

ALL IN THE FAMILY — PART 3

the Curse is BROKEN



FEBRUARY 28, 2021

GENESIS 9:18-10:1, 10:6-20

A SERMON BY REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY, SENIOR PASTOR



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MOVING FROM CROWD TO COMMUNITY

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Preacher: Pastor Howard-John Wesley

Sermon: "The Curse Is Broken" **Scripture:**

Genesis 9:18-10:1,6-20 (NIV)

CURRICULUM GUIDE



Sermon Summary

In the third and final installment of Pastor Wesley's sermon series All in the Family, we learn about a biblical genealogy that has been misread and misappropriated for most of history. Pastor Wesley opens the sermon demonstrating the sociological and cultural impact of The Cosby Show on television viewers in the United States, and the show's efforts to expose us to a different portrait of the Black family. Similarly, Pastor Wesley attempts to give us a different and more accurate understanding of Genesis chapters 9 and 10. The sermon uncovers how the "curse of Ham" has been historically used to provide misguided theological support and justification for the enslavement of people of African descent and racist ideology that Blacks are inferior to whites (sacralization).

Key Points:

1. Ham was never cursed. Canaan was cursed.
 - a. The passage does not curse the descendants of Ham, therefore, Africans were not cursed to be slaves. The enslavement here is not literal slavery, but instead it is about a political and military conquest as a justification of Israel taking Canaanite land. Therefore, the theological justification for the enslavement of people of African descent is rooted in a text that has nothing to do with the American form of slavery or race.
2. The curse did not come from God.
 - a. God was not active or speaking in the text. The curse did not come from the mouth of God; it came from the lips of Noah.

Notes for Facilitators:

Welcome to week 5. This is a good time to reconnect after our week off. How are people observing Lent, which began on February 17th and ends on April 3rd, during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Getting To Know You Questions:

1. When tracing the genealogy of Ham, researchers mark him as the forefather of the northern African people of, what is now, Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Libya. Have you ever traced your genealogy/ancestry? If yes, where did it lead you?
2. The Cosby Show was intentional about exposing viewers to a different portrait of the Black family. It showed an image of Black professionals, lasting Black love, Black parenting of Black children, Black intelligence on an Ivy League campus, and an image of the excellence of Black music and art. How would you define the portrait of your Black family?



Into The Bible Questions:

1. The “curse of Ham” has been historically used to provide theological support for the white racist ideology that Black is inferior to white. Do you know of other scriptures that some people use or misuse to justify their own personal views?
2. Pastor Wesley warns us that favoritism will destroy our families. Read Genesis 27 to learn the story of how Isaac blessed Jacob over Esau by deception. How does the story demonstrate the dangers of favoritism often found in families?

Life Application Questions:

1. Pastor Wesley argues that Ham’s bigger crime is not what happened in the tent, but what happened afterwards. Can you discuss a time where you committed a sin, and you found that the consequences of the sin were greater than the sin itself?
2. What are some ways you can cover family members, even those who hurt you, without validating their mistakes?
3. The perception of Black people as lazy, ignorant, immoral, and deserving of subjugation by a “godly race” has long permeated America and even some churches. How does your Christian walk heighten your call to social justice and convict you to advocate for others?
4. Genesis 9 reveals that Noah sinned in his drunkenness and Ham sinned when he looked at his father. The text, however, focuses solely on Ham. Similarly, we sometimes tolerate sin in our own lives, but are intolerant toward the sins of others. How can we be more introspective, and incorporate tools to check ourselves?



"Can I Push It?"

1. Some Christians have a superficial knowledge of the Bible; this can lead to over reliance on the interpretations of others. Give examples of when we sacralize—take an ideology and recast it as biblical truth—to give it theological justification? How do we challenge those views?
2. Though, there is no biblical evidence of Ham's crime, there are theories that he performed sexual acts on his drunken father. It is this hypersexualization of Ham and later Black people that becomes the premise of the foundation of the Ku Klux Klan. In a Georgetown University study, we learn of the same hypersexualization of Black boys and girls, finding that adults view black girls (compared to their white peers of the same age) as more knowledgeable about sex. How can we protect Black youth from the hypersexualized perceptions of America?

Activity:

Break The Curse: We know that no matter what dysfunction has happened in our families, God has sent Jesus Christ to cover a multitude of sin and break every curse. In your groups, go around and complete the following affirmation:

"I was told I could/would never _____, but God
_____."



Spirit Work:

In Noah's anger he curses Canaan, but what may be more damaging is that he does not forgive Ham or talk to him. Who are you harboring anger, bitterness and/or resentment toward? Who have you not forgiven? This week pray for the courage to have difficult conversations with people in your family.

Additional Questions for Married Couples:

When Ham sees his father naked he immediately goes to tell his two brothers. Ham exposes his father's vulnerability. To protect family, there are some things you have to keep confidential. What lessons have you learned in your marriage about keeping family business private?

Additional Questions for Young Adults:

The "curse of Ham" does not come from the mouth of God, but instead from the lips of Noah. Have you ever felt cursed by people in your life? Does the realization that a curse comes from a person shape your views on its ultimate effect or importance?

Additional Questions for Parents:

When Noah cursed Ham's son in anger, he also blessed his son Shem in turn, showing his favoritism. Are you aware of any instances where favoritism may have created sibling rivalry between your children? How do you combat expressing favoritism toward one of your children over the other?

Additional Questions for Women:

Can you think of some stories that we tell about family, friends, and neighbors that are modern day forms of sacralization? How can we rectify this?

Additional Questions for Men:

Just like Noah's decision impacted his three sons differently, how has your life been affected by the actions and decisions of others in your family?

Supplemental Readings for This Week

Monday, March 1	Genesis 9:1-17
Tuesday, March 2	Genesis 10:6-20
Wednesday, March 3	Genesis 11:1-9
Thursday, March 4	Leviticus 18:7-8
Friday, March 5	Acts 10:34-36

Resources, Terms, and Further Study

1. ASBC Self-Care Guide <https://www.alfredstreet.org/selah/>
2. Cain Hope Felder defines sacralization as the transposing of an ideological concept into a tenet of religious faith to serve the vested interest of a particular ethnic/racial group. See Cain Hope Felder, "Race, Racism, and the Biblical Narratives" in *Stony The Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 128-137.
3. Postdiluvian: Of or relating to the period after the flood described in the Bible. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/postdiluvian>
4. Political Map of North Africa: <https://images.app.goo.gl/nxR42NtR2gg1fJct8>
5. Stephen R. Haynes. "Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery (Oxford University Press, 1st Edition, 2007)
6. Epstein, Rebecca, Jamilia J. Blake, and Thalia Gonzalez. 2017. "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood." June 27, 2017. <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2017/08/girlhood-interrupted.pdf>