



LIFE GROUP STUDY MATERIAL

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

**SESSION #2:
ESCAPING THE SHADOWS**

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ESCAPING THE SHADOWS

LESSON AIM

To help us recognise how our family upbringing shapes our emotional health, identity, and relationships, and to discover how Christ redeems us from unhealthy patterns and leads us into healing, freedom, and a new identity as children of God.

VIDEO LESSON

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvixQYBrnfg>

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Peter 1:18-19

18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

1 Peter 1:18-19 ESV

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will explore how our upbringing can affect our emotional health. Even if we grew up in relatively healthy environments, there can still be emotional wounds and unhealthy patterns that we carry into adulthood. Many of our emotional responses, fears, habits, and ways of relating to others are shaped by what we experienced growing up. Family environments can influence our sense of trust, identity, emotional expression, how we handle conflict, and even how we relate to God. The good news of the gospel is that through Christ, we are not bound to the dysfunctions or wounds of our past. In Him, we can experience healing, freedom, and begin living as a new creation. Let's begin by looking at three family archetypes in the book of Genesis.

Archetype 1: Healthy Family - Abraham

Abraham was a man who walked closely with God and responded to God's call in faith, yet fear and dishonesty were still present in his life. On two separate occasions, Abraham lied about Sarah being his sister because he feared for his own safety. Although Abraham's family could be considered relatively

healthy compared to later generations, it still contained areas of weakness and dysfunction. This reminds us that no family is perfect. Even in generally healthy environments, unhealthy instincts, fears, and emotional patterns can still be passed down from one generation to the next.

Archetype 2: Performance-Based Family - Isaac

Just as Abraham lied about his wife, Isaac repeated the same pattern with Rebekah, showing how unhealthy patterns can continue from one generation to the next. Isaac's household became a performance-based and favoritism-driven environment. Isaac favored Esau, while Rebekah favored Jacob, creating division, rivalry, and deception within the family. Isaac's affection toward Esau was closely tied to Esau's hunting and ability to please his father, making acceptance and blessing feel connected to performance rather than unconditional love. Over time, this unhealthy family dynamic contributed to conflict, broken relationships, and separation between the brothers.

Archetype 3: Dysfunctional Family - Jacob

Jacob's family became deeply dysfunctional, marked by favoritism, rivalry, and emotional chaos. Jacob openly loved Rachel more than his other wives, and he showed clear favoritism toward Joseph above all his other sons. This created deep jealousy and bitterness among the brothers, eventually leading them to betray Joseph and sell him into slavery. What began as unhealthy patterns in earlier generations grew even more destructive in Jacob's household, demonstrating how unresolved dysfunction can intensify and affect an entire family if left unaddressed.

Conclusion

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ redeems us not only from sin and condemnation, but also from the wounds and unhealthy patterns of our past. Through His precious blood, Christ has ransomed us from the empty ways handed down through generations. God is not like our imperfect earthly parents. He is a loving Father who fully knows us, fully accepts us, and gives us a new identity as His children. In Christ, we are no longer defined by our past or our family dysfunctions, but are made new creations, empowered to walk in freedom, healing, and wholeness.

Please find below a comparison table showing how these different traits can appear across the three family archetypes.

Aspect	Healthy Family	Performance-Based Family	Dysfunctional Family
Trust	Open, secure	Conditional, based on success	Broken, suspicion-driven
Comfort	Freely given	Earned through achievement	Rare, often avoided
Encouragement	Regular, affirming	Performance-driven	Inconsistent or absent
Handling Conflict	Addressed openly with resolution	Avoided or controlled	Explosive or silent
Expression of Emotion	Accepted and processed	Suppressed	Ignored or over-expressed
Identity Formation	Rooted in love and stability	Rooted in performance and success	Rooted in survival and coping
Parental Influence	Guides and nurtures	Critiques and demands	Neglects or dominates
Relationship with God	Based on grace	Based on effort	Often absent

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Instructions for group facilitators: Every group is different. You may modify the discussion questions to suit your group and you do not need to use all the questions in the group discussion.

Question 1: Which of the three family archetypes (Healthy, Performance-Based, or Dysfunctional) do you relate to most, and why?

Question 2: In what ways do you think your upbringing has shaped your emotional responses, fears, habits, or relationships today?

Question 3: Looking at the comparison table, which area challenged you the most (trust, comfort, encouragement, conflict, emotional expression, identity, etc.)? Why?

Question 4: Isaac's family connected acceptance and blessing with performance and achievement. How can performance-based thinking affect our relationship with God and others today?

Question 5: Jacob's family shows how unresolved dysfunction can intensify across generations. Why is it important to address unhealthy patterns instead of ignoring them?

Question 6: The study reminds us that God is not like our imperfect earthly parents. How can unhealthy family experiences sometimes distort the way people see God?

Question 7: What does it practically mean to live as a "new creation" in Christ when it comes to emotional healing, identity, and breaking unhealthy cycles?

NEXT STEPS

Take time this week to prayerfully reflect on how your upbringing may have shaped your emotional responses, relationships, and view of yourself or God. Ask the Holy Spirit to gently reveal any unhealthy patterns, fears, or wounds that may still be affecting you today. Bring these things honestly before God, remembering that He is a loving Father who fully knows you and fully accepts you in Christ. Spend time meditating on your new identity as a child of God and ask Him to help you walk in freedom, healing, and wholeness. If appropriate, consider opening up to a trusted pastor, leader, or mature believer who can journey with you in prayer and encouragement. Do you know someone who could benefit from this lesson? Share what you have learned and invite them to join you for the next session.