

Tending Our Wounds

We are wounded men. One of several biblical terms for “man” is the Hebrew word *enosh*—for man in his weakness and woundedness.

Life involves suffering. We are wounded by painful experiences with our family, intimate relationships, authority figures, violence, poverty, oppression, addictions, or other hardships.

Where wounded, we need healing for our good and for those around us. As Richard Rohr asserts, what we don’t transform, we transmit. Because hurt people, hurt people. Wounded men wound others, projecting their pain on those around them.

While some men have been wounded by their mothers, Rohr notes that the most common pain men experience is a father wound or father hunger, leaving most men with a huge, aching hole inside them. This is a source not only of great personal pain but also our social problems as men act out their fear, pain, and anger. Healing this wound can lead to tremendous social reforms.

Patrick Arnold observes:

Few of us grow up without a father-wound of some kind, and the type inflicted on Ishmael—father neglect—is extremely common today. Every boy needs to relate to a father who will give him a permanent sense of security, a psychic safe-place of sureness and strength that tells him that he belongs, that he is wanted, and that he will make it with a little work. Every boy needs to know that his father is on his side, pulling for him, giving him paternal energy so that whatever he does, he knows he can succeed. If the boy does not receive such assurance from his father, he cannot recreate a firm psychic center within himself, and he is left with a terrible lack of self-esteem and confidence . . . [and] where psychic holes develop, demons rush in.*

Recognizing this wound is not to blame or judge those who have hurt us. Our goal is not to pass judgment but to reach understanding for our healing and growth with a spirit of compassion.

* Patrick Arnold, *Wildmen, Warriors and Kings: Masculine Spirituality and the Bible* (Crossroads, 1991), 94–95.

Seven steps for the process of healing

1. Name the wound and its source.
2. Grieve—feeling our pain, sadness, and anger.
3. Bring this to God (and others) so it may become a sacred wound.
4. Receive the gifts from our wound.
5. Forgive—letting go of our pain, anger, and demands.
6. Embrace our parents and others with understanding and grace.
7. Extend the love we wish we had received.

Remember: *What we don't transform, we transmit.*



For Reflection and Conversation

1. How have I been wounded?
2. How have I hurt or wounded others?
3. To what extent has there been healing and reconciliation?
4. What do I need to forgive or do to make amends?
5. What gifts from my experience do I want to embrace?

–Steve Thomas