through His mercy has saved us, and the Holy Spirit has washed and renewed us, and we are justified by grace, then why am I still struggling with sin?" I asked my Christian counselor many years ago.

"It's because the sin is either unconfessed, or you are choosing to continue to do it," he answered.

"But I still have unforgiveness for various family members for things that have happened in the past," I said. "I've reconfessed it. I don't want to do it. Why can't I get beyond this?"

"Your mother was an unforgiving person, wasn't she?" he said.

"Very much so. She had unforgiveness for nearly every family member. That's why she distanced herself from most of them. She had few friends for the same reason—she pushed them away with her unforgiveness for the most minor infractions."

"Have you ever thought of the possibility that you could have acquired that tendency toward unforgiveness in your personality? Children pick up what their parents are," he suggested.

I'd never thought about the possibility of there being anything outside my own mind that was propelling me to stay locked in unforgiveness, but the more I thought about it, the more I remembered seeing that trait manifest seriously in other family members. Nearly every family has to deal with that at some point, but most get beyond it without allowing it to cause a major breach in the family ties.

"I know this doesn't relieve me of my responsibility to forgive, but I do see a pattern of this in my family," I said.

"And what frightens me most is that it could happen in my own children. I see them now hanging on to unforgiveness toward one another for things that have happened. It would break my heart to think that after they've grown and left our house, or after my husband and I have gone to be with the Lord, they would have

nothing to do with one another. I can see that I have to get free of this for them as well as for myself.”

The counselor and I prayed that day that the sin of unforgiveness in my family would not be passed down from generation to generation, but would be stopped by the power of the Holy Spirit. I proclaimed the truth of God’s Word, which says I am a new creation in Christ and I don’t have to live according to the habits and sins of the past. Through that revelation, I resolved to confess unforgiveness the moment it appeared—even if that meant doing it on an hour-by-hour basis.

The more I have released unforgiveness through confession, repentance and prayer before God, the more I have seen my children become free of it too. And their relationship with one another has improved. Of course, my children’s ability to forgive does not rely on me. It is their decision. But hopefully they will see forgiveness being modeled in a clear-enough manner as to make their decision to forgive easier.

A good way to see a negative trait broken in your child is to see it broken in you first. The best place to start is to identify any sin in your life. Wherever there is sin, you need to confess it. If that sin is given place time and again, it will

become

more and more entrenched. For example, a lie is a sin. By repeated

lying, place is given for this trait to become entrenched, and soon

lying gets out of control. Another example is wanting to die. This is a

sin. When people say "I want to die" enough times, they can get to the

point where they are plagued by suicidal thoughts.

If you see a place in your life where you

have sinned or not lived God's way, repent of it immediately by going

before the Lord and confessing it. Ask for God's forgiveness and say,

"God, You be in control and help me not to live like that anymore."

Then identify any sin in your parents and

grandparents that you feel could be affecting you or your children and

pray about that also. The Bible says, "The Spirit Himself bears witness

with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then

heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17). We want

to be heirs of God, not of our family's sin.

In Jesus' name we can be set free from

any family pattern of sin, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we can

refuse to allow it any place in our children's life. If you can think of

any family traits you don't want your children to inherit, start

praying.

Stormie Omartian is the best-selling author of *The Power of a Praying* series, including *The Power of a Praying Parent*, from which this article was adapted. Copyright © 2007 by Stormie Omartian. Published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. Used by permission.

A Prayer for Your Children



Lord, You have said in Your Word that a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children (Prov. 13:22).

I pray that the inheritance I leave to my children will be the rewards

of a godly life and a clean heart before You. To make sure that happens,

I ask that wherever there is a sinful trait in me that I have acquired

from my family, deliver me from it now in the name of Jesus. I confess

my sins to You. I ask for forgiveness and restoration, knowing Your Word

says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us

our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). I know

that cleansing from sin through confession lessens the possibility of

passing the habit of sin on to my child.

Jesus said, "I give you the authority

... over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). If there is

any work
of the enemy in my past that seeks to encroach upon the life
of my
child, [name of child], I break it now by the power and
authority given
me in Jesus Christ. I pray specifically about [name something
you see in
yourself or your family that you don't want passed on to your
child].
Whatever is not Your will for our lives, I reject as sin.

Thank You, Jesus, that You came to set
us free from the past. We refuse to live bound by it. Thank
You, Father,
that You have "qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance
of the
saints in the light" (Col. 1:12). I pray that my son
[daughter] will not
inherit any sin trait from his [her] earthly family, but will
"inherit
the kingdom prepared for him [her] from the foundation of the
world"
(Matt. 25:34). Thank You, Jesus, that in You the old has
passed away and
all things are new.

Weapons of Warfare



God's Word is our most effective weapon to demolish
familial strongholds. In faith, claim these verses over you
and your family.

- Blessed
be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

according to His
abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope
through the
resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an
inheritance
incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away,
reserved in
heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through
faith for
salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. —1
Peter 1:3-5

- The
Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has
anointed Me to
preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal
the
brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and
the opening of
the prison to those who are bound. —Isaiah 61:1

- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
old things have passed away; behold, all things have
become new. —2 Corinthians 5:17

- For we
ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived,
serving
various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy,
hateful and
hating one another. But when the kindness and the love

of God our Savior
toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which
we have done,
but according to His mercy He saved us, through the
washing of
regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He
poured out on us
abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having
been justified
by His grace we should become heirs according to the
hope of eternal
life. –Titus 3:3-7