

Healing the Wound of Fatherlessness

Apostle Mike Connell

Session 3: The Father Wound

I. What is the Father Wound?

1. What is the Father Wound?

- **Definition**
- A Father wound is the **long-term emotional pain** that a person suffered which is caused by abuse or abandonment of a father's love

- **It is Long Term**
 - The pain is long term because the wounds take place in childhood, but its effects are often not apparent until many years later
- **It is Emotional**
 - The pain is deeply emotional because it effects the heart, not the physical heart but the spiritual heart

2. The Importance of Your Heart

- *Prov 4:23 Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life (AMP)*
- **The heart is the core of our identity, the seat of our emotions, desires and belief system**
 - Whatever affects the heart affects the course of our life and relationships
 - A father is designed and called by God to love his child as the representative of Father God
 - There is a strong desire and longing in the heart of every child to be loved by his father
 - When a father fails to love his child, he has abandoned one of his most important assignments
- When a father damages the heart of their child the impact can be life shaping

3. Two ways the Father Wound takes place

i. Abuse: Things a Father Does

- The Father Wound can occur because of Abuse
- Abuse means to treat in a harmful or offensive way that causes injury or damage
- **Physical**
 - The abuse can be physical
 - Slapping, punching, shaking, pushing, kicking, choking, pinching, hair-pulling
- **Emotional and Verbal**
 - The abuse can be emotional

- Name calling, yelling, anger and rage, threats, criticism, ridiculing, scaring, ignoring, humiliating in front of others, belittling, excessive teasing, abuse of mother in front of child, damaging furniture and walls
- Statements like: What's wrong with you? Can't you do anything right?
- **Sexual**
 - The abuse can be sexual
 - Inappropriate touch, indecent exposure, exposure to pornography, sexual conversations

ii. **Neglect: Things a Father Withholds**

- **The Father Wound can occur because the father neglects or withholds what the child needs**
- **Examples**
 - Not providing leadership
 - Ignoring the child
 - Silence and isolation
 - Passivity in the marriage and home
 - Neglecting basic physical needs
 - Withholding approval and affirmation
 - Withholding affection
 - Not affirming emotions
 - Not comforting in time of distress, or fear
 - Not protecting and standing up for him
 - Not exercising reasonable discipline and boundary setting
 - Not spending time together and sharing experiences
 - Not sharing and engaging with their child
 - Failing to pray and lead spiritually

4. **Shame**

- Usually the father abuses or withholds because he himself has been wounded, or suffered lack or has no good models of fatherhood
 - However, a child does not see or understand this
 - The child comes to the wrong conclusions
 - The child experiences abandonment and with it a deep shame
- **Shame: *"Something must be wrong with me"***
 - Because the child can't hide physically, they begin to hide emotionally by closing off their heart to further pain and hurt
 - Toxic shame eventually clothes the child like a garment
 - The child begins to conceal and hide their true self
 - The child suppresses their emotions and seeks false comforts and other ways of avoiding meaningful relationships

II. Effect of Fatherless in USA

1. In 2022

- 74 million children 17 years and younger in US
- About one third do not live with their biological father
- Millions live in blended families, struggling to adapt to differing rules in each household
- About 18.4 million or 25% have no father figure at all

- **Consequences**

- **(National Center for Fathering)**

- Fatherless Children are:

- 2 times more likely to commit suicide
- 4 times more likely to be raised in poverty
- 7 times more likely to become pregnant as a teen
- 9 times more likely to drop out of school
- 10 times more likely to do substance abuse
- 11 times more likely to have violent behaviour
- 20 times more likely to end up in prison
- ("Fatherless Epidemic" National Center for Fathering, accessed March 3, 2023)

- **National Fatherhood Initiative**

- 92% of parents in prison are fathers
- 100% of male shooters were male on anti-depressants

2. Father Wounds of Troubled People

- Adolf Hitler's father.....was violent, regularly beat him and died when Adolf was 14
- Joseph Stalin's father.....was an alcoholic who beat him
- Mao Zedong's father.....was verbally and physically abusive, calling him lazy and useless
- Saddam Hussein's father.....died early and his stepfather beat him so badly, he ran away, killed over 250,000 people. Known as the "Butcher of Baghdad"
- Idi Amin's father.....abandoned him as a child, he became angry, violent, strongly reacting to any form of rejection
- King Tshaka (Zulu) father.....humiliated and cruelly treated him, killed over 2 million people
- John Wayne Gacy (killed 33).....father was an alcoholic, beat him with a belt, verbally abused him
- Ted Bundy (serial killer 30x).....abandoned by his father before he was born
- Mass shooters..... 47.56 had parents divorced, never married, father abused physically or sexually, the father was an alcoholic or drug addict or imprisoned. The vast majority experienced early childhood trauma and exposure to violence at a young age

3. Effects of Divorce & Abandonment by Father

- In 2021 (USA)
 - The divorce rate was about 42% (690,000)
 - Divorces have a devastating impact upon children depending on the age they were
- Consequences
 - Loss of time with their father
 - More likely to experience financial hardship and poverty
 - Increase in anxiety and depression
 - Increase in pre-marital sex and living together
 - Girls are more likely to have teen pregnancy
 - More likely to contract sexual diseases
 - Less likely to view marriage as a life commitment
 - More likely to have learning difficulties, ADHD
 - Twice as likely to attempt or commit suicide
 - Twice as likely to develop an addiction
 - Lower school achievement
- Other Consequences
 - **Divided Loyalties**
 - Torn between loyalty to one parent or the other
 - Deep grief and anger buried
 - **Overly Responsible**
 - Taking on the role of the absent parent and losing own identity
 - **Need to Control**
 - Fearful, anxious and living in a heightened state of alarm and sensitivity
 - Needing to control everything to feel safe
 - **Fear of Conflict**
 - Memories of marriage conflict are very present and painful
 - Children can become traumatized by the parental conflict prior to divorce
 - People pleasing and avoidance of all relational conflict
 - **Feelings of Abandonment**
 - In divorce, adult needs take priority over a child's needs
 - Deep grief over feeling abandoned by one parent persist
 - Fear of being abandoned in relationships
 - Questions: *Where is my father? Why did he leave me? What's wrong with me?*
 - **Feeling Powerless of Helpless**
 - There was nothing the child could do to prevent the divorce
 - Deep fears develop that can paralyze relationships and decision making

III. The Culture Shift in New Zealand

1. The Impact of World War 2

- Soldiers returning from World War were often highly traumatized by their wartime experiences
 - They returned home traumatized by war
 - There was no help available to assist them address was trauma and reconnect
 - After living for years through intense violence, death and fear, normal life was strange
- **This showed up how father's related to their families**
 - Emotional Distance and Disconnection.....closed off, like a stranger
 - Anger and Irritability.....reacting to small frustrations
 - Silence and suppression.....stoic, not talking about experiences or feelings
 - Difficulty with Intimacy and Parenting.....Emotional numbness, authoritarian, duty oriented
 - Substance Abuse.....Alcohol to numb the intruding memories
- **Children of WW2 veterans often showed:**
 - Affected genetically by the impact of father's war trauma
 - Higher rates of anxiety and depression
 - Difficulties trusting others
 - Emotionally disconnected and distant
 - Perfectionism and terror or emotional self-suppression
 - Feeling "responsible for keeping everyone happy"
- **Third generation, the grandchildren also may feel the impact**
 - They begin to question:
 - Why are we like this?
 - Why do I feel so much fear / anxiety?
 - Why don't we talk anymore?
- **Children of Holocaust survivors have been studied extensively and show:**
 - Altered cortisol (stress hormone) levels
 - Higher vulnerability to PTSD from their own later-life traumas
 - An inherited deep fear of loss and sudden catastrophe
- Each of these Movements has contributed to undermining the value of Biblical fatherhood
 - The spirit behind them rejects the image and order of God for fatherhood
 - This has had serious social and relational consequences

a. The Value of Fatherhood has been undermined and diminished

- Fatherhood has been devalued, ridiculed, and sometimes rejected
- Traditionally roles of father as primary provider, protector and authority figure have been undermined and challenged
- Women have left the home for the workplace
- Young children have been exposed to extensive time with caregivers rather than with their parents

b. Fatherlessness has dramatically increased

- Single parent households have become normal
- Fathers have become less involved in the lives of their children born outside marriage
- Dramatic increase in children growing up without a father figure
- Erosion of marriage and family stability

c. Gender and Identity Confusion

- Questioning of traditional and Biblical gender roles has increased
- People began to view fatherhood as a social construct and despise it
- Media have extensively ridiculed and belittled Fatherhood and distorted God's design for Marriage

2. Local Church has also been Deeply Impacted by Fatherlessness

- 1 Cor 4:15 *For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel*

1 Cor 4:16 *Therefore, I urge you, imitate me.*

- There has always been a major need for Apostolic Fathers in the church

● **Ways that Fatherlessness has Impacted Churches**

a. Pastoral focus instead of Apostolic focus

- Churches are led mostly by Pastors rather than Apostles
- The focus of pastors tend to be more gathering up and nurturing people
- Apostles are pioneers who call people to mature and participate in mission
- Apostles confront spiritual powers and build strong spiritual atmospheres

b. Feminization of the Church

- There is a focus on experiences and feelings rather than discipleship
- Many church activities women relate to more easily than men
- Imbalance of ratio of women to men
- Lack of ministries that focus on building men
- Frequent presence of Controlling Powers (Jezebel)

c. Corporatization of the Church

- Many church pastors have not experience good fathering themselves
- Many have unresolved father and childhood issues
- Deliverance and healing ministries are given no place
- Orphans and Orphan Leaders abound, all climbing a corporate ladder
- The church becomes very performance oriented and Fatherless
- The church becomes a Corporation with a CEO and not a family with Fathers

IV. Activations

- 1. A you think about this message, what impacted you the most?**
 - **Why did this impact you?**
- 2. Can you identify ways that your father may have wounded you?**
 - **What happened?**
 - **How did it affect you at the time?**
- 3. As you reflect upon your father, in what ways was he absent from your life?**
 - **If your father left you physically, what was the reason for his leaving?**
 - **How old were you when this happened?**
 - **In what ways did this affect you?**
- 4. Think about family experiences growing up**
 - **Can you think of things that were withheld from you that caused pain you remember?**
 - **What happened?**
 - **How did this affect you?**