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Family Voyage
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Family Voyage

Part A: Summary of the Data

Everyone I interviewed was from my father's side of the family. My father had six sisters and six brothers and was the middle child. His parents were Pentecostal believers. I always found my grandmother to be gentle and quiet and my grandfather was more extraverted but sweet and gentle. Therefore, what I discovered surprised me quite a bit but also helped me understand the behaviors and values of my father's generation, the thirteen siblings as well as my own.

I interviewed my father, Jaakko Hakala, my uncle Timo, my oldest cousin Arto and another cousins Anne, Sirpa and Jaana.

Addiction

My father's grandfather had a serious addiction to alcohol. This made him violent. He would treat his wife poorly in front of the children. My grandfather was the only son with six sisters. He was an absolutist and did not drink at all and so were all his thirteen children including my father. But there is quite a bit of addiction in the next generation. Some of my cousins are on disability and cannot work due to alcohol problems and one of my cousins who started drinking early in life also attempted suicide.

Secret

Besides having a serious drinking problem, my grandfather's father was also a jealous man. He married a beautiful woman and became paranoid that she was not faithful to him. Drinking made this worse. One day when my grandfather was nineteen years old, the father came home drunk and was violent. My grandfather saw a hammer nearby and hit his father in head with it as he was protecting his mother. This led to his death. My grandfather was arrested. Just before his father died, he told the authorities that his son was innocent and that the whole incident was his, the father's fault. Therefore, there is no criminal record of this.

Favoritism

In my family, no matter whom I spoke with, there is absolutely no favoritism. In every generation all members of the family were treated equally, there were no favorite children and there was no pressure to perform. Everyone I interviewed emphasized that all children are loved as they are, no matter how they behave, how smart they are, or by any other factors. One of my questions was what a perfect family looks like and everyone answered that it is a place where all are equally loved, a place where everyone is valued and there is a freedom to say anything and show emotions openly.

Family and Discipline

My grandfather, whom I always thought to be gentle, actually disciplined his thirteen children pretty harshly as well as his grandchildren who lived in the neighborhood. Some of these grandchildren were very young, sensitive girls. His discipline did not end with his own grandchildren but was extended to the neighborhood boys. Yet, most said that they believe in the end, this led them to a better and healthier life.

Every, except one person in my father's generation, regardless of gender, avoided disciplining their children but they all married a person who would be responsible for spanking the misbehaving children. A healthy family and marriage where spouses respect each other, where children look up to their parents and where parents treat their children equally and give them the freedom to be themselves came up in each interview. Also, finding a spouse was the happiest memory for everyone.

Value of Hard Work

My grandfather was an entrepreneur. He had thirteen children. One day a man, who had been forced to move to his village following the Second World War when the Soviet Union took parts of Finland, discovered that there was amazing clay in my grandfather's property. This clay was exactly what was used to make bricks. As the country was rebuilding after the war, my grandfather started a brick factory. Most of the thirteen children were part of this operation. This was hard work. When these thirteen had their own families, the value of hard work continued. Many of my cousins, including myself had to

work our whole childhood very hard. Today, many of my cousins own successful private companies and have made millions of dollars.

Negative Emotions and the Ability to Process Emotions

Negative and painful childhood memories were consistently related to either death of others or fear of death of self in a dangerous situation. Negative emotions were not talked about, they were just part of life. There were many serious incidents but the emotional drama of those was never processed. My grandfather lost his eye and had a glass eye as a result, my uncle that I interviewed, lost his thumb as a teenager, my dad still has trauma when his horse took off with him in the wagon as he thought he was going to die and my cousin lost young neighbors and beloved relative as a young child and now remembers how difficult it was because there was no one to talk to.

PART B: Interpretation and Evaluation of the Data

I feel honored to have been able to interview six of my relatives on my father's side. Every person I spoke with, had only positive things to say about my interest in their lives and view of the family. Some of the questions relating to sex, anger and temper were uncomfortable, especially when speaking with the older generation. I was surprised by the uniformity of the answers and values. The family secret I discovered helped me to make sense out of many questions I had observed over the years, especially the observation of my family being such peacemakers. Even though being peacemakers is a good thing and it was a happy environment to be brought up with, yet it started to puzzle me as I am getting older.

The most significant discovery, which also came out of the discovery of the secret, is the understanding of why so many of my aunts and uncles suffer from manic depression. Between workaholicism and being brought up under harsh discipline most of my aunts and uncles suffered from mental weaknesses. This understanding has led me personally to begin to identify and express my own negative feeling because I have noticed that I have suppressed all negative emotions my whole life and at times have felt depressed for a few days. I am grateful to God that He showed me this.

My grandparents, who were born in the turn of the twentieth century, both came from poor families. My grandfather was a cook for the Finnish soldiers in the World War One. He was hardworking, entrepreneurial, and a people-oriented person, but had a temper and a secret. My grandparents became devout Pentecostals. All their thirteen children were involved in church except the youngest, the black sheep. I call him the black sheep because he got divorced two times and married three times. Divorce in my father's generation, in Pentecostal circles was not acceptable. Despite being part of such radical denomination, I found no legalism, which I believe, has positively influenced the future generations love for God and church.

All thirteen children needed to work very hard in the brick factory my grandfather built. Hard work as a value, carried to the next generation. My generation, including my cousins, especially those who lived in the countryside, were expected to work very hard as children.

Generational Value Patterns and Rebellion

19th Century-Grandparents' Parents Generation

- Alcoholism
- Abuse
- Violence
- Poverty
- Praying mother

1900-1990 My Grandparents' Generation

- Discipline of the children
- Temper
- Religion
- Absolutism

1930-Current Aunts, Uncles and my Father's Generation

- Mental Illness
- Workaholicm

- Importance of Religion
- Absolutism (alcohol)
- Non-confrontational: Family harmony was the most important value. Difficult topics were never discussed. Negative feelings were never processed. Overwhelming sensation of acceptance.

1956-current, Cousins and My Generation

- In consistent church attendance
- Working in ministry and for the church
- Alcoholism
- Divorce
- No discipline
- Creativity

1985-current, my children and their cousins

- Gender confusion
- Divorce
- Fulltime ministry

Suppression of Feelings, Family Peace and Mental Illness

I believe my grandfather's secret, which included violence, even though it was provoked by his father's jealousy, aggressive and abusive behavior resulted for all of my grandfather's children to suppress their feelings. It is almost as if they unconsciously decided, "I will never get angry." Those thirteen children have never had any disagreements or arguments. There were never even any questions asked which could have led to a disagreement. I never saw this until I started looking into my family patterns and behaviors. I did not know about this secret, and it puzzled me why my dad, all aunts and uncles are such peacemakers. It was not normal! Also, as my grandfather was the one who spanked the children at times harshly, all my family, in the next two generations highly valued their children's

uniqueness. My grandfather's temper and the need to control his children's behaviors made the next generations behave in opposite ways.

The third aspect of the suppression of feelings is that since difficult topics were never talked about, and anger had to come out somehow, most of the thirteen children have suffered from some level of mental instability. Some had to be hospitalized for a short period of time and some have been taking psych medicine as well as sleeping pills.

This part of the family voyage was the most significant for me personally. Discovering my own inability to express negative emotions and the discomfort of difficult conversations are definitely part of my dysfunctions. As a result, I have started to have those difficult conversations and I am expressing my anger as I had a wonderful opportunity to practice this a few months ago. I believe, I will be a healthier person and a leader after understanding how my lack of feelings, especially lack of being able to feel and identify negative emotions has formed.

Alcoholism

Alcoholism has debilitated some lives in my generation. My father and his siblings as well as my grandparents were all absolutists. It was believed that drinking was a sin. My grandfather suffered greatly from his father's drinking, jealousy, and violence. Between his father's behavior and becoming a born-again Pentecostal, my grandfather and all his thirteen children did not drink. On the other hand, in my cousins' generation there are a few who have completely ruined their lives with alcohol or married someone with alcohol addiction. Alcohol addiction and the lack in importance of church involvement seem to go hand-in-hand as well.

Divorce

My father's side of the family was part of the Pentecostal movement. Even though I have not detected legalism, there were unspoken rules of conduct. Marriage counseling was not something Pentecostals would seek. My father's generation stayed married no matter what. Hard work united married couples as they worked on their farms. And since my father's siblings were incredibly non-

confrontational, they would leave the room when any argument arose and would never engage in any disagreements even with the spouse.

The next generation, my generation, never learned from their parents the art of healthy disagreements. My generation would suppress all our negative emotions. Many of my cousins suffered from lack of attention and tenderness as children. This also led to lack of affectionate expressions. Both of my siblings and many of my cousins have divorced, possibly because we were not able to speak up, express our disappointment and our love as well as always working too hard leading to being absent from parenting.

Absent Fathers

The value of hard work in my father's generation made them not spend any quality time just for fun with their children, my generation. I did not feel valued by my parents because they never, for example, participated in my sport events. I felt detached emotionally from my parents. My parents were always busy at the farm, church or humanitarian aid and we, the children, were expected to be busy as well. Absent father syndrome affected the way my generation parented our children as well. We also worked hard and did not take enough time with our children. Some of the young people of the last generation are experiencing gender confusion. I believe this is the result of divorce, absent fathers who had married controlling wives who would take the responsibility of the discipline.

Sex Outside the Marriage

I did not discover any sexual abuse, rape, pedophilia, promiscuity, or abortion.

Generational Blessings

I have always felt incredibly blessed by my roots and heritage. This is why in this paper I wanted to look at the negative aspects more than clear blessings. My aunts' and uncles' respect for the uniqueness of each person led many of them to do humanitarian and missionary work all around the world including North Korea, Thailand, Mongolia, Siberia, Russia and many African counties. I am a fifth generation of praying, God-fearing people. Even though my grandfather, who was a gentle man, had a temper that was aggravated by misbehaving children, all his children served the Lord and were active in a local church

and many influenced missions across the globe. My father and all my aunts and uncles are hard working, people loving peacemakers and leaders. These examples have led many in my generation and our children to become involved in fulltime ministry and teaching in a Bible School.

Other generational blessing that I see clearly come from respect towards each other, continuous forgiveness and financial support of God's work. My whole family on my father's side, loved God's mission and never held back in their financial giving to God's work even when there was very little money. I have experienced the generational blessings in my own life and feel grateful today.

Part C: Summery

Implications in my Life and Family

I have identified the following points in order for me to stay mentally healthy and to become a more credible leader:

- I need to take the risk of difficult conversations, especially in a conflict situation.
- When I feel angst, I will identify the feeling and give it a name.
- I will be more aware of the amount of time I spend with my grown-up children because it is easy for me to always be busy.
- I will be more vulnerable and more open with my emotions with my husband and children. This will be difficult.

Implications in my Ministry

Leading Soul Care as part of my ministry has already helped me to be more open and honest especially about my failures and share them with my groups. The area the Family Voyage brought to my attention, when it comes to leadership and ministry, is that I must have the difficult conversations especially with those above me, such as the Senior Pastor. Bottling those feeling is not healthy especially after seeing the family pattern when it comes to suppressing negative emotions for the sake of peace. I must take the risk, not worry about the outcome, and be myself, share my feelings even if I lose my job. I believe this will make me more confident, happier, and more credible because I would not be living two lives but be my true self at all times.

After interviewing my relatives who all live in Finland, I feel thankful to God for allowing me to have been born to this incredible family that loves God more than anything else. It felt good to have deep and meaningful conversations with my relatives. Some of the questions relating to sexual behaviors were uncomfortable to ask. What surprised me the most was the uniformity of the answers including my own experiences. Discovering the secret gave clarity to questions I have been pondering for a while. I feel saddened by the lack of affectionate love and expression of feelings as well as tender support of my generation when we were children. My parents' generation had experienced the hardship of war and poverty and children were not always looked as precious gifts from God. I believe this effected my generation negatively more than anything else. The love for mission, humanitarian work and anything God-related, where abundant giving of time, treasure, and talent were never questioned or held back, leads me to believe in God's blessing upon my generation.