

# Overcoming Negative Inheritance

The lives and decisions of our parents, grandparents, and ancestors have shaped us in many ways. They continue to influence us, often more than we're aware.

In this world we can inherit material things from our ancestors, both positive (e.g. a fortune) or negative (debts). 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 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, most likely 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 believed that God only accepts her if she doesn't make mistakes. Just like the generations before, she had never learned how to love herself, or to love others unconditionally. She constantly lived in isolation and fear of failure.

Sin in the life of a person can also have negative effects on their descendants. God explains several times that He is "maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." (Exodus 34:7)

Sin is often passed on from generation to generation until someone stands up and actively stops it. By repenting and cutting himself off, he and his descendants become free from this negative inheritance!

By doing this, he also restores God's blessing on his family. Before, a curse was active in the family and God's blessings had been stolen from them, but now God's good intentions can come into being in their lives. 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 in detail 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**

In a conversation with God, He can show us, step by step, the negative elements of our spiritual inheritance. If we do all the necessary steps to clean these things up, 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, what is 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.

*Holy Spirit, where did I partner with this sin?*

Repent and ask God for forgiveness for where you sinned.

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

*In the name of Jesus Christ, I reject this inherited curse. The things I named don't have any influence on me and my descendants anymore. Jesus, please cleanse my inheritance in your blood.*

*Father God, I ask You to forgive the sins of my ancestors.*

Confess the sins of your ancestors on their behalf. Ask God to forgive them (compare to Nehemiah 1).

*Jesus, what was stolen from me and my family through this sin?*

Let God show you the consequences of the sin.

*In the name of Jesus Christ, I claim back ... [whatever was stolen]. Jesus, what do you want to bless me with?*

Let God show you what He wants to bless you and your family with. Accept this blessing personally.

*In the name of Jesus Christ, I bless my family with ...*

Bless your family with the blessing you personally received.

*Check again: Jesus, is this thing completely cleansed? Is there any other inherited problem that you want to show me today?*

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.