

WE ARE ALL INFLUENCED BY FAMILY SYSTEMS

Introduction – We tend to attribute all our psychological, behavioral, and medical problems to the individual alone. Family systems help us recognize we are all influenced by powerful emotional bonds from our extended family. Sometimes our problems are a symptom of dysfunction in this social sphere. This opens up new possibilities for healing through a change in how we relate to these often unconscious ties that bind us.

A. Multigenerational Impacts on Everyone

Exodus 20:3-6

1. The idolatrous sins of the parents will continue for four generations.
2. For families that keep God's commandments and reject cultural idols, they will see the effect of God's love for a thousand generations.
3. We should explore our family roots to detect patterns of behavior that have unconsciously affected us.

B. Breaking the Generational Effects of Sin

Ezekiel 18:19-24

1. God is just and will ameliorate the consequences of parental sins if one repents. The opposite is also true.
2. This truth is assumed to be a fact in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:17-19).
3. Marriage is an opportunity for new beginnings (Genesis 2:24).

C. The Church Is Our New Family System

Mark 3:31-35

1. Jesus did not turn his back on his family of origin, but was creating a new family of those committed to doing the will of God.
2. This new community must practice healthy relational skills when there are interpersonal problems (Matthew 18:15-17).
3. Much of the instruction in the New Testament is about how to create a healthy family system in the church (Galatians 6:1-5, 10)

Conclusion – We need to recognize the important influence of our families of origin on us. We need to avoid the extremes of enmeshment (overly connected) or independence (disconnected). Instead we need to learn how to be connected in healthy ways to our church community as well as our biological family.

Discussion Questions

1. How did our families of origin affect us?
2. What are some healthy things we can do to stay healthily connected to our families?
3. How can our church community assist us in growing in our ability to connect constructively with others?