

Kingdom Living Today

Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World

18. God's Shepherds Help Undo Intergenerational Curses

“THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS
MUST TURN TO THE CHILDREN
AND THE HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN
TO THE FATHERS.”

The leaves were rustling in the light breeze along the park trail as the two men walked side by side at noontime.

The 30-something African/American smiled at the older man keeping up nimbly next to him. “Jack, I’m really glad we could spend this time together!” Jerome exclaimed. “Keisha and I have changed a lot since we went through the *Demolishing Strongholds* workbook and embraced our Father’s Covenant in Jesus.”

“Dee and I have witnessed the Holy Spirit’s presence transforming both of you,” Jack responded with an affirming grin. “I think it’s time you two and your daughter Maya became part of our fellowship family!”

“That would be great! We’ve both looked forward to being with you all as family in Jesus,” Jerome responded warmly. Then, after hesitating briefly, he continued softly, “But Jack, I may have a hangup that could hinder me in growing in my relationship with my Lord as His Kingdom man and with you all as spiritual family.”

Jack looked at the younger man. “What do you think your hangup is?”

As Jerome looked into the kind eyes of the older man he murmured, “It’s going to take some explanation...”

“If you can walk and talk at the same time, I’m all ears,” Jack responded as they headed down the shady path.

Jerome inhaled deeply as he began for the first time in his life to unburden his soul. “First off, I don’t know who my father is. I grew up in the Watts area of Los Angeles and my mother had me when she was seventeen. She died when I was still a teen myself and never spoke a word about my father.”

Jack glanced compassionately at Jerome as he went on, “Maya isn’t Keisha’s and my birth child. My wife’s sister died of a drug overdose when Maya was two and we adopted her.”

Jack nodded encouragingly. Then Jerome’s face tightened with pain. “There’s something else, Jack. To be honest, I’m scared of being in a fellowship. I’ve never let people get real close to me.” He sighed deeply as he spoke. “A couple years ago Keisha and I were having serious marriage problems. She wanted to leave me so we went to a counselor. He told me I suffer from something called “Reactive Attachment Disorder.”

“Reactive what?” Jack asked with interest.

“Reactive Attachment Disorder. It’s when you’ve lost someone close to you and start protecting yourself emotionally. I think Maya suffers from the same thing and I haven’t been able to do anything to help her,” Jerome answered with deep regret.

Jack pressed for more information. “What are some of the symptoms of this disorder?”

“I don’t know them all,” the younger man responded, “but for me, I have a difficult time giving and receiving love. So I resist any form of physical closeness.” He paused in thought, then added, “I also have a hard time grasping cause and effect — I don’t always understand consequences of the things I do. It’s created a lot of tension in our marriage at times because of the stupid things I’ve gotten myself into.” Furrows filled his brow as he went on, “I was told I need to learn how to trust the input of others, but that’s been so hard for me to do. I wanted you to know this because maybe you could help me.”(1 Thessalonians 5:12)

“I know that Jesus can heal your inner emotions,” Jack answered gently, “and no one but our Lord has the power to do this.” He tapped Jerome on the arm and added, “And, I know that those in our fellowship family will do all they can to support you so you can learn how to love and be loved.(1 John 3:23) All of this can happen,” the older man challenged, “if you REALLY want it for our Lord’s purpose in your life.”

“I do... I REALLY do!” exclaimed Jerome, his eyes tearing up. “I’m tired of hurting others and letting them down. You know, I don’t even have one man I can call a ‘friend,’” he sobbed quietly.

Jack drew them both to a halt and put his hand on the taller man’s shoulder. Just then Jerome shouted with surprise, “Look, I’m crying! Not being able to cry was one of the other symptoms of this disorder.” His tears kept flowing. He didn’t want them to stop because he was so happy to feel them on his face.

Without even thinking Jerome wrapped both arms around Jack and hugged him like a son greeting his Dad after many years of being apart. The two clung to each other for some time.

Finally, Jack looked into Jerome’s face with sincere love. “I think Jesus is at work already, don’t you?” Jerome beamed as he nodded.

As they began walking again the younger man asked, “This can’t be all I need to do to overcome this disorder. Can you think of anything else?”

“I believe there is something else, Jerome,” he responded, “especially if you’re going to be the affectionate husband Keisha needs and the loving father Maya’s yearning for. Let me explain.”

Jerome interjected with hope, “Please do, Jack.”

“As I’m thinking about it, the symptoms of this disorder to one degree or another are common to all of us who’ve suffered deep emotional wounds in the past. They’re a normal response for those who are children of divorce, or who’ve been raised in homes with alcoholic parents, or have been impacted by the premature death of someone close to them.” Jerome nodded in agreement as Jack continued, “We humans tend to guard ourselves emotionally whenever we’re hurt or let down.”

“I can see that,” Jerome affirmed, “but that guardedness doesn’t seem right for us who follow Jesus.”(1 Thessalonians 1:8)

“Exactly!” Jack declared. “I want you to see this from our heavenly Father’s vantage point. He knows ALL the consequences to the sins of mankind beginning with those of Adam and Eve. Moses sure got it right when he wrote that *“every inclination*

of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil all the time."(Genesis 6:5)

"So," asked Jerome tentatively, "does our Father just sit back and accept this rebellion and throw His hands up in dismay?"

Jack answered quickly, "Oh, He doesn't accept it at all! He knew He needed to save mankind from ourselves. In essence, the whole Bible unfolds His plan of helping us live in eternity with Him, which Jesus made possible through His atoning sacrifice."

"I understand that," Jerome asserted. "But how does this apply to helping me with my Reactive Attachment Disorder?"

Jack regarded the desperate man with caring concern. "You're seeing this disorder as something you want to be free of. But our Father sees this as something He can receive glory from! He wants to recruit you to help others with the comfort your healing will give you."^(2 Corinthians 1:3,4) Seeing the confusion in Jerome's face he went on, "All the consequences of man's sin are our Father's means to bring us to His Son, Jesus. First, to be washed clean of our sins by His shed blood and reconciled to Father so that we're in covenant union with Him through His Spirit."^(Colossians 1:22)

"Yeah, I get that," noted the younger man as Jack went on earnestly, "Also, Father wants to heal us of the emotional scars of our sins and the hurt we received because of the sins of others."^(Matthew 8:17) He smiled kindly as he added, "Our Father uses our emotional suffering, whether it's been caused by our own sins or by the sins of others, to bring us to what only Jesus can do for us. And, after we receive the forgiveness of our sins and experience the power of Jesus to heal our emotions ^(1 Corinthians 2:4,5), our Father recruits us as His ambassadors to tell others about Him."^(2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

"I think I understand what you're saying, Jack. I'm only looking to get out of this emotional pit I'm in, while my Father is looking to recruit me for something bigger. I feel a little ashamed." Jerome's voice broke as he looked away.

"Don't be, brother. That initial reaction is normal, but how do you feel about being His ambassador after your emotions are healed?" Jack asked with a big grin.

The younger man sniffed then laughed, "Great! It makes me want to turn to Jesus with all my heart trusting that He'll heal me! But Jack," he added as his chin drooped, "at the same time I feel so unworthy that my Father would use someone like me."

Jack gave the big man a squeeze around his back. "Jerome, you're exactly the kind of man our Father wants — a living testimony to the power of His Son, Jesus! The Gospels reveal the power of Jesus to heal and to deliver people from demonic oppression. And, keep in mind that the Apostle Paul taught power, *then* wisdom" ^(1 Corinthians 1:24) The older man's voice was etched with sorrow. "Christianity for too long has taught wisdom *without* power, or even worse, just presenting Bible facts without the power of the Spirit to obey in obedient trust."^(1 Corinthians 4:20) He added, "That's why so few testify to our Lord Jesus as living and active today among His Kingdom people."

"That sure sounds like our prior church experience," Jerome agreed. "But tell me, how I can be completely healed and be my Father's agent to help others?"

Jack grinned at the younger man's eagerness. "As Dee and I have shared the Hebraic foundations over the years, we've come to realize that they're our Father's means for us to enjoy the fullness of His love — a loving relationship that's based on trusting Him in all things. We've observed that most Christians don't really *trust* Him; they mouth the right words but when push comes to shove, they rely on their

own analysis and rationale.” As the younger man nodded, Jack added, “One of the primary sources to their distrust is their own earthly fathers.”

“But I didn’t even know my father,” Jerome remarked, searching the older man’s face. “How could he be part of my problems?”

“You may not recognize it, but some of your emotional guardedness is a result of knowing that your father fled your mother. This leaves a deeper emotional scar than most people realize,” Jack answered. “Plus, you were raised for years without any positive male input. Unless you’re healed by Jesus, you aren’t going to trust our Father as He calls His children to.(Psalms 9:10) Think about it,” he added, “He’s sovereign over all the universe! He created it all, yet so few trust Him. Is this how you want to live?”

“NO! I don’t want to be like that!” Jerome cried out. “What do I need to do?”

“First, you need to forgive your father from your heart,”(Matthew 18:35) Jack stated firmly. “Now that you’re free of strongholds, you need to see *him* as a prisoner to the same demonic spirits you were once captive to. You need to see him as having done the best he could with what he had going for himself, even if it was flawed.”

“I can do that!” Jerome exclaimed, then prayed, “Father, I do forgive my father and I ask your forgiveness for what I’ve held against him. Lord Jesus, please heal me and help me love Keisha and Maya with Your love. Give me a trusting heart so I’ll never be afraid of being hurt again.” Weeping, he whispered, “Dad, I wish I’d known you.”

“I’ll be a father to you if you’ll have me,” Jack said warmly.(1 Corinthians 4:15)

Jerome couldn’t contain himself with the joy of finally being someone’s son, even at age 38. The two men embraced as father and son in spirit.

+ + + + + + +

About a month later everyone had gathered at Brett and Lacie’s for their weekly fellowship celebration. Everyone except Jerome and his family. Jack was getting concerned because they hadn’t called. Not wanting the others to be anxious he lifted up a quiet prayer. Just then, there was a knock on the door — they arrived!

Jerome greeted the others as he quickly made his way toward Jack, choked up as he hugged him. “I’m a living testimony!” Everyone but Keisha and Maya were puzzled. Turning to the rest Jerome said, “You all remember a few weeks ago Jack asked me to share how Jesus healed me of some emotional scars caused by my absentee father, and I asked you to help me learn how to love and be loved.” Everyone nodded, smiling as they observed the thrill in Jerome and his whole family.

“I just got off a two-hour conversation with my Dad!” he bellowed joyfully. Excitement filled the living room as Jerome went on, “He called me this morning! A year ago he’d been released from prison after serving time for armed robbery. While he was there a chaplain led him to Jesus. After his release the Holy Spirit told him to find the child he’d never known. It took him this long to locate me.” Fighting off tears he continued, “He asked for my forgiveness. I told him I’d already forgiven him, and asked him to forgive me for the attitudes I’d held against him.”

It was another of those great moments for a loving group hug. Then Jack asked them all to kneel with him as he led in a prayer of thanksgiving. The presence of Jesus fell on them all, and Lacie led out in song as the others joined in, “Majesty, we worship Your majesty...”