



Foundations of Christian Spiritual Formation

Lesson 5 *Family History and Dynamic Growth*

The Effects of Family History on the Spiritual Life

*How we view our earthly father and mother greatly effects the way we view God as our Father, our mother, our guardian and protector.

*Jesus portrays the correlation of the earthly father to the heavenly Father in a positive light.

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

—Matthew 7:9–11

*The American family landscape has changed drastically over the last forty years, effecting how we now view parental figures.

Stats on the American Family

From 1962 to 1981, the number of divorces tripled.

In 1962, 50% of adults believed that parents in tough marriages should stay together and work on it for the sake of the kids. By 1980, less than 20% felt that way.

A child born in 1968 faced three times the risk of parental break-up than a Boomer child born in 1948 faced.

Less than 50% of the emerging generation reached age seventeen with both biological parents living with them in the same house.

A 1987 national survey showed that more than 50% of all children of divorce had seen their fathers three times or less in the previous year.

—John Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed*

*The role you played in your family unit, carries over in to the spiritual life. (i.e. If you were a peacemaker in the family, you will try to be a peacemaker with God.)

*How religion was taught and modeled in your family unit also effects how you view God today.

Growing Past Our Past

*Our life stories are not prophetic traps.

*We have freedom in Christ. Not freedom from as much as it is the freedom to . . .

•*Responsibility*—our ability to respond to reality.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

—Galatians 5:1

*Dynamic growth is a necessary part of the spiritual life and a result of existence. Existence is growth. Existence is change. To remain the same equals death.

Reflections

♣What is your family history? How has this history effected the way you view God?

♣What role did you play in your family and how has this/these roles carried over into the spiritual life?

♣Has your parent's view of religion encouraged or discouraged your pursuit of God?

♣Open your heart to God. Allow Him to show you parts of your life story that have not been healed or that are still influencing your thoughts of Him in a negative way.