

Does the Bible Teach About Generational Curses?

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False teaching in relation to *generational curse* is becoming a major issue among many Christians today. It has become increasingly common for Christians to suppose that they are victims of generational curses. The doctrine of generational curses (“ancestral curses”) is very popular within some groups of Christians. Unscriptural instruction has led many people to bondage and fear, and counseling is offered to break the generational curse. Breaking the generational curse is also tied to spiritual warfare. Amid such a magnitude of confusing theories it is vitally important that we examine the subject from a Scriptural perspective.

The term “generational curse” is *not* in the Bible. Generational curses are curses or judgments that are passed on to individuals because of sins perpetuated in a family in several generations. These curses can be passed down from one generation to another. They bring judgment or bondage in the individual’s life, until that individual addresses the sin issue that caused the curse and break that curse. Some of the proponents of generational curse even teach that parents can pass on evil spirits to their children and “family iniquity” is passed to persons through the family blood. This notion leads many people to believe that all the miseries of their life are caused by generational curses, and they frantically search for ways to get out of it or break it.

The teaching of generational curse is based on faulty interpretations of verses like **Exodus 20:5, 6; 34:6-7; Num.14:18**. Human history and experience confirm that sinful behavior on the part of parents can bring suffering for their children and grandchildren. The consequences and harmful effects of one’s sin can affect others; it can have lingering effects. This is a general truth. The warnings in these verses are given **in the context of idolatry**. “You shall not make for yourself an idol” (Exodus 20:4). This is the second commandment of the ten Commandments. This command was a prohibition against making an idol or any likeness of Jehovah, as an object of worship. Verses 4-5 state the consequences of disobedience to this command; it would continue for a few generations (third and fourth). However, obedience to it would result in blessing for limitless generations - to thousands. Clearly, the imbalance of the consequence for obedience, blessings for thousands of years, as opposed to consequences for disobedience/rebellion to three or four generations shows that God is not a vengeful God, but He is abounding in loving kindness, mercy, and grace (see Deuteronomy 7:9-10).

Note the words, “those who hate Me” (not upon everyone) – those who persist in unbelief and rebellion against God and continue in idolatry. But as the Gospel of Jesus Christ promises, anyone can receive pardon and forgiveness through repentance and faith.

Old Testament scholars point out that the people in the ancient world found their most important identity, in their clan, not in themselves as individuals. They also believed that the clan was corporately responsible for faithfulness to the covenant. When the fathers or elders were unfaithful, the entire clan was a part of that unfaithfulness. The phrase *third and fourth generation* refers to all those living at that time. It is possible that the verses under consideration may reflect this 'clan' mindset.

Some natural consequences and effects of sin can continue in life. **The ripple effects of sin by one generation inevitably affect future generations.** The patterns of sin in our parents and families can have a very negative influence on us. When we acquire a sinful habit or belief it can negatively affect our lives. The children of alcoholic fathers or drug addicts suffer neglect and abuse as a direct consequence of their father's sinful behavior. The descendants of those who hate God or involved in idolatry are likely to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers. In this fallen world children sometimes experience the tragic consequences of their parents' sins. Physical and sexual abuse might become ingrained in the psychological legacy of certain families. It is a general truth that certain types of sin can pass from generation to generation. **Consequences - not curses – are passed on through the generations.**

Scripture explicitly declares that "The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself" (**Ezekiel 18:20**). "The soul who sins will die" (**Ezekiel 18:4, 20**). The Bible clearly teaches the principle of individual accountability. The Law states, parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents, each will die for their own sin (**Deuteronomy 24:16**). Each person will answer to God for his/her own choices, not for the choices of their parents.

Summary & Conclusion:

The term "curse" is not mentioned in the so-called verses usually associated with the *generational curse*. God is warning of His judgment on the sin of idolatry and rebellion against His truth. An idolatrous culture or community would have disastrous impact on their generations and may influence them negatively. Though there will be the cumulative effects of sin, responsibility is always on the individual. God's judgment falls only on those who *hate* God (Exodus 20:5: "on those who hate Me"). The punishment pronounced here involved successive generations that *continued* to commit the sins they learned from their fathers. The individual's relationship with God was *not* determined by the sins of one's parents.

1. The original curse of sin (Genesis 3) affects every human being and all of creation (Romans 8:19-23). Though there are curses mentioned in the Bible, none is

“generational.” Through the first Adam all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:23).

2. A child of God can individually bring himself under the chastisement and discipline of the Lord by being defiantly disobedient to the Lord. But he does not “own” the sins of the fathers and he is not responsible for those sins.
3. The Bible assures the believer freedom from condemnation, guilt, and curse. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). The curse of sin in our life is broken by Christ at the cross. God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). Christ has redeemed us from all iniquity (Titus 2:13-14). The debt of sin has been cancelled by nailing it to the cross of Christ. Christ has made full payment for our sin (Colossians 2:13-14). Since the Son has made us free, we are free indeed (John 8:12) **and no longer under any curse.** “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Don’t turn back again into bondage (Galatians 4:9).

The notion of generational curses is foreign to Scripture. Christ broke every curse at the cross. Don’t fall into the deceptive traps of the erroneous teaching on generational curse. Those who promote this teaching *dangerously apply the curses and judgments of the wicked to the just.* Anyone carrying the burden of sin, guilt, addiction or bondage must personally come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and deliverance (Matthew 11:28). The good news of the gospel is that the cycle of sin and its power can be broken by the power of the blood of Christ. “If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).