Getting It Wrong

Have You Ever "Blown It"?

Years ago I tore my Achilles Tendon, and it was a terrible injury. It took almost a year before I had the needed surgery done on it, but the surgery was successful and I hoped to have a full recovery. All that was necessary was that I go to the physical therapy sessions and do the required exercises. I did go to a few of the physical therapy appointments and for a while I kept up with the exercises. But then I had important things to do and the exercises were boring and tedious and so I gave up on the physical therapy and the exercises. Not only did I lose much of the strength in that calf muscle but it looked very odd compared to my other calf, like a stick in contrast. What made matters much worse was that due to the lack of strength in the calf muscle where I had the surgery on the Achilles tendon, I suffered a horrific injury to the other leg within a year skiing. Mistakes can be costly, and sins which are acts of rebellion against God, can be devastating. What is worse, the mistakes we make we can pass on to future generations. Have you known of the psychological damage done to the children of alcoholic parents? Can a marriage broken by adultery affect the lives of the children and grandchildren? Of course it can. I've heard of terrible wildfires caused by smokers who carelessly dropped a cigarette in some dry grass along a trail. The sin of racism in one man led to the loss of millions of lives and the ruin of the country that man led. There is a great difference between just getting it wrong because someone forgets to wash his dish and that same person sleeping with his neighbor's wife. We will take a careful look at the damage caused by sin across generations and also what faithfulness can do when put into practice. This is our big idea. Live by faith in Christ and God will make your life have a lasting impact on generations to come.

There is in the Bible the account of how badly off the disciples were in the way they interpreted a warning Jesus gave them. Perhaps we cannot fault them for the mistake they made but it seems it would have been avoided it they had been more careful to pay attention to the evidence before them. Just after He washed the feet of the disciples, Jesus made an astounding declaration. **After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me."** (John 13: 21 NIV) The disciples were flabbergasted. This was unthinkable. **His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.** (John 13: 22 NIV) At first glance it would seem that the disciples were looking around trying to figure out who other than themselves would do such a treacherous thing. The opposite was actually the case. Matthew and Mark make it clear that each of the disciples wondered if he himself was the one who would betray Jesus. **They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"** (Matthew 26: 22 NIV) Not a single one of the disciples expressed the suspicion that it was Judas Iscariot who was the evil traitor in their midst. Each of them, knowing his own heart and the vast array of mistakes he had made, thought he might be the betrayer. It does not seem that any of them thought the betrayal would be an act of evil. An honest mistake perhaps. A failure to be careful maybe, but not a treachery by any means. It was in fact, treachery that Jesus was describing and yet to those disciples other than Judas, it did not seem possible…a mistake of course could happen and any of them was certainly capable of being the betrayer but not they thought, as an act of sin.

We know now the terrible ramifications of Judas going to the Jewish authorities with how he would lead them to Jesus but often we don't realize just how bad sin can be and what we pass off as mere mistakes can have a lasting effect. The Bible gives fascinating historical data regarding the reckless nature of sin. Sin never just hurts the one sinning. It always damages others as well. Sin never acts alone. It always leads to more sin. That is the nature of sin. Keep in mind that Judas had, before he betrayed Jesus, been pilfering money from what was given Jesus and the disciples. **…he (Judas Iscariot) was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.** (John 12: 6b NIV) Sin resulted in more sin. It's not just true of individuals. It also is the case for groups, for families and for generations.

It is intriguing to consider the well documented family line of Abraham and Sarah. It is firmly established in the Bible that Abraham was a great man of faith and Sarah not quite as much. In fact it is her doubts and worldly problem solving that most mark her history and although Abraham made his mistakes, he was much better known for the rightness of his long life. Isaac their son was seemingly a fairly good man. We don't have many examples of him living unfaithfully other than Isaac lying to King Abimelech when he moved to the land of the Philistines and told them his wife Rebekah was his sister. He was a good man of God mostly. His wife Rebekah on the other hand, was another story. When Isaac wanted to give his spiritual blessing to Essau, his older son, Rebekah concocted a scheme where Isaac would be snookered into passing on the blessing to Jacob, the son Rebekah favored. Isaac had ordered Esau to

go catch some game and make a stew for him and then after eating Isaac would bestow the blessing of God upon his older son. But while Esau was out hunting, Rebekah went to Jacob the younger son and presented him with her treacherous scheme. **Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies."** (Genesis 27: 8-10 NIV) What sort of wife does that; encouraging her son to lie to his dad, her husband? Keep in mind that Rebekah was Isaac's wife because she was brought to him from Abraham's family hundreds of miles away. It was Abraham's servant who was given the charge of finding a wife from among Abraham's relatives and when the servant was convinced the Lord had led him to the right woman, Rebekah, he wanted to take her back to Isaac after the family agreed to let her go with him and Rebekah also agreed to the proposed marriage. However, Rebekah's brother wanted to stall. The servant though refused to wait any longer and perhaps wary of the corruption he likely saw in Rebekah's brother Laban, insisted they go immediately.

Decades later, the Bible reveals the moral depravity of Rebekah and her clan. Rebekah as described earlier laid out a plan for her younger son Jacob to deceive his father, her husband into giving the coveted blessing of Isaac to Jacob rather than Esau. When Isaac found out he was deceived by his own son and wife, he was broken hearted and Esau, the son whose blessing was stolen from him was filled with murderous rage. So, to avoid being killed by his twin brother Esau, Jacob fled several hundred miles to go live with Rebekah's brother Laban and his family. Jacob fell in love with Laban's beautiful daughter Rachel and agreed to work seven years for her hand in marriage. However, on his wedding night, Laban sent his older daughter Leah into Jacob's tent and Jacob slept with her, thinking it was Rachel. The next morning Jacob was shocked to discover he was married to Leah and not Rachel. **When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?"** (Genesis 29: 25 NIV) Much like Jacob and his mother lied to Isaac and deceived him, Laban, Rebekah's brother and Jacob's uncle deceived Jacob. And don't forget about Leah. She had to have seen over the course of the seven years how crazy Jacob was for Rachel. She too was a liar and deceiver to pretend she was Rachel when she had sex with Jacob on his wedding night. Take this one step further. What about Rachel? Why did she keep silent while all this was happening? It was a family of liars who seemed to feel no guilt about their deceit. This is not a strange aberration uncovered in Scripture. We know this is how it is! Sins gets passed down from generation to generation whether it is child abuse, drug and alcoholism, infidelity, atheism, a lack of commitment to the body of Christ or any other sin you can think of. Later, Laban tricked Jacob many more times to get him to work for him years longer than he should have had to work. And Rachel lied to her father as Jacob and his family left, stealing Laban's idol and insisting she had not stolen it. A seemingly harmless sin, or what many would call a minor mistake can lead to years of catastrophic sinning along generational lines. Sin is the destructive force that has ruined humanity and it is no laughing matter. It brings death and separation from God and one another.

There is something else we see in Scripture about generational tendencies and it is most encouraging. Abraham exhibited tremendous faith in God! **By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.** (Hebrews 11: 8 NIV) He made courageous decisions to follow God whole-heartedly. If you slip past Isaac, past Isaac's son Jacob to Jacob's kids, you discover in the fourth generation something quite amazing. Jacob and Leah and Rachel, all liars and manipulators in their own right had twelve sons themselves or through concubines, ten of whom were also corrupt liars filled with jealousy and wickedness. But there was one son, Joseph, who was not like any of them, not like his brothers, not like his mother and father and not like his grandfather. He was morally, the spitting image of his great-grandfather, Abraham, and if we are honest about it, perhaps even a better man than him. Not only can sin be passed down from generation to generation, so can faith. No matter what your age is, you can reject sin and make faith the legacy of your life. Imagine what greatness you can pass along to those you love and the generations who follow. You are the means by which God plants faith and truth and goodness and moral rightness in those who come after you! Our big idea is a monumental one. Live by faith in Christ and God will make your life have a lasting impact on generations to come.