

Sermon Title: Family Legacy: Forgiveness or Estrangement

by Pastor Leslie Araki

Theme: Forgiveness

**Forgiveness video of Mother able to forgive young man** who killed her daughter in a drunk driving auto accident. How to live this out. Help me to do the impossible. Is there someone that I need to forgive. Is there someone that I need to ask forgiveness from. Can I ever forgive myself? Have you ever let it sink in that Jesus let his son die on the cross for your sins?

Christ: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I) STRIKE ONE. JOHN AND STANLEY

When I became the primary caregiver for my grandmother on the Big Island of Hawaii in the early 90's I had an interesting experience at her house during an early evening. My "Uncle Stanley" the brother of my Grandfather John Fukuda stayed with me at the dining table to talk stories. While we were talking, he shared with me how he and my grandfather had not spoken for many decades and that he was sorry. My grandfather had been dead for five years, but Uncle Stanley wanted to make amends. As he spoke, he started apologizing to me as if I were my grandfather. He stated that he was so sorry or the distance that was between he and my grandfather. I of course told him that his brother forgives him. He cried and cried tears of joy. After that he prayed to God to ask God for forgiveness and that evening became a Christian. This evening is burned into my memory. This was the beginning of a legacy. I wonder how many generations, how far down the line of non-forgiveness, the Fukuda family has.

Primary verses

Matthew 5:23-24

23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

II) STRIKE TWO. MABEL AND JOANN

That evening with my Uncle Stanley reminded me of another evening I can remember when I was young. It was at my parent's house in Manoa and my mother Mabel, a Christian, was having a conversation with my Aunt Joann, also a Christian and my mom's younger sister. My aunt was trying to describe why she had been hurt by my mother years ago and had not been able to let it go. Instead of apologizing or owning her side of the conflict, my mother told Joann to just forget it. I remember seeing my aunt over the years try to make amends

with my mother, but she was never able to leave the conversation without being even more hurt. My mother couldn't understand why her sister would always bring this hurt up. It wasn't until both sisters had different levels of dementia that they could be in the same room without one or both of them being hurt. We have pictures of the visit my mother made to a care home in California where she and younger sisters were smiling and at peace. Both sides of the family felt that there was closer in these sister's life.

The Bible has many examples of family at odds with one another. Jacob and Esau, Abraham and Lot, Joseph, and his brothers. Joseph had a right to be angry with his brothers. They sold him into slavery and told their father that he was killed by wild animals. He was then imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit and forgotten by everyone except God. When he was promoted to second in command in Egypt, he met his brothers again. When his father Jacob was dying Jacob gave instruction to Joseph.

Genesis 50:16-18

New International Version

16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

### III) STRIKE THREE YOU'RE OUT! MIKE AND LES

When I was involved in Hawaii Youth For Christ back on the early 80's and 90's I had a conviction that not participating in foreign worship meant that I shouldn't go to family Buddhist funerals. I was told and I agreed that it was important to let my family know of my commitment to Christ so they will respect my convictions and become Christians themselves. I made an appointment with the patriarch of our family Uncle Clifford Araki. My dad Paul came to this meeting. Our family is old school traditional in that we still pound mochi annually and most family members at this time went to Sei Cho No Ei Church (Shinto/Buddhist/Christian Church). I shared with my uncle and father that I would not be able to go to Babachan's funeral when she died. They did not understand what or why I was doing this but allowed me to do what I thought was right.

When my brother Mike heard this, he was incensed. What the Heck! He didn't say heck. You would put my religion before family? You are dead to me. That was when I lost credibility and respect from my brother. Every time... Every time I saw him, he would enrage or swear at me. I left a spoon with mayonnaise on it by the sink and he let me have it. What kind of Lolo Christian are you? Is this what you learn in church. Be inconsiderate to others by leaving a mess for others to clean up? He didn't say Lolo. This became a point of tension in my Christian life. I would hear messages in church such as leave you offering and reconcile with your brother and try to make things right. Nope. Blasted again. I'd pray and ask God to soften Mike's heart but would only get blasted, again. I became like a cartoon character named Batthink. "My wings are a shield of Steel." Open close his wings of steel before the bad guys Could shoot him with their Tommy Guns.

When I was about to get married in 1999 my fiancé, now my wife Beth, and I were working through a couple's workbook together. One chapter was on FAMILY OF ORIGIN. Beth asked me about what's with Mike and me. I told her the story and she asked if my grandmother were to die tomorrow would I have gone to her funeral. I told her yes, I would. Does Mike know this? Did you tell him? No. I said. Oh, I get it: Mike is a mind reader. Call him Les and tell him that you would go to Babachan's funeral. I told her it wouldn't help. Beth was my fiancé so I told her I would call. I'll call you back in two minutes to tell you how bad it went. Beth told me she would be praying all the time until I called her back.

Mike picked up on the second ring. I told him that I regretted not going to Babachan's funeral and that if it were tomorrow, I would go. There was silence for an eternity. It was probably just seconds but seemed like forever. I was just about to hang up when he asked me how was Seminary going? Oh um, good. Good... and we talked for about five minutes. Now we are best of friends and watch UH football at my father's house in Manoa during football season. We do family get together with our whole families. Miracle Three.

Quote: Jeremiah 29:11 and Eph 4:6-7

Tell other's stories that I witnessed:

Unknown reasons, finances, insult to a family member, abusive relationship, Divorce, fill in the blank,

**Mathew 6:12**

**And forgive us our debts,**

**as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

Two sisters were in a room with their mother on her death bed. One of the sister's told me that Karen, not her real name, was upset with John, not his real name. Why? Because he doesn't come to visit mom or dad. He doesn't have much time. He has ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS. HE IS SO... SELFISH. I listened to stories of how John had blown it in the past in Karen's eyes. I asked Karen, if John were to come into this door to visit your mom right now would you tell him ABOUT TIME. Or would you hug him and say I'm so proud of you for being here thank you for coming? Karen did not give me an answer, we prayed and left. That weekend Karen texted me to say that she had been wrestling with what I said and decided that she would hug her brother. I called Karen with another Question: if John blows it and never visits your mom and dad before she or both of them die is that it? Would he have committed an unforgivable offense and sin? Would he be out of the family as far as you are concerned? Or can you picture another future. Can you picture ten years in the future where your children and his love each other and you and your brother being friends because you don't hold on to this forever? Karen answered... does it matter?

Have you been offended by someone you love? Can God do a miracle in your life? Can we be like the woman in the video and forgive the none deserving? Can we be like Joseph and forgive family members. What about the

person who slandered you, lied and betrayed you? Broken vows and hearts. Can God do that kind of miracle in your life and heart. Protect your heart. But is God telling you something right now?

Bible says generational sins to the third and fourth generation but blessing to the thousandth generation. What kind of legacy will you leave your family?