



Week 11 | Working Through Your Past: Viewing Our Stories Redemptively Exercises

Exercise 1 - Family History

We all inherit ways of living from our family and culture that are out of sync with the way of Jesus. So a key task in our apprenticeship to Jesus is being re-parented into the family of God. The goal of today's exercise is to review key events in your family history and identify generational sins, brokenness, relational patterns, and inherited values. Note that today's exercise will take longer than usual. You may want to work on it over the course of several days.

Start today by considering the questions below. You may need to ask your parents, grandparents, or extended family members to get answers to these questions. Some questions may be hard to ask, so only go as far as you're comfortable.

Which, if any, of the following diseases are in your family of origin (Arthritis, Cancer, Heart Conditions, Diabetes, Depression, Fibromyalgia, Mental Depressive Disorders, Mental Disturbances, Nervous Breakdowns, Skin Issues, Ulcers)?



List all non-Christian religions in your ancestral history (Buddhism, Freemasonry, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, the Occult, etc.).

Has there been any substance abuse or addiction?

Has anyone had, participated in, or sponsored an abortion?

Has there been any notable sexual promiscuity? Affairs? Divorces?

Has there been any sexual, emotional, physical, or spiritual abuse?

Has there been any abandonment (physical or emotional absence) in your family of origin?

How would you describe your parents' and grandparents' marriages?

Did your parents show affection? To each other? To their kids? To you?



Was your family more patriarchal or matriarchal? Or a healthy balance?

Which parent are you most like? With whom were/are you closer?

How well did you get along with your siblings growing up? How about now?

Which role did you play in your family (responsible eldest, baby, black sheep, caretaker, etc.)?

How did your family deal with conflict (fight, flight, freeze, etc.)?

Was your family open in talking about feelings, especially negative feelings?

Were there any family secrets (pregnancy out of wedlock, incest, abuse, financial scandal, etc.)?

How did your family define success?



How was money handled? Viewed? Was there a spirit of poverty or wealth?

Were there any heroes or heroines in the family? Any scapegoats? Why?

Were there any traumatic losses (sudden death, prolonged illnesses, stillbirths, bankruptcy, etc.)? Were those losses talked about openly and mourned? Or swept under the rug?

Key Events and Messages

Continue by thinking through key events in your past and the messages you received from them.

Messages received about life from Father
(Caretaker):

Messages received about life from Mother
(Caretaker):

Messages I received from key events:

What these messages made me believe (beliefs that may or may not be true):

**Adapted from practicingtheway.org*

Exercise 2 - Recognizing God's Presence in the Past

Begin today by praying and becoming aware of God's presence and love for you. Ask Him to open your mind and heart in this time to listen and hear from Him.

Start by making a list of key moments in your life when God seemed particularly close--moments when your life was touched by sacred sense of awe, wonder, or gratitude. Memories could range from witnessing the birth of the baby to an answered prayer for yourself or a loved one. Next to these experiences describe the feelings you had during them. Feelings of deep joy and wholeness can often be a sign of God's presence.

Reflecting on your life journey, include people who have touched your life with kindness, opportunities that have crossed your path for growth, and talents and abilities that have enriched your life. Ask the Lord also to bring to mind moments when you have been a bearer of His loving presence to others. How has He redeemed difficult things in your past for your good or for the good of others? See in all these gifts the generous love of the Giver of all good things. When your list is complete, pause and read over it. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving in loving response to God's abundant grace in your life.



Exercise 3 - Receiving God's Healing for the Past

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. - 1 Peter 2:24

Our God is a God of healing--He longs to speak to the wounded places in our lives and heal them with His love (see also: Psalm 147:3, Psalm 103:2-4). Opening the wounded places of our hearts is an emotional and difficult process, but until we allow God into the harmful events of our pasts we will never experience true freedom and restoration from them.

Start today by reading Psalm 147:3, Isaiah 53:5, and Matthew 11:28. Meditate on God's desire to heal your wounds. Allow Scripture to fill you with courage to open your heart to the Spirit, and let him provide healing today.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants to heal. What wound, past experience, trial, hurtful word, or person is still harmfully affecting your life today? It may be a specific experience, season of life, or a particular relationship. Where do you need God to speak His truth and love over you?

Open your heart to the Lord, share your honest feelings about this pain. Ask Jesus to speak truth and love to your wound. Allow Jesus to take the burden of pain from you and give you strength to walk in true freedom. Pray that Jesus would remove any shame or guilt from your heart and would give you the grace to offer forgiveness to yourself or someone else. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you believe and give you patience to wait for complete healing. Spend a few minutes in silence listening to God's response. Give thanks to God for his unending love.

What is the next step that you feel invited to take on your own journey of healing? How do you respond to the invitation to take that step?

* In some situations, it may be necessary to find a professional person--pastor or counselor--to help you in your journey of healing. Do not hesitate to seek the care you need. Please speak with one of the Fellowship elders--they will help you begin the process (chad@fellowshipjonesboro.com; 870-926-1234)

