Biblical Restoration of Intergenerational Trauma in Families in Aruba

Which unique developmental answers does the Bible contain for the restoration of intergenerational trauma in families that can be applied in Aruba today?

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Advanced Family studies (AFS)

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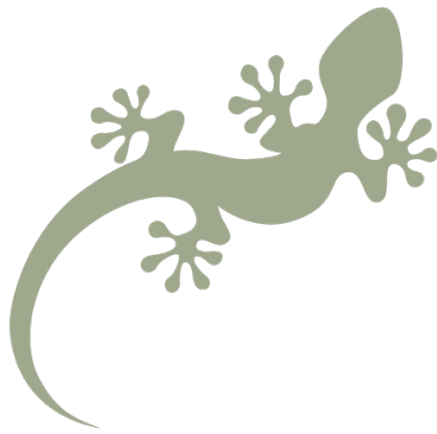
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October 2023

Pega pega pa semper!

-Randy Arends

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Acknowledgments

This capstone project is written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Advanced Family studies of the University of the Nations. It is a result of the things I learned and the research I did, and it could not have been completed without the help of several people. First of all, I am grateful for all the respondents who were willing to complete the survey and provided me with a bit of their wisdom. The contribution they made surprised me and was an encouragement in the process of thinking and writing.

I would also like to thank the people who shared their insights about Aruba with me at various occasions. I especially want to give thanks to Randy & Quilin Arends, who stand side by side with us in the frontlines and back us up in so much of the mission work we do. Their proofreading comments, encouragements and friendship during this process of studying and writing meant a lot to me.

I want to thank my fellow students Sylvia Leal and Mónica Portocarrero for the good conversations we had during our student trio meetings. Approaching the study topics from different angles, helped me to sharpen my mind. Mónica also proofread my writing, which blessed me very much.

Other proofreaders to who I owe a thank you are my brother-in-law and my sister, Albert & Christine Bondt. Their academic and critical view helped me a lot, I learned so much from them, and I am very thankful that they were willing to participate in proofreading.

Over the last couple of years, our YWAM mentors Kim & Cindy Hunt played an important role in our lives. Thank you so much for standing with us and encouraging us, keeping us accountable, and for proofreading.

It goes without saying that the UofN Family College committee members deserve recognition for providing the guidelines, support, thoughts and remarks. Thank you to Paul Marsh and Sheryl Watkins, and a special thank you for Stephan Schmid, whose ability to ask all the right questions in the right moments made a real difference to me. I thank him so much for his guidance and help.

Hanneke, Ryan, and Kai, I love you, I am proud of you, and I am very grateful that we can walk this journey together. Thank you for your invaluable support and advice, which allowed me to fully commit to the study and writing this paper.

Finally, I want to thank my God and Father, the Creator of every family on earth. He has blessed me with life and I will be forever grateful for His love.

Erik de Kievit, October 2023

Introduction

The country of Aruba and intergenerational trauma are seemingly inextricably linked. In every family, wounds are experienced that recently, or somewhere in the past, led to a change that can be felt to this day. Strong intergenerational patterns seem difficult or impossible to overcome and regularly cause inexplicable behavior or pain without an identifiable cause. Not knowing the cause for intergenerational trauma on such a large scale leads to a search for solutions that can alleviate unnecessary suffering, restore family relationships, and break negative intergenerational patterns. The solutions that are found often offer no lasting way out and put Aruban family relationships under great pressure.

Currently, there is a lot of interest in the origin of intergenerational trauma that was caused by slavery and the oppression of indigenous people in the context of colonialization. On July 1, 2023, King Willem Alexander apologized on behalf of the Dutch government for the Dutch slavery past. The fact that these apologies had a positive effect, was not only evident from the cheers that could be heard among the people present at the king's speech, but also from the reactions from all corners of the Dutch kingdom. In Aruba the king's speech also was received with gratitude. However, there were also critical voices that wondered whether the apologies given would change the attitude and behavior of the former colonizer. The apologies were given and received with sincerity, but the pain of the past still lives on in the Aruban society. This response shows that much remains to be done. As the slavery past is just one of the many underlying causes for trauma caused so long ago, it automatically raises the question what it really takes for the Aruban people to fully recover from intergenerational trauma.

The influence of traumas in families and consequences of traumas over the generations has intrigued me for many years. Why is it that trauma with one person in one generation, can have such a strong developmental outcome in next generations? Many families appear to have no choice but to act in a way that reflects a trauma that one or more family members endured generations ago. Destructive behavior of this and next generations seems to be subconsciously anchored in family patterns developed out of one or more traumatic events in the past. The real solution to break that cycle permanently and become a healthy generation still has to be discovered. Even though several books and articles have been written about the healing of intergenerational family traumas, there seems to be no clear and complete answer so far.

To explore possible answers to this question, I have researched several developmental components in the Aruban family context in connection to the Bible. I believe that God has a solution for everything that is broken. That is the reason I decided to work out the general outline

of the problem and a potential approach towards solutions in the everyday life of Aruban people. To do this, I used the first four chapters in this paper as building blocks that, when combined, can provide a strong basis for more study and the advancement of intergenerational trauma treatment based on the Bible. To get a better understanding of the importance of this topic in the Aruban family context, the first building block will be to look into the history and cultural development of Aruba. After that, the second building block, will focus on God's original design for people, relationships, and families. The literature review, in which we discover more about intergenerational trauma from a counseling and therapy point of view, will be used as a third building block. In this chapter the definitions of trauma and intergenerational trauma will also be further unraveled. The fourth and last building block will, through survey research, provide insight into the experiences of Aruban residents today. In chapter five all building blocks will be put together to see if a strong foundation can be laid, and sequential steps can be identified for building healthy and strong families, capable of overcoming or preventing intergenerational trauma. It is my heart to look for a solution for the Aruban people, knowing that working on it will also hurt. I do this for myself, for the Arubans, and for others who want to help the Aruban people.

Living in this country to help restore God's love in families, I do feel great love and respect for my fellow Aruban citizens. This capstone focusses on intergenerational trauma in Aruban families in general, which obviously draws more attention to problems that appear in Aruban family life. It should be clear that not every family in Aruba experiences intergenerational problems, and that we can be grateful for the people in healthy situations who often are great examples for others. Understanding that discussing intergenerational trauma in families in Aruba can be a sensitive topic for people, and especially for Aruban people, it is important for me to emphasize that I have tried to write this capstone with the greatest care. If any descriptions, typifications, characterizations, or generalizations made in this capstone feel like a misconception and cause pain in any way, I want to sincerely apologize for the lack of understanding on my part. Over the years I have seen and met many Aruban people who live a life of faith and are beautiful examples of God's love. It is my honor to live and work alongside them for the glory of God. Believing that He is and always will be the answer to true restoration of any brokenness in this world will hopefully contribute to building an initial foundation to help Christian brothers and sisters, and Christian counselors and therapists in Aruba, to do further research, support families, and work towards Biblical restoration of intergenerational trauma in families.

Summary statement of the problem

Aruba is a beautiful country. It is also a hopelessly broken nation with a broken political system, corruption, poverty, many addictions, religious confusion, and with many broken marriages and families. The prophetic promises over Aruba stand for decades already, and are huge, but most of these prophesies have not become reality yet. It cripples this high potential nation, and the calling over its people to export the gospel to the nations is of yet unfulfilled, despite God's mandate and the available talent.

From the beginning of our ministry, it was very clear that our family had to build personal relationships with the Aruban people in order to get a better view on what was needed. Although my wife and I started to invest in relationships immediately, it was not easy to connect and maintain these connections. It soon became clear that it takes a long time for Aruban people to build trust in relationships. We often got no further than a superficial conversation in which the Aruban side promised to get acquainted later. Disappointed many times by the follow-up that did not come, we kept trying to find new entrances. It is said that when you get to know Arubans, you do not get any further than the porch for the first three years. I later discovered that this saying is especially true for mission builders coming to Aruba and who are expected to leave after a while. Apparently, many people come from abroad with wonderful promises to help Aruba and Arubans, which in reality often does not come to fruition. Particularly Arubans who live in poverty remain disillusioned, and after so many times they no longer want investments from well-intentioned foreigners. Good intentions do not help, and after seeing more than enough broken relationships, investing in new ones seems pointless. Nevertheless, most Arubans have always been friendly to us and fortunately we have experienced many exceptions who are open to building a relationship, and we gained many wonderful contacts and several Aruban friends with whom we feel a deep connection.

From a counselor's point of view, intergenerational trauma has been an obvious part of every session I have had with people who live in Aruba. Many of the people that we met were traumatized, experienced problems caused or sustained by broken relationships, or suffered from self-esteem issues or role confusion. Many of the children we met grew up without a father (or mother), were subject to abuse, poverty, and lack of (parental) attention. They grew up without healthy attachment relationships. When they do not have to go to school, these children are home alone or live in the streets. Their caregivers are working almost every day all day long, from early in the morning until late at night. Due to the absence of parents who try to survive and do not know how to parent children in a healthy way, peer orientation is very common and accepted in

Aruba. It is the way for children to find company when their parents cannot or will not be there for them. Although parents almost always love their children, many of them have not had good examples themselves and have therefore no reference how to put up healthy boundaries and create a safe place in which their children can thrive. Earning barely enough money to pay the bills, these parents have their own problems. In an environment like this it is no wonder that relationship problems and substance abuse eventually arise and are hard to resolve. These conditions have been present for as long as people can remember and they don't seem to change.

This capstone project will be the beginning of a process of research that hopefully will lead to a Biblical method for intergenerational trauma therapy in the future. However, during the process of developing a method and using it in counseling, we have to be aware that a method can also distract from helping people when the method becomes more important than the person. It remains important to see people in their own context, and methods should serve this purpose. The context in which the counselor or therapist is working and his frame of reference must also be taken into account. One's own experiences and possibly unrecognized own intergenerational trauma can have a major influence on the outcome of any counseling process. It is important to realize that what we consider as normal human behavior, deviates so much from God's original design, that even the reference framework of available Christian counselors and therapists is corrupt, and that we therefore cannot offer a satisfying answer. However, when we look at Aruban society, the need is too great and the subject too important not to enter into this fundamental discussion. Therefore we have no other option than to start unraveling the patterns, thoughts and feelings that come along with intergenerational trauma in families in Aruba and put them in the framework of Bible based counseling. The purpose of this capstone is to shine a Biblical light on accepted counseling insights and to set apart some elements that could be a part of a program of Biblical restoration of intergenerational traumas in families. The aim is to provide practical guidelines that can help to deal with intergenerational trauma in a given context. The question this capstone addresses is:

Which unique developmental answers does the Bible contain for the restoration of intergenerational trauma in families that can be applied in Aruba today?

This paper is written from a Biblical worldview and is limited to developmental aspects of Biblical restoration of intergenerational trauma that are applicable in Aruban families in general in the here and now. This means that it does not elaborate on behavioral aspects associated with intergenerational trauma, or describes any differential outcome of intergenerational trauma in separate neighborhoods in Aruba. We will also not dive into the topic of intergenerational curses.

Although this topic is closely related to intergenerational trauma and the Bible, it probably takes another capstone project to fully grasp the depths of it, and even a third capstone to relate these topics to one another. The limitation of this capstone will therefore be to research and find unique Biblical developmental answers. The breadth of the developmental approach ensures that historical, anthropological, biological, sociological, psychological and theological elements are incorporated. In order to maintain a workable limitation, only those elements that are directly related to intergenerational trauma will be discussed.

1. The cultural heritage of Aruba

1.1 History and early demography

Aruba has a rich history that holds a great variety of inhabitants and their historical backgrounds, languages, and culture elements. This makes Aruba a wonderful nation, even though it is just a small island. The country of Aruba, which is a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is situated in the southern Caribbean Sea, some 1,600 kilometers (990 miles) west of the main Lesser Antilles chain and 29 kilometers (18 miles) north of Venezuela's coast. It is 10 kilometers (6 miles) wide at its widest point, 32 kilometers (20 miles) long from its northwest to its southeast end, and has a land area of 179 square kilometers (69.1 square miles). Aruba is one of the ABC islands, a group that also includes Bonaire and Curaçao. The Dutch Caribbean is the collective term for Aruba and the other Dutch Caribbean islands (Wikipedia 2023).

In his report for UNESCO (2008), Luc Alofs tells us that "the study of the Aruban cultural heritage is fragmented, incomplete and often speculative, but it is also intriguing and despite its limitations, it clearly shows the unique position of the Aruban identity on the cultural map of the wider Caribbean region" (24). He mentions that compared to the English speaking Caribbean, there was very little large-scale slavery in Aruba. Therefore, "the role of the plantation economy, slavery and economic exploitation were limited" (Alofs, 13; Dupuy 1983, 237). In their book 'Ken ta Arubano?' ('Who is Aruban?', 2001) Alofs and Merkies explain that Aruba was not colonized for centuries due to a lack of raw materials. The Spanish conquerors could not find gold or silver on Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire. Therefore they called these islands "Islas Inutiles", useless islands. The Spanish used these islands mainly as hunting grounds, so they could trade the indigenous people to Hispaniola (now: Haiti and the Dominican Republic). The Dutch conquered Aruba in 1636. At that time some Spanish people still lived on the island. In the centuries that followed, Indian people from Venezuela and Colombia came to Aruba, and from 1795 European colonists and some Sephardic Jews settled on the island. With the arrival of the colonists, the slave trade also made its appearance. Because large-scale farming was not possible in Aruba, the number of enslaved people remained limited along with the number of plantations. However, 20 percent of the population lived in slavery. Although it was forbidden to enslave Indians, both people of West African and Native South American backgrounds were enslaved. This officially came to an end in 1863, when slavery was abolished by the Netherlands and 480 enslaved people on the island became free (Alofs & Merkies, 3, 9, 10, 16, 21, 22). Historicist Adi Martis talks in the podcast of the NTR Caribbean Network, of a group of about 500 people of mixed color that became free on a

total habitation of 3000 people (Stamper, Henriquez, and Martis[1] 2023, 00:13:00-00:14:09). Unfortunately, the Netherlands was one of the last countries to abolish slavery. The British kingdom for instance, had abolished slavery 30 years earlier (00:44:34-00:45:25). The greatest legacy of the slavery past is the language, Papiamento. The origin of Papiamento lies in Africa. Papiamento is one of the few languages from colonial times that at some point became the language of everyone. (00:30:50-00:31:29).

1.2 Economic development

The economic development of Aruba was particularly difficult. Of several agricultural initiatives, only aloe cultivation was successful. Therefore, people left the island to find work in other countries. This labor migration came to a halt with the arrival of the oil industry in the 1920s (Alofs & Merkies, 30-32). When the oil industry came to Aruba, it attracted many new immigrants. These people were often hired in good positions in Aruban society and the Aruban people that already lived on the island had fewer opportunities themselves. Migrants came from other, English-speaking islands and Suriname and they had a different understanding of slavery, based on family experiences in other countries which in most cases differ from the experiences in Aruba (NTR1, 00:45:54-00:47:00). One of the natural effects of the migration is that over forty nationalities live in Aruba (Van der Helm 1998, 69). Thanks to government efforts, tourism took off in the 1950s, and in the 1970s, tourism became the second pillar of the Aruban economy. Tourism has had both a positive and a negative influence on the development of Aruba. On a positive note, with the rise of tourism, Aruba's economic base became broader. The disadvantage was and is that temporary contracts are often used in the tourism sector and that wages are much lower than in the oil industry. (Alofs & Merkies, 133). Tourism became the most important economic sector when the Lago refinery closed their gates in March 1985, and the oil industry on the island disappeared after 60 years (5).

1.3 National identity

With a total of 107,354 inhabitants, Aruba is densely populated (Wikipedia 2023). The national identity can be characterized by cultural influences from different parts of the world. Van der Helm notes that one of the most remarkable things in the demographics of Aruba is that it is of great diversity (69). Over the centuries, the various cultural influences have merged into one

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[1] After this marked as NTR1.

creole culture. Creolization is described by Barrow (1996) as "a process whereby Europeans, Africans and others interact, exchange and adjust culturally" (xii). In Aruba, the Caribbean, West European, West African, and Latin American influences can be clearly recognized (Alofs, 12,13). However, there is little known about who the original inhabitants were. This makes it harder for people to orient themselves. Knowing more about the indigenous Aruban people, and how they became victims of *red slavery*[2] would help to orient towards the realization that this experience is not wanted again. In addition, realizing that there is human smuggling and human trafficking in Aruba today, and having this awareness, makes it possible to say: "not again" (Stamper, Henriquez, and Alofs[3] 2023, 00:15:17-00:16:54).

Religion plays an important role in Aruban family life. Of the Aruban population, 75.3% identifies as Roman Catholic and approximately 4.9% identifies as protestant. Of the remainder, only 5.5% identifies as a non-believer. Many people in Aruba find hope in their religion. Believing helps them to cope with crises and difficult circumstances, and it gives hope in times of financial despair. (Wikipedia-Aruba, 2023; International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family 2023[4]).

In general, people in Aruba tend to keep aspects of their past private, so they avoid discussing what happened and prefer to stay silent. (NTR1, 00:47:55-00:48:30). The Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and the authorities are partly responsible for this culture of silence and concealment, but they are also victims of it. (NTR1, 00:55:57-00:56:25). People do not want to know that they are descendants of enslaved people. When people talk about it, they pretend that slavery was the same as in Suriname, or Curaçao, America, or the American Islands, while slavery looked different in Aruba than in other places (00:03:57-00:05:30). Aruba was subject to Curaçao for centuries. In a political attempt to find Aruba's own identity, association with Indian origin was chosen. In that struggle the Aruban people have become Indian and the Curaçaoan people were associated with the West African background. Arubans wanted to have a separate status. For that they needed their own background, so that they could have their own identity (00:57:04-00:58:23). To start identifying Aruba with Indians has mostly been a matter of politics in the 1940s, when Aruba already wanted to separate from Curaçao. (NTR2, 00:33:43-00:34:46). In 1986 Aruba obtained a separate status within the Kingdom and formally separated itself from the other islands of the Dutch Antilles, becoming a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Wikipedia-Status aparte, 2023).

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[2] Enslaved people of Indigenous South American descent.
[3] After this marked as NTR2.
[4] After this marked as IEMF 2023.

1.4 Family culture and socialization

The family unit is the basis of society. When her socializing role is performed adequately, this will effect a more cohesive society (Evans & Davies 1994, 4; Lapin & Lapin 2020, 10). It is one of the major functions of a family to be the safe place in which the socialization development of children can take place and social norms and values are learned, so that they can become integrated members of society (Barrow 1996, 13). Before the twentieth century, the family household in Aruba was the center of kinship organization. As in the rest of the Caribbean, marriage was seen as the most important union and other forms of partner relationships were considered as less satisfying alternatives or break-away forms (48). Illegitimate birth was low, and because of the absence of large-scale slavery the matrifocal household was not common (Alofs, 33). Both the nuclear- and the extended family played a significant role in the socialization of children. Members of the extended family, i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, and nieces were often included in the basic family system (IEMF 2023). However, as in many other Caribbean countries the primary role of the family in the socialization process is changing, and family culture is shifting. Over time, the extended family was given a less central place. Traditionally, members of the extended family often lived in the same household as the complete nuclear family. Children experienced therefore the influence of a range of individuals who were emotionally accessible for them. Caused by internal and external migration children no longer benefit from this influence (Evans & Davies, 18). At the same time, absent parents give peer groups, the neighborhood and the community the opportunity to have more influence in the lives of children (3). The dispersion of families however, causes community members to be less supportive and no longer feel a sense of responsibility toward young people (Evans & Davies, 18; Barrow 2008, vii). This is a new context in which the community becomes more peer oriented than adult oriented. In this changing environment, the African phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" -although it still sounds profound- unfortunately is no longer a healthy statement.

Evans & Davies describe four distinct family household groups that currently exist in the Caribbean: the marriage union, the common-law union (parents live together, but are not legally married), the visiting union (the mother still lives with her parents), and the single parent family. Partner relationships often evolve from a visiting union to a common-law union, eventually culminating into a marital union (4). In Aruba, the mother role is highly valued and to have children is seen as desirable (5). Although status change in society causes for women to have more authority in the homes as well, women are still expected to do household chores, take care of the children in the domestic domain, and submit to their husbands. Men are expected to provide in

income and protect their families, discipline and train their children, and represent the family within society (Barrow 1996, 13, 459; IEMF 2023).

With the visiting union becoming a "normal" starting point for the eventual forming of nuclear families, the family unit becomes more matrifocal. Fathers get a more peripheral role which creates distance between them and their children (Barrow 1996, 22, 74). Visiting fathers have a weaker social link to the family household and even though they can be economically important to the family, due to poverty and unemployment they are often in no position to take care of the complete family unit (Barrow 2008, 24). In conditions of poverty and deprivation, children are particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse, which can lead to the development of similar behavior patterns through the generations. Poverty is therefore the greatest danger to healthy child development; poor children live in poor families with the effect of an intergenerational poverty cycle (39, 48).

The visiting union also causes the risk of short-term relationships and early pregnancy to become bigger. When early pregnancy takes place and people assume that maternal responsibilities can be carried from a very young age, critical developmental tasks, like establishing self-worth, a personal identity, creating healthy relationships, developing socially responsible behavior, and acquiring ethical core values are ignored (Evans & Davies, 6). This phenomenon is reinforced with the growing absence of fathers. Roles that in the past naturally were fulfilled in the family household, are now more and more fulfilled by daring peer oriented friends who interact as relatives, lessening the adult oriented respect for parents, and causing natural boundaries between groups in Aruban society to disappear as well.

The realities of the home situation, as well as lack of knowledge, cultural beliefs and unrealistic expectations lead to harsh discipline processes without explanation or reasoning. Especially in lower income groups, regular conversations between parents and children are limited, and parents are used to give their children commands with the expectation that they will obey immediately (7, 8). Children that live in a visiting union under the described conditions are also more likely to be shifted to a relative, a friend, or a neighbour of mother. Possible reasons for this *child-shifting* are migration of mother in search for work, the child not being wanted in a new visiting union, the child being sent to live with relatives or friends hoping for a better life (11), or male sharing. In situations of *male-sharing* -men having different children with several women-children are more vulnerable to become the "outside child". This can be quite confusing for children and can have an effect on the sense of belonging, the sense of security, and self-esteem (13, 14). If, in situations like this, the father is physically and psychologically absent, children are

likely to form an image of their father as irresponsible and detached (17). All these behavioral practices, although understandable in the given cultural context, have possible implications for the development of social behaviour, social competence and academic achievement in school (7-9). Insecure and changing relationships may prevent children from developing deeper attachment connections in relationships. A primary caregiver needs to be there for them always, steady and dependable (12).

2. God's relational framework

2.1 Father of origin

When we look at God's relational framework, we need to start with who He is Himself. Who was God from the beginning and what is His character. Two books in the Bible start with mentioning what the beginning looked like; Genesis and John. To begin with the first book, Genesis tells us that God created the heavens and the earth (ESV 2001, Genesis 1:1). The Hebrew word that is used to describe God (Elohim) is plural. The original meaning of Elohim is not only that God is multiple, which means that They are One but not alone, but it also means that God is supreme and true, with the fundamental right to rule and judge (Isaiah 55:8,9).

Whom the persons in the Deity are, is explained in depth throughout the Bible. In Exodus, God is presented as Father for the first time (Exodus 4:22,23). All things are from Him and for Him we exist (1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Almighty, the Beginning and the End of everything (Revelation 1:8). He is the Father from whom every family is named, the compassionate One who takes care, and He wants the people that He created to be His children (Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 55; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 6:26; Ephesians 3:14,15; 1 John 3:1). He raises us up to be His children and reproves us when needed (Proverbs 3:11,12). He is who He is (Exodus 3:14).

Although there are many prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of the Son, He is in person introduced as the Savior of the world in the gospels in the New Testament (Matthew 1:21; Mark 1:11; Luke 1:31,32). The second book in the Bible that starts with describing what happened in the beginning is John. John explains that Jesus is the Word, that the Word was with God in the beginning, and that He was God (John 1:1,2). He became human and came to earth as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). To make even more clear who He is, it is stated that everything was made through Jesus and that nothing could exist without Him (John 1:3; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the One that was send to earth to save, when everything was lost for humanity (John 3:17, 4:34, 5:30). He succeeded in His task gloriously, went to heaven to prepare a place for us and is sitting at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 1:3, 12:2; Acts 7:55,56; 1 Peter 3:22). He is the Sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15).

The Spirit of God is introduced in the second verse of the Bible, hovering over the face of waters (Genesis 1:2). Although the Spirit is not mentioned too many times in the Old Testament, Ezekiel prophecies that God will put His Spirit within the people of Israel (Ezekiel 36:27). Jesus introduces Him as the Holy Spirit, the Helper who is sent by the Father and lives inside of us (John 14:16,26; Ephesians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 3:16). He is the One who comes with power and freedom

(2 Corinthians 3:17). He comprehends the thoughts of God and gives us wisdom and insight to bear witness about who God is and about His marvelous deeds (Mark 13:11; John 15:26; Acts 5:32; 1 Corinthians 2:11).

With these explanations the persons of the one supreme and true God are evident. The Father is the one for who we exist, The Son is the one from who we exist, and the Spirit is the Helper who is sent to us by the Father, so that we can have continuous relationship with the Father through the Son. This one God is truth Himself, with the right to rule and judge, the Creator and Plumbline for everything. God not only tells us that he has relationship in Himself, but He also makes known to us that He is the origin and only true standard of relationship (Isaiah 46:9-10; John 15:4-5,12; Ephesians 3:14,15). Therefore, the only way to get any understanding of what relationship is and what families should look like, is to look at the Father of origin, and the only way to come to the Father is through Jesus (John 14:6).

2.2 Identity and belonging

To know our identity, we need to know if we belong. When we grow up, our principles and paradigms are formed on top of our experience if we matter to someone. Before we ask any question about what we should invest in, the core question is: is someone willing to attach to us? Or in other words: are we worthy enough to be invested in?

The Bible explains and underlines God's eternal and fundamental love for us, that He continuously is invested in us, and that He wants a personal relationship with us. He describes Himself as Love and therefore, in the light of what we discussed in the previous paragraph, He is also the only rightful source of love (1 John 4:7-21). It is of great importance that we realize that He created us from that deep love, and that we because of that, first and foremost belong to Him (Psalm 100:3; Romans 14:8; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He loves us with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3; Psalm 103:17; Psalm 118:1-4,29). He thought of us and He chose us in him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). He created us in His image to look like Him (Genesis 1:26,27). He thought of the identity, every personal detail and every talent of every individual (Psalm 139; Matthew 10:29-31). He thought of the time and place of every human being (Acts 17:26). He encourages us and upholds us with His right hand (Isaiah 41). He wants us to be rooted and grounded in love, and He gives everything for a healthy relationship with us (Ephesians 3:17; Isaiah 43).

To know our identity, we need to stay connected to our Father in heaven. To find the attachment with Him that we all so desperately long for, we need to stay pro-actively invested in

the relationship with Him. Knowing this, we also hold the original design for family relationships in our hands. Proactive investment in attachment with God within the relationships with our spouse and children is the only way to keep our family identity clear. Therefore, the paradigms that we have in our families need to be based on the example of *that* attachment in order to be effective. It is when we realize that He loves us from everlasting to everlasting (Ps. 103:17; Jeremiah 31:3 ESV), that we can see that we can only fully belong in God's Fatherly presence (Martin 2010, 15).

2.3 Covenant relationship

Throughout the Bible, God is giving examples of what He wants His own marriage with His people Israel, and the wedding of Jesus and His bride the church, to look like (Martin, 18,34). He expresses this image of the perfect wedding not only through His words, but also through examples in His fallen creation (ESV, Isaiah 54:5,6). However, He starts by not only creating man (male), but also woman (female) from within the man (Adam), joining them together to be one in harmony (Genesis 2:21,22). Probably not realizing the depth of this, the man and his wife already share a relationship covenant of oneness and love with their Creator. They are both created in His image, and He gives them a shared and equal assignment to extend His love to the rest of creation (ESV, Genesis 1:26-28; Martin, 19). At the time, there were no ceremonies other than the singing of Adam to His Maker: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man" (ESV, Genesis 2:23).

 After the fall, God continues to remind His people of His intentions with this covenant of oneness and love (e.g., Isaiah 54). It doesn't seem to sink in with the people of Israel in the time of the Old Testament, and it still doesn't sink in with many of us today. Even though Jesus, our Redeemer, the Bridegroom of the church came, we often still don't get the full concept of God's *agape* love; "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (ESV, Acts 20:35; Martin, 29). The concept of marriage that the world believes in is a story of give and take; you give some, you take some, and then it will be okay. This is however not the same concept as the commitment to oneness and love that God gives to us. He showed us that it is better to give (ESV, Matthew 6:2-4, 19:21; Luke 6:38). If one spouse gives a hundred percent to the other, but takes some of it back afterwards, the other didn't receive one hundred percent. But when both spouses give each other one hundred percent without the expectation to get back, both of them receive one hundred percent. It is through this equal giving and receiving that *a safe place* (shalem)[5] is created.

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[5] A *safe place* is translated in Hebrew as s*halem*, which has the same root as shalom (Lapin & Lapin, 16,18).

The Bible is clear about the standard for a healthy marriage. This standard is not only set in Genesis 2:24, but repeated with what Jesus says in Mark: "But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mark 10:6-9). Jesus, taking us back to the perfect standard in Genesis, confirms that God's standard has not changed. In the rest of this chapter in Mark, and in Matthew 19 where other details are added, He makes known that every other way is corrupt. In several of his letters, Paul gives more words to this when he explains more of God's standard in general, for overseers and elders in the church, and even specifically for widows. God intended us to be faithfully married to one husband or one wife (1 Corinthians 6:13b-7:16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:9; Titus 1:6). With Paul mentioning this several times in different contexts, it becomes evident that this element of his statement is valid for anyone who is married. In 2 Corinthians, he even makes a direct connection between the image of a marriage and the attachment to Jesus, when he says: "For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

2.4 Original family design

As God has determined for each individual human being what they should look like, which talents they should have, and in which time and place they should live, He also determines the family context they are supposed to live in. The meaning of the Hebrew word for family, *mishpachah*, describes perfectly what God intended with families. Mishpachah literally means a place of service, which gives focus to the principles of obligation and giving. In a family, everyone's needs should be taken care of (Lapin & Lapin, 11,12). This is a difficult topic, because as soon as we are confronted with the imperfection of earthly family contexts, we do our best to try to comprehend the why of God's choices to put people in certain families. Especially in situations of continuous abuse or intergenerational trauma, this is hard to imagine. Often, we are looking for justification but we cannot find it. Although it is logical to try to understand the why of difficult individual situations, we have to be careful with what we think or say about God in this context. Because of our sinful nature, the relationship framework in our minds is also corrupt. When we don't have a full understanding of the original family design as how God intended it, we also don't have a full understanding of the consequences of free will choices that people make which lead to broken situations (Fabiano & Fabiano 2012, 11). As sinful people who believe to be able to be our

own plumblines, we are far from truth in most of our personal determinations. Even the, in our eyes, perfect family situations we sometimes see, are probably far off from how God pictures the ideal family.

The original family design God intended, has the special ingredient of pure agape love that we lost when Adam and Eve chose to be as God and become their own plumblines (ESV, Genesis 3:6). They decided that ruling in their own authority would be better than serving in this love, even when they knew that God had warned them that this would mean death for them (2:17, 3:3). In the instant of making that choice, the perfect family relationship died on earth, and the silence that arises with intergenerational trauma begun. They hid themselves, were ashamed of their nakedness, and started to uphold themselves by trying to downsize their own responsibility at the expense of the other (3:10-13). Our sinful nature was judgmental en therefore the blaming began.

Because of our sinful nature, it is not easy to express God's agape love within our own families in a practical manner. Often times, we are so caught up with all the urgent matters of life, that we forget, or even neglect, the ones that are most important to us; our spouse and children. In fact, this is the area in family life where people consistently are dissatisfied with their own behavior (Covey, 55). Apparently, we believe that family relationships are the most important to invest in throughout our lives, but we fail to prioritize accordingly. Unfortunately, even in our closest relationships, we consistently fail in serving one another.

2.5 God's love for Aruba

There shouldn't be any doubt about the culture of marriage that is set in the Bible. But, when I look around in the culture of the Arubian society, even under Christians, not much of that image is left. In Aruba, there are too many broken families. With a sky-high divorce rate[6], many one-parent-families, domestic violence and child abuse, this country needs healing in many places (YWAM Aruba 2019). With a background in Roman Catholicism, Bible knowledge is very limited and easily twisted, and people are not used to read the Bible themselves (Armstrong 2017). In Aruban culture, people ask their pastors to pray for them, are used to pray the phrases they know, or mainly say the prayers they have learned in school. Among men, there is a macho-culture, which looks good from the outside, but is in fact horribly empty. This "One Happy Island" shows itself like a Christian country, but for this nation Hosea 4 is very accurate: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And

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[6] More about this in chapter 4.

since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." (ESV, Hosea 4:6). Since God is the perfect relationship in Himself, this last part is certainly not a threat. It is rather an observation and a warning, that all who cut themselves off from the original design of love that the Lord gives us, will see the consequences in the relationship between their children and God. This corresponds with the warning that God consistently gives throughout the Old Testament that sins or iniquities of parents will affect their children to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5, 34:6,7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9; Fabiano & Fabiano, 111; Wolynn, 47). In Exodus 34 this warning for the effect of sin on generations continuous with the reminder that God is loving, faithful, merciful, gracious, and forgiving (ESV, Exodus 34:6-7). God also mentions that He doesn't want fathers to be put to death for the sins of their children, and vice versa, but each person will die for his own sin (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:1-32). Since God is truth and He cannot contradict Himself, we can be sure that the mention of the effect on the third and fourth generation is meant for the first generation, and therefore directly for all who hear or read it. There shouldn't be any doubt left of what will happen when you choose to be your own plumbline without connection to the Father.

Due to a lack of guided orientation towards God, and a healthy identity forming, many people in Aruba just do what feels right to them in the moment. Couples don't get married before they have children, or they don't get married at all. Men choose to be free and independent, having different women all over the place. Father figures are often not present, moms have children from several fathers, and there are not enough good examples for the kids. I have heard several times that people only had one couple in the family, or even none, that stayed married throughout their childhood. The effect of all this is intergenerational confusion and trauma; confusion of identity and roles due to missing orientation on the Father, and families that are out of balance without clue of what is good.

As in most countries, Christians in Aruba also have family- and marital problems. The orientation on God and self is confused, and because of that a true standard is missing in the lives of most Arubans. Without God as the plumbline for the forming of identity, unhealthy behavioral patterns arise that also corrupt the development of healthy relationships. As an effect, national culture development is loose, which leads to political corruption and traditions of idolatry and adultery. The risk of all this is an almost irreversible negative normality of broken families and intergenerational problems. On the outside Aruba looks like One Happy Island, but on the inside the island is deeply hurt.

Jesus was very clear about adultery: "everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28). In Mark we read that whoever first divorces and then marries another commits adultery (Mark 10:11-12). It is evident with what I wrote before, that adultery is common in Aruba. Calling adultery for what it is, is hard. Especially when the sanctity of the covenant of oneness and love almost unnoticeable fades into the background. With no understanding of the right context in which the Word of God is given, freely chosen values, formed by individual desires, become the core of the set standard in today's society. Without this context and the insight and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, it is easy to say: "Jesus will forgive, He forgave the adulterous woman", twisting His words in the situation of John 8:1-11 into your own favor. Or the other way around: "I've done so much wrong, I stopped praying, because He won't listen", finding an excuse to keep on living the way you want to live. In the four years that I lived in Aruba, I heard statements similar to these multiple times.

I am truly concerned for this country and the people in it, and I believe God is too. The effect of the current pattern is more confusion and intergenerational trauma; lonely children growing up without a dad, and a mom working way harder than she can handle to be able to feed her children, being too tired to act lovingly when she comes home. Grandma or an aunt are often in charge, and the household could change any time. I have seen examples of children of about ten years old, left alone with their brothers and sisters for long days in a row, and no adult able or available to step in. It hurts my heart.

3. Literature review

3.1 Introduction and context

Many counselors, therapists and scientists have done research on how to effectively treat trauma. Building on the knowledge that we gathered in the previous chapters, we will now look into counseling and therapy aspects that possibly could help us treat intergenerational trauma from a developmental perspective. Although traumatic events have great influence on behavior, the choice to look at intergenerational trauma from a developmental perspective was easily made. Especially when we include Aruba's cultural heritage and God's relational framework, we cannot just focus on behavior, but we have to look at the development of intergenerational family patterns that occur in the given context. Therefore, this literature review is meant as a third building block for creating a solid foundation on which we can build insight to find a culturally appropriate and Biblical treatment for intergenerational trauma. The Aruban culture and the Bible are both pretty clear about prescribed behavioral patterns. In addition to that, we will now review what literature says about the developmental approach, intergenerational trauma, attachment relationships, inherited patterns, and some of the basic conditions for restoration and resilience.

3.2 Developmental perspective

To give a total overview of available literature that helps to understand the complexity of counseling and therapy methods to treat intergenerational trauma in a review like this, is simply impossible. Therefore, the scope of this literature review is limited to the developmental approach in psychology. I intend to get a relevant content-related glimpse of some of the different angles we can review the treatment of intergenerational trauma from.

In his article *'What Is Developmental Psychology'* (2023), Mcleod defines *the developmental approach in psychology* as "a scientific approach that aims to explain growth, change, and consistency through the lifespan." To do this correctly, developmental psychologists start most of their research with a special focus on the development of children. Because of that, much of the literature does reflect that special focus. It is however a misunderstanding to assume that childhood is all they focus on. Mcleod explains that developmental psychologists study biological, social, emotional, cognitive, and other processes in the lifespan development of people. The purpose is "to optimize development, and apply their theories to help people in practical situations" (Mcleod, 2023). The importance of optimizing development in the context of intergenerational trauma may be evident. Many societies, and certainly the Caribbean ones, are

filled with people who are emotionally disconnected to their own self and the people around them because of trauma being present and actively alive in them. These traumas are not only affecting their own lives, but also the context in which they live, and therefore the lives of their family and friends.

3.3 Intergenerational trauma

The section 'Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders' of the DSM-5-TR[7] doesn't give a clear answer to what intergenerational trauma is. In psychiatric and psychology literature, several different terms are used to define overlapping areas of (intergenerational) trauma. We could use the Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD), the Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) otherwise defined as the Developmental Trauma Disorder (DTD), historical trauma, inherited trauma, et cetera, to describe different ways of how trauma can be viewed and experienced. Some of these definitions can be found in the DSM-5-TR, and due to ongoing discussions between experts, others cannot. It is not doable to describe the different definitions or ongoing discussions about them in this review. Therefore, one definition has to be chosen to work with. To define intergenerational trauma correctly, we first have to look at the definition of trauma. On her website, the American Psychological Association (APA) describes *trauma* as "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster." Typical responses that occur immediately after the traumatic event are shock and denial. Reactions that can occur over a longer time period include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, broken relationships, headaches or even nausea (APA 2023). Maté & Maté (2022) define trauma as a psychological injury that is stored in our neurological system, mind, and body, existing long after the incident(s) that caused it and being triggerable at any time. Throughout the lifespan, trauma is both a risk factor and a contributor to illnesses of all kinds (21). In the article *'Recovering Emotionally From Disaster'* (2013), APA explains that common responses to trauma can be intense or unpredictable feelings, changes in thoughts and behavior patterns, sensitivity to environmental factors, strained interpersonal relationships, and stress-related physical symptoms. One of the outcomes of trauma is dissociation. In their factsheet, *Trauma Related Dissociation: An Introduction* (2020), the ISST-D[8] describes *dissociation* as "a process in which a person disconnects from their thoughts, feelings, memories, behaviors,

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[7] DSM-5-TR: *Diagnostical and statistical manual of mental disorders, Fifth edition, text revision*, American Psychiatric Association, 2022.
[8] International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation.

physical sensations, or sense of identity". In his book *'The body keeps the score'*, Bessel van der Kolk tells us: "Dissociation is the essence of trauma. The overwhelming experience is split off and fragmented, so that the emotions, sounds, images, thoughts, and physical sensations related to the trauma take on a life of their own" (2014, 50). In therapy sessions with patients, Van der Kolk noticed three levels of responses after trauma. At the first level, social engagement is instinctively reached when we feel threatened. We seek help, support and comfort from other people around. If no one is coming to our aid, or we experience immediate danger, we try to survive through fighting off our attacker or fleeing to a safe place at level two. If this fails, we preserve ourselves by shutting down in freezing or collapsing to spend as little energy as possible at level three (61,62). This state of shutdown is one of the most persistent symptoms of complex trauma and signifies the inability to self-regulate. This can have major consequences in the development of intergenerational trauma (O'Neill et al. 2016).

We speak of intergenerational trauma when these possible responses occur in an intergenerational context. In her article 'Understanding Intergenerational Trauma', Dr. Fabiana Franco gives a clear definition of intergenerational trauma that we will work with. She defines *intergenerational trauma* as "trauma that gets passed down from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations" (Franco 2021).

3.4 Attachment relationships

Being able to feel safe in meaningful connections directly correlates to having a meaningful life. Several studies indicate that social support is the most powerful protection against becoming overwhelmed by stress and trauma (Van der Kolk, 61; Maté & Maté, 123). Neufeld and Maté (2014) tell us that the presence of a person with whom they can identify and from whom they can gather strength is the most important factor to keep children from being overwhelmed by stress (77). To explain this further, they use the term attachment which was first introduced by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby. He defined *attachment* as "an emotional bond that is characterized by the tendency to seek out and maintain proximity to a specific attachment figure, particularly during times of distress" (Hicks and Korbel 2013). In other words, attachment is the need for emotional closeness and clinging to our loved ones (Neufeld & Maté, 16). Attachment needs to be at the heart of every family. Without attachment, there is no family (23).

In her research, developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth showed that we watch our loved ones in order to stay emotionally and physically close; that we seek connection when we

feel insecure, confused or depressed; that we miss people we are attached to when we are apart; and that we count on them when we go on a journey of discovery (Johnson 2008, 28,29). This means that in order to build close relationships in which we feel attached we need to take risks by being vulnerable through sharing our emotions.

In order to connect in our families well, we not only need to have the ability but also the will to share our emotions. In the western culture, maturity stands for independence and self-reliance. However, Bowlby discovered that being able to turn to others for emotional support is actually a sign of strength (Johnson, 31). When intergenerational trauma exists, being vulnerable is a very complicated task, and building and maintaining close relationships is not easy. Unresolved trauma can take a terrible toll on relationships (Van der Kolk, 155). One of the features of trauma is the inability to articulate what happens to us (Wolynn 2016, 14). The process of connecting in attachment relationship is therefore harder and takes longer for people who are traumatized (Johnson 2008, 112). In these situations, behavioral family patterns can unknowingly play a horrific role in sustaining trauma. When your close family members terrify or reject you, you implicitly are taught to shut down and ignore what you feel. (Van der Kolk, 154). The quality of our close relationships is therefore of great importance for the way we face traumas and heal from them (Johnson, 240).

3.5 Inherited patterns

Increasing evidence from epigenetic research shows that intergenerational trauma is also a biological phenomenon (Wolynn, 21). Recently, scientists began to understand the biological processes that occur as a consequence of inherited trauma (22). There are serious reasons to believe that children who experienced a traumatic event likely would pass the pattern down not only to their children, but also to their grandchildren (Wolynn, 23). Every human being, in their earliest biological form, as unfertilized egg, already shares a cellular environment with their mother and grandmother. When your grandmother was five months pregnant, the precursor cell in the egg that you developed from was already in your mother's ovaries (Wolynn, 18). Scientists are now learning to understand that in this shared environment stress can cause changes to our DNA[9] (19). A significant number of studies demonstrate that the traumatic experiences of parents influence their children's gene expression and stress patterns (Wolynn, 21; O'Neill et al. 2016). It is

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[9] Epigenetic changes: the DNA code itself doesn't change, but the assignments that the body gets to fulfill certain tasks does. Epigenetic changes can be hereditary i.e., children can be born with epigenetic changes that they received from their parents (Erfelijkheid.nl 2023; Maté & Maté, 40).

interesting to see that what scientists began to discover recently, was already anchored in the word of God from the beginning. Since He purposefully chose our identity, frame, time, and place in Him, our lifetime journey did not begin at birth, but long before that (Fabiano & Fabiano, 14).

While the biological reasons for inherited trauma continue to be explored, it does not detract from our responsibility to keep the most important things the most important things and invest purposefully in our family lives (Covey, 70). Since we are not always aware of our deepest emotions, it is easy to emotionally hide from our loved ones if we want to. Growing up, all of us go through different developmental stages and we learn different lessons on how to fundamentally handle emotions. If we miss a stage we can have substitute experiences later in life which allows us to get back on schedule. But if something goes wrong, the emotions we have not learned to handle will be very uncomfortable for us. We will probably try to hide them from others, and eventually we will even hide them from ourselves. We *"screen them off"*, not even realizing they are there (Skynner and Cleese 1997, 42). It is a natural response to put our emotions on hold when we need to survive dangerous situations (Johnson, 241). There are two main reasons why we feel forced to do so. The first is suffering from sudden trauma, the second is that we learn to put our emotions behind the screens because of a taboo in our family; children learn to follow the family pattern because of the risk of rejection. This pattern passes down through the family, and eventually becomes an intergenerational family pattern (Skynner & Cleese, 42). Being silent is not an effective strategy for healing from family pain. At a later time, it will express itself as intergenerational fears or symptoms (Wolynn, 68; O'Neill et al. 2016; Keirse 2017, 39). When we are aware of our emotions and comfortable with them, it is easier to handle our feelings. But if we find no access to our feelings, they are not available when we need them; and when they escape after screening them off for a while, they may cause damage because we don't know how to control them (Skynner & Cleese, 46). This will eventually lead to unhealthy family patterns. Therefore, it is important to discover what is behind our screens. When we have less behind our screens, and we are prepared to look behind them when someone else points something out, it is easier to grow personally and build healthy attachment relationships (65).

We will not be able to build strong and safe connections when we don't allow our loved ones to know us completely, or when our loved ones don't want to know us (Johnson, 120). If no attached relationships are available, an *orientation void* will arise resulting in orientation towards whoever is nearby (Neufeld & Maté, 17). Once this orientation void exists, sometimes even caused by the slightest detachment, all kinds of crippling problems can occur. These problems prevent us from integrative and mature functioning and the fullness of what God wants for our lives, which

can lead to attachment affairs (Neufeld & Maté, 23,80,82; Fabiano & Fabiano, 110). If intergenerational trauma therefore continuously keeps existing in a society, eventually a culture of silence, abuse, illegitimate relations, and broken families will arise.

3.6 Restoration and resilience

When trauma occurs, we basically lose the assurance that the world around us is secure. When intergenerational trauma occurs, we also lose the assurance that we belong, and because of this our identity becomes unstable. From an intergenerational point of view, identity has a historical and a relational reality in it. It is the sum of what has and has not been passed down through history. Which elements of your past are you aware of, and what do you want to take with you or not. (NTR2, 00:34:55-00:35:06, 00:41:40-00:42:34). The existence of a traumatic pattern in intergenerational family relationships has the implicit consequence that it becomes impossible for the victims to make that choice. They cannot change the old pattern into a new healthy one, because the old pattern is in them, and therefore it becomes impossible to adapt to a new situation. Without *adaptation* there is no resourcefulness, and without direction there is no recovery from trauma and no resilience because of the opposition that will arise (Neufeld & Maté, 98). The only suitable option is to stay silent, but silence leads to the death of the soul. It reinforces the utter loneliness and isolation of trauma (Van der Kolk, 169). In order to change a traumatic pattern, we first need to be shielded so we can rest; secondly, we need information to reassure anxieties and help to cope; and in the third place we need emotional support (Skynner & Cleese, 75; Keirse, 18). The only way to experience real recovery is when we are helped by someone who is trustworthy from the outside of the direct family system. Someone who can stand in the gap for us, provide the rest we need, and break the silence.

The earlier discussed biological origin of intergenerational trauma can also be of influence on the restoration and resilience of traumatic family patterns. It can not only create an inheritance of suffering, but also a legacy of strength and resilience that can be felt intergenerationally (Wolynn, 17). In a similar fashion as epigenetic changes can be caused by a traumatic event, they can also be caused by a positive influence in a motivating environment (Maté & Maté, 42). Research shows that children being raised in this kind of environment have better brain function than children who have stressful lives with behavioural, cognitive or emotional problems (Barrow 2008, 2). However, it remains difficult to distinguish biological causes for restoration and resilience from environmental causes. For instance, researchers have also discovered that poverty can be a major hinderance for recovery. With poverty, people's rights to protection, provision and participation in

society are being denied, which makes it hard to say what causes certain restoration or resilience in a specific situation (2).

Another important condition for restoration and resilience is the possibility to reflect on emotions, and give words to what happened or is happening (Keirse, 28,35). As we saw before, we respond to trauma by putting our emotions on hold and therefore become incapable of articulating what happens when we are in dangerous situations (Johnson, 241; Wolynn, 14). Repression of emotions undermines the capacity to defend against stress (Maté & Maté, 56). That is why it is important to create the option for vulnerability and share emotions with others. The building of safe and trustworthy relationships is essential in this context. Trauma victims need to know that the people they are talking to don't go anywhere and don't share anything with others.

4. Research design and outcomes

4.1 Research methodology

The information that can be found on intergenerational trauma today is overwhelming. Therefore, it is not a complicated task to write a literature review on this subject. However, the resources that review intergenerational trauma from a Biblical and a counseling/therapy perspective, are very limited, especially when it comes to the cultural heritage of a specific nation. It is therefore important to test the findings of the review in practice.

To get a reliable outcome of this capstone study, we want to learn about how the Aruban people experience the effect of intergenerational trauma in their lives. Our intention is to get a realistic view of the need that Aruban families have for Biblical restoration of intergenerational trauma. The purpose is to connect this outcome to the available research so that we can find applicable Biblical developmental answers for restoration in Aruban families today.

For this capstone we made use of survey research in the form of an anonymous digital questionnaire (Appendix A), focused on adult inhabitants of Aruba. Because of the nature of this capstone, it was important to be able to ask specific questions related to the Bible and Christianity. Therefore, most of the respondents who were asked to fill out the questionnaire, were believers or experienced a connection to the Christian faith. The target group consisted of 63 people, of whom 47 filled out the questionnaire. To underline the importance of getting a realistic view into the Aruban context, we compared some of the numbers in our survey research with numbers that were retrieved from the website of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in Aruba. Most of this information was gathered during a national census that was held in 2020.

4.2 Questionnaire outcomes

The ages of the 47 respondents who filled out the questionnaire varied between 19 and 76, with an average age of 50[10]. Of these respondents 59.6% was female, 40.4% male, and almost half of them (53.2%) were born in Aruba[11]. The time that respondents had lived in Aruba varied between 1 and 71 years, with an average of almost 32 years. Most of the respondents were married

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[10] Appendix B / In comparison: According to the Population and Housing Census 2020, the average age of the adult population in Aruba was approximately 53.5 (Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba 2023, Table P-A.1).

[11] Appendix C / In comparison: According to the CBS the average immigration rate over the years 1972-2022 was 36% (CBS 2023, Total number of immigrants and immigration rate, 1972-2023 1st QTR). The average population that was born in Aruba over those years, was therefore 64%.

(66%[12]), or had a long-term relationship living together as a couple (4.3%). Most of the remaining respondents were either single (17%) or divorced (6.4%). There was a great variety of occupations among the respondents. Occupations that were best represented among the participants could be found in the educational sector (23.4%). Other work related situations that were well represented were people who were retired (12.7%), housewife (10.6%), pastor (8.5%), or entrepeneur (8.5%).

When asked *if participants were aware of intergenerational traumas in families in Aruba before filling out the questionnaire*, 37 of 47 mentioned they were aware of this. However, all 47 respondents (100%) mentioned they do believe that intergenerational trauma is a problem in Aruba. In addition, the next question gave respondents the possibility to articulate multiple causes for intergenerational trauma in Aruba in their own words. In total 110 answers were given that were divided in several categories. Given *causes for intergenerational trauma in Aruba* are substance abuse/addiction (17%), family dysfunction (9%), sexual abuse (9%), absent parents/fatherlessness (8%), lack of knowledge/education (7%), not talking/taboo (6%), physical abuse (6%), mental abuse (6%), intergenerational history[13] (5%), and culture/mentality (5%). In this last category, three respondents explicitly mentioned the macho culture/mentality among men. It is striking that when all forms of abuse of people pulled together in one category, the total percentage comes to 22%. Given the total freedom that respondents had to answer this open question, it is noteworthy that almost all answers fall within the context of the functioning of nuclear and extended families, combined with substance abuse.

When asked what *the main intergenerational family problem* currently is in Aruba, 34% of respondents mentioned fatherlessness as the main problem. Other mentioned problems were addiction (17%), separation of parents (12.8%), sexual abuse (10.6%), mental abuse (8.5%). Since respondents could only give one answer to this question, several of them mentioned an extra category of problems in the following question that was focussed on the category "other" (8.5%). All of these answers connect to the given causes for intergenerational problems and the main intergenerational family problems mentioned above.

The next question related to *the experience of intergenerational trauma among the respondents*. Almost 60% of them (28 of 47) mentioned that they had to deal with intergenerational trauma themselves. When composing the questions for the questionnaire, the decision whether or not to ask this question was not an easy one. It is important that participants

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[12] Appendix D / In comparison: According to the CBS, in 2020, 34,4% of the population was married (CBS 2023, Marital status of the population of Aruba in percentages, 1972-2020)

[13] Including slavery, intergenerational family patterns, and intergenerational curses.

recognize themselves sufficiently and still feel respected when a question is asked. I am therefore grateful that respondents were willing to give such a direct, clear and honest answer to this very personal question.

When asked *how people in Aruba mainly deal with intergenerational trauma*, 29 of 47 respondents mentioned that people don't talk about it at all. Of the other respondents, 13 chose the option that people sometimes talk about it with people they trust. The overall score of this question is that a vast majority of 89.4% of the participants with their answer emphasizes that traumatic silence in Aruba is a real phenomenon. In addition, also 89.4% of respondents mentioned that there is not enough help available in Aruba to deal with intergenerational family trauma.

When asked what *the main general effects of intergenerational family trauma in Aruba* are according to the participants, a wide variety of unique answers were given (58 of 126). It is therefore not possible to include all the answers in the text. In order to give a general impression, the answers have been categorized into personal effects (49 of 126), family effects (33 of 126), social effects (21 of 126), and effects on all three categories (23 of 126). When answers fit in two of the three categories, they were classified in both categories to ensure that specific classification would take place. Although complete objectivity cannot be guaranteed with this method, it at least gives an impression of how wide of a variety the experienced general effects of intergenerational trauma in Aruba are. To mention some of the specific experienced effects; addiction (13 times), mental problems (9 times), abuse (7 times), and identity issues (6 times) were mentioned most.

When it comes to *the effect of intergenerational family trauma on marriages in Aruba*, the variety of answers became less wide and better containable. On a total of 80 given answers, 28 respondents were mentioning divorce/separation as the main effect of intergenerational trauma on marriages in Aruba. Related effects mentioned were: poor marriages (8 of 80), and adultery (7 of 80). Distrust, suffering children, and abuse were all mentioned 4 times. Since divorce rates in Aruba are among the highest in the world, it is not surprising that this is cited as the effect of intergenerational trauma that impacts marriages most. In the years 1985 to 2022, the average divorce rate in Aruba was 56.7%, with increasing numbers to 64.7% in the last decade, and an astonishing 101% in the first quarter of 2023 (CBS 2023[14]). This means that for every 100 couples that got married in the first quarter of 2023, 101 divorces were filed.

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[14] Appendix D: CBS 2023, Marriages and divorces, 1985-2023 1st QTR.

The answers to the question of *which (Biblical) solutions for the restoration of intergenerational trauma could be found in Aruba*, can be divided in four categories; Godly solutions, educational solutions, external solutions, and transformational solutions. The total of given solutions on this open question was 78. Respondents gave a total of 31 *Godly solutions* in which God or Jesus were mentioned directly 23 times. Further were mentioned: Identity in God/Jesus (3 times), God as a Father (3 times), the Bible (3 times), a relationship with God (2 times), and prayer and fasting (2 times). *Educational solutions* (20 of 78) varied from teaching and preaching to very practical solutions as condom use and birth control. It is noteworthy that 6 respondents used the word "awareness" in their answer. This gave the impression that various participants feel that there is insufficient awareness among the Aruban people about the possible solutions for intergenerational trauma. Of the *external solutions* (16 of 78), counseling (8 times) and believers that help (3 times) were mentioned most. The last category, the so called *transformational solutions* (11 of 78), mostly represented personal transformation as forgiveness (4 times), repentance (2 times), renewed hearts (1 time), acceptance (1 time), et cetera. One striking transformational solution that was mentioned is the modernization of the church in Aruba.

With the given answers so far, the pattern begins to emerge that intergenerational trauma, its causes, consequences and effects, after so many generations with insufficient help from outside has become embedded in the national culture of Aruba.

When asked what could be *(Biblical) solutions for the restoration of intergenerational trauma in Aruba*, respondents mention the book of Ephesians, or specifically Ephesians 5:22-32 the most (13 times). In this paragraph the apostle Paul writes about the roles of husband and wife in marriage. Some of the respondents include chapter 6:1-3, in which Paul speaks about the roles of fathers and children. Other Bible verses that were mentioned more than once were 2 Corinthians 5:17 (4 times), Malachi 4:6 (3 times), Malachi 2:4-16 (2 times), Genesis 1:27 (2 times), and Ecclesiastes 4:12 (2 times). In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul tells the reader that when people are in Christ, they are a new creation. In the book Malachi, God speaks through His prophet (Malachi) about the corrupt behavior of Israel. In Malachi 2:4-16, the covenants between God and His people, and between husband and wife are emphasized. God mentions that He made husband and wife one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union to seek Godly offspring (2:15). In Malachi 4:6 is mentioned that the hearts of the fathers will be turned to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Genesis 1:27 states that God created man, male and female, in His own image. In Ecclesiastes 4:12 we can read that for man to prevail, a "threefold cord" is needed, which often is connected to marriage relationships in which God is present, as was mentioned in

Malachi 2:15. Next to these verses, it is noteworthy to point out that Isaiah 54 and 55 are mentioned. These two chapters are about God's eternal covenant of peace with His people, and the compassion of the Lord for His people. This closely connects to the covenant of oneness and love that was discussed in chapter 2 of this capstone. Based on the answers given, the tentative conclusion can be drawn that respondents see the direct involvement of God in human relationships as the Biblical solution for the recovery of intergenerational trauma in Aruba.

The last question of the questionnaire was focussed on *Bible verses, -chapters, and -books that speak to people when it comes to the restoration of intergenerational trauma*. Although it can be interpreted as a similar question as the one before, the sentiment of the question is different. In the question before, the focus was more on Biblical solutions, whereas in this last question the focus was put on a personal connection to the heart when hearing or reading specific Bible verses or -stories. What is striking is that in the answers 20 of the 66 Bible books are mentioned, 8 of which are books from the Old Testament. Among them are complete books; Genesis, Psalms, Proverbs, Romans, (1 and 2) Corinthians, Galatians, and again Ephesians. Next to these books, Exodus 34:6,7 about the third and fourth generation, Malachi 4:6 about the hearts of the fathers and the children, 2 Corinthians 5:17 about being a new creation in Christ, Romans 6:3,4 about having died and being raised in Christ, and Isaiah 54 and 55 about Gods eternal covenant and comfort are also mentioned again. Although these answers can be interpreted as a repetition of the previous question, it is also conceivable that people apparently feel a strong connection to the mentioned Bible texts. Having seen all the answers, it is plausible to assume that the answers to the last question are mainly focused on God's personal comfort for people, whereas the answers to the previous question were mainly solution-oriented.

5. Bringing it all together

5.1 Acknowledging what happens

When we review the outcomes of the different building blocks of this capstone, a practical application that gives hope in the midst of destructive family patterns is not easily made. Realizing how much there is at stake for this tiny, high-potential country, it is seemingly impossible to write a culturally appropriate plan for the recovery from intergenerational trauma in families. However, there needs to be a way out of the hidden pain and misery that so many Arubans encounter for generations already. There need to be solutions that not only work, but are applicable on a wide scale. Developmental answers that not only counselors and therapists can incorporate in their approach, but that can give inspiring behavioral direction for anybody, anywhere, and anytime.

We do not have any doubts about the existence of intergenerational trauma in Aruba. Intergenerational trauma is a real and existing phenomenon, as real as the silence that accompanies it. Although several respondents of the questionnaire mention awareness of the problem as one of the solutions, most respondents seem to be very aware of what is happening in Aruba and are able to pinpoint very specific causes themselves. This corresponds to the percentage of respondents who have experienced intergenerational trauma themselves. When we extrapolate this data to the entire nation of Aruba, it means that a vast majority of the Aruban citizens is at least somewhat aware of the intergenerational problems that are plaguing the island. However, there can be different views on the causes of intergenerational trauma in families in Aruba. Some will start with the slavery past which, although concealed, played a major role in the development of Aruba. Others will blame the problems on the alcohol abuse throughout the generations. Also, impactful social changes that occurred with the rise of the oil industry and tourism, or the political choice to distinguish Aruba from allied nations might be seen as causes. Maybe all of this is true, and whatever the exact causes may be, with the research that is already available, it should be obvious that a pattern similar to what is currently evident in many Aruban families, has emerged in the nation of Aruba. Combined with the knowledge that epigenetic changes can lead to specific behavioral patterns through the generations, this seems to seal the future development of Aruba. With that in mind, awareness and other educational solutions can be a part of the solution, but cannot be the solution of the problems in itself.

Realizing that the transfer of information does not solve the problem itself, we need to have a look at relational aspects that are found in Godly, external, and transformational solutions. In the outcome of the questionnaire, fatherlessness, addiction, separation of parents, and sexual abuse are mentioned as the main current intergenerational family problems in Aruba. Three of

these can be directly seen as relational problems within the nuclear family. The problem of addiction most of the times is a disguise in itself, being an extrinsic form of dissociation. With addiction, the immediate question arises what has happened in a person's life to not be able to face reality (Maté & Maté, 109). Without explaining this in detail, the direct connection to impactful relational events may be clear.

Another mentioned problem, the separation of parents, directly correlates to the high divorce rate in Aruba. With the knowledge that partner relationships often start as a visiting union, evolve into a common-law union, and eventually culminate into a marital union (Evans & Davies 4), we realize that even more partner relationships get ended even before marriage is in the picture. The rates of partner relationship problems and broken partner relationships are therefore much higher than what the divorce rate shows us. Especially when children are involved, this will have a huge effect on the continuance of intergenerational trauma.

Directly related to broken partner relationships and divorce, the effect of fatherlessness can also not be underestimated. Although the father is absent, this does not mean that there is at the least a partial fulfillment of the role that he has in the nuclear family. It may be that he is still providing an income, and somehow has a protective role for the family. However, his emotional involvement in the family activities, and his role in disciplining and training the children cannot be the same as when he is living with the family. The role of the mother changes with this as well. Although taking care of the children can still be a big part of her role, her tasks must now be completed in a broader context. Next to her comforting role towards the children, she also becomes the center of the nuclear household, with the children relying on her for emotional support, provision, protection, disciplining, training and representing (Barrow 1996, 13, 459; IEMF 2023). Having a macho-culture among Aruban men means that, with the absence of fathers, the children are more peer-oriented than family-oriented, which doesn't help them to see their conceivers as fathers and have adult-oriented respect for them. With this, development of a sense of belonging, a sense of security and a sense of self-esteem become more confused for them (Evans & Davies 6,13,14). Another consequence is that even the question if they are worthy enough to be invested in becomes insecure. Detachment and dissociation are natural consequences of these kinds of re-occurring behavioral patterns. Children need a person with whom they can identify and from whom they can gather strength (Neufeld and Maté 77).

With the loss of safe attachment relationships comes that we lose the ability to reflect on emotions and articulate what happens to us. This leads to the only suitable option; to stay silent. That in turn makes connecting in new attachment relationships harder (Johnson, 112,241; Van der

Kolk, 169; Wolynn, 14). Research about the cultural heritage of Aruba and answers from the questionnaire show that traumatic silence in Aruba is logical and real. Although the Aruban culture is very relationship-oriented, this silence creates a gap in relational functioning and the communication of emotions. The fact that there are not enough professional counselors available in Aruba does not make it easier for trauma victims to relearn how to express emotions in a healthy way in a confidence-inspiring environment.

Knowing that we are dealing with problems of a relational nature means that we also have to focus on finding solutions with a relational nature. When parents are taught how to perform their internal nuclear family roles and create a safe place (shalem) in which the socialization development of children can take place, it will positively affect the socializing role of the family unit and will therefore lead to a more cohesive society (Barrow 1996, 13; Evans & Davies 1994, 4).

5.2 Principles of restoration

Healthy attachment relationship is the major key to be able to function as a family, experience personal belonging, discover and integrate identity, and to help build resilience. The experience of safety in attachment relationships comes with being vulnerable, and is worth the risk of sharing our emotions. However, when that trust is violated in its core and our right to exist becomes insecure, we need a special combination of circumstances to restore what was broken. In the context of intergenerational trauma this is especially difficult to organize. With intergenerational trauma, not only our right to exist is vaporized, but also the funding pillars on which we built it. Because of that, the assurance of being shielded so we can rest, the assurance of information to reassure anxieties and help for us to cope, and the assurance of emotional support (Skynner & Cleese, 75), are plunged into a deep ravine. Unsurprisingly, this leads to strange behaviors that so many in the world exhibit in unsuccessful attempts to survive. With the absence of belonging that is embedded in a safe family culture, help needs to come from the outside. This opens a new window of dangers, including peer orientation, new abusive relationships, and extrinsic dissociation that is executed by substance abuse (Maté & Maté, 109). The inherited biological components of intergenerational trauma and its consequences, do not help to prevent or break these types of behavior patterns, and will without proper help lead to further negative development of victims and their families.

The help that comes from outside needs to be available, trustworthy, safe, and secure. Investment in the restoration of intergenerational trauma needs to be a very intentional and long-term commitment. As discussed before, an important condition for restoration is the possibility to

reflect on emotions, and give words to what happened or is happening. Trauma victims need to know that the people they are talking to do not go anywhere and do not share anything with others. This means that prioritizing the relationship, keeping attachment in mind, focusing on connection (even when being apart), and creating structures and imposed restrictions (Neufeld & Maté 137-147), need to be part of the natural process of being there. Helpers need to know that they don't have to solve anything -in fact, they can't- but that by being present and listening they become the answers to the problems themselves (Covey 61; Neufeld & Maté, 200).

5.3 Considering truth

Since Aruba is an island, opportunities for personal development and cultural change are limited. Although the cultural heritage of Aruba is formed by countless conversions to diverse circumstances, it is also formed by confusing and traumatic behavior patterns which lead to a diffuse identity. We realize that detachment, dissociation, silence, and deviation from the truth have become a natural part of the Aruban family culture. Knowing that communication styles used in Aruban families and society apparently lack goal orientation and openness (Alofs, 33), a different way has to be found to (re-)connect so that restoration can take place. Since ethical condemnation seldom leads to change of cultural patterns (Barrow 1996, 439), it looks like the only way that change can happen is when individuals whose identity is rooted and grounded in love, will give themselves in sincere long-term attachment relationships to live the change that can happen. When we look at Aruba, these circumstances are not easy to create. Since intergenerational trauma and confusion are everywhere in society, and the capacity of professionals that are able to deal with intergenerational trauma is very limited, it seems that humanly speaking there is no way out for Aruba.

With God's relational framework in mind, we also know for sure that we are not capable of restoring intergenerational family patterns to His original idea. While it has long been convenient to ignore the restorational aspects of the Bible in this society and the world, it is vital to consider the truth of God's Word and let our Father Himself speak radical change into the lives of people who suffer from intergenerational trauma. When we review aspects of the developmental approach in psychology in the light of Biblical principles, it is important to find out what this means for Christian counselors and therapists, and maybe more importantly, for Christians in general. With the research done, it may be evident that counselors, therapists, and researchers still are struggling to find a way out of intergenerational traumatic family patterns. We all fall short to the glory of God, and when we realize that He is the Father of origin and the only true standard of

relationship, we know that for real restoration or resilience we are dependent on Him (ESV, Isaiah 46:9-10; John 15:4-5,12; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 3:14,15). In John 14:6 Jesus tells His disciples That He is the way, the truth, and the life and the only way to the Father is through Him. This means that outside of Jesus we are doomed to get lost in lies and death and that we certainly will not get to the truth of the Father in our own strength. We therefore have to re-align our behavior from what we think and feel is best, to what He says about His relationship with us in His word, and what He shows us about specific situations (mishpachah). There is no alternative. We need the Spirit of truth as our Helper because He is able to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

Families in this country desperately need Jesus, and a deeper understanding of how His yoke is easy, His burden is light, and how He gives rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-30). People are longing for real attachment, like the woman at the well was. I am praying for the Arubian people to have the same encounter with Jesus as she had. He told her: "I who speak to you am He." (John 4:26). Suddenly, she realized that after all that happened, He still loved her unconditionally and with an everlasting love. She ran back to her own people that rejected her, saying: "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). I believe that same encounter is needed in Aruba. Our heavenly Father loves to spend time with us and meets us at our critical crossroads. That is why we have to seek the things that are above, when we have been raised with Christ (Colossians 3:1).

5.4 Ministry of reconciliation

The detachment of self and others that naturally occurs with trauma is extended from a detachment from Jesus. This needs to be addressed before any healing can take place. Therefore, if we want to or not, reconciliation is a constant theme in our lives. Our sinful nature wants us to be self-centered and function independently from God and others, preserving what we have. With that, our natural flow is to move away from opening our hearts, sharing our emotions, and becoming vulnerable. When we consider that God reconciled us to Himself through Jesus, and that we are new creations in Him, our identity of origin becomes visible and reconciliation towards others naturally flows out of that (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). However, we need to recognize the position that we are in. Our greatest sin was that we wanted to be like God. By formatting a structured path to healing we are at the risk of taking over from God. In restoration processes, we need to be aware, that we cannot fully understand the timing and process that our Father has for individuals. Even when it comes to restoration, He holds the blueprint for the healing of every individual. Therefore, in every restoration process -and in any other process for that matter- we

need to be connected in intimacy with Him. How can we expect to be of any help when we are first and foremost peer-oriented instead of adult-oriented in the relationship with our Father. Created by His word of truth as His beloved children, we have to be imitators of God and firstfruits of reconciliation, without taking over from God (Ephesians 5:1; James 1:18).

As good examples of what reconciliation within original relationship achieves, we also understand that we need the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to bring restoration and wholeness in relationships again; the Father gives identity and form, Jesus gives life and rest, and the Holy Spirit gives continuous comfort and guiding. Like Jesus, we therefore need to listen in any given situation to what God is saying to us about His original design, what has happened and is happening, and what His will is for that specific situation. Listening to God's will however, cannot excuse knowing but not doing. Knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, we have to be doers who do not let themselves be influenced by what is considered normal in the world, but choose to practically love and make a difference for afflicted people (Ephesians 3: 19; James 1:27). Like our Father did with Adam and Eve, we can also go and search for the ones that got lost, break the silence and ask: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9).

5.5 Developmental outcome

The fundamental truth is that only in a close attachment relationship with our Father we can develop in a healthy way and overcome intergenerational trauma. As so many kings in the Old Testament proved with their lives, when the choice is made to move away from God's grace, there is nothing left but destruction and despair. We need Jesus to be our way, our truth and our life and receive practical applicable instructions from the Spirit in every situation that occurs. The answer to the question if the Bible contains unique developmental answers for the restoration of intergenerational trauma in families that can be applied in Aruba today, is therefore 'yes'. But when we realize that the individual needs of every person in relationship with the Father cannot be compared to other situations, the application will be different every time. This does not mean that we cannot give practical principles that can be applied in general and in each specific situation. It is purely when we realize how Jesus served us and that we only can live in attachment with Him, that we understand that choosing to serve each other more and unconditionally always is the better option. When we turn back to intimacy with Jesus, and find our identity in Him, realizing we are His bride, not only adultery with the enemy is not a problem anymore, but we will also stop seeing broken marriages, fatherlessness, gender issues, and so on. We are in preparation of becoming the wife of Jesus and we are already engaged to be married. In the Jewish tradition,

the couple became engaged when the bride accepted the cup with wine from her husband-to-be. We have a choice how to be connected to our Groom, like we have a choice how we are connected to our earthly partners. We really do have something to look forward to and we better invest in attachment and prepare well.

This also means that we all need to speak with our non-believing neighbors about the attachment relationship that the Father wants with us, and act accordingly in our own families (Matthew 28:19,20). We cannot hear and know about this deep intimate connection that He created all of us for, and take the destruction of intimate family relationships around us for granted and do nothing (James 1:22). Churches cannot take the gospel of reconciliation to their own congregants without stirring them heavily to act on it daily, and by not being willing to humbly reconcile themselves with other churches who also consist of God's beloved children (ESV, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Martin, 12). Counselors and therapists cannot afford it anymore to apply psychological methods in client-relationships without the outspoken acknowledgement that the Father of origin wants to make all things new (ESV, Revelation 21:5). There is no other way than Jesus and we all have to honor Him for who He is. When we prevail in this, we will receive the true heritage; God will be our God and we will be His children (Revelation 21:7).

5.6 Specific guidelines

When we write down practical Biblical principles that can be used to build resilience or recover from intergenerational trauma, we run the risk of being incomplete. Nevertheless, at the end of this capstone it is important to state some of these principles even when the list is incomplete, so that the beginning of a guideline is created on which to build further. This section first lists practical Biblical guidelines from a developmental approach that should be adhered to by anyone involved in a recovery process, or in building resilience against intergenerational trauma. These guidelines can give inspiring behavioral direction with a developmental outcome for anybody, anywhere, and anytime. Secondly, specific guidelines are provided for professional counselors and therapists working with victims of intergenerational trauma. Although this second list can be used by all counselors and therapists that work with victims of intergenerational trauma, it puts extra emphasis on the Aruban context. It is important to indicate that this second list is only intended as extra help for educated, skilled, and experienced professionals. It is not wise to become involved as a counselor or therapist in situations of intergenerational trauma if you are not adequately prepared and trained to deal with complex multi-layered processes. Suggestion towards doing so could cause damage to yourself and others. To help others, please

get properly trained, and in the meantime refer victims of intergenerational trauma to professionals.

Practical Biblical principles for the restoration of intergenerational trauma:

- Acknowledge Jesus as your King and Savior (Romans 10:9).

- Invest daily in the attachment relationship with your Father by spending time alone with Him, praying (Matthew 14:23).

- Read your Bible daily (Psalm 119).

- Cry out to God and ask Him to reveal what is happening (Hebrews 5:7).

- Learn to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you in every situation (John 14:26).

- Learn to understand what it means that God specifically chose and made you to be His beloved child (Ephesians 1:4,5).

- Be humble and learn to realize that only God's point of view is completely true, so you will not be fooled by the subjective opinions of other people (John 16:13-15).

- When you sinned or made mistakes, repent as soon as possible in the same relational context as it happened in, and ask forgiveness (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 32:5, 86:5; Acts 3:19, 17:30).

- Repent and ask God for forgiveness of specific sins or mistakes of your ancestors, and to set you (and your children) free from the consequences of the choices that your ancestors made (Leviticus 26:40-42).

- Invest in your family relationships (mishpachah) and the other relational contexts God put you in (1 Timothy 5:8; John 13:34,35).

- Seek (professional) help, you don't have to figure it out alone (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10).

- Learn how to grieve, recognizing and expressing your emotions (John 11:33-35).

- Learn to understand that there was a reason for the behavior of your parents, grandparents, and earlier ancestors, which they probably did not understand themselves. They are still responsible for what happened, but you learn to understand that they didn't understand. In this process, you are not stepping out of the relationship, but you learn how you can open the door to a new beginning. Jesus did this when He hung on the cross, asking His Father to forgive His persecutors because they did not know what they were doing (Luke 23:34).

- Learn to understand that everything can be restored in one moment, but that God often uses a process so that you (and others) can learn more of who He is (John 5:2-9).

- Learn to understand that the process that God has for you to develop into who He wants you to be, differs from every other developmental process of every other person on earth (Psalm 139).

- Pursue love. (1 Corinthians 13, 14:1a)
- Believe that your Father is able to do far more abundantly than all that you ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).
- Speak with your family, friends, neighbors and other people within your relational context about the attachment relationship that the Father wants with us, and act accordingly yourself (Matthew 28:19,20).
- Be aware of the ones that got lost, create a safe place (shalem) and break the silence by giving personal attention to them (Genesis 3:9).
- Knowing is good, knowing and acting accordingly is better (James 1:22).
- Practice reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).

Counseling principles for the restoration of intergenerational trauma, with emphasis on the Aruban family context:

- Take time to develop an attachment relationship with your client. The key to making the transition to a healthy normality is having a strong attachment bond. Dare to be open and take the chance of sharing your own emotions. Do not try to find answers, but become the answer to the problems by being present and listening (Covey 61; Neufeld & Maté, 200).
- Be accessible, reliable, safe, and secure. Investment in the restoration of intergenerational trauma has to be a very intentional and long-term commitment. By providing shielding so they can rest, assuring them with information to calm their fears, and the assuring them of emotional support, you can initiate shalem and help your client to cope (Skynner & Cleese, 75). Put the relationship first, consider attachment, emphasize connection (even while you're separated), and impose structures and limitations (Neufeld & Maté 137-147). Do not expect teaching and preaching to change intergenerational patterns and behavior (Barrow 1996, 439). Make sure that your identity is rooted and grounded in love, and be willing to give yourself in a long-term attachment relationship to live the change that can happen.
- Realize that you can't solve anything. Only God can speak radical change into the lives of your clients and bring real restoration. He is the Restorer of our souls (ESV, Psalm 23:3). The detachment of self and others that automatically occurs with (Intergenerational) trauma is extended from a detachment from Jesus. Before any healing can start, this needs to be addressed.
- Align your behavior to what God says about His relationship with us in His word, and what He shows us about specific situations (mishpachah). Be aware that you cannot fully understand

the timing and process that the Father has for individuals. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth (John 16:13). When it comes to restoration, God holds the blueprint for the healing of every individual person. You need to be connected in intimacy with Him.

- Communicate with cultural integrity. Since communication in Aruban families and society doesn't seem to be goal-orientated and open (Alofs, 33), realize that building a healthy attachment relationship and loving on people comes before a directive counseling approach. It helps when you are receptive to other forms of connection so that restoration can take place.

- Since the capacity of professionals that are able to deal with intergenerational trauma is very limited in Aruba, make sure that you stay healthy as a counselor or therapist by taking proper rest, and by connecting to other counselors, therapists, coaching, intervision, and/or supervision to reflect on yourself, your relationship with God and others, and the process of providing your services.

- Work towards a process of unblaming. Next to the process of forgiveness, unblaming is likely one of the most effective methods for dealing with trauma that God has given us. Your client gains insight into the fact that the parties involved don't comprehend the consequences of their behavior. In this process, the victim is not stepping out of the relationship, but rather works towards opening the door to a new beginning. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He did this and asked His Father to forgive His persecutors because they had no idea what they were doing. (ESV, Luke 23:34).

- Every grief process is different and every person grieves differently (Keirse, 87). When counseling or therapy takes place in a family context, it is therefore important to create and implement safety and balance (shalem) in the chosen setting by practicing multidirected partiality. This contextual methodology helps the counselor or therapist to create a setting in which listening and following the story of each person involved is made possible (mishpachah). This makes it possible to walk next to the client(s) in the family context and to make adjustments when necessary. To do this properly, it requires the counselor or therapist to focus both on helping to develop an attachment relationship in the family context and on addressing personal behavior within the context of family counseling or therapy.

5.7 Proposed action

In God's eyes all our lives matter. He created us with a specific purpose, and for a specific time and place. We belong in attachment relationship with Him. Noticing this unique position God put us in, we have to consider the relevance of what we do. To break patterns of intergenerational trauma,

pro-active and preventive work is critical (O'Neill et al. 2016). In the evaluation of what is needed, we will focus on practical preventive actions.

In this capstone we have unraveled four building blocks that are needed for building a strong foundation against intergenerational trauma in families in Aruba:

1. We discovered more of the cultural heritage of Aruba.

2. We focused on God's original design for people, relationships, and families.

3. We discovered more about intergenerational trauma from a counseling and therapy point of view in a literature review.

4. We did survey research and got more insight into the experiences of Aruban residents.

After giving practical Biblical principles and counseling principles for the restoration of intergenerational trauma, with emphasis on the Aruban family context, it is now time to evaluate what actions should be taken in order to implement the outcome of this capstone:

▪ Prevent intergenerational trauma and initiate restoration by returning to God. As the Originator and Creator of our lives, God deserves our full attention and complete worship. He is the only one who can rectify what we have done wrong. We need to keep far from any assumption that we ourselves should be able to repair what we could not even properly maintain. For every bit of life we are reliant on God as the Author and Sustainer of life, and any choice to deny this is choosing a way to utter destruction. If you want to be a part of a restoration process, your focus should therefore be on building attachment relationship with Him and repenting from any wrongdoing, so that He can forgive and restore. In this context, evangelism is a useful activity to help people to understand who God is as their Father.

▪ Prevent intergenerational trauma by investing in healthy attachment relationships within marriage and (nuclear and extended) families. It is God's intention to put every person in a family attachment relationship. This means that we are obliged to maintain and nurture this relationship (mishpachah). Doing this not only gives us a greater understanding of who God is as our Father, it also puts us in the position where He can use us beyond our own families. In addition to making time for each other as a family, it is also possible to invest in family relationships by following courses such as The Alpha Marriage Course[15], REAPP[16], and the

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[15] https://themarriagecourse.org
[16] https://www.reapp.org

Alpha Parenting Course[17]. In these courses partners/parents can be taught how to perform their internal nuclear family roles (mishpachah) and create a safe place (shalem) in which the socialization of children can take place. This will affect the socializing role of the family unit positively, and will therefore lead to a more cohesive society (Barrow 1996, 13; Evans & Davies 1994, 4). Children and teenagers can learn affect-regulation and self-soothing in guided attachment relationship programs in the nuclear family or at school (O'Neill et al. 2016). Examples of group programs for children and teenagers are Clued-Up, FriendshipCards[18] and a Dutch training called Kanjertraining[19].

- Initiate restoration by breaking the silence (of Aruba). As the survey research in this capstone shows, awareness is already partially here. Acknowledging that intergenerational trauma is a problem in Aruba means that the silence about this problem needs to be broken. This does not mean however that individual cases should be shared openly. It means recognizing the national problems by creating an environment of trust in which victims can come forward and families can be built up. To support this breaking of silence, a national campaign can be set up, or theme evenings can be organized in churches.

- Prevent intergenerational trauma and initiate restoration by investing in personal discipleship. In the context of personal discipleship people get the opportunity to build attachment relationship with someone who is trustworthy outside of the nuclear family. In this discipleship relationship, people can learn their true identity and authority in the true reality in relationship to the true Entity. In other words, they learn about who God is, what His reality looks like, and what this means for the identity they have, and the authority they have been given in Jesus' name. Especially churches could play a significant role in creating opportunities for personal discipleship. For example, discipleship training could be organized and a program could be set up in which mature believers each disciple one new believer to start with.

- Initiate restoration of intergenerational trauma by investing in unity among churches in Aruba. The amount of churches in Aruba that do not cooperate with other churches is too big. The fact that brothers and sisters from other churches are not recognized as such, indicates that the problem of intergenerational trauma has also taken hold in the churches. This problem can be tackled by initiating a process of reconciliation between churches in which all involved have to realize that for this problem to be solved, each one has to be the least, no matter what

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[17] https://themarriagecourse.org/try-parenting/the-parenting-children-course
[18] https://friendshipcards.nl
[19] https://kanjertraining.nl

others think of it. In this we have to learn how to become fools for Christ (ESV, 1 Corinthians 4:1-13).

- Invest in specific training for counselors and therapists in Aruba. At the end of this capstone it should be clear that treatment in situations of individual trauma requires a different approach than treatment of intergenerational trauma in a family context. Intergenerational trauma is always linked to the cultural heritage in which specific behavioral and developmental patterns are formed. In Aruba, relationships are more focused on surviving the family system. This calls for a contextual system approach in which individuals are not overlooked. Because there is also a chronic lack of counselors and therapists in Aruba who are sufficiently trained to help address the problems, it is very important to invest in both the quantity and quality of mental care. Further research is therefore needed to adapt or develop a method for the treatment of intergenerational trauma in Aruban families, new counselors should be invited to settle in Aruba, and support programs for counselors could be set up for proper management.

- Connect to an international network of Christian counselors and therapists for more focus on restoration of intergenerational trauma in families. Intergenerational trauma is not only a problem in Aruba, but around the world. While problems may vary from country to country, it is important to increase knowledge and experience through the exchange of information between counselors and therapists. Specifically in the field of treatment of intergenerational trauma by Christian counselors and therapists, there is still a world to be won, especially since Christians already know the true road to restoration of life.

- Create a module about intergenerational trauma in families within the Family College of the University of the Nations. Although creating a module about intergenerational trauma will not help to equip students to become counselors or therapists, knowledge about this topic can help them to make an essential contribution to prevention and restoration processes. Additionally, it is also important to conduct further research to find possibilities for more contributions by people outside the care circle.

At the end of this paragraph and this capstone it is important to provide the reader with a disclaimer. The suggestions given may be helpful for those who function in the context of intergenerational family trauma, they however portrait just some of the discoveries that were made and therefore this work is far from complete. Considering the outcome of this capstone, we have to conclude that we only scratched the surface of treatment of intergenerational trauma in families in Aruba. So much more has to be researched and so much more to be discovered. With

this, it is good to consider that, although we have worked with four building blocks to build a solid foundation for the treatment of intergenerational trauma in Aruban families, in reality there is no other foundation than Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Abbreviations

APA   American Psychological Association

ASD   Acute Stress Disorder

CBS   Central Bureau of Statistics (Aruba)

CPTSD   Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

DSM-5-TR   Diagnostical and statistical manual of mental disorders, fifth edition, text revision

DTD   Developmental Trauma Disorder

ISST-D   International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation

PGD   Prolonged Grief Disorder

PTSD   Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

REAPP   Relationship Enrichment by Applying Preventive Principles

Glossary

Adaptation

A process in which people learn from their mistakes and benefit from failure (Neufeld & Maté, 203).

Attachment

"An emotional bond that is characterized by the tendency to seek out and maintain proximity to a specific attachment figure, particularly during times of distress" (Hicks and Korbel 2013).

Attachment affair

When an outside attachment competes with or takes away from contact and closeness with a loved one (Neufeld & Maté, 203).

Behavioral approach

A scientific approach that aims to explain how people can be motivated, what they do and how they act, with the purpose to encourage behavior that is helpful and change behavior that causes difficulties.

Child-shifting

Children being shifted to a relative, a friend, or a neighbour of mother (Evans & Davies, 11).

Detachment

A withdrawal dynamic to avoid pain through encasing oneself in a shell of hardened emotion, impervious to love, caused by a hurtful experience of absence (Neufeld & Maté, 80).

Developmental approach

A scientific approach that aims to explain growth, change, and consistency through the lifespan, with the purpose to optimize development, and apply theories to help people in practical situations (Mcleod 2023).

Discipleship

Learning your true identity and authority in the true reality, in relationship to the true Entity.

Dissociation

A process in which a person disconnects from their thoughts, feelings, memories, behaviors, physical sensations, or sense of identity (ISST-D[20] 2020).

External migration

To move to another place in the world.

Historical trauma

Intergenerational trauma which specifically effects indigenous people, including an inheritance of a traumatic history of oppression in communities over several generations (O'Neill et al. 2016).

Inherited trauma

See intergenerational trauma.

Intergenerational trauma

"Trauma that gets passed down from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations" (Franco, 2021).

Internal migration

To move within the same country.

Male-sharing

Men having different children with several women (Evans & Davies, 13).

Matriarchal household

A female-headed household.

Matrifocal household

Mother-focussed household (supported by grandmothers and daughters), based on the idea that the bond between mother and child is of vital importance, while male-female bonds are likely to be less close and enduring (Barrow 2008, 23).

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[20] International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation.

Mishpachah

The Hebrew word for family, which literally means a place of service.

Multidirected partiality

A contextual methodology that helps the counselor or therapist to create a setting in which listening and following the story of each person involved is made possible. This makes it possible to walk next to the client(s) in the family context and to make adjustments when necessary.

Pega pega pa semper

Attachment forever. Pega pega literally means sticky-sticky, and is the Aruban expression for attachment. Pega pega is also the Aruban name for a Gecko.

Red slavery

Enslaved people of Indigenous South American descent.

Resilience

"Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands" (APA 2023).

Restoration

Returning something to a former condition.

Shalem

A safe place which is created by equal giving and receiving. From the same root as shalom (Lapin & Lapin, 16,18).

Trauma

Trauma is a psychological injury that is stored in our neurological system, mind, and body, existing long after the incident(s) that caused it and being triggerable at any time. (Maté & Maté 2022, 21).

Unblaming

Learning to understand that there was a reason for the behavior of your ancestors, which they probably did not understand themselves.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for survey research

1. What is your gender?
47 antwoorden

- 🔵 Man
- 🔴 Woman

59,6%

40,4%
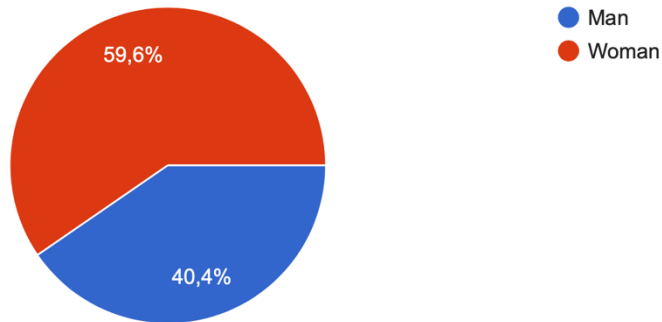
2. What is your age?
47 antwoorden
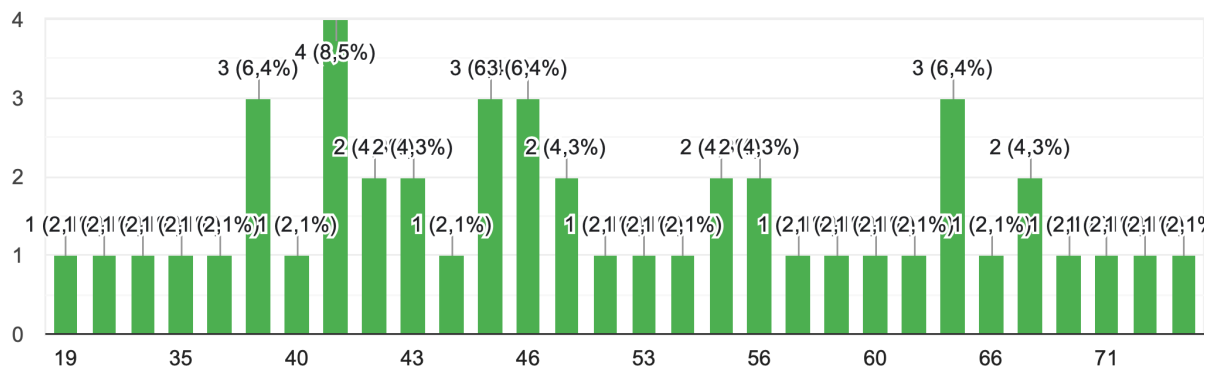
3. Were you born in Aruba?
47 antwoorden

- 🔵 Yes
- 🔴 No

53,2%

46,8%
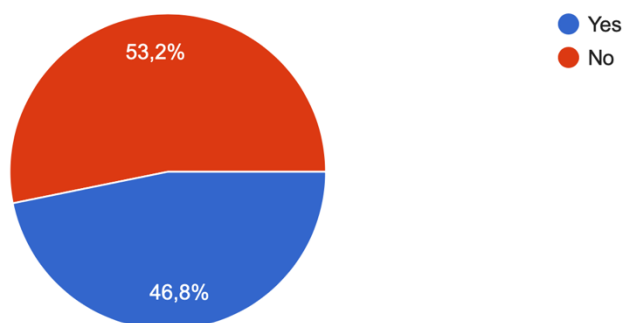
4. How many years have you lived in Aruba?

47 antwoorden
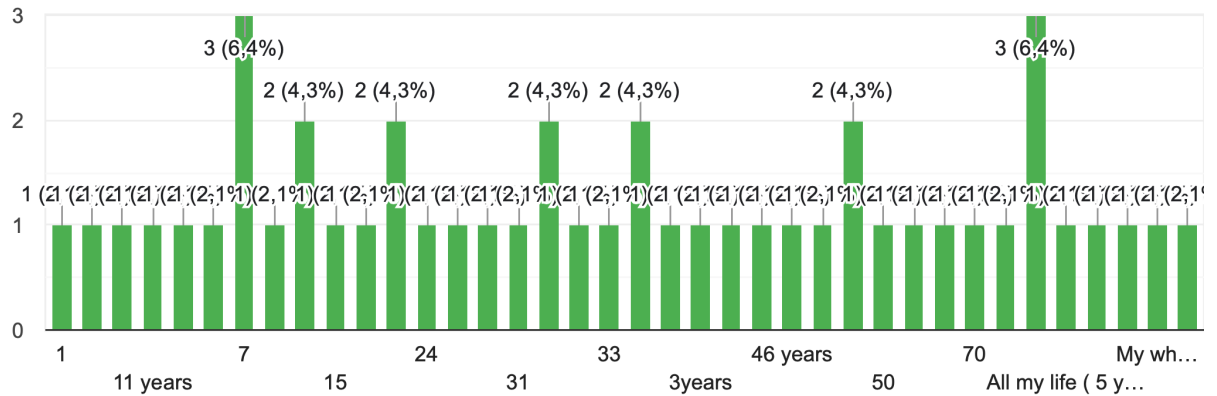
5. What is your marital status?

47 antwoorden

- Single
- Living Apart Together (LAT)
- Living Together
- Engaged
- Married
- Widowed
- Separated
- Divorced

66%

17%
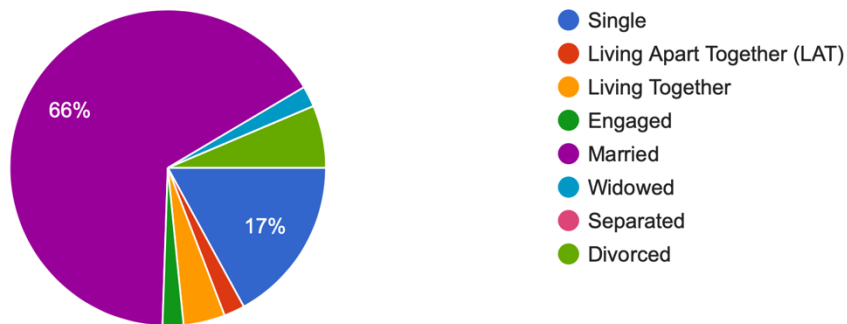
6. What is your primary occupation?

47 antwoorden
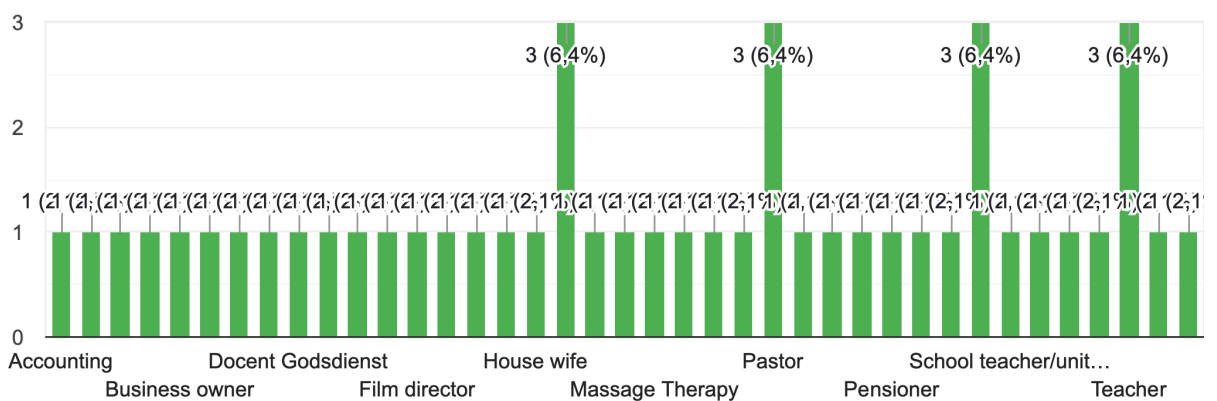
7. Before I asked you to fill out this questionnaire, were you aware of intergenerational traumas in families in Aruba?

47 antwoorden
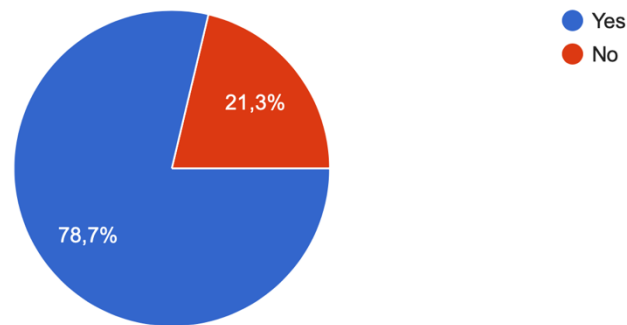
8. Do you believe that intergenerational trauma is a problem in Aruba?

47 antwoorden
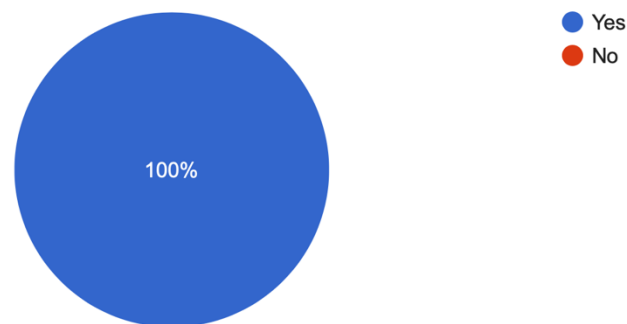
9. What are the causes of intergenerational trauma in Aruba?

- History, culture, lack of knowledge about trauma, lack of proper psychological care in this country.
- Lack of resources / education.
- Ignorance
- Not talking out what you passed through as a child.
- Alcohol and drug abuse.
- Alcohol and macho man mentality.
- Not being educated enough on the matter to be able to speak out.
- One can be a wrong self-image.
- Absence of parents, Child abuse, sexual abuse by members of the family, due to alcohol or drug influence.
- Lack of education on the matter.

- Family dysfunction
- Dysfunctional family
- Single mom families, addiction, low educated, poverty, teenage pregnancies.
- Broken homes
- Sexual abuse, fatherlessness.
- Lack of God in peoples and partners lives. The use and abuse of substances such as alcohol and drugs.
- Taboo, not discussing nor facing the trauma.
- Pedophilia, broken marriages, alcohol/drug use, mistreatment/abuse, lovelessness upbringing.
- Primarily lack of knowledge of the fact that God is a living God and accessible God. This then gives space to generational curses being passed down from generation to generation. This includes all kind of manifestations like drug addiction, alcoholism, etc.
- Adultery
- Family problem
- Alcoholism, child neglect.
- The absence of talking about trauma together with lack of good and accessible psychological help and with that, the absence of healing of trauma, causes trauma can influence the next generation(s).
- The absence of God.
- Trauma, sexual assault, rejection, abuse, addiction.
- Drugs, alcohol, child abuse, incest etc.
- Fatherlessness in families. Abuse of alcohol which leads to reckless behavior, which also causes trauma.
- I think alcohol abuse, divorce, many hours of work.
- Incest, alcohol abuse, fatherlessness.
- Broken families because of absent fathers. Abuse (sexual, physical, and verbal). Taboo about many topics. Wrongly held beliefs about upbringing. Addictions.
- Too many generations living in 1 house.
- Single parents with drugs and alcoholic habits.
- Sexual abuse
- Culture of machoism, power abuse, discrimination.
- Not wanting to break the cycle and choosing to do the same as the generations before.

- There are a plethora of causes of intergenerational trauma, but the main ones I can think of are when there is an authoritative and neglectful figure in the family which makes the child develop trauma, and the child can pass down their trauma to the next generation. The other could be a parental figure in a family who experienced lifelong effects of abuse and their children could develop disorders or substance abuse and the following generation may feel the impact of the trauma from the previous generation.
- Not sure.
- Slavernijverleden, armoede, elementen in de cultuur zoals niet snel over je gevoelens praten.
- Alcohol, affairs, unforgiveness.
- Often infidelity rooted in seeking affirmation.
- Lack of communication and knowledge on the matter.
- Lack of love, fatherlessness, incest, addiction.
- Neglection, and rejection.
- Alcohol, macho culture, lack of an actual relationship with God vs religion.
- Unresolved pain, fatherlessness.
- There is a vicious circle of, among other things, lack of knowledge, poverty, lack of support, social problems that make it extremely difficult to break patterns. Subsequent generations often end up in similar situations again and lack the strength and knowledge to stop the circle on their own. This will result in either showing the same kind of behavior or being confronted with the same kind of problems and temptations.
- Sexual abuse, alcohol abuse, physical abuse, poverty.

10a. What is the main intergenerational family problem in Aruba?
47 antwoorden

Legend:
- Addiction
- Fatherlessness
- Identity confusion
- Role confusion
- Poverty
- Separation of parents
- Sexual abuse
- Mental abuse
- Other

Pie chart values: 10,6%, 12,8%, 8,5%, 17%, 34%
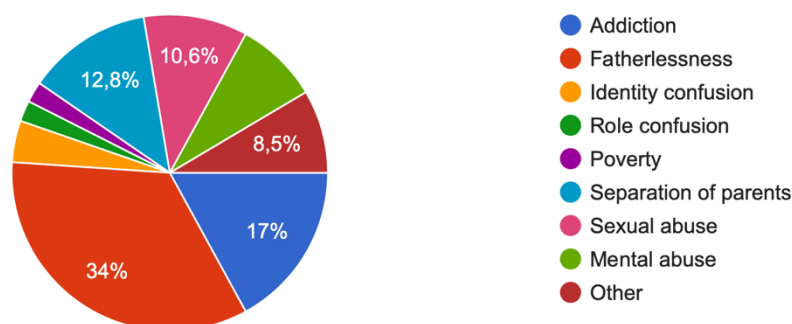
10b. If you chose "other" as your answer at the last question, which main intergenerational

family problem do you see?

- Addiction

- Mental Abuse

- It's a mixture of all above.

- Can't answer this question because I haven't read thorough research on this subject. But generally a lack of having received real love because of various reasons.

- I did not choose "other" but I sure can identify fatherlessness, separation of parents and sexual abuse as also being part of the traumas.

- Separation of parents

- Rejection

- Sexual abuse, addiction, poverty.

- Mental instability (because of abuse in any form) is the core of many family problems.

- Godlessness

- Lack of expressing love and affection.

- Macho culture

- It's hard to pick just one, but this one is probably underlying in all others as well.

11. Did you have to deal with intergenerational family trauma yourself?
47 antwoorden

Legend:
- Yes
- No

40,4%

59,6%
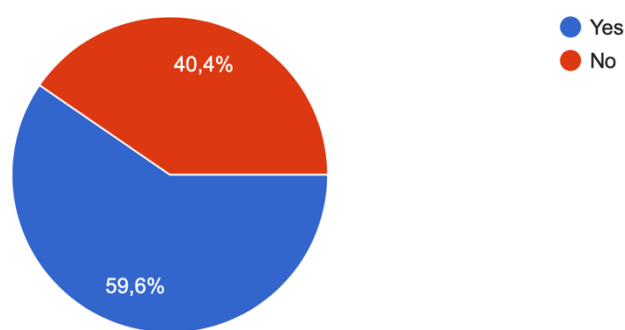
12. How do people in Aruba mainly deal with intergenerational trauma?

47 antwoorden

- 🔵 They don't talk about it at all.
- 🔴 They sometimes talk about it with people they trust.
- 🟠 They often talk about with people they trust.
- 🟢 They talk about it a lot.
- 🟣 They complain about it to people they trust.
- 🔵 They complain about it in general.
- 🔴 They respond emotionally when other…

13. Is there enough professional help available in Aruba to deal with intergenerational family traumas?

47 antwoorden

- 🔵 Yes
- 🔴 No
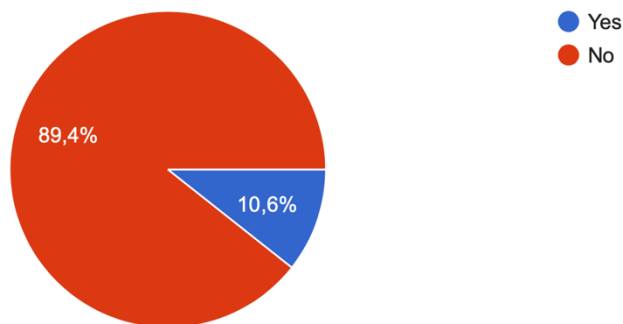
14. What are the main effects of intergenerational family trauma in Aruba in general?

- Identity issues, inequality, broken families, neglected children.
- Criminality
- Youth problems mainly
- Alcohol addiction
- Alcohol addiction
- The children are the ones who don't know how to handle the trauma. Sometimes school dropouts/ wrong friends lead to addiction.
- Confusion, uncertainty, fear.
- Vandalism, poverty, babies making babies.
- They effect relationships with others.

- Broken families, young babies getting babies, absent fathers, suicide, loss of identity, loss of values which increases gangs to be accepted.
- The lack of healthy was of dealing with issues being passed on to the next generation.
- Family disfunction, not seeking for help and that causes violence.
- Bad role model, kids drop out of school.
- Lots of single parent families, fatherlessness, boys getting into criminal activities.
- Addiction
- Trauma and social problems.
- Low self-esteem, people are not motivated to continue with their studies. The rate of professionals and highly educated people on the island remain very low. Also a mentality problem. People really need to educate themselves and stop believing every lie the government tells them.
- People don't reach their full potential in life or will just follow the wrong path.
- Continuation of breakdown in relationships, also visible in teen pregnancies.
- Rebellion, addictions, identity crisis.
- Alcohol
- I think addiction.
- Divorce, sexual abuse, mental abuse.
- Distrust in people, identity crisis, men are undervalued, women too often (in my opinion) take up leadership positions, few male role models, no good examples for boys, fear for taking responsibility, shifting blame onto others, feelings of inferiority.
- Single moms
- No trust in systems, people, organization.
- High rate of divorce, constantly people behaving not properly, one person with several partners (heterosexual, and same sex).
- Fathers being on the road with friends drinking, most of the time.
- Drugs, divorce, family destruction.
- Man don't take their responsibility or position in the family.
- Trust issues in oneself, other and God.
- Children growing up without proper guidance and parental supervision.
- Drugs habits
- You have people who are damaged emotionally and they will pass this on to the next generation.

- Learning problems, mental and physical issues, poverty, marginal households, low self-esteem, unemployment.
- Depression, anger and trust issues.
- Anxiety, depression, substance abuse, low self-esteem, domestic violence, PTSD.
- Not sure.
- Gebrek aan zelfbeheersing, gebrek aan structuur, gebrek aan verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel, slecht zelfbeeld.
- These traumas become normalized.
- Feeling insecure, low assertiveness, craving affirmation. Separated families also often result in lower income; children not doing well in school or not being motivated to continue professional development; increased stress resulting in physical and mental health issues.
- Physical, mental and verbal abuse.
- Identity confusion
- Addictions
- Young mothers, addiction, and abuse.
- Hopelessness, poverty, people are 'stuck' and don't know why, sexual abuse.
- Though there are many, even at a young age, you can see that both kids and adults are already stuck in a certain perception of life, of their possibilities or place in a family and their self-worth. This is probably a big part of not being able to battle all the other problems they encounter and why they are vulnerable to many of them.
- Neglect / avoidance

15. What are the effects of intergenerational family trauma on marriages in Aruba?
- No willingness to really commit in a marriage, very high divorce rate.
- Divorce
- Plenty divorces.
- Family separation
- The children suffer the most under this.
- Divorce or stay in the marriage but each one have their own life.
- Divorce
- A poor marriage.
- Abuse, loveless, abandonment, lack of communication or expression of feelings.

- Not having an understanding of how to effectively navigate through crisis as they arrive.
- Trust
- Divorce, don't trust one another.
- Lot of divorces.
- Divorce
- Problems
- High divorce rate on the island. This has another effect on children and teenagers. They grow up with low self-esteem and lack of identity.
- Insecurities as a partner (thinking you might fail your spouse), unable to love freely, afraid of betrayal, etc.
- Breakdown of marriages.
- Broken marriages
- Adultery, divorce.
- Divorce
- Divorce, child neglect.
- Unbiblical division of roles (woman is the boss in the family). Because of not having a good example, not being able to maintain a good marriage. In addition there are many extramarital relationships.
- Less valuable
- One of the highest rates of divorces in the world.
- Very strong effect. People don't have an example to follow. So that's why they don't know how to behave in a marriage.
- Infidelity, distrust, broken relationship.
- Children growing up with pain and loneliness.
- Many divorces
- Emotional baggage that hinders true connection.
- The trauma hinders the institution of marriage to function properly.
- Divorce
- Marriages can break down due to this and you will have less strong healthy marriages.
- Not capable to build marriage relationships, poor communication skills, poor educational skills, self-centeredness, everyone living their own single lives in the marriage. Cheating on both sides.
- I would say lack of understanding, toxic behaviors, etc.

- Domestic abuse, minimization, substance abuse.
- Divorce
- Die gaan bijna allemaal stuk, gebroken huwelijken en veel ontrouw.
- May lead to separation because many couples bring their emotional baggage into a new relationship.
- Mistrust, false expectations and seeking for affirmation outside the marriage, resulting in more broken families.
- Many couples are living miserable, and others end up divorcing.
- Divorce
- Broken marriages
- Divorce, more than 1 partner at once, abuse (mental/physical).
- Unhappiness because people think that this is what they deserve / that this is what marriage is all about.
- Massive, in my school I see that (by far) most households are broken up.
- Abuse

16. What could be (Biblical) solutions for the restoration of intergenerational trauma in Aruba?
- Jesus is the only answer to true restoration of trauma. If you find your identity in Him, things change.
- Include God in the family.
- Awareness
- Ephesians 5:25 and onward.
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Show them that in the Bible these traumas also exist, and how there can be a change with what the Bible says how to handle these traumas. God's point of view.
- Have believers understand what it is so they can be able to help.
- Once one has given his or her life to Jesus and allows the word to do the cleansing in their lives.
- Healing starts when you accept that there is a trauma. Knowing that you are not a failure, or a mistake, you are loved with an unconditional love, Jesus loves you with an Agape Love that surpasses every method there can be.
- Gaining an understanding of the purpose for relationships.
- Bible lessons in school, they could learn at a young age that they could trust God above all.

- Have God in the center of their lives.
- Teaching people about the importance of a stable family, marriage and faithfulness, the role of a father.
- Cheering Christ with the people, and let them know there is hope in Him.
- Yes
- Pray and fast for the whole island.
- Confession, healing and a renewed heart.
- Jesus restoring human beings in their heart by pouring His love into it, and followers of Him being mediators of this to others.
- The knowledge of the triune God. Let people know that God is alive and still helping today, and that He always will.
- Bible teaching
- Counseling
- Awareness of the problem.
- First of all, people need a relationship with God through Jesus. Then, they need to get their identity in Christ. They have to forgive themselves and the people around them in order to be able to build healthy relationships. I think knowing and believing who they are in Christ is crucial for restoration. In many cases I think, professional help (from a Biblical viewpoint) is needed also.
- Relation with God.
- Awareness, repentance, forgiveness, accountability, train the trainer.
- Course during marriage, pre-marriage courses, books on marriage.
- By bringing awareness that is not a taboo to talk about it, if you have experienced it. But that there is help and restoration available primarily by bringing these burdens to God. And secondly, receiving help from mature brothers and sisters, pastors, and professionals who can guide them in the healing process.
- Everything
- Liberation of generational curses.
- I don't have an answer.
- No sex before marriage. Teachings about being a godly woman/man, Gods commandments for the spouses concerning marriage.
- Preaching the gospel to kids and youth.

- Forgiving would be a key factor in this all. But important is to really listen to people who have gone through this, and remembering that every situation is different again.

- Christ is the solution for everything. The awareness of this has to be promoted. Most of the people believe in God but don't know what He can do for them.

- A solution is breaking the cycle but it has to come from the person itself, realizing and reflecting that as a person, you don't want to go through the same as your family member.

- Don't really know much, I'm not religious. However from what I know, prayers? Because it can be another way of processing your feelings.

- Turning hearts to Jesus.

- Het nieuwe leven van Jezus in mensen!

- Discipleship, counseling, renouncing to the past, faithfulness to the spouse.

- Finding our identity, purpose and hope in God. Learning to humble ourselves and to forgive.

- Prior to marriage, educate couples how they ought to treat each other and how to deal with issues as they arise.

- The Father's heart, sozo.

- Reconciliation with the heavenly Father.

- Education in school, modernization of the church within the community (long term solutions), more condom-use or integrating birth control in the medical package (short term solutions).

- Programs/small groups that deal with the root. Not too big of a group because you want people to feel safe to share on their journey to freedom. We need biblical counselors.

- Building a relationship with God can drastically change both their self-image and perspective. In addition, by getting to know God as a Father, it gives them the opportunity to be a different parent for their children for the next relationship and to give them a different, stronger foundation for their lives.

- Restauration through transformation.

17. If you are familiar with the Bible, which Bible verses/chapters/books speak to you when it comes to the restoration of marriages and family relationships?

- Ruth, because of the commitment she has to her mother-in-law and her willingness to serve and leave everything she knew behind.

- Can't remember.

- Love your neighbors as you love yourself.
- Psalms 127
- 1 Peter 5: 10
- Isaiah 40:31, Jeremiah 29:11, 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- Ephesians 5: 22-29, Malachi 2:14-16.
- He can reconcile your marriage if you receive the gift of your Father. He heals the broken-hearted. Surrender to Him, you are worth more than silver or gold, you are valuable and accepted. Start over. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, all things have been new.
- Paul in several books in the New Testament addresses marriage and its structure.
- Ecclesiastes 4:12
- Ephesians 5:21-33, Ephesians 6:1-3.
- Ecclesiastes 4:12
- 1 Peter 4:8
- Esther, the Psalms & David.
- Proverbs to start with, and then the whole Bible. Continue with Genesis, when God created man and woman and their role. They have to learn to love and respect each other.
- James 5:16
- Malachi 4:6 about turning the hearts of the fathers to their children.
- Isaiah 54 and 55, Psalm 139, just to name a few.
- Malachi 4:6
- The book of Ephesians.
- So many verses about identity, f.e. Romans 8:15, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 1:4,5,7. I think this has to be the basis. On top of that Biblical teaching about marriage f.e. Ephesians 5:22 and further, Philippians 2:3,4.
- Don't know from the head.
- Genesis 1:26-28 and Ephesians 5:22-27.
- 1 Corinthians 13, Hebrews 13, Proverbs 31.
- Ephesians
- Colossians 3, full chapter.
- Colossians 3:13-14, Ephesians 4:31-32, Proverbs 25:29.
- The book of Ephesians.
- Honor parents and forgive as much as it depends on you.

- Ephesians
- Gestorven met Christus en opgestaan met Hem in een nieuw leven. Romeinen 6:3,4.
- 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Malachi 2:16.
- Husbands were given instructions to love their wives as Christ loves the church.
- Ephesians
- 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 or Ephesians 5:22-6:2.
- I would say a verse that addresses the men role within a family and how he should take responsibility for the family and the decisions, and how the women should take on their responsibilities as well.
- The hearts of the sons and fathers being restored to one another, Malachi 4:6.
- Ecclesiastes 4:13, Ephesians 5.
- Psalm 34:18, Romans 12:2.

18. If you are familiar with the Bible, which Bible verses/chapters/books speak to you when it comes to the restoration of intergenerational trauma?

- Genesis
- Can't remember.
- Spare the rod and spoil the child.
- Jacob's life with his brother, his father-in-law, and his sons in Genesis.
- Psalm 78:1-10
- 1 John 1:9
- Jeremiah 30:17, Isaiah 61:7.
- Hebrews 4:12
- The love of God is everlasting. Genesis 1:27, you were made in His image. Psalms 139:15-16, know that you are not a mistake. He wants to lavish you with His love. Matthew 7:10, He offers you more than your earthly father ever can. There is hope, He comforts you. He wipes away all your pain.
- I would say, do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of the mind.
- Matthew 6:26
- The book of Proverbs, 1 chapter daily.
- Don't know.
- 1 Peter 5:10

- Husbands, love your wife and wife's submit to your husband and respect your husband.

- Deuteronomy 30:1-10

- Malachi 4:6 about turning the hearts of the fathers to their children.

- Isaiah 54 and 55, Psalm 139, just to name a few.

- A house divided shall not stand.

- Ephesians, Romans, Corinthians.

- Again, verses about identity, Ephesians 1-3, Romans 8, Galatians 4:6-7, 5:1,13-14.

- Don t know from the head.

- Proverbs 3:5-6 and Isaiah 40:29.

- Romans 12:1

- Malachi 4:5-6, 2 Corinthians 5:17, John 8:32.

- The Psalms, Proverbs, wisdom for families.

- Galatians

- Ephesians 2, full chapter.

- Exodus 34 :6-7

- Book of Ephesians.

- God is a healer and He can also heal people with traumas.

- Colossians 1:13-14

- Gestorven met Christus en opgestaan met Hem in een nieuw leven. Romeinen 6:3,4.

- Matthew 11: 28-30

- Romans 5:8, Psalm 27:10, John 1:12, Romans 8:28.

- Ephesians 3:20-21

- Romans

- 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

- Exodus 34 speaks of punishment to the third and fourth generation.

- Psalm 34:18

Appendix B

Table P-A.1. Population by single years of age and sex (in absolute numbers and as a % of the total population)

Age	Absolute			Relative (%)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0	419	385	804	0,4	0,4	0,7
1	550	491	1.041	0,5	0,5	1,0
2	543	542	1.084	0,5	0,5	1,0
3	591	518	1.108	0,5	0,5	1,0
4	605	613	1.217	0,6	0,6	1,1
0-4	2.707	2.548	5.255	2,5	2,4	4,9
5	621	570	1.191	0,6	0,5	1,1
6	688	605	1.292	0,6	0,6	1,2
7	647	653	1.299	0,6	0,6	1,2
8	634	633	1.267	0,6	0,6	1,2
9	637	634	1.271	0,6	0,6	1,2
5-9	3.226	3.095	6.320	3,0	2,9	5,8
10	646	653	1.298	0,6	0,6	1,2
11	686	686	1.371	0,6	0,6	1,3
12	679	707	1.386	0,6	0,7	1,3
13	760	691	1.451	0,7	0,6	1,3
14	752	699	1.451	0,7	0,6	1,3
10-14	3.522	3.436	6.958	3,3	3,2	6,4
15	809	713	1.522	0,7	0,7	1,4
16	668	654	1.322	0,6	0,6	1,2
17	744	707	1.451	0,7	0,7	1,3
18	681	631	1.312	0,6	0,6	1,2
19	632	617	1.249	0,6	0,6	1,2
15-19	3.534	3.322	6.856	3,3	3,1	6,3
20	650	585	1.235	0,6	0,5	1,1
21	528	509	1.036	0,5	0,5	1,0
22	498	510	1.008	0,5	0,5	0,9
23	615	490	1.105	0,6	0,5	1,0
24	539	519	1.058	0,5	0,5	1,0
20-24	2.831	2.612	5.443	2,6	2,4	5,0
25	632	592	1.224	0,6	0,5	1,1
26	575	622	1.196	0,5	0,6	1,1
27	559	651	1.210	0,5	0,6	1,1
28	651	643	1.295	0,6	0,6	1,2
29	531	647	1.178	0,5	0,6	1,1
25-29	2.948	3.155	6.103	2,1	2,3	4,4
30	751	697	1.448	0,7	0,6	1,3
31	634	724	1.359	0,6	0,7	1,3
32	575	692	1.267	0,5	0,6	1,2
33	630	674	1.304	0,6	0,6	1,2
34	651	715	1.367	0,6	0,7	1,3
30-34	3.241	3.504	6.744	3,0	3,2	6,2
35	710	820	1.530	0,7	0,8	1,4
36	616	748	1.364	0,6	0,7	1,3
37	583	737	1.320	0,5	0,7	1,2
38	642	707	1.350	0,6	0,7	1,2
39	642	712	1.354	0,6	0,7	1,3
35-39	3.193	3.725	6.918	3,0	3,4	6,4
40	771	896	1.667	0,7	0,8	1,5
41	585	808	1.393	0,5	0,7	1,3
42	674	766	1.440	0,6	0,7	1,3
43	627	816	1.443	0,6	0,8	1,3
44	589	752	1.340	0,5	0,7	1,2
40-44	3.247	4.037	7.284	3,0	3,7	6,7
45	720	787	1.507	0,7	0,7	1,4
46	626	763	1.390	0,6	0,7	1,3
47	722	807	1.529	0,7	0,7	1,4
48	744	900	1.644	0,7	0,8	1,5
49	680	938	1.618	0,6	0,9	1,5
45-49	3.492	4.196	7.688	3,2	3,9	7,1
50	833	996	1.830	0,8	0,9	1,7
51	723	842	1.566	0,7	0,8	1,4
52	793	918	1.711	0,7	0,8	1,6
53	775	929	1.704	0,7	0,9	1,6
54	744	908	1.652	0,7	0,8	1,5
50-54	3.868	4.594	8.462	3,6	4,2	7,8
55	779	922	1.702	0,7	0,9	1,6
56	819	1.011	1.831	0,8	0,9	1,7
57	833	905	1.738	0,8	0,8	1,6
58	855	1.006	1.860	0,8	0,9	1,7
59	833	911	1.744	0,8	0,8	1,6
55-59	4.120	4.755	8.874	3,8	4,4	8,2
60	820	1.033	1.854	0,8	1,0	1,7
61	680	832	1.512	0,6	0,8	1,4
62	763	889	1.652	0,7	0,8	1,5
63	710	862	1.571	0,7	0,8	1,5
64	584	796	1.380	0,5	0,7	1,3
60-64	3.557	4.412	7.969	3,3	4,1	7,4
65	708	838	1.546	0,7	0,8	1,4
66	577	727	1.304	0,5	0,7	1,2
67	584	649	1.233	0,5	0,6	1,1
68	566	655	1.220	0,5	0,6	1,1
69	498	608	1.106	0,5	0,6	1,0
65-69	2.933	3.476	6.410	2,7	3,2	5,9
70	539	593	1.132	0,5	0,5	1,0
71	398	469	866	0,4	0,4	0,8
72	416	526	942	0,4	0,5	0,9
73	351	470	820	0,3	0,4	0,8
74	335	440	775	0,3	0,4	0,7
70-74	2.039	2.497	4.536	1,9	2,3	4,2
75	335	447	782	0,3	0,4	0,7
76	263	351	614	0,2	0,3	0,6
77	270	343	613	0,2	0,3	0,6
78	213	266	479	0,2	0,2	0,4
79	216	282	498	0,2	0,3	0,5
75-79	1.296	1.689	2.985	1,2	1,6	2,8
80	227	279	506	0,2	0,3	0,5
81	176	238	414	0,2	0,2	0,4
82	168	230	398	0,2	0,2	0,4
83	111	211	322	0,1	0,2	0,3
84	122	203	326	0,1	0,2	0,3
80-84	804	1.161	1.966	0,7	1,1	1,8
85	87	191	278	0,1	0,2	0,3
86	78	155	233	0,1	0,1	0,2
87	73	122	195	0,1	0,1	0,2
88	45	99	144	0,0	0,1	0,1
89	39	74	113	0,0	0,1	0,1
85-89	321	642	963	0,3	0,6	0,9
90	42	66	109	0,0	0,1	0,1
91	24	55	79	0,0	0,1	0,1
92	27	39	66	0,0	0,0	0,1
93	14	30	43	0,0	0,0	0,0
94	9	31	40	0,0	0,0	0,0
90-94	117	221	337	0,1	0,2	0,3
95+	29	64	93	0,0	0,1	0,1
Total	51.024	57.141	108.166	47,2	52,8	100,0

gem. leeftijd bevolking

Source: Population and Housing Census 2020

Appendix C

Total number of immigrants and immigration rate, 1972-2023 1st QTR		
Year	Number of immigrants	Immigration rate
1972	1.942	33,46
1973	2.171	37,24
1974	1.696	29,07
1975	1.741	29,87
1976	1.691	28,97
1977	1.988	33,94
1978	1.778	30,25
1979	2.040	34,46
1980	1.897	31,66
1981	1.950	32,20
1982	2.382	38,87
1983	2.562	41,17
1984	1.745	27,74
1985	1.333	21,60
1986	1.447	24,15
1987	1.587	26,83
1988	2.211	37,27
1989	2.743	45,38
1990	4.436	70,69
1991	4.229	64,13
1992	4.469	64,76
1993	7.278	98,77
1994	3.287	42,36
1995	4.094	51,30
1996	4.950	59,62
1997	4.007	46,43
1998	3.416	38,62
1999	3.344	37,30
2000	3.535	38,96
2001	3.386	37,03
2002	3.076	33,41
2003	3.516	37,75
2004	3.858	40,55
2005	3.756	38,47
2006	2.387	24,01
2007	2.199	21,96
2008	2.926	28,99
2009	2.846	28,01
2010	2.534	24,88
2011	3.546	34,56
2012	3.411	32,76
2013	3.412	32,29
2014	2.725	25,51
2015	3.595	33,32
2016	2.591	23,83
2017	2.713	24,95
2018	3.169	29,10
2019	2.809	25,72
2020	1.846	17,00
2021	2.193	20,36
2022	2.580	24,04
2023 1st QTR	686	6,38

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics and the Civil Registry and Population Office

Appendix D

Marital status of the population of Aruba in percentages, 1972-2020

Year	Never married	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Other
1960	60,1	31,8	0,9	2,3	
1972	64,0	31,9	1,6	2,5	
1981	57,2	36,1	3,3	3,4	
1991	52,4	37,7	6,2	3,7	
2000	52,1	37,2	7,3	3,5	
2010	51,7	34,7	9,6	3,9	
2020	51,0	33,4	10,0	4,1	1,4

Source: Population and Housing Census 1960, 1972, 1981, 1991, 2000, 2020

Marriages and divorces, 1985-2023 1st QTR

	Marriages	Divorces	Marriage/Divorce rate	Midyear population	Marriage rate	Divorce rate
1985	431	171	39,7	61.728	7,0	2,8
1986	357	191	53,5	59.931	6,0	3,2
1987	380	214	56,3	59.159	6,4	3,6
1988	390	196	50,3	59.331	6,6	3,3
1989	443	216	48,8	60.443	7,3	3,6
1990	504	270	53,6	62.753	8,0	4,3
1991	515	209	40,6	65.896	7,8	3,2
1992	566	219	38,7	69.005	8,2	3,2
1993	643	231	35,9	73.685	8,7	3,1
1994	620	198	31,9	77.595	8,0	2,6
1995	591	246	41,6	79.805	7,4	3,1
1996	600	292	48,7	83.021	7,2	3,5
1997	592	305	51,5	86.301	6,9	3,5
1998	564	331	58,7	88.451	6,4	3,7
1999	913	333	36,5	89.659	10,2	3,7
2000	964	342	35,5	90.588	10,6	3,8
2001	970	333	34,3	91.439	10,6	3,6
2002	770	519	67,4	92.074	8,4	5,6
2003	753	505	67,1	93.128	8,1	5,4
2004	770	484	62,9	95.138	8,1	5,1
2005	744	461	62,0	97.635	7,6	4,7
2006	678	544	80,2	99.405	6,8	5,5
2007	646	444	68,7	100.150	6,5	4,4
2008	711	418	58,8	100.917	7,0	4,1
2009	658	425	64,6	101.604	6,5	4,2
2010	673	484	71,9	101.838	6,6	4,8
2011	630	504	80,0	102.591	6,1	4,9
2012	749	508	67,8	104.110	7,2	4,9
2013	710	535	75,4	105.675	6,7	5,1
2014	775	501	64,6	106.807	7,3	4,7
2015	835	405	48,5	107.906	7,7	3,8
2016	801	428	53,4	108.727	7,4	3,9
2017	790	423	53,5	108.735	7,3	3,9
2018	725	396	54,6	108.908	6,7	3,6
2019	587	372	63,4	109.203	5,4	3,4
2020	307	287	93,5	108.587	2,8	2,6
2021	389	314	80,7	107.700	3,6	2,9
2022	546	323	59,2	107.310	5,1	3,0
1st QTR 2023	102	103	101,0	107.455	0,9	1,0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics and the Civil Registry and Population Office