

Monday:

As stewards, we are entrusted with many things, including our time, talents, treasures, gifts, opportunities, influence, education and jobs, among other things. The greatest gifts entrusted to us, though, are our relationships. Through them we grow closer to Christ as we depend on Him for His best in each relationship. In this series, we are beginning to understand what “legacy” means for our relationships. Legacy is what we are given relationally by those who came before us, as well as what we will pass on relationally to those who come after us. In Christ, we want to learn the good as well as the bad relational patterns in our families. We want to pass on the good and learn from the bad so that we don’t continue unhealthy patterns. To do this, we are learning that the three keys to leaving a healthy legacy in our relationships are awareness, intentionality and integration.

This past weekend, Diane shared a message with us on connecting the generations of our families. This is incredibly important in leaving a healthy legacy. Today we are going to begin the process of awareness in how we honor and connect the generations of our family.

READ: Romans 12:10. Also READ: Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, and Ephesians 6:2.

What is the common command in these verses? What has been your understanding of this command?

To connect the generations, we must honor those who came before us as well as those who come after us. It is important to treat one another with respect regardless of the ups, downs, frustrations, successes, struggles and all that comes in the relationships we have been entrusted with in our families. As we begin this week, think about your life. How well do you bring honor to the generations in your family? If God is the center of your life, then connecting to one another in relationship as well as connecting the generations should be a priority. Please circle an honest response to these questions:

1—I have not honored the relationships in my family.

10— I consistently bring honor to the relationships in my family by the power of Christ working in me.

In my family, I connect to the generations that come before me because:

I Listen- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I Take Time- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I Ask Questions- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I Care- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I Try to Understand their position- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I Treat them Respectfully- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 They are a priority in my life- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Reflect today on some ways you can start or continue to bring honor to the generations in your family. What is God speaking to you? What awareness of honoring the generations is coming forth through the activity above?

Tuesday:

This week we are focusing on investing in the relationships of the generations of our families; those ahead of us and those coming behind. As we study Scripture, we see that the men and women of the Bible provide many examples of how the generations interacted. One example we can look to for a strong generational connection is the relationship between Naomi and Ruth. We are going to spend the next few days looking at the relationship between Naomi and Ruth. It is rich with teaching on how we learn from one another as we work to keep the generations of our families connected in love. To begin, **READ: Ruth chapter 1.**

On a separate piece of paper, write out some thoughts about the relationship you see between Naomi and Ruth.

One of the pieces that stands out is that Ruth saw the importance in staying connected to her mother-in-law, Naomi.

Ruth was completely loyal to the Israelite family she had married into. She put Naomi’s needs above her own in order to keep their family together. Ruth’s example is one for us to follow. We may not have to pack up our things and move to keep our family connected, but Ruth’s example of remaining loyal and surrendering her will to God’s in the area of family is important for us to emulate. Where are you located in the generations of your family? As you think about where you are located in the timeline of your family, what role do you play in keeping the generations together? Awareness is the first key to leaving a healthy legacy in our relationships. Do you feel you play an active role in connecting the generations of your family? Why or why not? It is incredibly important for us to understand that we miss out on legacy when the generations of our family don’t connect.

You may have a great deal of hurt and dysfunction in your family. If this is true, pour your heart out to God about all that is going on. Express your anger, hurt and frustration. Ask Him what a healthy step would be for your family. Maybe at this time, His work will be specifically in you as He brings healing deep into your soul. He loves you. He knows what you are going through. Look to Him for His love. He will give you courage to live well as you seek Him. Maybe you have good relationships in your family, but you are busy and do not connect with one another. It could be that you need God to help you prioritize your time so that your family comes second only to Him.

We need to engage with generations in our life, whether they are our grandparents, parents, adult children, young children or grandchildren. We need to make the intentional choice to invest in legacy by embracing our families’ uniqueness. We need to discover their stories and encourage them to speak of their life. It is important that we learn from them. We need to listen well and capture the heart of who they are. What is God showing you as we work this week on connecting the generations? Spend time in prayer. Ask God to show you His will regarding the generations of your family as you work through the devotions this week.

Wednesday:

Yesterday we read chapter one in Ruth. **RE-READ: Ruth 1:19-22.**

As Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, she was welcomed back with the question, “*Can this be Naomi?*” In Naomi’s response we see what the years of struggle have created in her heart. Her reply in verses 20 and 21...²⁰ *She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.”*²¹ *I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”*

We can see by her words that Naomi is filled with bitterness. Sadly, this can happen to so many of us. As we walk through life, we can tend to focus exclusively on all the difficulties, trials, struggles and pain. If we do this instead of focusing on God, we may become bitter, resentful and hard-hearted. Because this is what Naomi had done, she returned with this reply instead of sharing that her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth had returned with her. Naomi missed that God had not left her alone. He had given her an incredible gift in Ruth.

Ruth made the trip to Bethlehem and in doing so she committed her life to God and to caring for Naomi. Maybe you have someone in your family who has grown bitter and resentful as they have gotten older. It can be incredibly difficult to care for someone who lives with a negative and disagreeable outlook. We must be dependent upon the Holy Spirit working in us to bring His fruit in this type of relationship. Through God working in us in love, the person consumed by bitterness may begin to see hope and joy in life again.

Read Ruth Chapter 2. In this chapter, we see Ruth’s care for her mother-in-law. We also see God’s care and provision for Ruth through her faithfulness to Naomi. As we wait on God to work in the relationships in our families, we keep pursuing Him and find that He will care for us and provide for us as we care for our families. As you think about Ruth’s care for Naomi, spend time in prayer. Ask God how He wants this lesson to bear fruit in your life. What is the piece that is important for you to integrate into your life? Maybe you are already caring for a family member and you need the reminder to stay calm in God because the person you are caring for has fallen into a place of resentment and bitterness. Maybe you realize you need to better care for your family or a specific family member. Is someone in your family living a lonely life? Even if they live a distance away, you can call, write letters

and send notes. Maybe you realize that someone in your family is caring for you and you are the one living with an unappreciative and negative attitude. If so, ask God for His help. Take steps toward health in Him.

PRAY: 2 Timothy 1:13-14.

Thursday:

In the devotions this week, we have studied Ruth's connection to Naomi. Today we want to study Naomi's connection to Ruth and the concept of intentionality. **READ: Ruth 3 and 4.** Because of Naomi's guidance, Ruth was able to take steps toward a relationship with Boaz. Without Naomi leading her, Ruth most likely would not have thought to take this step in relationship. Boaz took Ruth as his wife and they had a son named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of King David. Naomi received the family she desperately longed for and through this line of family generations we know Jesus was eventually born. In the genealogy of Jesus in verses 5 and 6 of Matthew, "*and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.*" Ruth lacked the confidence and the courage to approach Boaz. She needed Naomi's encouragement and guidance. Without Naomi, Ruth may not have believed a relationship with Boaz was even possible. When the generations of our families stay connected, we can help each other. We may feel that we are the only one offering something in the relationship, but this is not true. Everyone has something to offer and when we keep the generations of family connected, all the generations can help each other. Have you seen this in your own life? How have the generations of your family helped one another?

Maybe you realize the generations of your family could be helping one another but are not. Why do you feel this is true? What steps could you take to bridge the generations so that they can begin to work together?

As we work through the devotions for this series and especially this week, we recognize how incredibly difficult this may be for some of you. Some of us have been abandoned and rejected by our families. We may want to keep the generations connected, but others in our family have made choices that make this unrealistic at this time. When this happens, we must acknowledge our grief and look to God to fill in the missing pieces. Maybe we don't see our families as worthy of our effort and our time. Maybe we have been hurt too many times to count. It takes courage to honor family that we don't see as worthy. What we need to remember is that our children and/or our grandchildren are watching us. For their sake we treat our family with honor through our words and in our actions. If family members choose not to be in our lives, we don't take the path of gossip and the position of talking about them in dishonorable ways. God will provide for us as we trust and wait on Him, giving our families honor whether we believe they deserve it or not. We can choose to bear and honor the image of God in humility and grace. If there is abuse and evil in our families, we do not justify or condone it. We simply acknowledge that our parents and those who came before us gave us life. We look for any good that may be our legacy from them. We work to forgive them and to let go of bitterness. It is important that we do not allow resentment and the failures of our parents to determine our lives. We choose to be free in Christ as He is the One who gives us all freedom and hope. Christ has chosen us to be in His family. We honor our families, and when we do this, we honor God. Spend time in prayer. You can pray 1 Peter 3:14-16 "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

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DEVO | June 3/4 , 2017

Friday:

Take a few deep breaths and settle into silence.

Choose a very simple prayer to express your openness and desire for God to work in you.
(Example: *Abba, Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I belong to You.*)

Close your eyes and offer your prayer to Jesus, allowing His will and love full access into your entire being. If/when you become distracted, offer again your simple prayer to God.

PRAY: Psalm 78:1-7 and ask God to help unlock His truth in you, using the three keys of awareness, intentionality and integration. Ask Him to help you leave a healthy legacy in all your relationships. In the specific area of connecting the generations of family, what next steps do you feel God wants you to take?

Psalm 78: 1-7

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
 incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
² I will open my mouth in a parable;
 I will utter dark sayings from of old,
³ things that we have heard and known,
 that our fathers have told us.
⁴ We will not hide them from their children,
 but tell to the coming generation
 the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might,
 and the wonders that He has done.
⁵ He established a testimony in Jacob
 and appointed a law in Israel,
 which He commanded our fathers
 to teach to their children,
⁶ that the next generation might know them,
 the children yet unborn,
 and arise and tell them to their children,
⁷ so that they should set their hope in God
 and not forget the works of God,
 but keep His commandments;

How can you better connect the generations of your family, integrating the Psalmist's words into your life? What do you believe God is asking of you as you finish this week focused on the relationships of the generations of family?

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