

## “Going Back to Unlock the Future” (Gen 50:20)

We are taking a journey of the series “Being Set Free.” Last time, we studied “A Life Flourishing in Love.” And we practiced emotional nurturing for one another, through giving and receiving appreciation.

“A Life Flourishing in Love” is a process. It’s a life-long journey.

Where did we learn about yourself and about life? Usually we’ve got the life foundation at home from family, mainly from parents or caregivers. Where did they get these things? From their parents or caregivers. Many things passed on from generation to generation. In most cases, you are not aware of it, because it’s so natural for you and for your family. It’s a big part of you, but you don’t recognize it, you don’t think about it.

There are good things which help you to live out the word of God, develop you to be mature disciples. But there are bad things which direct you to different direction from the word of God. I call it “emotional garbage.” In order to go forward, to be a more mature Jesus’ follower, we need to be set free from this garbage.

“True spirituality frees us to live joyfully in the present. It requires, however, going back in order to go forward. This takes us to the very heart of spirituality and discipleship in the family of God – breaking free from the destructive sinful patterns of our pasts to live the life of love of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Today’s title is “Going Back to Unlock the Future.” Let’s go back to the past in order to open the future as God intends.

### 1. Family Patterns

“While we are affected by powerful external events and circumstances through our earthy lives, our families are the most powerful group to which we will ever belong. Even those who left home as young adults, determined to “break” from their family histories, soon find that their family’s way of “doing” life follows them wherever they go.”<sup>2</sup>

It’s common to see certain patterns repeating themselves from one generation to the next. You may know some families like that. Addictive behaviors,

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (Book)*, Zondervan, 2006, p.93

<sup>2</sup> Book, p.95

sexual abuse, poor marriages, divorces, affairs, one child running off, changing job, poor financial management, and so on.

We can see this in the Bible. The classic example is the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We know there's a powerful blessing that's passed on from generation to generation, Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, and even to us to this day. But at the same time, we see negative legacies passed on from generation to generation.

We can see some patterns in each generation.

Lying. Abraham lied about his wife Sarah in Egypt. He said she was his sister (Gen 12:13). And he told the same lie to the king of Gerar (Gen 20:2). Isaac also lied to the king of the Philistines that Rebecca, his wife, was his sister (Gen 26:7). Jacob lied to his father that he was Esau, his brother (Gen 27:19). Sons of Jacob sold their brother Joseph, but made it appear as if he was killed by a wild animal (Gen 37:31-32).

Favoritism towards one child. Abraham had two sons but he favored Isaac. Isaac had two sons, but he favored Esau (Gen 25:28). Jacob had 12 sons, and he favored Joseph more than any of his other sons (Gen 37:3).

Brothers fighting with each other. Children of Abraham. Ishmael mocked Isaac. And it was to the extent that Sarah urged Abraham to drive out Ishmael (Gen 21:9-10). Genesis 25:18 says; "Ishmaels children, his descendants lived in hostility toward all their brothers." Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, they are twins. They were fighting each other even while they were in their mother's womb (Gen 25:22). Jacob took Esau's blessing. Esau thought of killing Jacob (Gen 27:41). Jacob's children. Joseph's ten brothers envied and hated Joseph and plotted to kill him. In the end, they sold him as a slave (Gen 37:18, 28).

## 2. Putting Off the Sinful Patterns

Family patterns from the past are played out in our present relationships without us necessarily being aware of it.<sup>3</sup> We chose to become Christ followers, but in reality we continue to follow, probably unconsciously, the concepts, perspectives and rules we internalized in our families of origin.<sup>4</sup> So discipleship requires putting off the sinful patterns of our family of origin and relearning how to do life

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<sup>3</sup> Book, p.96

<sup>4</sup> Book, p.100

God's way in God's family.<sup>5</sup> This is the process of taking us to the very heart of spirituality and discipleship in the new family of Jesus, breaking free from destructive sinful patterns of our pasts, so we can live a life God intends, so we can be a gift to the world.<sup>6</sup>

For putting off the sinful patterns, we need to know what we have inherited from our family of origin. We cannot skip this in order to put off the sinful patterns. We must recognize our "emotional garbage" in us, must distinguish what is unbiblical, what hinders us from living out the Word of God, and what prevents us from growing as Jesus lovers.

Here is what I learned, growing up in that kind of circumstances. I'll just share about emotional garbage I received.

A life is all about work. We work and receive money as reward. We sell one book, and we gain just a little. And it is not easy to sell books. If we don't sell them, we cannot receive money, then there is no food on the table. We must work hard. Work as much as we can. Even after I became a Christian and a pastor, a life is still all about work. I preached about grace, but I lived out work.

I am insecure. My parents always argued, quarreled. I grew up watching and listening to them. Only after I became an adult, I realized I grew up feeling insecure.

I don't remember when I started this, but whenever I went out with my parents, I tried to remember how to get there from my house. I was doing it unconsciously. Why did I do that? It was because even if they leave me somewhere, I can go home by myself. My parents made me uneasy. I felt insecure at home. But, I had no other place to be. How insecure I was!

In order to deny this, I compared myself with others. I wanted to feel superior. It was convenient for me that I had my younger sisters.

It didn't change even after I became a Christian, even after I became a pastor. I shared this with you before, but I naturally pointed out the faults of others, and corrected people who were in error or in sin. By doing it, I felt I'm doing okay as I could forget about my brokenness.

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<sup>5</sup> Book, p.95

<sup>6</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course DVD*, Zondervan, 2014, Session 3.

Feel responsible for chaotic situation. When my parents quarreled with each other, I tried to stop it. When the kitchen sink was full of dishes to be washed, I washed them and tried to clear them. When there were a lot of dirty clothes to be washed, I did the laundry to reduce it. If my sisters were hungry, I had to feed them. When I did those things, my parents made less quarreling. I felt responsible for the disordered chaotic situation. If I can't do anything about it, I will be part of the chaos. I felt like that. It was such a pressure.

Since 1994 I've been serving in church as pastor. Five years ago, I came to Yangon, and started to serve in this church. If there is something imperfect, I felt responsible for all kinds of things. I felt responsible to fix them all by myself. If someone says something like complaining about traffic, power cut, food poisoning, challenge of working local people, whatever, I felt I had to do something for response. No limit. No boundary. So I was easy to overwork myself. Of course, I cannot make everything perfect. I cannot please everyone, and satisfy all their need. So I blamed myself. I was easy to get depressed. And it pushed me to work more.

One more thing. It's about church. My parents always went to church in their best clothes. My mother was especially demanding about this. She corrected my hair style, my clothes, and the way I talked, the content of my talk, even the way I sit. You must do this in church. You must be like that in church. Certainly, my parents were the best lady and gentleman when they were in church. They are fully respected.

What I learned was that church is the place where you show your best self. You mustn't reveal what your daily life is really like. If you do this well, you're a good Christian and others in church will respect you.

It was still on my mind even after I became a pastor. "I must be perfect in church." Otherwise, I won't be accepted.

This is not about digging up trash of our parents, but raising our awareness about negative patterns of our family so we can live free. We don't have to carry "emotional garbage," we can take it out. And that's what we can choose.

So remember, all families are broken, some more so than others. This may be painful for you as some of us have buried so much of our past. I was one

of them. Others of us may be reluctant to look seriously at our families of origin because we feel like we're betraying them.

We need to remember that 99% of families, our parents did the best they could. They did better than their parents. It's good to look back the situations where your parents grew up and recognize what they inherited from their families of origin. One benefit of going back as you do this is you may end up more compassionate and understanding for your caregivers or parents, when you consider where they came from.<sup>7</sup> Most parents did their best in their limitation. It is not to blame them or to find fault with them.

What we're doing here is potting off our emotional garbage, we can be set free. And the sinful patterns don't have be repeated in our following generations.

Each of our family members, or those who raised us through childhood, has "imprinted" certain ways of behaving and thinking into us.<sup>8</sup> Our family history lives inside all of us, especially in those who attempt to bury it.<sup>9</sup> We can't change what we're unaware of. Philosopher George Santanya said it well: "Those who cannot learn from the past are doomed to repeat it."<sup>10</sup>

Let's look back on the sense of value that was accepted, practiced and emphasized in your family of origin. Knowing what kind of sense of value is imprinted in us will help us know ourselves deeply.

You have a list at the reflection points. For example, how do your family understand money? Who handled money and how did he or she handled it? How do your family talk about money? When we think about the family sense of value on each item, our view of life will become recognizable, and will be clearly defined. It helps you to find out what kind of emotional garbage you have.

I'd recommend you to have someone whom you can trust when you do this. Because most likely you may become emotional as you look at the negative parts in your history. You may need someone whom you can share your feelings openly and who just listen to you without judging you nor anyone else so that you can go through the process. I'm available for you, just to let you know.

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<sup>7</sup> DVD

<sup>8</sup> Book, p.99

<sup>9</sup> Book, p.96-97

<sup>10</sup> Book, p.104

If your parents, or grandparents were involved in other religions, usually those gods and spirits have their foothold in your family. When you were little, probably they prayed to those gods and spirits for your blessings and protection. In some cases, they may have even dedicated you to those gods and spirits. You need spiritual deliverance. I recommend you to receive help from someone who are experienced in ministry of deliverance. I'm here for you, just to let you know.

It will be the same, if your parents practice fortunetelling, astrology, tarot card, magic spell, divination, feng shui, use amulet and so on. If you yourself used to practice those things, of course you need spiritual deliverance.

### 3. God is True to His Promises

God promised Abraham to bless him (Gen 12:2-3). God promised Abraham that through his offspring all nations on earth will be blessed (Gen 22:18). God promised Isaac the same blessing (Gen 26:3, 24). God promised Jacob the same blessing (Gen 28:14). And He blessed him (Gen 32:29).

God showed Joseph through his dreams that he was chosen, and that God would bless many through him. However Joseph's brothers plotted to harm him. Joseph was almost killed. He was sold as a slave. And he was thrown into prison for an offense he never committed. There in prison he was forgotten. His life was taking him in the complete opposite direction. However, God *did* use Joseph, and He blessed many through him. God was true to his promises.

#### Gen 50:20 CEV

You [Joseph's brothers] tried to harm me [Joseph], but God made it turn out for the best, so that he could save all these people, as he is now doing.

Trough Joseph, many lives were saved. Surely Joseph's family, and not only the people in Egypt but also the people in surrounding countries (Gen 41:55-57). God fulfilled his promise, the promise to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob and to Joseph. "I will bless you, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

The evil plans of humans do not defeat God's promise.

So, then why does it matter to deal with our family emotional garbage? It does matter! Because if the emotional garbage was removed from their family, Joseph didn't have to suffer. If the family lived out God's Word freely, Joseph

didn't have to go through those traumatic experiences. His brothers also didn't have to be burdened with regret, self-condemnation, and trauma. There was just so much needless pain. We don't have to repeat it. We don't have to pass it on over and over and over. We can be set free.

Joseph recognized the invisible hands of God moving in and through all the events in his life, even the tragic ones. It provided a means for him to be a gift to the world. And his willingness to go back enabled him to go forward and become a blessing to nations.<sup>11</sup>

It's the same for every one of us. The invisible hands of God are moving in and through all the events in each of our lives even the tragic ones. Be still before the Lord. Just spend time with God in quietness. Imagine the invisible hands of God moving in and through each event in our lives. Ask the Holy Spirit to show that God was there with you in that event, in that crisis you experienced (Is 63:9). Remain in the presence of God. By God's love, we will be set free from the emotional garbage that was passed on from generation to generation. The emotional garbage will be removed and we will be healed and our true self will be restored.

#### 4. "Adoption," Being born anew into God's family

When we look deeply beneath the surface of our lives, many of us are not fundamentally doing that many things differently from how our families did them. I'd say, "Jesus is in your heart but grandpa is in your body."

We have inherited what our family has practiced and passed on from generation to generation. We have lived what we have inherited for decades. They are deeply imprinted in us.

God's intention is that our local churches are to be place where, slowly but surely, we are re-parented on doing life God's way.<sup>12</sup>

The great news of Christianity is that your biological family of origin or your culture does not determine your future, God does. What has been done, what has gone before you is not your destiny. The most significant language in the New Testament is "adoption" as being born anew into the family of God. It's a radical new beginning. We who place our faith in Christ were spiritually reborn by

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<sup>11</sup> DVD

<sup>12</sup> Book, p.104

the Holy Spirit into the family of Jesus. God has become our Father. We are legally given a new name, Christian. We have a new inheritance of freedom and hope and glory. We have new brothers and sisters, other Christians.<sup>13</sup>

God has put us into a family of gospel, which is church. And there we will take out emotional garbage and learn to live out the Word of God. It is like re-writing the auto-pilot program little by little. Through practice and experiences, the emotional garbage inside us will be replaced by the Word of God.

Church is the place where we are being set free more and more, and grow mature, as we experience God's love through one another. As we live in this freedom, we can forgive one another, love one another, and be connected with one another. There is a unity and harmony in diversity. That is because Church is the body of Christ.

But one thing we must remember is each of us are now on the process of being set free. We are on the process of maturity. We are growing. We are being transformed from glory to glory into Christlikeness. The work is in progress. In other words, we still have shortcomings, broken parts, we are under construction, not finished, not completed yet.

I am the example of that. I want to love others, but cannot do it well sometimes. I want to forgive others like Jesus forgave me, but sometimes I cannot. Then I can experience again the love, grace and mercy of Jesus. I realize I don't have to do it on my own, but I can trust the Holy Spirit to enable me to do it. There is growth. And it happens in the new family, church! I'm very thankful for every body.

We may sometimes get hurt, discouraged and troubled by one another unintentionally. Then again we can learn to forgive and be forgiven, to love and be loved by one another. We give appreciation for each other. We nurture our emotion for each other. We're growing to be more like Christ together. "Experiencing the Life, Changing Lives." That is our church NLIF. Amen!

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

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<sup>13</sup> DVD

1) How would you describe the family atmosphere you grew up in? Try to use just a few words.

2) Imagine yourself in Joseph's shoes sitting in a prison cell without any hope of freedom (Gen 39:1-40:23). What thoughts, feelings or doubts might come to your mind about your family? About yourself? About God?

3) List the life messages you received from your family. Take time and ponder the concept you've received from your family and the way you're expected to act/handle in your family on the following issues: Money, Conflict, Sexuality, Grief and loss, Expressing anger, Family, Relationships, Attitudes towards different cultures/religions, Success, Feeling and emotions. (You may add more)

4) What might be one specific message from your family of origin that God has revealed to you through this study? What do you want to change?

5) Read Eph 1:3-5, 5:1. What does God speak to you? What truth is revealed to you?

Some are taken from "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course Workbook," by Peter Scazzero, Zondevan, 2014, p.45-51, and "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality," 2006, p.99-100