



Who's Up Your Family Tree?

Plan



Introduction for leaders

The original version of this was written because there were teenagers in the youth group who were adopted. When we thought of repeating this session a few years later, our youth worker suggested that we focus more on some of the people within Jesus' family tree who themselves had to overcome the problem of having difficult parents or grandparents. This demonstrates that it is possible to break away from a difficult family history and be very different from your parents. Those who have been damaged by difficult family situations must ultimately choose between being a victim or being a survivor. However healing can sometimes be a long process. Leaders need to deal with such people in a calm, sensitive, patient and prayerful manner.

This is a session that requires thorough preparation but it is worth it. It could be extended into a short series. It was used with 14-18 year olds and may need to be adjusted slightly for a younger group.

Aim/s select from

- To look at some of the people in the Bible who had difficult parents/relatives but who succeeded in being very different from them.
- To encourage them to accept themselves regardless of their family background.
- To show that our family background need not control our lives.

Resources – possible options - select as required

BBC web site <http://www.bbcwhodoyouthinkyouare.com/>

Romans 8:37 written on a poster or projector

DVD clip from a film in which there is a relative whom everyone dislikes e.g. 'Ella Enchanted' or 'Sleeping Beauty'

Key Bible verse

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Romans 8:37 NIV

Bible references

Matthew 1:1-16

Romans 8:28-39

Genesis 19:30-38; Deuteronomy 2:9; Deuteronomy 23:3: Moab ancestor of Ruth

Joshua 3 & 6:25: Rahab grandmother of Boaz

2 Samuel 11 & 12:24-25; 1 Kings 1:28-30: Solomon & his parents David & Bathsheba

2 Chronicles 28-32: Hezekiah & his father Ahaz

2 Chronicles 33-35: Josiah, his father Amon & his grandfather Manasseh

Games and other starters

See 'Activity Ideas for Family Themes on the website

Introduction

One option is to chat about the recent trend for people to research their family histories. One helpful example for this theme is Actress Patsy Kensit. Her father had a criminal record and was mixed up with the most notorious London criminals of the 1960's. Her grandfather also had a criminal record. Discovering the respectable side of her family history was a tremendous encouragement to Patsy. More details below

We are going to take a look at some of the people in Jesus' family tree as they were quite a mixed bunch. He had some very disreputable ancestors as well as people who with God's help, managed to deal with some very challenging family situations.

Short introductory talk

Have a shortened version of Jesus' family tree written on a flip chart or overhead. Pick out a few people such as those in the list below and give a few key facts. You could alternate between 2 leaders for this perhaps. A change of presenter helps concentration spans. You could include people like:

- Leah was not loved by her husband Jacob as much as his other wife, her sister Rachel. This must have been really difficult for her, but she was a godly woman and God honoured her by giving her 6 sons, one of whom was Judah from whom both David and Jesus were descended.
- Judah and **Tamar** – Genesis 38.
- **Boaz** and **Ruth** are famous for being the grandparents of David. Boaz' grandmother was **Rahab** the Canaanite who came from Jericho. Rahab was a pagan and may also have been a prostitute until the Israelites arrived and she decided that she had enough faith in their God to make it worthwhile betraying her own people. Joshua 3 and 6:25.
- **Ruth** was a foreigner. She was descended from **Moab**, who was the son of Lot and Lot's daughter. Genesis 19:30-38 (Deuteronomy 2:9 & 19; Deut. 23:3)
- **Solomon** should never have been born when you consider how his parents, David and Bathsheba got together. The fact that he was an ancestor of Jesus shows how completely God forgives. (He was Bathsheba's second son as her first son died) 2 Samuel 12:24-25; 1 Kings 1:15-17
- **Josiah**, his father Amon & his grandfather Manasseh. **Manasseh** was so evil he would make some modern dictators look tame in comparison. He even sacrificed his own son to the pagan god Molech. 2 Chronicles 33.

Main part

We are going to take a closer look at some of the people in Jesus' family tree. There were some really nasty and disreputable characters amongst them. He did not have only lovely people as his ancestors. This also means that some of his other ancestors had to deal with some very challenging family situations. With help from God they were able to become very different sort of people from others in their family. We inherit much from our families but we can choose to be different.

Interactive groups

In either groups or 'stations', take a closer look at people like Solomon, Josiah, Hezekiah, Moab, Ruth.

Each group or 'station' to take one character with a leader who has read up on him/her.

Short profiles on Josiah and Manasseh in leaders notes below

Discussion suggestions

- How might this person have felt about the way their parents/grandparents had behaved?
- What choices might they have had to make?
- What sort of person did they turn out to be themselves?
- Where might they have got the strength from to make positive choices?
- Can they be an inspiration to us in any way?

Groups report back & sum up

All of us will have inherited both positive and negative things from our parents and all of us will pass both positive and negative things on to our children. It is possible to escape those negative 'hand-me-down' issues. It is our choices that make us what we become and God is very willing to help us when we ask for his help with our positive choices.

Application, Reflection & prayer

- Create a "small family prayer tree". Think about how to pray for key members of your family
- Ask God to help you accept people as they are. This can be harder with your own family.
- Ask God to help you to separate how you feel about someone's behaviour from how you feel about them as people.
- If you have a big problem with someone, ask God to show you at least one good thing about them. Each day, pray "God please bless X", even if this is through gritted teeth! It's a good start!
- If someone is trapped in a pattern of bad behaviour or negative thinking, ask God to show them a way out. Anyone can change, so pray!
- Ask God to help you to react differently when a family member winds you up etc.
- Ask God to help you not to do things that cause problems for others and to have the courage to apologise when you do.
- Design a poster with the verse from Romans 8:37 – "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." NIV

Writers: Brenda Lord & Ian Mullens; posted 29 May 2015

Image: <http://www.genealogyinc.com/humor/genealogy-crazy-tree/>