

## **Leading Your Family, to the Third and Fourth Generations**

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My sister and I recently discovered that we share a characteristic behavior. Neither of us says “yes” to a commitment unless we are certain we can do the task and do it well. As a result, our friends and colleagues consider us to be very “count-on-able.”

People say the same thing about my daughter. Is it genetic? Is it coincidence? I doubt it.

I think my daughter learned this trait from me, and my sister and I learned it from our parents. Our parents probably learned it from their parents.

How many of your “natural” strengths and limitations were picked up unconsciously from your parents? Consider your strengths to be blessings your parents passed on to you. Maybe it was genetics; maybe it was the influence of environment as you were growing up. Whatever the source of your strongest attributes, your parents probably had some influence on their existence.

Ah, but those weaknesses--are they a punishment to you for the limitations of your ancestors?

Punishment? That’s a strong word! Is it possible that you are paying for what your parents and grandparents did or failed to do?

It’s not only possible, it’s Biblical. Look at Exodus 34:7. God told Moses, “I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love....Even so, I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.”

Does this mean you can blame Mom and Dad and their parents for your weaknesses? Maybe, but I wouldn’t be too hard on them. All they did was pass along to you what they unconsciously learned from their parents. And assuming they loved you and did the best they could, they probably made some intentional improvements over how their parents raised them.

Further, I assume you love your children and care about their futures. So you’re doing all you can to teach them properly and give them good values, right?

Despite good motives, you are probably passing along some unintentional bad habits.

Self-deception is a major difficulty faced by leaders, including parents. Satan is the author of deception, and one of his great satisfactions is having fooled us humans about our flaws.

We like to look good, so we pretend--to others and to ourselves--that we’re “okay” as we are. So, many of us do little once we become adults to improve ourselves. And we don’t realize that we are inadvertently passing along the limitations that we’ve learned from our parents.

The first step in confronting self-deception is to simply become aware that you’re being duped! Then you can use your God-given freedom to choose something different.

You can decide to be a transition person in your family’s lineage. By inviting the people around you to give you feedback on your actions, you’ll raise your awareness of your irritating and detrimental habits. Then you can search for options, considering how you might modify those behaviors.

By making a conscious choice, you perform differently next time, stretching yourself beyond your comfort zone. The likely effect of your new behavior will be a different short-term outcome. If you achieve improved results, you can continue in that direction, replacing your habitual behaviors with something you believe will provide improved long-term outcomes.

I invite you to seek feedback and do some self-evaluation. Those around you might enjoy immediate benefit. More importantly, you’ll likely pass on fewer limiting patterns to your children and grandchildren, even to the third and fourth generations!

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