

ICEBERGS: LEGACY

- Ancestry.com is a company that allows people to have their blood tested in order to know their ethnic background.
- There's a funny commercial where this guy is talking about how his family always thought they were German.
- But he had his DNA tested and found out he was Scottish and the memorable line from the commercial is when he says, *"So I traded my lederhosen for a kilt."*
- My sister recently had hers tested and we found out something similar. My name is Erik Neilson and we have relatives from Sweden and so we figured we were mostly Swedish.
- But the DNA test said we're mostly Irish.
- It's probably more fun to be Irish than Swedish.
- The only thing Sweden has is lutefisk and IKEA.***
- So now that I'm Irish I've decided to take up drinking & fighting.
- No. Maybe as a fallback if this pastor thing doesn't work out.
- But we have no say in our ethnicity. You ever think about that?
- People don't choose their skin color.
- They don't choose which country their ancestors came from.
- They don't choose which country they're born in, and they don't choose which family they come from.
- Those things are just inherited. You get what you get.
- That's why it's so absurd to label people, mock people and discriminate against people based on skin color or ethnicity.
- No one chose those things...we inherit them.
- And besides our ethnicity and our DNA we all inherit some other things from our families.
- Everyone here has inherited some of their family legacy.
- Whether that legacy is a blessings or it's baggage we all have been influenced by our families.
- For some of you this is a source of pain and for others a true blessing.
- But before we get any farther I want to read a passage in...
[Philippians 3:13b-14](#) "Forgetting the past and looking **forward** to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

- I love that passage. It tells us that the past is in the books!
- The past can't be changed or fixed!
- Our God is the God of yesterday, today and forever.
- But he is far more concerned with our future than our past.
- Even if you've not had the best parents...or been the best parents
- Even if things in your family have been less than perfect...we all want our kids and grandkids to be blessed.
- We all want them to better and have better than we have.
- Tonight we are talking about our family's legacy.

Family is an institution. (Gen 2:24)

- From the very beginning with the very first man & woman, in the second chapter of the Bible...marriage has been God's plan.
- And marriage the foundation upon which family's are built.
- Genesis 2:24 "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."**
- It's worth mentioning that there are only 3 institutions created by God. God formed government, the church and family.
- All three of these institutions help societies function, they promote order, and prevent anarchy and chaos.
- If you think about it:
- When your **government** is running smoothly...things in your country are generally better.
- When your **church** is healthy and thriving...your faith is stronger.
- And when your marriage is going well...your family is doing well.
- And if all three of those things are going well...**
- What...are the odds of that happening?**
- When those institutions are functioning correctly people feel good. They feel secure and safe and stable.
- Those institutions that God gave all people everywhere create a sense of wellness and stability.
- And when one or all of those things aren't going well, the opposite is also true.
- When those institutions are failing, fighting or suffering from neglect or corruption...there is a sense of instability that grips people.
- Many people here have been through divorces or grown up in homes with divorce.

-Without dredging all of that up...we can safely say that divorce hurts families. Divorce hurts children. Divorce hurts the church.

-But have you ever considered the idea that divorce hurts **society**?

-Some might say, "Society doesn't have to live with my husband!"

-But collectively...what happens to a nation when the God-given institution of family is broken?

-And if you want to know...just look around.

-We see the effects of broken families all the time. Every day!

-And it's not a uniquely American problem! In...

Malachi 2:13-16 God was speaking to Israel.

-The names and places were different but the problem was basically the same.

"Here is another thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn't accept them with pleasure. You cry out, "Why doesn't the Lord accept my worship?"

I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows.

-God told the men of Israel "U wonder why I'm not blessing you?"

-**"You're wondering why I'm not answering your prayers?"**

-You've abandoned your wives; broken faith with your wives!

-Why do you think that God would accept your worship when your neglecting the care of your wife?

-1 Peter 3 says that men who don't care for their wives have a hindered prayer life.

-They're making requests to the Father while mistreating his daughter. And he's not very motivated to bless us while we're betraying our marriage vows.

-Malachi said she is the woman that you made vows of faithfulness to and you've broken those vows! (He goes on)

15 Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? **Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth.**

16 "For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel. "To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty," says the Lord

of Heaven's Armies. "So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife."

-Please hear God's Word today.

-He never wants divorce, it's never his idea, he ***hates divorce...but he does not hate divorced people.***

-If you know God that shouldn't surprise you.

-What's surprising is that this passage wasn't written to one man.

-It was written to a nation of people.

-They were marrying people who didn't love God.

-They were being unfaithful and divorce was rampant in their land

-They may have been saying what many people in our day say:

-Doesn't the Lord want me to be happy?

-Don't I have God's blessing to do whatever makes me happy?

-And the answer is...it depends on WHO your god is.

-If happiness is your god do as you please.

-But if the God of Heaven is your god then the answer is "no".

-God values holiness over happiness. And holiness usually leads to fulfillment and joy, while the things that promise us happiness often bring us pain.

-There is a nuanced point in this passage that can't be ignored

-God's wants "godly children from our union."

-When you marry and have children you are raising them in the ways of the Lord.

-You are teaching them to follow God, teaching them right from wrong. Teaching them to be faithful.

-Why bring up children in a passage on marriage and divorce?

-Because divorce affects the ***faith*** of our children.

-When Christian people divorce they almost always check out of church. And their kids who desperately need stability in a very unstable situation...also don't go to church.

-And when mom and dad's family values are thrown aside, often the kids do the same things.

-Divorce affects parents and it affects the kids!

-In 2016 there were almost 1 million divorces in US; which is about 100 divorces an hour.

-What happens when hundreds of thousands of couples divorce in any nation? It has a cumulative effect on society.

-There is non-Christian story teller named Garrison Keillor who is famous for tales about the fictional town of Lake Wobegone, MN
-One of his stories really caught my attention.
-It's about a man who is going to attend a conference with a female coworker.
-At least that's what he told his wife.
-He's really going to this conference with her to have an affair.
-And as he's about to cross that line, he realizes something:
-Let me read an excerpt from the story; the man says...

'I thought, so this is what adultery is like: simple. I sat down in the front yard under our spruce tree and waited for her to pick me up. I believe that men and women can part for many reasons, including the lack of love and appreciation.

I left my parents for my wife because she appreciated me and they didn't. Twenty years later, I sit in my own front yard, waiting to join a woman who appreciates me more. But in five years, or six, or eight, will I go to a higher bidder? What happens when I'm older and my grade falls? Who do I choose when I'm old and can't run fast and nobody chooses me?

'I sat there in the front yard and thought, so this is what adultery is like: it's just horse-trading. 'As I sat on the lawn, looking down the street, I saw that we all depend on each other. I saw that although *I thought my sins could be secret*, that they would be no more secret than an earthquake.

All these houses and all these families, my infidelity will somehow shake them. It will pollute the drinking water. It will make noxious gasses come out of the ventilators in the elementary school. 'When my wife and I scream in senseless anger, blocks away a little girl we do not know spills a bowl of gravy all over a white tablecloth.

'If I go to Chicago with this woman who is not my wife, somehow the school patrol will forget to guard an intersection, and someone's child may be injured. A sixth-grade teacher will think, 'What the heck?' and eliminate South America from geography. Our minister will decide, 'What the heck? I'm not going to give that sermon on the poor.'

Somehow, my adultery will cause the man in the grocery store to say, 'To heck with the health department, this expired

sausage was good yesterday; it certainly can't be any worse today...we depend on each other more than we know."

-The point of the story is that the erosion of families sends shockwaves through society. But it works both ways:

-The **success** of our marriages affects our descendants for generations. A strong Christian marriage can be a foundation/example for of our kids and grandkids.

-It's a pattern, a mold, it's a precedent that can be followed.

-But dysfunction, divorce, and instability can also be a pattern.

-I've already said we're not focusing on the past. So...

-Whatever you may have done, or seen, or been a part of....

-God has a plan for us today, a vision for marriage that may be crucial for our futures, and the future of our kids and grandkids.

-And just maybe...crucial for the future of our nation.

-As we think about legacy, we have to acknowledge some of our...

Some of our family legacy is inherited. (Ex 20:5)

-Do you know that some of our attitudes about marriage/family were caught from the families we grew up in?

-This idea that our marriages send ripples into the next generations is a biblical idea. (Ex 20...10 Commandments)

Ex 20:5b "I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who *reject me*."

-Sometimes people take this to mean that kids are punished for the sins of their parents...which doesn't seem fair.

-And that's not what God is saying. (see Ez 18:20)

-Children aren't punished for what their parents did.

-Children are punished for doing the same things their parents did

-Sometimes Christians call this "generational sin" or a "generational curse"

-Counselors would call it "cycles of dysfunction".

-Call it whatever you want...but don't call it God's plan.

-We all pass on things to the generations behind us.

-And we all pick up on things from our families.

-If you're a yeller...chances are your parents yelled.

-If you watched your mother nag your father incessantly...you might have picked up some nagging tendencies.

-If you watched your dad win the argument by intimidation...you might do the same thing with your wife.

-And sometimes it's more serious. Some people grow up in the home of alcoholic & co-dependent parents.

-And now they are in an alcoholic and co-dependent marriages.

-Some grew up with an absent father...and proceeded to make babies with an absent fathers...or became an absent father.

-My grandfather called punched my dad more than once.

-And my dad threatened to punch me more than once.

-And by God's grace I raised a teenage son and never once threatened or punched him. But it crossed my mind.

*-We all struggle **against** the legacies we inherit.*

*-We all have things that we have to learn **AND** unlearn.*

-All of us fight against tendencies we learned from mom & dad.

-Some are minor things and some are major things.

-My wife tells me stories about kids from school who are living in such dysfunctional families that it seems like they'll never have a chance to make it in this life.

-All the cards were stacked against them before they even began.

-And when they grow up they'll likely do the same things.

-But the opposite is also true.

-Some of you moms picked up great tips on motherhood from your mom...and she taught you well.

-Or you saw such virtue in your father that you married a guy just like him.

-Some of you learned certain skills from your parents, or picked up certain values that have helped you succeed.

-Many of our godly marriages are informed by what we saw in our parent's godly marriages.

-I caught from my parents the idea husbands are the ones who mow the lawn and fix the cars and women cook and clean.

-But I really like to cook and I make Laura mow the lawn!

-Where do we get those attitudes?

-We catch things from our families.

-Some of our family legacy is inherited.

-Here is a Family Camp Challenge for those parents with kids still at home.

-Think of a value or virtue that was strongly instilled in you by our mom or dad. And the next time you call or see your mom ...***ask your mom/dad where she got that from?***

-Mom/Dad, how did you teach us the importance of doing the right thing, or the value of serving others?

-Why did I grow up with that strong conviction about going to church or about marrying one time for life?

-Your parents would love to tell you about how and why they taught you the values that were important to them.

-As a child my room was in the basement and I would have to come upstairs to the kitchen for breakfast.

-Many mornings as I came up my mother was on the couch, in her bathrobe, with a Bible in her lap and her head bowed in prayer.

-She is a Christian woman and more than anything else...she wanted us all to be Christians.

-It brings her great joy to know that her kids all married Christians.

-We all know and love Jesus. The grandkids are being raised to know and love Jesus.

-Guess where I picked that up from? My mom. Guess where she picked it up from? Grandma and Grandpa Tucker.

-Some of our legacy, for good or bad, is inherited.

Some of our family legacy is pioneered. (Ex 20:6)

-Some of the things we pass on to our children we learned from our families. But in some areas we cut our own path.

-I know people with alcoholic parents and grandparents.

-Drinking and drunkenness were part of family life and family gatherings and they pioneered a new way forward when they decided not to be controlled by alcohol.

-Some grew up in homes that were faithless and godless and you pioneered a way for your family in the faith.

-The truth is that we all have things in our family history that we have to work to overcome or to change.

-But when we leave our parents' home we have the freedom to choose differently...the power to change things for our children.

-We have the opportunity to adopt biblical values, higher standards, better practices and to pass those on to our kids...and break those generational sins.

- Like Ex 20:5 says, we can continue in the sins of our parents, and experience the same consequences as them.
- Or, we can start a new legacy. Determine in our hearts and minds that things will be different on our watch.
- Guess what God says about family legacy in that same passage? Ex 20:6 “But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.”
- People who reject God pass on sins and the consequence of sin to their kids and grandkids.
- But people who love God pass on blessings.
- They are blessed when they follow God’s plan and their kids grow up in that blessed home.
- And Lord willing, they choose to do what their parents have done and they experience the same blessings.
- So what are you passing on, to your kids and grandkids and nephews and nieces?
- Which of the family dysfunctions are going to **END** with your generation?
- And what kind of generational blessings could you usher in by loving and obeying the Lord your God?
- The reality is:

Our family legacy is being written by the choices we make each day. (Josh 24:14-15)

- Had a talk with a guy a while ago ...just making small talk between services.
- And the subject of family came up.
- This man was sharing how he had just returned from a family reunion and he said about 80 people showed up.
- And he began to well up as he told me that all of them...brothers, sisters, kids and grandkids...all of them are Christians.
- I could see the joy in his soul as tears formed and he said, “all the glory goes to God.”
- And I immediately thought...not everyone has that.
- In fact, very few Christian families will ever have that.
- We can’t control what the people around us do, what our families do.

-But we can decide what we're going to do, who we're going to be, what our families will stand for.

-Joshua had just led Israel into the Promise Land. This is what he Joshua 24:14-15 "So fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away **forever** the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. (the family curse)

-They're coming into the promise land. It was a new beginning, an opportunity for change, and Joshua said now is the time to put away **FOREVER** the sins of your ancestors.

Serve the Lord alone. 15 But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve.

But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."

-Let's say that out loud together. Read.

-Some of you have had some major strikes against you growing up in godless and dysfunctional homes.

-I'm so sorry for that. It's not fair, it's not right but it's your reality.

-Others have grown up benefiting from strong marriages and Christian values...and it's an advantage.

-But that doesn't make it automatic for you.

-But at the end of the day...we all have to choose what legacy we're going to leave behind.

-And if you don't like the legacy that you've written so far.

-**Determine in your heart that today**...things are going to start to change. That your family legacy, from this day forward is going to be a legacy of faith.

-**Determine in your habits that starting today** your family will be a family that is in church, that is in the Word of God, that takes prayer seriously.

-That your family will be a family that serves and gives and shares and builds their foundation on the work of Jesus Christ.

-Determine that your legacy will be a legacy of a strong family.

-A legacy that will be a blessing to your descendants for generations to come.

-And no matter how young or old you are...it's not too late or too soon. **LET'S READ THIS TOGETHER** as we close.

Philippians 3:13b-14 "Forgetting the past and looking **forward** to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and

receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.