

UNDERSTANDING WOUNDS

By Ben Bennett

Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:14-17 NLT

Our battle is ultimately not against our behaviors, thoughts, or our sin, but against Satan and the fiery arrows that He attacks us with. These fiery arrows often come in the form of lies that have been rooted in our souls through pain and wounds we develop from our life experiences, producing shame and faulty core beliefs in our lives.

Yes, we sin because we are sinful, but we also sin because we are sinned against and we develop ways to cope with the pain that others' sin has caused us. This pain is often caused unintentionally by those that are closest to us, like our friends and families, resulting in emotional wounds in our lives.

Wounds tend to come in the form of two extremes. The first is "big W" wounds. These are caused by infrequent painful experiences of high intensity. It could have been sexual or physical abuse, the loss of a parent, a life threatening situation, the divorce of parents, or other infrequent experiences of high intensity.¹

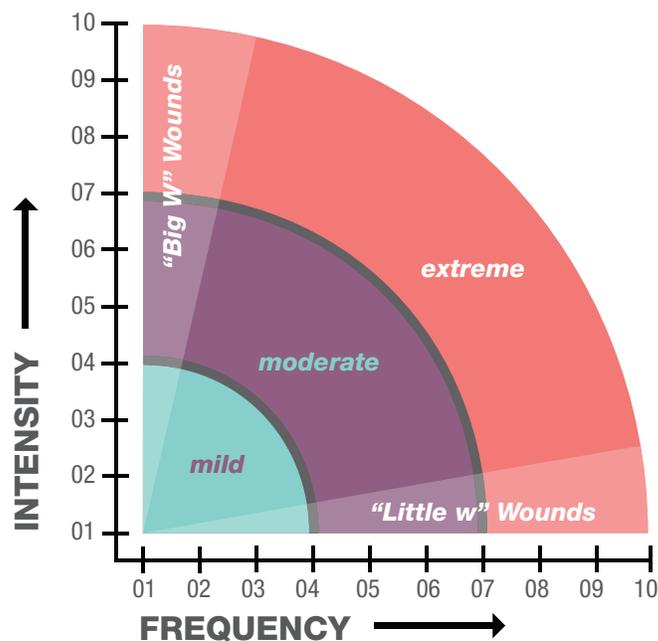
The second form of wound is "little w" wounds. These are caused by frequent painful experiences of low intensity.² This type is more common and all of us have experienced this. For example, maybe you had consistent experiences of someone communicating to you that you'd never measure up in life. Maybe it was unintentionally communicated to you over and over that you had to perform to to get approval. Maybe you were bullied consistently, controlled, or manipulated. Maybe a parent was physically or emotionally absent consistently. All of these could cause little w wounds leaving a deep impact on our soul and leading us into the extreme range of wounds.³ They can affect us just as much as Big W wounds.

"Big W" Wounds:

- Sexual Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Loss of Parent
- Divorce of Parents
- Combat Experiences

"Little w" Wounds:

- Bullying
- Controlled
- Manipulation
- Absent Parent



Whether it's wounds from our families, our friends, sexism, racism, injustice, or the lies of the world communicated to us, we all have wounds. In life, we can think that we have gotten over the past or since we're no longer angry about something that happened years ago that we've moved on. But painful events and wounds from others can deeply impact our souls, leading us to cope rather than truly heal. And on top of that, everyone is created uniquely and responds to painful events differently. So something that deeply hurts one person may not affect another person at all. Identifying and addressing our emotional wounds in life is a crucial part of discipleship and becoming more like Christ. If we ignore our wounds, this will severely limit our ability to connect with God

¹Ted Roberts, Seven Pillars of Freedom (Pure Desire Ministries International, 2015), 161

² Ted Roberts, Seven Pillars of Freedom (Pure Desire Ministries International, 2015), 161

³ Ted Roberts, Pure Desire (Regal, 2008), 67



and others for the rest of our lives until we work through them with others. See, the ways we sin and cope are ultimately about medicating our emotional wounds in life.

“YOU CAN NEVER BE MORE SPIRITUALLY MATURE THAN YOU ARE EMOTIONALLY MATURE.” *-THE EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE*

A friend of mine, Dr. James Reeves, explains so well why addressing wounds is so important in what he calls the Emotional/Spiritual Principle. The Emotional/Spiritual Principle states “You can never be more spiritually mature than you are emotionally mature.”⁴ Put differently, unaddressed emotional wounds cause us to hit the ceiling of our spiritual growth. How? Well when we’ve been hurt by others we develop bitterness, we isolate, we believe lies about ourselves, God, and others, we inhibit God’s work in our lives. In short, we sin. When we sin, our intimacy with God and others is stifled.

So often in scripture the measure of our maturity and love for God is directly linked to our ability to love others. One example, Luke 20:27 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’”. The degree to which we love others is directly correlated with our ability to love ourselves. And our ability to love ourselves is directly correlated to our ability to love God and understand who He truly is. It’s an entire progression. When we have experiences of being hurt by others our view of God and others is damaged, and we medicate these wounds in a myriad of different ways, inhibiting our emotional and spiritual growth.

By identifying and working through our emotional wounds with people who are loving and accepting, we can begin to see God for who he truly is as a loving and personal Father. As that happens, we can begin to see ourselves as God sees us, as someone who is loved, valuable, and adequate. These beliefs take root experientially, in our hearts, growing us closer to God and others. This is true discipleship.

⁴ cityonahilldfw.com/about-us/

WORKING THROUGH WOUNDS & RENEWING THE MIND

By Ben Bennett

“In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.” Ephesians 6:16 NLT

The enemy often attacks us through fiery arrows in the form of lies that have been rooted in our souls. These lies are developed through pain and emotional wounds from our life experiences, producing shame and faulty core beliefs. Often, these lies can operate at a subconscious level, causing great difficulty in identifying them, their source, and steps to practically work through them.

These painful experiences and lies can easily lead us to develop ways to cope in life through emotional health issues and habitual sin. For example, maybe you often believe the lie that you are inadequate and it is connected to the emotional wound you carry from being bullied by friends as a child. Whenever you face a challenging task, you feel inadequate because of that wound, and you find yourself procrastinating to escape the feelings of failure. Throughout this document, you'll find a couple practical solutions to begin the process of identifying wounds from painful life experiences, working through them, and renewing your mind in light of your true God given identity.

TOP 10 MOST PAINFUL EXPERIENCES EXERCISE

Make a list of your top 10 most painful experiences in detail, focusing on painful experiences that happened during childhood. Please note, some experiences may be infrequent but of high intensity. I.E. the divorce of parents, a death in the family, sexual assault, or physical abuse. Other experiences may be frequent but of lower intensity. I.E. bullying, a somewhat physically or emotionally absent parent, a performance mentality, being controlled, manipulated, or it being communicated that you have to earn the love of friends or family by their words or actions.

For each of the 10 experiences answer the following three questions.

1. What part of the pain am I responsible for, and who do I need to forgive? (Working toward forgiveness is a process that takes time. Forgiving others is crucial to the healing process and allows us to no longer be controlled by bitterness or our pain.)
2. How did this event affect the important people in my life? (How did people respond? Did people stand up for me?)
3. How has this event affected life for me today? (What faulty core beliefs about myself do I believe as a result of this experience? How am I still reacting to these experiences?) I.E. I feel inadequate, worthless, unlovable. I fear being rejected by people's words or actions. I fear failure. I escape through overworking, food, porn, social media, entertainment.

RENEWING THE MIND

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” Romans 12:2 NIV
“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV

One of the most practical ways to renew your mind in light of your true God given identity is through meditating on something called Personal Promises. These are simply those times where you've experienced a promise from God about your core identity or who He is. Practically, these allow you to renew your mind and heal from faulty core beliefs. Here's how to identify Personal Promises from God in your life.




STEP ONE

Identify 3 core lies you believe about yourself, God, and others. Often these are directly tied to some of the painful experiences in your life growing up. I.E. I'm worthless, unlovable, I can never measure up, I can't trust people, if I let people close they will hurt me, God doesn't love me.

STEP TWO

Identify 3 verses of scripture to combat each of the 3 lies. I.E. I'm not worthless because I'm loved. 1 John 3:1 "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."

STEP THREE

Identify a time in life where you experienced the truth of this scripture and when God communicated this to you. I.E. My first year in college, I recommitted my life to Christ at a worship gathering. During that experience, I felt so loved and accepted by God and others and experienced what it meant to be a loved child of God as 1 John 3:1 says. This part is crucial as it engages the right side of the brain, the same place our woundedness is stored, so this helps the truth of scripture sink into our heart, renew our mind, and combat our painful experiences.

NEXT ////////////////

Meditate daily on the scripture and the experience. As you meditate on the verse, close your eyes and visualize yourself back in the experience. Meditate on these whenever old faulty core beliefs get triggered. I.E. Whenever I feel worthless, I close my eyes and picture the experience I had during my first year of college encountering God's love for me. I visualize the worship band playing music, remember the love I felt from God, and I quote 1 John 3:1.

Lastly, we sin because we are sinful, but we also sin because we are sinned against. We develop ways of coping with our painful life experiences. As you find yourself reacting to stress, difficult situations in life, or going back to habitual sin, ask yourself what pain from your past is getting triggered that may be leading to your specific reaction. I.E. As a child, my Dad was very strict and would lash out at me with intense anger when I misbehaved. This left an emotional wound of rejection in my soul. As an adult, when people say critical things, I often feel worthless once again. I find myself medicating these negative emotions through sin in the form of overeating, resenting people, looking at porn, and overworking to earn approval from others. Many things can trigger our wounds and our desire to look at porn. To see the extent of these triggers refer to the 19 triggers document (also online at josh.org in the Porn Portfolio).