

BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY FOUR

Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28

God, the ultimate Artist, builds into each child an original pattern. The parents’ task is to make a serious study of how this child is put together and cultivate the good things.

—Charles R. Swindoll

In a typical airport, travelers crisscross wide corridors en route to far-off places. Almost all of them carry luggage—backpacks slung over shoulders, bags draped at one side, wheeled suitcases pulled behind. It’s a luggage parade!

When these travelers arrive at their destinations, unpacking is the first order of business. Every item must find its place. Socks and shirts and coats and dresses are neatly tucked away in drawers and closets, and when the bag itself is empty, it goes into the closet as well.

Imagine how strange it would be if no one unpacked their bags and everyone hauled their luggage with them wherever they went! Yet we do this all the time. All of us—even our children—carry baggage. Not literal suitcases, of course. We carry emotional and spiritual baggage, which consists of the negative traits that were passed down the family line from our parents to us and from us to our children.

In this study we’ll examine how a bagful of sin tumbled down the generational conveyer belt in Abraham’s family. And we’ll be encouraged by the example of one progeny who determined not to fall in line with his forefathers. He unpacked his ancestral baggage and lived free of his family’s sin. Who is this courageous man, and how did he break the pattern? Let’s find out!



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

If you did the assignment in the previous study on the inherited “bents” in your family, you are aware of the ancestral baggage that may be present. And yet, God has been faithful through the generations. He has been working to bring you and your children to this place of growth. Pause now to thank the Lord for His sustaining grace and invite Him to continue working in your life and the lives of your family members.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

For this study, the best tool from the *Searching the Scriptures* toolbox is the contrast-and-comparison method.¹ We'll read six passages, observing the characters, situation, sin, and consequences in each passage. Then, we'll review our observations, noting similarities and differences and interpreting our findings. Finally, we will draw correlations and craft principles for application. Golden nuggets of truth for your family await to be discovered!



Observation: A Case Study of Ancestral Baggage

God chose Abraham and his family as the keepers of the covenant—God's plan of redemption for the whole world. And yet, the baggage of sin in Abraham's life almost sunk him and his sons!

Abraham

Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, was also a father of lies. His habit of lying is not the legacy we would expect from the great patriarch; however, it's recorded in Scripture, and it certainly triggered terrible troubles for his offspring. Read the passages below and write down what you observe in the text under each heading.

Abraham plants the seed of generational sin. Read [Genesis 12:10–20](#).

List the characters. Describe the situation, Abraham's sin, and the consequences.



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Abraham cultivates generational sin by repeating it. Read [Genesis 20](#).

List the characters. Describe the situation, Abraham’s sin, and the consequences.

In this passage, take special note of the way Abraham rationalized his lie ([Genesis 20:11–12](#)) and manipulated his wife ([20:13](#)). What did he say and do?

Compare and contrast the two accounts. What is similar? What is different?



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Abraham’s fear conjured a half-truth; a half-truth created a misunderstanding; a misunderstanding led to a serious problem, which prompted embarrassment, injury . . . and near disaster. If God hadn’t intervened, the covenant that depended on Sarah and Abraham having a baby would have crumbled. God’s redemptive plan nearly ended before it began—all because of little white lies!

And it got worse. Instead of confessing when he got caught, Abraham gave excuses, minimized his sin, and manipulated his own wife. Unless pulled out by the roots, sin generates sin and always hurts the ones we love. In this case, Abraham’s wife and his future son and grandson.

Isaac and Jacob

Read the passages below and write down what you observe under each heading.

Isaac repeats his father’s deception. Read [Genesis 26:1, 7–11](#).

List the characters. Describe the situation, Isaac’s sin, and the consequences.

Jacob deceives his father, Isaac, with Rebekah’s help. Read [Genesis 27:1–29](#).

List the characters. Describe the situation, Jacob’s sin, and the consequences.



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Compare and contrast the two accounts. What is similar? What is different?

Abraham’s lies produced a crop of flaws in his family. In a performance eerily like his father’s lie, Isaac lied to Abimelech, who was most likely a descendent of the king whom Abraham had deceived years before. Years later, Rebekah borrowed lines from the family script to deceive her own husband for the sake of her favorite son, Jacob.

With each new branch of Abraham’s spreading family tree, the sinful bents of deception grew more twisted and gnarled. The stories read like a Shakespearian tragedy: wife plots against husband, son dupes dying father, brother double-crosses brother. What was Sir Walter Scott’s famous line? “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!”

Abraham’s habit of lying spun through the family in tangles of cunning, guile, treachery, jealousy . . . and near bloodshed.

Jacob’s Sons and Joseph

Read the passages below and write down what you observe under each heading.

Jacob’s sons plot against their brother Joseph and deceive their father. Read [Genesis 37:3–35](#).

List the characters. Describe the situation, the sin of Jacob’s sons, and the consequences.



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Joseph breaks the family pattern by revealing his identity to his brothers. Read [Genesis 45:1–15](#).

List the characters. Describe the situation, Joseph’s *right* response, and the consequences.

Compare and contrast the accounts from Genesis 37 and 45. What is similar? What is different?

Instead of perpetuating the ancestral pattern and returning lie for lie, treachery for treachery, evil for evil, Joseph, by God’s grace, reversed the cycle of sin with honesty and forgiveness. Joseph’s response to his backstabbing brothers shone a ray of hope for a new day for this dysfunctional family.



Interpretation: Principles as Pathways to Follow

A principle is a statement based on a truth that transcends time and culture; it applies to all people in all times in history. Below are some truths from the text, followed by principles based on the case study of Abraham’s family. We’ll get you started with one principle, and then you can create your own.



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Unpack the baggage of half-truths, deception, and secrets. Sample principle: “I want to be an example to my children of telling the truth.”

Unpack the baggage of rationalization, minimizing, and manipulation. Sample principle: “I want to help my children admit sin and encourage an environment of forgiveness.”

Unpack the baggage of favoritism, jealousy, and sibling rivalry. Sample principle: “I want to resist at all costs the tendency to compare my children with each other.”

As your children grow up, you will notice tendencies in them. You can see these things occurring on the playground. Or you can see them around the table as the conversation is held. Or you can see them in a sibling rivalry. “A child is known by his doings.” Wake up and see what your children are doing. —Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Wisdom from the Proverbs

In the correlation phase, we find supporting truths from similar Scriptures. Proverbs offers wise words of counsel to pack in your ancestral bags for the next generation. The following Proverbs offer what wisdom to help your family replace the foolishness from the past?

Proverbs 12:19

Proverbs 20:7



Application: Dealing with Your Family’s Ancestral Baggage

Think how much heartache could have been spared Abraham’s family if someone in his life had confronted his lying. The family baggage might have been unpacked early on and replaced with a new legacy of honesty, confession, and forgiveness.

Don’t be like some members of your family who shrug off the issues, saying, “Well, you know our family—we always keep secrets from each other.” Or “Well, you know dad—anger is just his way.” Or “Well, you know mom—she has to be in control.” Instead, be an agent of change like Joseph!



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Perhaps no one trained you to behave any different than your parents, but now you can train in your children a new way to behave. What new ways can you teach your children to counteract the negative bents in your family tree?

The good work you do now in the lives of your children will reap benefits for years, perhaps, generations to come. Don't delay. Find strength from God and His Word and start unpacking your ancestral baggage today.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me in this delicate issue related to child rearing. Open my eyes to the baggage in my family. Point it out. Make it clear. And help me to stay faithful to the hard work of parenting, as I unpack the ancestral baggage and change the course of my family history. In the name of Jesus, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



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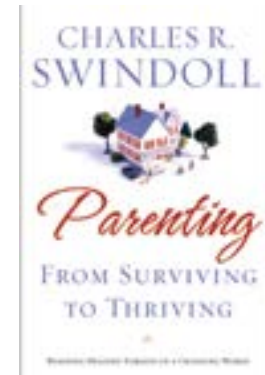
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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