

CHRIST CAN HEAL THE PRESSURES OF FAMILY SYSTEMS

Introduction – Sometimes our physical, moral, and emotional problems are the result of the stressful emotional pressures we experience from our families. People can relieve this anxiety by dealing directly with the problem or person involved with God's help. Healthy families have a balance between family togetherness and individuals' self-differentiation. The church is intended to become our new extended family that helps us heal and interact healthier with our other families.

Philippians 4:6-7

- A. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob exhibit some dysfunctional behaviors and their consequences.
1. Abraham's family of origin appears to be enmeshed (overly close). God commanded him to leave his family and country behind and go to a land God would give his descendants. Instead Abraham took his family and only went half way, stopping in Haran. He did not leave Haran until his father died. He took his nephew Lot with him when he finally journeyed to the Promised Land (Genesis 11-12).
 2. There was a multigenerational trait of lying and deceiving others because of family anxiety. Abraham lied to Pharaoh and Abimelech, telling them Sarah was his sister. This put her at serious risk of sexual abuse (Genesis 12 and 20). Isaac replicated this sin with his wife Rebekah (Genesis 26). Isaac's son's name, Jacob, literally means "one who deceives." He deceived his father to get his brother, Esau's, blessing as the firstborn (Genesis 27). Jacob's sons deceived the residence of Shechem and violated a covenant of peace by murdering, pillaging, and enslaving its inhabitants (Genesis 34).
 3. Isaac's family had unhealthy coalitions in their family system. Isaac preferred Esau and Rebekah preferred Jacob. The family cohesion was destroyed and Jacob had to flee for his life.

Genesis 25:27-28

Genesis 27:41-43

4. Sarah felt such anxiety over not producing an heir that she insisted that Abraham have a child, Ishmael, with her servant, Hagar. This led to so much family tension that Hagar and Ishmael were forced to leave (Genesis 16-21). This problem remains unresolved until today between the two descendants of Abraham, the Jews and the Arabs.

B. Christ can keep past family dysfunction from manipulating a Christian marriage.

Ephesians 5:21, 33

1. Successful marriages require both unconditional love and unconditional respect. Women are more sensitive to love and men to respect, but they need both.
2. A reverent attitude toward Christ enables husbands and wives to not try and control one another, but to practice mutual submission and serve one another out of love.

Matthew 20:25-28

Conclusion – To reduce unhealthy anxiety and emotional pressure on ourselves and others in our family, we are called in a Christ-centered church family to practice unity and acceptance.

Romans 15:4-7

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Bible presents important families like Abraham's with warts and all?
2. Who is the role model for both husbands and wives in a Christian marriage and what does this call for us to do?
3. How can we best deal with emotional pressures we feel from our families?