

How You Can Rise Above Generational Dysfunction

Despite our best efforts, many of us allow ourselves to become victims of generational dysfunction—living out our days repeating, or reacting to, the mistakes of our parents or grandparents.

As a professional therapist for the past three decades, I have observed firsthand the devastation that results from unrecognized and unaddressed patterns of thought and behavior. Marriages are damaged, families are torn apart, and anxiety and depression are prevalent in our society.

The good news is that God's Word offers us the wisdom we need to soar above generational dysfunction and find wholeness and healing in Christ. His love and grace, and the power of the Holy Spirit, give us the means to do so.

God's Word tells us that it is by the Spirit that we rise above sin and our old behaviors and thinking patterns. Our mindsets shift from being focused on what we want to what the Spirit desires. This transformation leads to life and peace. Romans 8:5-6 (NIV) says, "Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace."

It is easy to walk in the flesh—anyone can do it. It is a self-pleasing path, full of selfish ambition and self-absorption. It often moves us quickly along as we chase after various things that we think will make us happy—wealth, good looks and recognition, to name a few. As we hurry on our way, we often miss the small pleasures of life—a magnificent sunset, a purposeful conversation with a friend or time

playing on the floor with our child or grandchild.

If we're not careful, we can miss seeing into another's heart, seeing someone's hurt and pain—missing the opportunity to show empathy. Although our chosen path seems to make us happy, it is only for a season. Selfish endeavors do not nurture our spiritual and emotional growth. Instead, selfishness stagnates our growth.

In contrast, when we are led by the Holy Spirit, filled with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, our lives are different. We aren't trying to live in our own strength, nor do we depend solely on our knowledge or resources. Instead, day by day, we are learning to rely on the power, wisdom and comfort of the Holy Spirit. God knew what we needed to live victorious Christian lives in this world, and he made provision for us by giving us His Holy Spirit to indwell us. This gift is a mystery to those who have not had their spiritual eyes opened, yet it is a beautiful truth to those who follow Christ.

It is a fact that whatever we do not deal with in our lives will be passed down to our own children, to either resolve or pass down to their children. That is how patterns of generational dysfunction continue in families. For example, anger issues are often passed down from one generation to another. I have counseled couples who wanted to be kind, but their marriages were being torn apart because of anger issues that had been observed in a parent or grandparent. Until these issues are identified and addressed, there is a pull to continue in behaviors and attitudes that are familiar.

If you have been living in the shadow of generational issues that have been controlling your life, damaging your relationships and stealing your joy, I want to encourage you to break free. It's time to find a higher altitude.

Because of God's grace, you can soar above the storm clouds of generational dysfunction. Just as an airline pilot knows to

rise above tumultuous weather, we have an inner compass that motivates us to do so as well. We can rise higher. We were made to soar! {eoa}

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