

Overcoming Negative Inheritance

In this world we can inherit material things from our ancestors, both positive (e.g. a fortune) or negative (debts). We see that the lives and decisions of those before us have shaped us and continue to influence us.

In the same way, we receive a spiritual inheritance from our ancestors, which can contain both a positive side (blessings) as well as a negative (curses). Often we're not aware of all the things that make up our spiritual inheritance, but the fact is that we have received it and it is influencing us. Thankfully, we have the opportunity to become free from all the influences of a negative inheritance by renouncing it. This does not happen automatically – it requires our conscious decision.

So the good news is: We didn't choose our ancestors, but we can decide what we take from them and carry on.

The effect of sin over generations

When we observe families, we can see that patterns of sin exist. If a man struggles with anger, probably his father and grandfather did as well. Not only an individual is affected but the whole family as well. For example:

- Susan comes from a family of academically successful people. Her parents always pushed her to be excellent, as they had been pushed by their parents. She learned a pattern of only defining her self-worth through success. She believes that God only accepts her if she doesn't make mistakes. Just like previous generations, she has never learned how to love herself or how to accept others unconditionally. She constantly lives in isolation and fear of failure.

Sin is often passed on from generation to generation until someone stands up and actively stops it. By forgiving and turning away from this pattern of sin, we can be free from this negative inheritance. Before, God's blessings had been stolen. But now, God's good intentions can come into being in our lives and in the lives of our descendants. For example:

- When Carol was about to marry, she realized that she constantly was afraid that her partner would leave her. In prayer, God showed her that in her family there was a pattern of men leaving women. Her grandfather had emotionally withdrawn from her grandmother and her father divorced her mother, resulting in the lie that "men are not trustworthy". After forgiving and renouncing everything connected to that negative inheritance, she became free from these fears and full of joy.

Jesus gives us a new inheritance

God offers us the opportunity to become His children, to be adopted into His family (John 1:12-13). This is only possible through Jesus Christ (see "God's Story"). When we accept His offer and become born again, Jesus gives us a new inheritance (Romans 8:17). Also through Him we can be free from all the negative influences of the inheritance we received from our ancestors.

Initially, we received our negative inheritance without conscious involvement on our part. But in most cases, we started – consciously or unconsciously – to partner with the sins of that inheritance and with the underlying lies. So then we ourselves became guilty of that sin, just as our ancestors were. To really become free, we need to confess this sin to God and to repent – to choose to reject it and turn from it. We can pray generally and let our inheritance be cleansed by Jesus; but if we're not aware in which areas we have already integrated sinful patterns into our lives and are continuing to do them, then we won't see much change. That's why it is important to let Jesus show us what the unhealthy parts of our inheritance are. If we ourselves are already partnering with and committing the sin of our ancestors, it is not sufficient to simply disclaim the unhealthy inheritance. We need to repent from it personally as well.

Application

We don't need to figure this out on our own. In a conversation with God, He can show us, step by step, what we need to do. If we do all the necessary steps to clean up the negative elements of our spiritual inheritance, they won't have power over us anymore.

Use the support of a good helper! If you feel pushed or feel somehow uncomfortable doing this, please say so! If you're ready to engage in a conversation with God, you can start:

Father God, is there a problem in my life that I have inherited from my ancestors?

Let God show you the problem. He may also show more details as to when and how this sin entered your family.

Forgive the family members involved for their sin and for opening a door for the devil by partnering with it (see worksheet "Forgiving Step by Step" for details).

Holy Spirit, where did I partner with this sin?

Confess your sin and the sins of your family to God, repent and ask God for forgiveness (see worksheet "Confessing Sins and Repenting" for details).

Jesus, in your name I reject this part of my inheritance that is not of you. Jesus, please cleanse my inheritance in your blood.

Ask God if a lie came into your life through this sin. If so, reject this lie and let Jesus show you the truth.

You can ask God if something was stolen from you and your family through this sin. If yes, claim it back, ask God for His blessing, and pray for your family as well.

If necessary, ask Jesus what other steps you need to take. In case He shows another problem, start the application guide again from the beginning.