

Breaking Negative Family Cycles by Forshia Ross

Let me give you a brief synopsis on my background so you will have no mistake about some of the negative things I have had to overcome. I have been married two previous times, first to an alcoholic and second to a supposedly reformed drug addict/ex-convict. I have been manipulated and controlled in relationships. I have been sexually abused (not within my family), physically abused, and mentally abused. I have been abandoned and left places without a way home. I have been hungry with no money for food, gas, or a place to stay. I have been lonely. I have had an emotional breakdown with a stay in the mental ward. I have been near the brink of death. I have felt overwhelming guilt and condemnation. I have experienced years of physical problems; a threat of cancer and struggles with overweight. I have felt hopeless. I have had problems with my children and other family members. I have thought things in my life would never change and there was no way out for me.

And because of these things, my responses in the early years of my present marriage (of 31 years now) were not very pretty, to say the least. I was a rather tangled-up mess and felt stuck in a pattern of behavior that I could not seem to stop. But God had a plan for my healing and He has a plan to stop the negative, destructive cycles in your life and your families if you will cooperate with Him.

I would define a negative family cycle as a pattern of destructive 'cause and effect' behavior within the family circle that never seems to be resolved. Webster's defines a cycle as: **a course or series of events that recur regularly and usually lead back to the starting point.** As you can see from this definition, in negative interaction, we wind up right back where we started and no one really wins. I believe there are Biblical principles that will begin to break up these negative patterns because I have put them to work in my life and have seen incredible breakthroughs.

PRINCIPLE #1: I MUST ADMIT MY PART IN THE CYCLE

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. James 4:6

Though you may not be the cause of all the problems in your family, you must be willing to look at yourself and admit *your contribution to the pattern.* The other person may have no intention of changing or being wrong, (and I'm sure you've tried to show them that) but someone has to start the change and it can be you. Think about it! When something new is introduced into a pattern it has to upset the pattern thereby breaking it up.

For instance, my husband has a fine palette, as I like to gently describe it. He enjoys fine food and he is particularly, particular about his food. He knows if his lobster is not 1 1/2 lbs. even if the waiter says otherwise. He knows if his favorite dish that I cook has a substitute or mystery ingredient in it, no matter how subtly I might try to disguise it. Not being so particular about food myself, (I have my favorites, mind you) I like most anything and am pretty easy going about it. As you can imagine, this became an ongoing source of contention between us for many years. I dreaded going out to eat and I dreaded cooking. Every time I cooked, I would look for his approval and it seemed that he would resist giving it, no matter what I cooked. I considered him too picky and I was frustrated.

Well, when I was willing to look at myself and see if I could be part of the problem, boy was I in for a shocker! God showed me that I had put my husband on the spot by constantly expecting him to respond to my cooking the way I wanted him to. I had put him on the defensive because I was not willing to let him be who he was. Actually, I believe he dreaded sitting down to a meal because of my pressure for his approval. From then on, as I prayed and asked God to help me, I no longer looked nor asked for input about the meal. Wow! Things began to change. Now, I do get input, sometimes good, sometimes not so good, and sometimes not at all, but my husband is

free to be himself and I'm free from **unhealthy expectations**. I broke the cycle simply by changing my part of the contribution to it.

PRINCIPLE #2: I MUST BELIEVE THAT GOD WANTS CHANGE

...“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

Do you believe this scripture? Change can take place only when our assurance is based on God's truth. Changes in physical as well as emotional patterns can change. Negative generational family patterns can be broken and I am proof of it. Jesus died so that we could have the chance to live full, healthy, joyful lives. He really wants the best for us. But do we really believe it?

If we do not really believe God wants things better and desires to help us see it come about, then we have resigned ourselves to the way things are. We will not look for God's way out and we will not look for solutions. We're stuck. Ask yourself, *“Do I really want to change.” “Am I willing to do what God says to bring it about.”* These are tough questions but we have to ask them. Change requires some deep soul searching. Sometimes change does not come about because we are comfortable in the patterns we're in. As Dr. Phil McGraw would say, *“What's in it for you?”* He believes when there is no change in a pattern of behavior, there are payoffs. I agree with him. There's always something in it for us, no matter how warped it may be.

One of the hardest things I had to face about myself in years past was that I was jealous of other's being blessed. But God showed me that I could have blessings, too, if I was willing to be honest about myself and willing to obey His word. Listen to this scripture in Proverbs 3:33, *“The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous.”*

He wants to bless us and bring us out of trouble. Do you believe that? Will you believe that?

PRINCIPLE #3: I MUST BE WILLING TO WAIT FOR THE CHANGE

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. Hebrews 10:36

Not all adjustments that you make will have quick results. We must be **willing to wait** for it as we continue to do the right thing in so far as it pertains to us. You may not see change right away but we are to be people of faith. Some things in our life cause us to develop that wonderful quality of faith that pleases God. Yep, it hurts to wait. Our flesh does not like it one bit. In fact, it screams for the change now! But waiting is good for us. It tests our faith. It develops maturity. ***The sweetest victories are those that come in the fullness of God's timing.***

In our waiting, God will confirm our choices and give us strength and endurance if we ask for it. Don't give up; don't take the easy way out. Our society, unfortunately, does not support enduring character, but God has not changed. In Romans Chapter 12 verse 2, it says...*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* He's still after character in us - the likeness of Christ - the likeness of Himself - the sweetness of patience.

Are you waiting with purpose? Gritting your teeth and bearing it, is not true Biblical patience. Biblical patience is waiting with a goal in mind. Biblical patience is willing to put off our immediate gratification for the future outcome. Abraham waited a long time for the promise of his son and in his waiting, he became strong...sure...steady. He became sure of the very thing he waited for. In our waiting, we begin to truly know God.

HOW ABOUT SOME MERCY

In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears. Psalms 18:6

I recently spoke at a conference on the mercy of God. The teaching was called, *Mercy Came Just In Time*. In my preparing for it, I discovered the meaning of mercy to be a wonderful and hopeful word. Many times through my life I have cried out for God's mercy when there seemed to be no way out - when I had come to the end of my rope. God's mercy was always there and each time I cried out, it became a turning point in my life, a place where I let go and He showed me a better way.

You see God's mercy is not just a compassionate kindness that God *feels* for us but it is an *active reaching* out He does to us. It is an active word. When we cry out for mercy, He actively gets involved. What hope! Let's not be like the drowning man that wouldn't let himself be saved because he was trying too hard to save himself. Mercy on us!

Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy, The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. Psalm 28:6-7

Before we continue, let me recap briefly, the previous three principles covered in the last teaching newsletter:

Principle #1: I must admit my part in the cycle...Taking responsibility for our part in a negative family cycle, no matter how small, can be just enough to start the change.

Principle #2: I must believe that God wants change...Believing that God wants better for us and that He will help us find solutions will keep hope alive.

Principle #3: I must be willing to wait for the change...Patience is crucial to seeing results. God will give us strength and endurance so that we don't give up so easily.

These are good, solid principles that will give you a jump-start in seeing change take place in your life. Your willingness to participate in God's plan for change in your life will open the door wide for His help. I tell you the truth, God is so-o-o good! He wants to do this! *Now, lets go on...*

PRINCIPLE #4: FAMILY PATTERNS CAN BE SET INTO MOTION BY WORDS

"... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live." Deuteronomy 30:19 (NKJV)

Let me share with you something really strange that took place in my life in the early years of my emotional healing. I used to pick a fight with my husband *every six weeks* like clockwork. At first, I didn't notice that it happened every six weeks. And, I didn't realize that I actually was the one that set the stage for these fights. It always ended in a painful exchange of harsh words, tears, anger and a wedge between us. I couldn't seem to stop them until the Lord revealed a *startling truth* to me that showed me the root cause of these arguments that I believe can help you.

There is an amazing scripture in the Amplified version of the Bible in the book of James that if you take the time to study, it will astound you in its hidden truth. *"And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is a world of wickedness set among our members, contaminating and depraving the whole body and setting on fire the wheel of birth (the cycle of man's nature), being itself ignited by hell."* (James 3:6 - AMP) The tongue has the capacity to set into motion a pattern that can actually be transferred from one generation to the next *and be fueled by Satan*. You see, as God began to

reveal to me reasons and roots to my problems, He showed me that when I was growing up my family engaged in destructive arguments approximately *every six weeks*. *Words were spoken in the context of these arguments that actually set the stage, so to speak, for similar future interactions*. I was acting out what I had learned and what had been set into motion by my parents! This pattern carried over into my present life at that time. Isn't that incredible? After I became aware of this, I also became aware of the bait Satan used to ignite the patterns. I began to see that the baits were lies to tempt me. If I was wise and didn't take the bait, the fight died in the water and the pattern was broken. Now, this pattern *is* broken and it has not carried over into my children's lives.

PRINCIPLE #5: I MUST USE MY MOUTH TO SPEAK GOOD

Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, So a curse without cause shall not alight. Proverbs 26:2 (NKJV)

Of all the principles I have learned over the years, I would have to say that the principle of the power of the tongue is the most important. Words are **power conductors** and carry the potential to release curses in our lives. *A curse is words spoken for the purpose of bringing evil or harm upon. It also means torment.* You cannot be an overcomer unless you learn that your words have power and will bear fruit, either for good or bad. Hoping and wishing will not cause change. Crying and yelling won't, either. Listen, I've tried all of that. But putting into motion with your mouth the truth of God, will! You must learn to use your mouth to speak good. *Good counteracts evil and creates a place for God to build upon.* Good is on the side of light. Evil attracts darkness and opens the door for Satan to influence our situations and set up barricades. *Even though God loves us He cannot honor darkness. That, my friend, is a powerful statement! Let me say it again. Even though God loves us He cannot honor darkness.*

Often we are ignorant of this principle, as I was, of good versus evil and we suffer for it. Satan has to have a cause or reason to camp out in your backyard as the scripture above alludes to.

For instance, I suffered with cold sores on a continuous basis during those early years of emotional turmoil. It was painful and embarrassing and I finally prayed, asking God to show me what was causing them. And He did! He showed me that I was very critical in my speaking to and about others. And He also showed me that the fruit of my words created a negative result. I repented quickly and asked God to show me how to change the way I spoke so that my words were not destructive but edifying. My mouth was healed within a few days. Amazing, huh?

Take some time after you read this teaching and ask God to show you any generational patterns that has carried over into your life and/or your family's life. After doing this ask God to forgive you. You see, though it may not have been intentional on your part, you still participated in the pattern. Be specific. Name what it is and then, again with your own mouth, renounce your participation in it. Then address Satan with the fact that Jesus died for you and shed His blood so that you and your family could be free from curses. Tell him that with God's help, you will not be so easily fooled anymore. Amen!

PRINCIPLE #6: PRAYER MUST BE A PRIORITY

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

Why must prayer be a priority? Because it will take the help of God to overcome deep-seated patterns. Prayer connects with God and invites Him to participate in your life. During the time of breaking negative family patterns, you need to learn to pray. And what is prayer? Prayer is simply talking to God. That's it! People try to complicate it, but it is as simple as that. Talking to

Him on a continual basis about what you're going through invites Him to listen and be involved. You cannot possibly have success without His help. **His power coupled with your cooperation is what will bring you freedom.** You can have access to God through Jesus. Jesus is the bridge to God. Once you know this, you can **quickly** and easily come into God's presence based on Jesus' perfection and not your own. This is important, especially when you are in the throes of an 'immediate crisis.'

Confidence in talking to God is based upon His Word. I can't count the number of times during those years of healing that I learned to call upon the Lord's help during an immediate temptation because of the above scripture: *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."* I learned that He was a '**Man of His Word**' and I could count on it. And you need to learn that, too! His word is true and it can be trusted.

Before I learned that I had to change, I would call upon God to take the temptation away. And when it didn't happen, I would become frustrated and confused. But God wanted me to learn to draw upon His strength so that I could stand up to the temptation. I had to learn **endurance** until I had victory. Eventually, the temptation was no longer a temptation. The Bible says that, *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* (1 Corinthians 10:13) I remember asking God many times during the trials that I was determined to overcome, *"Okay, God, where is it, where is it, where is the way of escape you promised? I'm looking for it."* There would always be one if I was expecting it. It was always enough to keep me from giving in to the pattern. That's what I call prayer - that's what I call experiencing God's presence in time of need. Don't just ask for it but look for it and expect it. Base your prayers on the truth of His Word.

HOW ABOUT A THANKFUL HEART?

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.
Philippians 4:12

This scripture says Paul had to learn this secret. What was the secret? I believe the secret was that God would supply his needs, whether he was in trouble or not. In other words, God would give him what was necessary and Paul could be content in that. This trust in God's provision develops a thankful heart and keeps it soft. Thankfulness looks for the goodness of God even in trouble. So often, during negative situations, we develop cynicism or bitterness. But thankfulness acknowledges that God is somehow in control of our lives no matter what the circumstances are. When you look for God in all situations, it will keep your heart open and will allow God to lift you up. Allow God to give you just what you need and you will find it is enough!

Let's review, again, the previous six principles:

Principle #1: I must admit my part in the cycle...Taking responsibility for our part in a negative family cycle, no matter how small, can be just enough to start the change.

Principle #2: I must believe that God wants change...Believing that God wants better for us and that He will help us find solutions will keep hope alive.

Principle #3: I must be willing to wait for the change...Patience is crucial to seeing results. God will give us strength and endurance so that we don't give up so easily.

Principle #4: Family patterns can be set into motion by words...The words of the tongue has the capacity to set into motion a pattern that can be transferred from one generation to the

next and be fueled by Satan.

Principle #5: I must use my mouth to speak good... Words are power conductors and carry the potential to release curses in our lives. Good overcomes evil.

Principle #6: Prayer must be a priority... Close communication with God gets Him involved in our problems. We need His help to overcome negative patterns.

Now I would like to share three principles that deal with the heart. These principles are major issues that have helped me overcome negative cycles in my life and they will help you, too.

PRINCIPLE #7: FORGIVENESS MUST BE A LIFE STYLE

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14

Holiness is something God expects us to grow in because without it, others will not witness the goodness of God and be drawn to Him. *Holy means pure in heart, innocent, clean.* Our motives are very important to the Lord and must be pure.

Living in peace with others is a sign of holiness. Forgiveness is a sign of holiness. Keeping our heart clean and free from clutter gives us greater access to God's power, help and favor. God will work with us and give us time to forgive, but a time comes when we need to make the decision to let things go. This isn't easy but it can get easier. I believe every principle of God, when practiced, can become a life style. You see, every time we choose God, our spirit gets stronger - every time we choose the right thing, it is easier the next time. Every time we choose God's way, we choose a Holy God and His holiness is released in us.

I often hear people say that they have forgiven so 'n so, but then their words give them away. If you say you have forgiven but still talk about it with pain or sarcasm, I beg to differ. *Forgiveness must have an outward fruit to be complete.* Are you still rehashing old grievances? If you are, then come clean. God's forgiveness is powerful enough to heal the pain as if it never happened. Listen, all you will have left is a wonderful testimony of His power to heal.

Several years ago, I kept experiencing painful thoughts about some things that someone did to me many years before. I kept searching my heart to see if I had forgiven them and to the best of my knowledge, I had. I checked my conversation and that was clear. But the thoughts would not go away. I would rebuke them and they would go away for a while but eventually they would pop up again like a beach ball one might try to hold under water. God revealed to me that indeed I had forgiven, but I needed healing from the memories of the incidents.

As incredible as it may seem, memories make a dent in the brain that store not only the memory but also the pain associated with it. We can decide to forgive out of obedience but it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to go deep into our subconscious and heal from the inside. If this is you, ask God to show you someone you can trust to pray with you for a 'healing of memories.'

Isn't it wonderful that God can heal us so that it doesn't hurt anymore?

PRINCIPLE #8: YOU MUST ACCEPT YOURSELF

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! II Corinthians 5:17

It is so important to learn to accept yourself. You are very unique. There is no one that looks just

like you, talks just like you, and has the same history that you do. Therefore, there is no one else that can be used by God just the way you can. You see, your negative family situations, or generational history does not have to keep you from being all that you can be. In fact, these very things can be used as a testimony to tell others of God's goodness and power to change family history. It also affords you a tender and compassionate heart toward others who are going through similar things. God has a destination that He wants you to reach and when we accept ourselves and our little world of unique challenges, He can use us to reach the 'big world' around us. I've often said that God is the greatest recycler. *He makes all things new.*

Why is it important to accept yourself in breaking negative family cycles? I believe it is because Satan spends a lot of time telling those who have particularly difficult family histories that you are good for nothing and God can't use you. When you are bombarded with trial after trial and you wonder why others don't seem to have the problems you do, it begins to play upon your mind. You begin to think that something must be terribly wrong with you and it works to weaken and defeat you. Comparing yourself with others and their situations does not give God room to work for you. It keeps you looking elsewhere for solutions. It keeps you at war with yourself.

I believe it hurts God's heart when we think He made a mistake with us. Many years ago, I had to start making a habit of looking into the mirror every morning and talking to my reflection. I started saying the good things God said about me in His Word. This is called renewing your mind and putting on the new self which is made in the *image of God*. (See Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:24) God is love and acceptance comes from knowing that God loves *you* unconditionally.

PRINCIPLE #9: YOU MUST LEARN THAT GOD LOVES YOU

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Romans 8:37

When we are secure in God's love, we can overcome anything! Think about it. If you know the God of the Universe is backing you up, that's a lot of security and anything becomes possible. But maybe you don't really know how much God loves you. Maybe you were not secure in your family's love growing up. Or maybe the one you gave your heart to betrayed you. I had to ask God to teach me about His love. It took some time because I had to unlearn a great deal, but God consistently showed me His nature. His nature is love and He is a God of justice. If you are one who consistently mistrusts or is suspicious of others motives, ask God to teach you about His love. I found that as I began to reach out to others with God's kind of love, love began to come back to me.

When you are secure in God's love, you are able to believe that He has your best interests at heart. If you know God loves you, then you will trust that He wants to help you with your problems.

You need to know that God is good and that He loves you in order to establish ***patterns of goodness*** in your life. When patterns of goodness are established, it will change negative patterns of behavior for generations to come. Let your legacy that you pass down to your children be one of the goodness of God. Begin to show them the love of God. Love is a powerful force. Love makes room for God. The Bible says love never fails. (See 1 Corinthians 13) God's love builds wings so we can fly and if we fall or fail, God will catch us and help us try again. Isn't that beautiful?

ONE FINAL WORD

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Romans 8:30

God has already planned that you and I be conformed to Jesus' image. He already planned that you would be called to be a great witness for Him, showing others in your unique way how good He is. *He has already figured out how to get justice for you and fit your circumstances into a pattern of good.* He already desires to glorify you. Do you know what that means? It means He wants to raise the bar of your dignity. Your God is an awesome God!

I don't claim to have covered all the principles that will help you break negative family cycles. But I do emphatically believe that these principles, when acted upon, will change your life and affect your family. When mixed with faith and backed by God's love, you will have a recipe for life - a life lived in the fullness of God's power - a life worth living. And all will be able to hear and see the great things God has done for you because God is good.

Let me pray for you...

Dear Father, you hear the cry of this reader's heart and you feel their pain. You know that they hunger for stability within their family relationships. You know how much they want peace. Thank you for helping them reach the decision to let you enter into their negative cycles of defeat and hear your solutions. Help them to put your solutions into practice. I know that you want families to be whole and healthy. And I know sometimes it starts with us. I thank you for bathing this reader with your love and hope. I thank you for healing and providing help in time of crisis. I thank you for a good outcome. And I thank you for your goodness. The Gospel is good news! I pray this in the Name of Jesus. Amen!

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And remember...In Jesus, "lie hidden all the mighty, untapped treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3 (LB)

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