

When it comes to family, it's not uncommon to have a whole mix of emotions. There's so much goodness in God's intention for families and yet, we find broken people who make messy, complicated families. Like it or not—our families dictate many of the ways we live in our own communities and families later in life. Consider the devotional this week as an opportunity to explore how our care and respect of the elderly in our families and in our society is part of our faith journey.

New to daily devotionals? Here are a few tips for this week:

- You might not have elderly parents in your life or you might be those elderly parents. You might even find the need to expand the conversation to how society views the elderly. Resist the need to answer every question and let the narrative of Scripture and the Holy Spirit guide your processing. This is a good series to use a journal with, spending time recalling, listing and processing.
- A word of warning: When we uncover things about our families, we can often feel tempted to reveal them to others. Remember that not everyone in your family may be ready to hear your realizations. So, go slow and perhaps start by sharing your insights with trusted people outside of your family and always move forward in prayer and communicate with grace.

Monday, January 14th

Read Genesis 46:1-27

One of the most common features of Scripture is genealogy—you might be familiar with them as the parts we often gloss over! But genealogies are an important piece of the biblical narrative because it shows where people have come from—giving honor to how God has worked over time and tracking how faith has moved from generation to generation.

Think about your own genealogy. What do you know about your parents' faith? About your grandparents' faith? When have you sought out answers to these questions? When have you ignored these questions or considered them to be without value? What value might there be in digging into your genealogy? Is there someone in your family line you could ask for more information?

What do you know about your family's journey to America—what brought them here? What cultures, values, traditions and practices did they bring with them? How many of those things are part of your traditions now? Are there things you wish you would continue? Things you wish you could be the generation to stop?

Tuesday, January 15th

Read Genesis 46:28-34

Remember that Joseph was sold into slavery at a young age (by his brothers!) and now after decades, he is being reunited with his brothers and his now elderly father. What would have been complicated about Joseph's reunion with Jacob? What would have been healing?

What is your relationship with your parents' like? How is/was it complicated, strained or lacking? How has it evolved over time? Are there ways that your relationship with your parents could prove to be healing later in life? If estranged, are there possibilities of being reunited with your parents? If you consider yourself elderly, how have the previous questions applied to your relationships with your adult children?

What are your general thoughts, feelings and assumptions about the elderly population? If you are an elderly person, what assumptions have you experienced? In what ways might you need grow in a multi-generational perspective? Are there elderly people who have invested in you or ways you could seek to invest in others?

Wednesday, January 16th

Read Genesis 47:11-12, 28-31

After all this time, what would it have been like for Joseph to invite his elderly father back into his city and home? Why do you think he provided so lavishly for his father?

What would it be like to invite your elderly parents back into your life, taking up residence in your city or even your home? Have you had this experience? Can you imagine a world in which you might have to do this? What would be difficult? What would be honoring to the elderly?

How might God use you in such experiences? How might you begin to look more like Jesus? How might these opportunities change your outlook on caring for, ministering to, and honoring the elderly? What would it look like for you to give the best resources to the elderly in your life? In our society overall?

Thursday, January 17th

Read Genesis 48:8-16

In Jacob (also called Israel) and Joseph's reunion, he wasn't just reunited with Joseph but Joseph's children, too. What do you think the impact of that many generations meeting would be? In what ways would Joseph be blessed by this encounter? You can read Jacob's blessing for the entire family in Genesis 49—what do you find striking about how one relationship being reunited sparked a whole generation of blessings?

Who are the older or younger generations present in your life? How have they blessed you? How have you honored them? How have they played a spiritual role in your life? Are there relationships or generations that need to be reunited?

As an elderly person, are there people you need to invest in? Do you believe you have blessings to offer?

Friday, January 18th

Read Genesis 50:1-9

It's possible that Joseph encountered more pain because he was reunited with his father and was more impacted by his death. Do you think their reunion was worth it? What about the reality of the death of an elderly loved one has made you tentative about investing in such relationships? What might you need to trust God with in the midst of that?

Jacob's death is honored not just by his family but all of the Egyptian royalty—a social class and people he didn't belong to whatsoever—yet his death left a legacy with a generation of people and an entire nation. How has the legacy of the elderly impacted your life? What opportunity might God be inviting you into? How might you give people in your life the opportunity to have a legacy?

Do you believe you have a legacy to leave? How would that change or inform the way you live your life now? What kind of legacy would you seek to leave for the generations that come after you?

FAMILY

it's complicated

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