

How to Deal with a Parent's Sin

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Kingdom Basics
Exodus 20:4-6

I have been doing a series on the Kingdom of God and have mentioned on several occasions throughout the series that the theme of the Kingdom of God is the most basic theme of the Bible. If you want to know what is the unifying thread that holds together the entire Old Testament and New Testament, it is God expanding his kingdom. That is, expanding his rule and reign. The theme of the Bible is God taking ground back from the counterfeit king, the wicked king, named Satan, who gained power over the lives of men and women through the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. And throughout the Bible we read the story of how God takes ground back and recaptures men and women through evangelism, through world missions activity, through prayer, and repentance. But from beginning to end the story of the Bible is the story of God recapturing ground that has been lost to Satan.

Let me tell you a few stories of ground that has been taken back by the Lord. There is an Indian tribe called the Saboba Indians that live in Hamett, California. And up until 1992 the Saboba Indian reservation was one of the most violent Indian reservations in America. They had about 12 murders a year for a very small population and there were very few Christian Saboba Indians. They were terribly impoverished with lots of social problems and lots of violence.

Now before white Americans came to settle around Hamett, California, the Saboba Indians fought and lost a battle to the Pechanga Indians, a tribe that lived south of them. During the battle Saboba women and children fled to hide in a place that is now called Massacre Canyon. After defeating the men, the Pechangas went into the valley and slaughtered all of the Saboba women and children. That was a hundred years ago.

In 1992 a Christian pastor accompanied by a few Christian Saboba Indians and some Christian Pechanga Indians went to that Massacre Canyon and began to pray. With many tears a Christian Pechanga confessed the sins committed by his forefathers and he asked the Christian Sabobas' forgiveness for the sins committed against his people by the Pechanga Indians. They had communion together. Forgiveness was asked for and extended. Then they held a Christian worship service in Massacre Canyon. That was in August 1992.

In the three year period following August 1992, there was one murder in three years on the Saboba Indian reservation. Before that they were having one murder a month. They had one in the next three years. But even more wonderful, a revival spread throughout the Saboba reservation. Evangelistic meetings were overflowing with Sabobas making new decisions for Christ. They began to see healings and signs and wonders. A third of the Saboba Indians are now Christians, including the tribal leader and former witch doctors. The Saboba revival spread over ten other Native American Indian reservations in California.

Let me tell you another story. This one is about South Africa. Ten years ago everyone who was a political pundit, an expert, predicted that South Africa would be plunged into the most awful kind of racial violence when Black South Africans took over the country. They said that it would be nothing other than a blood bath. That is what all the experts were saying. It was going to be worse than anything that was seen in Northern Ireland between the Catholics and Protestants. It was going to be worse than what we see in the Middle East between the Muslims and the Jews. They said that the Black South Africans would certainly seek revenge for the decades of racial discrimination and apartheid. They said that South Africa would degenerate into another Yugoslavia—ethnic cleansings and massacres.

But none of the pessimistic predictions made by a unanimous chorus of political pundits and world leaders have come to pass. Instead, the transition of power from white to black rule has been almost entirely peaceful. There certainly has been some violence, but nothing on the scale that was predicted. What happened?

What happened was whites repented of the sin of racism, not only by them, but by their forefathers. F.W. deKlerk, former President of South Africa, is a Christian and he saw his mission as tearing down apartheid. One of his first acts in government was to bring together Christian leaders to advise him regarding how he should proceed. They had a nice team come together and one of the things they advised him to do was to repent and to ask forgiveness. And so F.W. deKlerk, on behalf of himself, his fathers, his race, his political party, issued a statement in which he said, “The national party – we have gone on our knees before God Almighty to pray for his forgiveness. I stand before you today to admit that which was wrong and was sin, our policy of racial discrimination and apartheid. And to repent and to ask for forgiveness.”

Nelson Mandela, the current President of South Africa, who himself suffered so much personally by being in prison on Robbins Island for decades – he missed his children’s entire childhood and young adulthood, he missed over two decades of companionship with his wife, he was beaten and isolated. Nelson Mandela has led the Black response of forgiveness for sins by Whites not only in his generation, but over the centuries.

One of my favorite Nelson Mandela stories speaks about his reconciling spirit. It was several years ago and the South African Rugby team was still racially segregated. It was an entirely white team. The segregation was a thorn in the side of Blacks in South Africa. It was a symbol of the old regime that the South African team was called the National Team even though it was all White. The White South African team was playing a rugby game before all white fans when Nelson Mandela led a march of Blacks to the rugby stadium. Everyone expected a bloody confrontation as Black bitterness and anger for continual mistreatment would certainly bubble over. Whites in the stadium were prepared for mob violence. The situation was very tense. Mandela led these Black marchers into the stadium to the very center of the field. And then he did the most amazing thing. He took his shirt off and he put on the shirt of the White South African Rugby Team. And then he led the Black marchers in a cheer for the White team.

When the Whites in the stadium saw this, their hearts were broken and they began to cheer for Mandela. The result of his reconciling action was not only that violence was averted, but there was an entire change in the hearts of both Whites and Blacks. The South African Rugby Team was immediately integrated and now the great South African rugby hero is a South African Black.

What do these stories of the Saboba and Pechanga Indians and of S.W. deKlerk and Nelson Mandela have in common? These two stories are stories of people who through confession and repentance broke the power of generational sin. They are stories of people who in our day broke a century or more of the power of sin and all of its awful consequences.

I would like to personalize this talk today. I don't want to talk at the national level or the international level. I want to talk at the personal level. We have been discussing taking ground back from the enemy and in many of our own lives there are patterns of behavior, patterns of sin, powers that engulf us that are not simply a matter of our own bad choices, but can be traced back to our parents, grandparents and, indeed, great-grandparents. Is there something in the story of those Native Americans or South Africa? Even more importantly, is there something in the text of scripture that shows us how to break the power and take ground back that's been lost in our family line?

Today I want to tackle that question in a talk that I have called, "How to Deal with a Parent's Sin." Let's pray.

In **Exodus 20:4-6 (Slide for the overhead)**, God in giving this commandment to Moses on Mt. Sinai said, **"You shall not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."**

What we read here is that covenant violations, violations to the commandments, could bring guilt not only to an individual who violates the commandment, but guilt to his entire family line. We see that God's love goes to a thousand generations, but we can never forget God's holiness. His holiness brings about a curse to the third and fourth generation of those who sin. Third or fourth generation is a way to refer to all of the living descendents of a person, since people generally don't outlive the fourth generation of those who descend from them. It is a way to refer to the eldest patriarch in a family – their children, their grandchildren, and then their great-grandchildren.

Now what is being communicated here? The NIV has a very unfortunate translation where it says in verse 5, "I, the Lord your God am a jealous God punishing the children for the sins of the fathers." That is not at all what the original Hebrew is communicating. God is not saying that a child will be punished for the sins of their fathers or grandfathers. What is being communicated is that the sins of the grandfather or father will be visited upon the child or grandchild. In other words, the sinful tendencies of the father or grandfather, the sinful weaknesses will show up in a child or grandchild as it did in a grandmother or grandfather. That if you look back on family lines, the

tendencies of a family, good or bad, will be passed down through the generations.

And this concept theologically is often called “corporate solidarity.” It is the idea that we don’t exist as autonomous individuals, but that our lives are connected. In the ancient Near East a person often found their identity in their family and clan. Their integration in the family, their place in the family, was a large part of their understanding of themselves. They were a daughter, a son, a granddaughter, and a great-grandson. They weren’t just independent agents. They knew that God’s dealing with their forefathers would have an effect on them.

In America we honestly haven’t a clue regarding this major theme in the Bible of corporate solidarity. We live in the most individualistic, most autonomous culture that has ever been on the face of the planet. The notion that we would be affected by anything that our parents did or grandparents did, at least in terms of our relationship with God, strikes us as being really outrageous. Even American Christians relate to God as if it is just me and Jesus period. The notion that we would be affected by our parents, our grandparents, our church leaders, our national leaders doesn’t seem fair. Why should we suffer or have problems just because of our mothers’ or fathers’ bad choices? Why should we start off in a hole spiritually because of our grandmother or grandfather or church leader or president? Why should we in any way have to pay for or deal with people’s sins?

Let me try to deal with that objection. I will deal with it in two ways. First of all, it is interesting that no one objects to inheriting a blessing they haven’t earned. We all are upset about and in America up in arms over the notion that we could somehow be affected by other people’s problems. But we have no difficulty whatsoever enjoying the fruit and blessing of other people’s labors. I don’t think I have ever heard someone say, “What really bums me out about the justice of God, what really angers me is that my father and mother were really wonderful Christian parents. And as a result I have this incredible Christian heritage that I didn’t earn. From early on God was a part of our lives. I watched dad and mom praying through things. There weren’t many days when I didn’t see mom or dad reading the Bible. They always took us to church where I got inoculated with good values and God’s word. My mom and dad just encouraged me a lot. They taught me to aim at excellence. It’s not fair. And then here I live in America with this rich Christian history and it’s been easy for me to hear and respond to the gospel. I have such an abundance of resource.”

I have never heard someone say, “You know, I just find it very difficult to deal with all the blessings that I didn’t earn.” Remember, in the Bible it is not just sinful tendencies that are inherited, but blessings. Isaac is blessed for the sake of his father, Abraham, in Genesis 26. Judah, the whole nation, is blessed for the sake of one national leader, King David, in the book of 2 Samuel. So if you object to somehow being affected by the bad stuff, because you didn’t earn it, you didn’t choose this or that, you would also similarly have to say to God, “God, take away all of the blessings in my life that I didn’t earn either.”

Let me give you a second response to the biblical notion of corporate solidarity, the effect on us by the sins of our parents. It is a simple, empirical fact,

backed up by massive amounts of sociological evidence that the sinful tendencies of parents do affect their children down to the third and fourth generations. Everything that we know about sociology tells us that parental sin has an enormous effect upon children. And that children will live out very different lives because of a parent's sin.

Let me give you some illustrations of the effects of sins of parents upon their children:

Let's talk about the sin of divorce. The Bible says, "God hates divorce" in the book of Malachi. Jesus tells us not to divorce. That God intends for there to be a permanent bond between husbands and wives broken only by unfaithfulness or complete abandonment. Do you know that in America, race and income are of virtually no consequence concerning whether a child is going to grow up to be a criminal? That the single indicator of whether a child will be involved in criminal behavior is the break-up of their home? Listen to this – a recent study of 25,000 incarcerated juveniles made by the Bureau of Justice Statistics:

- **72% of all incarcerated juveniles come from broken homes.**
- **A child growing up in a single parent home is 7x as likely to be a delinquent as a child growing up in a two-parent family.**
- **Of all possibly contributing factors, only divorce rates are consistently associated with suicide among teens.**

In Great Britain they conducted a study that said,

- **"So powerful is the connection between disruptive families and crime that once family status was controlled for, race or income had no effect on the crime rate."**

In other words it doesn't matter at all if you are Black, Hispanic, Asian, White – it doesn't matter what your income was, the controlling factor in criminal behavior is whether the family unit is in tact – father, mother – or whether there has been a divorce.

- **70% of all violent criminals come from female-headed homes.**
- **Two-thirds of all rapists come from female-headed homes.**
- **Most victims of child-molestation come from single parent households.**
- **A child living in a female-headed home is 10x more likely to be beaten or murdered than a child in a two-parent family.**
- **Children of divorce are 60% more likely to undergo divorce themselves than a similar population from intact families.**

The sins of the father are visited, the sinful tendencies, are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation.

- **Children who grow up in divorced families are less likely to marry, more likely to divorce, and more likely to have children outside of wedlock.**
- **Teens from single parent homes are twice as likely to dropout of school and become teen parents themselves than teens growing up in two-parent families.**
- **Fatherless children are much more likely to develop psychiatric problems. Boys are three times as likely; girls are four times as likely than in two-parent homes.**

- **Children whose parents are divorced are much more likely to engage in premarital sex and to become pregnant outside of marriage.**

People today laugh at the idea of staying together for the sake of the children. We say so long as you are happy, the kids will be happy. All the evidence says there is virtually no sin we commit that will have a greater negative impact on our children than the sin of divorce. Let's talk about another sin – the sin of drunkenness or alcoholism.

- **One third of all alcoholics had at least one parent who was an alcoholic.**
- **Children of alcoholics abuse substances at a rate 3x that of other children.**
- **Children of alcoholics suffer twice the mental disorders of other children.**
- **The total health care costs of children of alcoholics is 32% greater than for children of non-alcoholics.**
- **Children of alcoholics score lower on tests measuring verbal ability.**
- **Children of alcoholics have much more difficulty in school than other children.**

I'm sure were we to study this, we would see that other sins, the sinful use of pornography, the sin of adultery, the sin of anger, the sin of anxiety and unbelief, the sin of materialism – I bet if we studied other sins we would see this principle of the sinful tendencies of the fathers and mothers being visited on their children down through the generations. Let me ask you a personal question. Do you see, in your own life, as you have grown up, any of the sinful patterns and tendencies and ways of relating that were present in the life of your parents or grandparents? Have you struggled with any longstanding sin and said – the roads of this go back generations in my home? Or have any of you ever meditated upon the negative inheritance given to you by way of the divorce of your parents?

Now, it is not just a matter of social conditioning. It is not simply a matter of imitation. There is a spiritual problem here that ties in with our whole previous discussion of spiritual warfare. I want you to see this in Hosea 4:10-13.

Hosea 4:10-13 - "They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not increase, because they have deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution, to old wine and new, which take away the understanding of my people. They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery."

"They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not increase, because they have deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution, to old wine and new, which take away the understanding of my people. They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood." Now what is behind all of this? Hosea goes on to say,

“A spirit of prostitution leads them astray.” Not just an attitude of prostitution, a spirit of prostitution leads them astray. “They are unfaithful to their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery.”

Sins of the fathers and mothers being visited on their daughters and daughters-in-law. And behind this is not just patterning, but he says “a spirit of prostitution” in this case. What our parents open themselves up to spiritually can have devastating affects on us and our children. What we open ourselves up to spiritually can have devastating effects on our children and their children. Again, let me make this personal. God views you parents as the spiritual heads of your family. You are the doorkeepers of your home so to speak. What you let into your home spiritually through sin, whether obvious or secret affects your kids. What you keep out is kept out. A great reason to break sin patterns is for the sake of your children. I think of that great prayer of Jesus in John 17 “For their sake I sanctify myself.” Parents, do you pray, “God make me holy. God fix me. God change me; for their sake?”

Now I want to apply this to one particular sin. You know, that passage that we looked at before in the book of Exodus where we saw that God said he was a jealous God and he was going to visit the sins, the sinful tendencies, of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation and this test that we looked at in Hosea, which talks about the prostitution of parents resulting in the prostitution of their children. Both tests are speaking out of the context of the sin of idolatry. Hosea says, “They consult wooden idols.” Idolatry. And the Exodus passage is warning us against making idols in the form of anything in heaven above, on earth beneath, or in the waters below. You shall not bow down and worship them. It is in that context that God says that he is jealous and will visit sinful tendencies upon children to the third and fourth generations.

Let me state what I am getting at in the form of a proposition. A proposition is this: Idolatry and occult involvement is the one sin where we see the highest correlation between the sins of the fathers and the effects to the third and fourth generation. If there is any sin above all where God’s jealousy will be aroused and where he will visit those sinful tendencies downline, it is the sin of witchcraft, the sin of idolatry.

Now the crucial text for understanding what God prohibits by way of idolatry and spiritual adultery and witchcraft and all of that is **Deuteronomy 18:9-13**.

Deuteronomy 18:9-13 - “When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults with the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord, and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God.”

What is it that God was prohibiting? He was prohibiting first of all the practice of child sacrifice. "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire." In the ancient world, the sacrifice of human beings was widely practiced to the gods. The Bible tells us that these sacrifices were actually made to demons. But a common feature of Satanism and witchcraft to this very day is the sacrifice of a human being. Slitting the throat of a victim and pouring out the blood as an offering to a spirit. This is done not only in the ancient near east to the God Molech, but you see it in the Aztec culture, the Mayan culture, and various African tribal religions. You see it in Hinduism. Human sacrifice has regularly been practiced throughout the world outside of the biblical religions. We are seeing it more and more today in what has become known as Satanic Ritual Abuse.

There is a reason why human beings are used in sacrifice and torture. That is, there is spiritual power released in sacrifice. There is a biblical connection between sacrifice and power. A sacrifice to God and godly power; sacrifice to demons and demonic power. If you are taking notes you can look it up in 2 Kings 3:26-27.

The Lord goes on and condemns divination. Divination is the attempt to gain secret knowledge apart from God. To know the future. To know the sex of one's baby. To know where you lost money or what is going to happen in your business. I told you last week about one of the pastor's wives in our congregation and how her grandmother went out to visit a Native American diviner, who told her where her lost money was and who stole it. That is condemned in the scripture. We are not to get any secret knowledge apart from Jesus. Ouija boards would be classified under divination, so would palm reading and tarot card reading.

Sorcery is also condemned. It can be translated magic. It is basically an attempt to influence people and events apart from prayer to God. Where we are talking about magic, we are talking about Black Magic, the attempt to produce evil results through curses, spells, the destruction of a model of the enemy, taking a doll and smashing it. Bringing about evil is Black Magic and is condemned. White Magic is also using occult powers to achieve a good end, like an abundant harvest, or better business, or casting a spell so that someone's lover will love them.

God goes on to condemn interpreting omens. There was a tremendous amount of involvement in the ancient world in attempting to figure out what was going to happen in the future through observing signs – through interpreting eclipses or rainbows or the flights of birds in the air or animal behavior, or feel around the internal organs of an animal, to interpret all of that for the purpose of divining the future.

There is one last thing that is condemned – consulting a medium or spiritist. Mediums were mediators getting people in touch with the dead who were in the other world. So a medium would get in touch with the other world through the dead. They were the equivalent of a modern séance. And a spiritist would be used to get in touch with spirits from the spiritual world. It would be the rough

equivalent of New Age channelers – people who are spirit guides, who can get in touch with the other world.

Other lists in the Bible tell us that the practice of astrology is forbidden.

We have a list of occult activities. And the Bible says to God's people: You stay away from this stuff. Do not attempt to contact the spirit world – whether you are talking about angels, spirits, and ghosts of the dead. Don't get involved in this stuff even out of curiosity. Don't try to manipulate the spirit world. Don't try to gain knowledge about the spirit world apart from God and what he has revealed in his word. Don't try to gain power from the spirit world to do good for yourself – your finances, your healing, and your love-life. Don't contact the ghosts of the dead. Don't read horoscopes. Don't get involved in casting spells. Never try to contact Satan – whatever your motive is, or whatever your view of Satan is. And remember, the holiness of God says if you do, it will have a negative spiritual effect to the third and fourth generation.

You know, the Bible says in the last days right before Christ returns there is going to be an explosion in and interest of witchcraft and the occult. That all these things that God condemns in Deuteronomy 18 and says don't do it, don't do it, stay away from this, it is abominable – the Bible says that the last days' religion is going to feature the occult. Revelation 9:20 says this:

Revelation 9:20 - "The rest of mankind that were not killed by the plagues (these are the plagues during the last days in the great Tribulation period) still did not repent of the work of their hands. They still didn't stop worshipping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their magic."

The Bible teaches that last days' religion is going to be filled with counterfeit miracles, the practice of the occult, the practice of magic. That is what 2 Thess. 2 says, "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles and signs and wonders and in every sort of evil that deceives those that are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends a powerful delusion."

And you know, just as we saw before in the empirical evidence for these sins of the fathers being visited on their children - in the sin of divorce, alcoholism and so on – so there is a great amount of empirical evidence for this particular sin of idolatry and occult practice in the US today.

Let me tell you about Beverly Barre. Her story was recently told in US News and World Report. She said that she got rid of Catholicism and its guilt, guilt, guilt when she was growing up in California. But when her marriage was falling apart at age 26, she began taking classes regarding metaphysics. These classes led her into New Age teaching where she was taught to look to herself for answers, instead of an omnipotent God. She learned that the real secret was that she was God. And so each morning in her Phoenix home she practices yoga, meditating before a small altar adorned with a crystal, a cross and a small Buddha. These items, she says, the cross, a crystal and a small Buddha, represent the power and the energy from which all things come. Her daily ritual includes drawing three cards from a small deck, which feature an angel on one

side and the words that will predict the day on the other. On this day she draws the words: "Expectancy, spontaneity and love." Then she purifies her home by using a Native American tradition of burning sage and fanning the smoke with a feather as she moves from room to room.

She enhances her spirituality because of the positive energy emitting from the mountains, deserts and rocks. "Taking care of myself is my religion." It goes on to say that her son is a born again Christian and totally rejects what his mother is into. Apparently her truth is not his truth.

But this strange mix of spirituality and superstition and openness to the demonic is sweeping the country. For baby boomers, folks who are 34-53, the stats are that 49% believe in ESP. 14% say they have consulted a physic or fortune-teller. 78% of women and 70% of men read their horoscopes regularly. These practices are prohibited by the scriptures, and yet folks by the million are getting involved in astrology and channeling, palm reading and tarot cards. Calling up Dionne Warwick. Just look at the best seller's list over the last 4-5 years. A substantial number of titles are simply books that reject biblical revelation and communicate an alternative spirituality like "The Celestine Prophecy" or Bernie Seagull's "Love, Medicine and Miracles." Or "Conversations with God" by Neil Donald Walsh, who claims to have had a revelation from God where God told him that some of the things in the Bible are not true.

All of this would be bad enough except that alternative spirituality has also been embraced by sections of the Christian church. In many mainline churches there has been a recent rise of what has become known as "Sophia Worship." Feminists and lesbian theologians have introduced the worship of the goddess Sophia. In conferences called "Re-imagining Conferences," participants, mainly women from mainline churches, are led to worship the goddess Sophia. Apologists say that Sophia is just an aspect of God's being. But they have come up with an alternative communion service. In place of bread and wine, milk and honey is served. One conference participant, a "womanist" theology professor at Union Theological Seminary, said, "I don't think we need a theory of the atonement at all." And then with women cheering she said, "Atonement has so much to do with death. I don't think we need a bunch of folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping. We don't need atonement, we need to listen to the God within."

You know, God hates this stuff. Virtually every one of the practices I have mentioned dishonors God by having people turn from worshipping God, who alone deserves to be worshipped, to worshipping themselves. Every one of the New Age practices, these alternative spiritualities that are coming into churches all across America, cause people to turn from worshipping the only true God, who is alone blessed, and we end up worshipping ourselves and putting ourselves in the place of God. When a person gets involved in magic and channeling and astrology, divination and tarot card reading and Ouija Boards, they may or may not know that they are declaring war on God.

And God knows these things are unbelievably dangerous. We get in touch with powers that destroy us and unfortunately destroy our children and grandchildren.

Why are these things so popular? Before we talk about the solution, why are they so popular? I think you see three reasons:

1. People want power. We want to be like God. We want power. We want to control things. We want to control our love lives. We want to control our businesses. We want power and so we will get it any way we can, even illicitly.
2. We want knowledge. We want secret information that can't be known through the five senses. And we don't want to take the time to consult God. We want knowledge about the future of our love lives, the future of our businesses, the future of the economy, the futures of our children but we want it without the discipline of prayer.
3. We want the benefits of spirituality without moral absolutes. We Americans do feel spiritually empty. Technology won't meet the hole in our souls. We were made for spiritual contact with God. We Americans today want spirituality, that void filled, without moral absolutes. We don't want to be told that sex outside of marriage is wrong. We want to do what we want sexually when we want to do it. We don't want to be told that breaking our marriage vows is wrong. We don't want to be told that certain business practices that we engage in are wrong.

We want power. We want knowledge. We want spirituality without moral absolutes. And so we open ourselves up to the occult, to forbidden practices.

You say, "Rich, I see in my life the downstream effects of the sins of my parents or my grandparents. I see in my life that my parents' and grandparents' divorce has really affected me. Their alcoholism has affected me, their anger, their perfectionism has affected me. Their sexual practices have affected me. Their involvement in the occult, their consulting a medium, or palm reader, or diviner has affected me. I fear that in my life their stuff has affected me – what should I do?"

Proverbs 28:13 tells us the way out of sin. It applies to our own sins, but also it applies to the sins of our father and mother.

Proverbs 28:13 – "He who conceals his sins does not prosper. But whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy."

The way out of sin is to confess sin and to turn from it.

You say, "But Rich, I confess my own sin, but the sin I am afraid has really affected me is the sin that my mother did or my grandfather did. I understand that I may need to forgive them but confess sins of somebody else?"

The Bible teaches that you confess those sins as well and ask God's forgiveness for the sins of your family line – your father, your grandfather, your mother and your grandmother and your nation.

You say, "Where do you find that, Rich?"

Leviticus 26:39-42.

Let me set the context for you. The context of Leviticus 26 is the curses that have come from disobeying the covenant of God between God and the children of Israel. When Israel disobeyed God, God said certain curses would fall on them. And so we read the way out of the covenant curses in Leviticus 26:39-42.

Leviticus 26:39-42 - “Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers’ sins they will waste away. [Sins of the fathers visited on the children. But here is the word of hope.] But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers [you can underline that in your Bible]—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me [not only yours but your parents and grandparents], which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. For the land will be deserted by them and their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees.”

And we see people confessing not only their own sins, but the sins of their fathers and grandfathers and mothers and grandmothers. For example in Nehemiah 9:2-3,

Nehemiah 9:2-3 – “Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day, and spent another fourth in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God.”

Or listen to Daniel 9:7-11 – Confessing the sins of the nation.

Daniel 9:7-11 – “Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. O Lord, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.”

Daniel is not confessing his own sin. He is identifying with all the people and he is identifying with his fathers. And he is identifying with the leaders. And on their behalf he is making confession and asking God to break this chain of sin and its awful consequences.

Let me ask you a personal question. Have you ever taken the time to not only confess your own sins, but to go before God in humility and confess the sins of your fathers, mothers, and grandparents, and great-grandparents to the extent that you know them? The sins of their idolatry, their spiritual practices that were forbidden by God? Have you ever taken the time to confess and acknowledge their involvement in false religions? Their anger that has resulted in your angry tendencies? Their sexual sins? Their sin of divorce? Their worry and anxiety?

Oh, that stuff doesn’t bother me. I am an American individual.

The Bible says that it does affect you. That the sins of our parents do affect us. That the negative spiritual inheritance that they had does go down through the generations. We can break the chain. Like Nelson Mandela and F.W. deKlerk broke the chain in South Africa, like the Saboba Indians and the

Pechanga Indians broke the chain in Massacre Canyon. Through confession and repentance we can break the chain in our generation.

Conclusion.