

1. Family History

Lesson 1 of the Fathering in 15™ program mentions that your self-worth is an important idea for you to think about as a man and as a dad. Remember that you are a person of great value simply because God made you and loves you very much. For this reason you might find it helpful to find out what God has to teach us about our role as a dad, and we can learn what God has to teach us by looking into the guidance and wisdom that He reveals through the Bible. Let's take a few moments to look at some examples of what God, through the Bible, has to teach us about family history.



The first book in the Bible is the book of Genesis, and one of the stories in that book is the story of Joseph. Even if you are not very familiar with the Bible you have probably heard of Joseph and his “coat of many colors”. His story is told in chapters 37 to 47 of the book of Genesis. Joseph was the 11th son out of 12 sons of man named Jacob. Jacob was fortunate to have so many sons and he should have treated all of them equally. Instead, he clearly favored Joseph over all of the other brothers and Jacob gave Joseph a richly ornamented robe to show that he favored Joseph. Though it was generous of Jacob to give Joseph the expensive robe, the favoritism that it showed along with other things that happened between Joseph and his brothers caused the other brothers to hate Joseph (see Genesis 37:3-4). The brothers' jealousy because so strong that they plotted to kill Joseph, but at the last minute they decided to instead sell Joseph as a slave, and then let Jacob think that his favorite son Joseph had been killed by wild animals.

Joseph, betrayed by his brothers and now a slave in Egypt, was falsely accused of attacking an important man's wife and was thrown into prison. But through it all Joseph continued to believe in God and looked to God to help him. And with time God helped Joseph and he eventually became the most powerful man in Egypt after Pharaoh himself. There are many more details about Joseph that you can read about in the book of Genesis. In particular, Joseph was able to use his position of power to help his father Jacob, his brothers, and their families to avoid starvation. And even though Joseph had many reasons to hate his brothers and was in a position to be able to punish them, he realized that God had allowed the bad things that happened to him and to get him to a place where he could help his extended family survive, and Joseph forgave them for what they had done. Good or bad, God uses our family and other events in our lives to shape us, if we allow Him to.

In another book of the Bible we read the story of another young man whose family shaped him into a Godly man, his name was Timothy. The Bible tells us a little bit about Timothy's family and upbringing. In the book of 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 5 we learn that he was considered to be a man of faith who was raised by a godly mother and grandmother. Timothy also came from a racially mixed background, his mother was Jewish and his father was Greek. And because of Timothy's strong faith the apostle Paul decided to “take him under his wing”, to teach him and to help him mature. In fact, his care and concern for Timothy was so strong that he referred to Timothy as his son. Paul, being older and more mature in his faith, helped Timothy to grow into a leader in his community. Perhaps, if your father didn't help you very much as you grew up maybe you can find another older man like Paul, who can help you in that process. And that is the kind of role you can fill as a father as you raise and guide your children.

Remember, you were created in the image of God and are greatly loved by him:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.

Genesis 1:27

Questions for thought and discussion:

- a. Where did you develop your concept of self-worth (what you think overall about yourself as a man and dad)? What about self-esteem (what you feel about yourself as a man and dad)?
- b. How did Jacob, as a father, help to develop Joseph's sense of self-worth and self-esteem? What impact did that have on Joseph and in their family?

- c. How did Timothy's grandmother and mother help develop his sense of self-worth and self-esteem? What impact did that have on Timothy and in their family?
- d. How did God intercede in the lives of both of their families? How can He intercede in yours?