



Break the Power of the Past

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Resistance to looking at our own past and unwillingness to wrestle with its implications for leadership will deeply impact those we lead. Churches will not mature beyond the maturity of their leaders.
- Scripture and life teach us that an intricate, complex relationship exists between the kind of person we are today and our past.
- Scripture offers us a three-part framework for discipleship that frees us from the power of the past:
 1. Acknowledge how the blessings and sins of your family—going back three to four generations—profoundly impact who you are today.
 2. Recognize you have been birthed into a new family—the family of Jesus.
 3. Put off the sinful patterns of your family of origin and culture and learn how to do life in the new family of Jesus.
- The expression “Jesus may live in our hearts, but grandpa lives in your bones,” captures the challenge of discipleship that is slow and painful.
- We have been shaped by forces other than our status as children of God. The hard work of discipleship is necessary in order to let go of unbiblical ways of living and to learn to live in the new family.
- Every leader must wrestle with the question, “How much of my family history might be running the church or ministry God has entrusted to my care?”

DISCUSSION

1. What stood out most to you from this chapter on “Break the Power of the Past”?

- 2.** Family patterns from the past inevitably play out in present relationships and behavior.
 - How did you respond to the idea that you have been shaped not only by your family of origin but also by family patterns going back three or four generations?
 - In the book, what insights did you discover by looking at the generational family patterns of Abraham and David (pages 165–167).
- 3.** Using a tool such as the genogram gives us a big picture view of our family history, similar to the Overview Effect of seeing Earth from space.
 - How would you describe the Overview Effect of looking at generational patterns and dynamics in your own family? What themes or other insights emerged from considering the big picture?
 - In the book, briefly review the bullet list of questions about relational dynamics (pages 170–171). Which question(s) did you find most helpful in identifying how your past might be impacting your present? Briefly share why.
- 4.** Learning to live fully in the new family of Jesus requires unlearning the unhealthy patterns from our past, our “unbiblical family commandments.”
 - In the book, briefly review the examples of unbiblical family commandments (page 173). Whether they were spoken or unspoken, what were one or two commandments you learned growing up?
 - In what ways have these commandments influenced you as a leader, both in the past and recently?
 - The author writes, “Breaking the power of the past requires a crucifixion and everything in us screams against it.” In what ways, if any, do you feel resistant to the hard work of discipleship in connection with your past?
- 5.** Just as families pass on patterns and legacies over multiple generations, so do local churches, denominations, parachurch movements, and nonprofits.
 - In the book, briefly review the chart of positive and negative legacies of one ministry’s history (page 184). What two or three positive legacies do you associate with your church or organization?

- What negative legacies might be operating, or impacting, your church or organization? (Be sure to consider any “shadow” legacies, negative consequences of the positive legacies.)

6. The New Testament assumes that growing into maturity as a disciple happens within the context of a healthy local church where we are “reparented” in doing life Christ’s way.

- If the church is a place where people bring their entire histories with them through the door, what challenges do you anticipate in teaching your people what it means to function as the new family of Jesus?
- In the book, briefly review the bullet list of the five pathways for setting your church free (page 185). Which of the five pathways inspires the most hope in you as a tool that might truly help your people to become free spiritually and emotionally?

READING ASSIGNMENT



Before your next meeting, read Chapter 9, “Lead out of Weakness and Vulnerability.” Between now and then, pay attention to circumstances or relationships in which you are most likely to avoid being seen as weak or vulnerable.

GOING DEEPER

- Watch the video, “Explore Your Genogram,” accessible as part of the free Team Transformation Videos provided by Emotionally Healthy Discipleship. Go to: www.emotionallyhealthy.org/team
- Listen to one or more of the following Emotionally Healthy Leadership podcast episodes:
 - “Become a Team that Goes Back to Go Forward, Part 1,” accessible at <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/podcast/detail/Become-a-Team-that-Goes-Back-to-Go-Forward-Part-1/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.
 - “Become a Team that Goes Back to Go Forward, Part 2,” accessible at <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/podcast/detail/Become-a-Team-that-Goes-Back-to-Go-Forward-Part-2/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.