

## Small Group Questions

### Going Back to Go Forward

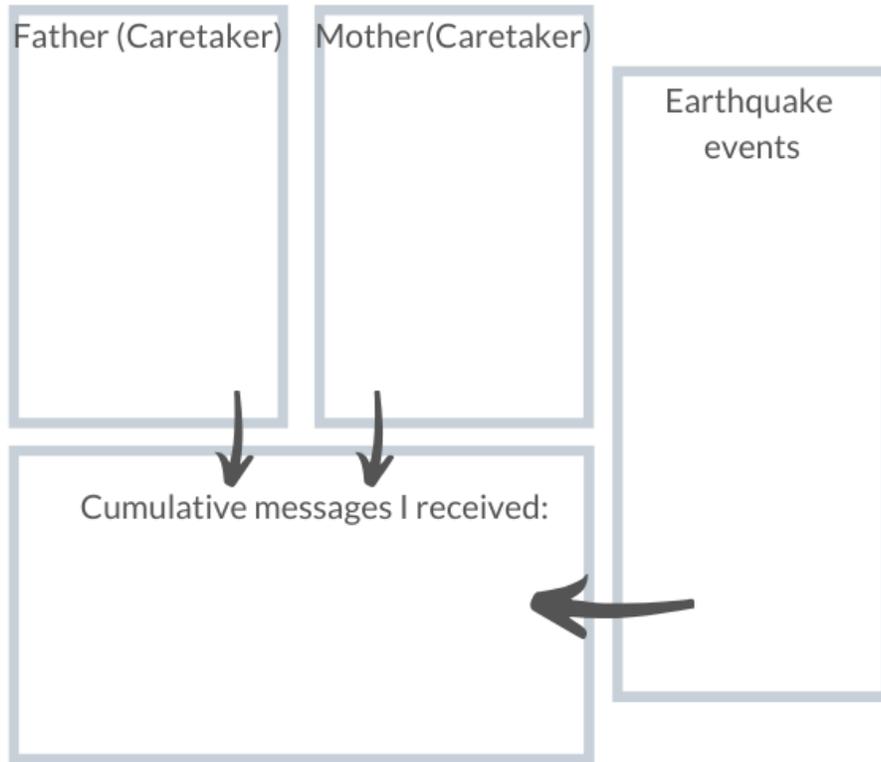
The “family” is an emotional system of two to four generations who move through life together in different places at different times. When we are born into families, we inherit their ways of relating, their values, and their ways of living in the world. Your family’s story and your individual story cannot be separated.

Joseph is an excellent example of that reality. He is born into a complex, blended family where Jacob, his father, his two wives, two concubines and their children all live under one roof. Joseph was Jacob’s favored son. As a result, his brothers grew jealous, leading them to sell Joseph to a merchant who took him to Egypt. The brothers never expected to hear from Joseph again. After he is sold, Joseph’s life becomes very difficult. For the next ten to thirteen years, Joseph lives first as a slave, and later, as a prisoner falsely accused of rape.

1. Imagine yourself in Joseph’s shoes sitting in a prison cell without any hope of freedom. What thoughts, feelings or doubts might you have about your family? About yourself? About God?
2. Through God’s miraculous intervention, Joseph is freed and made the second most powerful person in Egypt. When his brothers come to him for help and food, Joseph invites them to bring their father and live in Egypt. After their father dies, the brothers begin to worry. Read Genesis 50:15-21.
  - What assumptions are the brothers making about Joseph?
  - Why do you think Joseph weeps (v.17)?
3. Joseph chose to break with the “normal” way his family deals with hurt feelings and conflict by forgiving his brothers. How might you have responded if you were in Joseph’s position? (Be sure to put yourself in Joseph’s shoes).
4. Joseph had a rich sense of being part of his family of origin and how it had shaped his life. Fill in the boxes below. You are encouraged to do this prayerfully.
  - List the life messages you received from your parents or caretakers (e.g. Don’t be weak. Education is everything, You must achieve to be loved. Don’t be sad: things could be worse. Make a lot of money. Don’t trust people, they will hurt you)
  - List any “earthquake” events that sent “aftershocks” into your extended family (e.g. abuse, premature death/losses, divorces, shameful secrets revealed, etc.)
  - Look at the three separate boxes and summarize what messages about live/yourself/others you internalized. Then fill in the middle box.



## MESSAGES ABOUT LIFE



5. Share with the group the messages you received. How do these messages compare with the messages about who you are and how life is to be lived in God's family?
6. What might be one specific message from your family that God is revealing to you today that you want to change as part of your hard work of discipleship?
7. Pray for one another and the areas in need of change that have been revealed.

\*All questions from Peter and Geri Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Workbook*.