

Chapter 1

A New Revelation

Even now, I can see that day in my mind's eye. We were standing on the front sidewalk of the church we attended in my hometown. I was five years old. There was my mother, my four year old brother, my three year old brother, my nine month old sister, and myself. One by one the cars left the parking lot until finally there were none left. After a few more minutes, my mother gathered us up and told us it was time to start walking home. It was an eight block walk down a nice residential section of town, but difficult for a young mother with four small children in tow. My father had dropped us off there at 10:00 a.m. He was supposed to be there at 12:00 noon to pick us up. Something must have happened to him, or the car. No, that was not it. He had met some friends at a lounge in the old hotel downtown and drunk himself into a state worse than just the forgetfulness that left us on the church doorsteps. It was not long after that, that the divorce became final. There would only be a few brief encounters with my father after that. Even those were unpleasant and awkward. How do you treat someone that you do not know?

Some 28 years later, I received a call from my sister. "Your father is dying," she said. I thought for a long time about what to do next. I was separated by 500 miles, 28 years, and a world of experiences from the man who was responsible for my being alive. I was pastor of a small church and struggling with the burden of holding down two jobs and caring for the work that God had called me to. Something began to happen inside me that would change not only my thinking, but the direction of my ministry from that time on. As I sat at my desk with pen in hand, thoughts poured in like rain. I could scarcely grasp the process that was taking place in my spirit as I was confronted with truths that I had believed on and preached all of those years. I felt the Lord begin to deal with me about things my father had left me. I questioned the Lord concerning these issues. My father was penniless. He had never even seen a picture of his grandchildren, much less know their names. He didn't know my wife or her family or what she looked like. He didn't see me graduate or know that I was in the ministry. He didn't see the awards and scholarships, the joys and victories, the sadness and tears. I never saw him or heard from him in years. What could God mean when he was saying that I had to deal with what my father had left me?

It would take about 10 years for all that God was saying to be made clear, but it was a revelation I was not prepared for. It began that spring of 1984 and grew for the next few years. Then, God showed me something from the Bible that opened my eyes to truths that would begin a healing and deliverance in me. As the Lord began to show me the spiritual baggage that I was carrying, I wept in repentance and cried for joy for deliverance. I was so concerned for my own family. Why had I never seen it before? I had determined that I was going to raise my children in the nurture of the Lord. I was so sure that my childhood experiences would give me the drive to be a good father. But now, I was seeing that my father's nature affected me. I knew that spiritual bondages could be passed down to generations, but I thought that my father's absence from my life would exempt me from his troubles. My hand began to shake as I tried to put into a few brief words what my heart was feeling. How long did he have to live? Would my letter get to him in time? Would it make any difference? It didn't matter any more. I had to write it. I had to clear any and all obstacles in my life. I could only do what I could do. I could not restore 28 years of separation. I could not give him back the years that alcohol and disease had stolen. I could not even give him the promise that I would see him again in this life. But, I did have something that I could give him. It was mine to give. He had not been able to earn this gift. He had not even asked for it. But, I could give it anyway. I could forgive him. After all, someone had given me a gift that I could not earn - a gift that I had not sought for. God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven me. I

Chapter 1

A New Revelation (continued)

wasn't in the ministry because of some talent or ability of my own. I wasn't going to heaven because God had noticed my goodness or person. His grace was given to me, unmerited, undeserved.

To be free from guilt and ties to the failures of my past, I had to forgive. I could only write. The words were not that difficult to write. They were now coming from my heart. You don't have to try to impress someone when you reveal to them your heart. It is that way with God, and it is that way with man. Whatever your acquaintances think of you now, they will eventually find out what you are really like. There is no time for pretense. Neither can I afford to be fake. If I am going to plumb the depths of my heart, I can not try to cover them with insincere words or emotions. I will not be afforded the opportunity to do this more than once.

“ Dear Dad, I am sorry to hear of your illness. I hope that you are improving, and that you are better as you read this. It is not my desire to discuss all of the things that led us to be at this place at this time. I can not change any of those things. I do not wish to place any blame on anyone, or exact any vengeance on anyone. I want you to know that I forgive you. I do not hold anything that has happened against you. My only concern right now is for your soul. I have accepted Jesus Christ as my savior. It is the only way that heaven is assured. It is my desire that you go there too. I would like for you to ask Jesus into your heart as well. It is the Lord that makes it possible for us to forgive, because he is willing to forgive us. Jesus died for you. Please ask him to forgive you.

Love, Johnny

I looked over it at least a dozen times. Do I call him dad, or by his name? Should I sign it Love, or Sincerely? It sounded so much more like a child than a preacher. Yet, it was his child that had written it. Was it sufficient? Did I say enough? I will never know for sure. Soon after he received the letter, he died. His second wife read it to him in the hospital. At the funeral, she thanked me for the letter. She said that she could hardly believe that I was willing to forgive him. She knew most of what had happened. She then told me that she didn't know for sure how much of the letter he had understood. She thought that he knew what she was saying, but he had drifted in and out of consciousness for most of the last days of his life. It was not the kind of assurance that I was hoping for, but I knew that I had done the right thing. I was glad that I hadn't let slip by the last and only chance that I would get to break the chains of the past. From that day on, God began to open my eyes to many things in my life that had burdened me in my spiritual walk. In no way am I “victimizing “ my sins and weaknesses. Every man is responsible for his own sin. I am, however, seeing more in God's word that tells me how to not only break the bands of defeat and despair from the past, but set up pillars and foundations for the future success of my life, and the lives of my family. There are a few examples from the Bible that God used to shed some light on this subject. We have learned of the physical problems that can be left to our families. We need to see that spiritual problems can be passed on as well. I realize that most of the “ evidence “ that I will use is anecdotal. However, after twenty-five years in the ministry, I have not had to resort to outstanding or unusual cases to cite. I have tried to use examples that are commonplace and occur more frequently than we may like to admit.

This was only the first chapter of “Saul's Daughter - Breaking the Generational Curse”. If you are interested in knowing more about generational curses and want to order this book, please e-mail us at info@missionlighthouse.org. Get it for yourself or as a gift for someone you care about.