

# “Dealing with Your Past”

## The Family of God

Downtown

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Good morning everyone, I'm glad you're here with us this morning or listening wherever you are.

Here's an email I received this week - "I know my story has so much sin and pain from my family, but because of the hope and healing I've found in Jesus and being in Jesus' family, it made the sermon last week feel light."

That's beautiful. That's the goal. That Jesus would be leading us together to healing in such a way that the weight of all of this gets a bit lighter.

Let's reset. We set up some big foundational ideas last week in Pt. 1:

- 1.) From the beginning, God's desire has been to fill the world with a huge multi-generation, interwoven, shared-life, self-giving, others-exalting, trinitarian, love-based relationships extended family village of people who love and worship Him.
- 2.) That in both biological family and in His larger, God's design is that there would be this beautiful blue cascading waterfall of love and wisdom and grace flowing from one generation to the next.
- 3.) That in both of these, sin has worked through human history to ruin and complicate and distort and break down God's beautiful design.

The truth is all of us have inherited sin, pain, and broken normative patterns.

Here's how Peter describes it:

### 1 Peter 1:18-19

... you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

The "futile ways inherited from your forefathers" represent the red in our charts. Overtly sinful stuff, really painful stuff, and "normal" patterns that are futile or fruitless to bring about the ways of life God designed for us. And Peter says Jesus has ransomed us. Paid for our freedom from slavery to it.

Today, our question is what do we do about it? How do we get more and more red out of our chart so more blue can flow? How do we ensure we pass down to the next generation more of God's love, wisdom, and grace and less of our sin, foolishness, and pain? How do we walk as God's big extended family village, helping each other heal and grow?

I've got 6 steps for us to deal with our past... the red in our waterfalls

### Step 1: Know Your Wounds and Deficits.

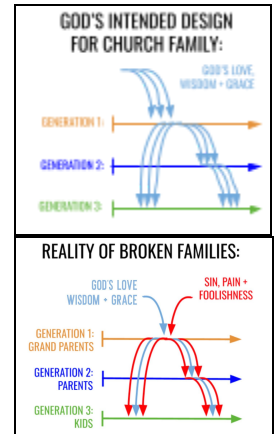
We're gonna use this basic dichotomy throughout today. Wounds and Deficits.

**Wounds** are active harm that's been done.

**Deficits** are aspects that are lacking in your formation and training.

Some wounds and deficits are really obvious. Some of you are painfully aware of your wounds and deficits. Others are way more subtle and hard to discern. It's not an exhaustive list but I want to give you some common wounds and deficits I've seen over 15 years of pastoring.

- **Abuse** - For some of you, you dealt with physical, sexual, or emotional/verbal abuse growing up. Abuse communicates that you are unworthy... your agency and choices are irrelevant. This leads to a myriad of



problems including being drawn to abusers in adulthood, becoming an abuser yourself, and/or hypersensitivity to anyone who tries to correct you.

- **Absence/abandonment** - Whether by death or divorce or distancing, some of you never really knew one or both of your parents. Kids who grow up with absent parents are statistically more likely to deal with substance abuse, overeating, and hypersexuality in adolescence. More likely to deal with anxiety and depression as adults. But most of all, there tends to be a difficulty in maintaining healthy love-based relationships over time.

- **Passivity** - For some of you, it wasn't that extreme, but even though your parents were home, they weren't engaged. Especially common with passive dads or overworked parents. Not doing anything terrible so rarely gets called out, but not really engaged to help you grow.

- **Manipulation** - Some of you have really manipulative parents. Overly dramatic/emotional or really angry... The constant threat is if you don't do what they want and make them happy... then you get punished with an emotional breakdown. Or a rage-out temper tantrum.

- **Overbearing/controlling** - the more common version of this is parents who are very loving, and very well-intentioned, but they end up overbearing and controlling. So where parents are supposed to train children how to make their own decisions with wisdom and confidence, the controlling parent due to fear or some wound of their own seeks to control their child. It feels loving. I just care about their safety... But the result is your child is never trained in how to think through and make good decisions for themselves. Arguably important life skill.

- **Over-lenient/no structure** - On the flip side, some of you had parents who gave you almost no restrictions or structure or correction. They wanted to be their kid's best friend, or they were lazy or untrained themselves, and the result is kids who tend to deal with a lot of anxiety because they have to figure out everything for themselves. And in the long term, it's a failure to not teach your kids how to submit to God's good authority.

- **Impossible pressure to perform** - For some of you, your parents put incredible pressure on you to measure up... And to this day, you feel like you have to perform to earn people's love.

- **Lack of practical training** - Another type of wound/deficit occurs when parents fail to engage their kids on practical life training that the kid needs as they become an adult.

One of the weirdest things that stand out vividly in my relationship with my dad is when I was in High School, I asked him to teach me about handling money. He was really good at finances. I was terrible. I asked him 3 or 4 times and he never helped me with it. It took me about ~10 years and friends and church family to help me get even a basic healthy foundation in this area.

Like I said upfront, that's not an exhaustive list. You may have 1 or 2 on it, you may have most, or your red may be something completely different. There are a ton of different ways you could have received wounds and deficits that you are now carrying from your past into your present in an unhelpful way and you need Jesus to ransom you from the futile ways you've inherited.

To get Jesus' freedom, we've gotta acknowledge that we have some wounds and deficits. If we don't know our wounds and deficits, we can't deal with them.

Three common ways people tend to respond to their wounds and deficits:

**1.) Denial.** I'm fine. I'm strong. I'm unaffected by those who came before me. Bury your head in the sand. Nothing can heal as long as you stay here. Maybe for you, it's not overt denial so much as you've just never really taken seriously what you've inherited and how it affects you.

**2.) Victim Mentality.** Victim mentality happens when you know your wounds and deficits... but instead of using that knowledge to pursue healing and growth... you get stuck in it. You start to blameshift all your problems onto others - from your past or present. In its worst forms, you start to build your identity on your wounds. the attention that comes from always being the one in a crisis and people rallying to help... that feels kinda nice

Victim mentality is very dangerous in our very feelings-based culture. It has some root of truth because you have inherited some red. And it feels good to believe that none of your problems are actually your

fault... but it doesn't actually help you heal. It's a sneaky way to refuse to take responsibility for your stuff. You've got the wounds and deficits you've got. Many are not your fault. Some of you may have been literally victimized in terrible ways. But God calls us to come receive a new identity in Him: ransomed. healed. Whole. Redeemed.

**3.) Redemptive view.** We trust that God has a purpose in the midst of our wounds and we invite Him in to help us heal and help us comfort others through us as we walk with Him.

Because I like you. I'm gonna vote for you to pick that third choice. And the rest of the steps are ways to take that redemptive approach to our wounds and deficits:

## **Step 2: Bring your wounds and deficits to Jesus.**

### **1 John 1:5-6**

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Here's the best thing about taking your wounds and deficits to Jesus. He already knows. You're not going to surprise Him. He knows it all. He went to the cross for you to pay for all the futile ways you've inherited knowing EVERYTHING about you. Better than you know. He has no false illusions about who you are. And He says I'm out here living in the light. Come join Me and see how free life can be out here in the light with Me.

The next step comes right after this step and I want to talk about them together a bit:

## **Step 3: Bring your wounds and deficits to church family.**

### **1 John 1:7**

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Jesus says that as we join Him in shining light on the dark places of our wounds and deficits one of the effects is we have fellowship with one another... In the incredibly individualistic culture we live in, this catches some people off-guard. "Wait I acknowledged my wounds and deficits. I talked to Jesus about them. I'm good. People aren't safe. I don't want to talk to anybody else."

The problem is you can't properly interpret and understand the darkness inside of you... because of the darkness inside of you... distorts your ability to interpret and understand your own darkness. We call them blind spots for a reason. You can't see 'em. Selah.

At least not fully. Not clearly. We need some other people outside our darkness to help us see. To help us see our blind spots. To help us see how Jesus can heal us.

Before we go to the next step. I want to clarify some things on how step 2 and 3 work together:

**Jesus is where true healing is found.** Jesus is the source of the healing we need. Jesus is the Great Physician. One more time for the people in the back, Jesus. Is. Where. Healing. Is. Found.

- I say this because some of you are actually very comfortable talking to other people about your problems and you don't actually take them to Jesus. That's foolish. Jesus heals us. Church family is here to help point us to HIM!
- I also say this because some of you think you have been really wounded by church family when the truth is you had impossible expectations of their ability to do something and be something for you that God alone can be.
- I also say this because some of you think your job is to run around healing everybody and you're running yourself into the ground trying to be Jesus.

**The physician and the hospital:** Here's a quick analogy that isn't perfect but may help. Jesus refers to Himself as a physician in Mark 2. So with Jesus as the Great Physician for our souls... church family is like the rest of the hospital staff. We're here to help patients get the help they need from the Great Physician. Nothing more, nothing less. That is enough.

And continuing that imperfect analogy, Jesus is the Great Physician... the gospel is the medicine.

**Step 4: Find gospel-healing for your specific wounds.**

I'm not talking about deficits so much here as wounds. Lies and messages that you've absorbed about who you are and who God is and how the world works and whether you're lovable or valuable or not. There's this beautiful verse in Isaiah 53:

**Isaiah 53:5**

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All of us have received certain wounds from our families, other people, or even just from our own terrible decisions in life... But Jesus inherited all of our wounds onto Himself in the cross.

And He did it in such a way that our wounds can get healed by His.

Some of you don't know if healing is possible. It is.

Some of you are terrified to even try to face your past... You don't need to be. He's already faced it for you and in His wounds, we find the safety we need and the healing we need.

Now it's one thing to know that big and theoretical up here... "ok yes Jesus can heal me."

But it's another thing to actually grasp how the gospel speaks specifically into your wounds:

What wounds did Jesus take to the cross with Him for you?

What wounds do you feel trapped in that Jesus conquered in rising from the grave?

For so long I felt like certain sins in my life were unbeatable until I started to get Romans 8:11 that says the same power that raised Jesus from the grave is at work in you.

If He can handle the grave, He can handle your mess. Whatever it is. You aren't dead.

One of my biggest fears I've had to fight is the fear that I will become my dad. That his sinful patterns are my destiny. So for me, I need to know that in the cross, Jesus purchased for me.

**Romans 8:30**

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Outside of Christ... I would almost certainly end up so much like my dad. I look like him. I think like him. I act like him. In 1000 ways I'm not even aware of. I've fought sexual sin and sexual addiction in my life... exactly like the sexual sin he dealt with... the sin that ruined our family.

This summer my dad passed away and I went to his house in Anderson. I saw his neighbor who had been mowing his yard so I went up to introduce myself and thank him. Mind you, I'd never met or talked to this man before ... "Hi I'm Jon. I'm Frank's son." And he said, "Well of course you're Frank's boy. You're his spitting image."

On one hand that's true. In some ways, I'm destined to become the spitting image of my dad... BUT in Christ... In Christ, I have a whole new destiny. By Christ's wounds, I'm destined to be conformed not to the image of my father but to the image of God's Son!!!

I don't know what your specific wounds are, but you need some verses. You need some Bible that reminds you of theological reality that specifically confronts your deepest fears and wounds.

And as you're figuring this out, you go to church family, tell them what you're learning. They help you connect some dots and point you back to Jesus. They pray for you when you're struggling. You go back

to Jesus and keep figuring more out and getting more gospel healing. You go back to church family to tell them what you're learning. And we all grow up together.

Okay, so that's primarily focused on your wounds, what about our deficits?

**Step 5: Go to church family to learn how to fill up your deficits.**

God puts church family together in such a way that we get to help those who are lacking in all kinds of areas of practical training. I didn't get financial training from my dad. But I did get it from Chris Kakaras and Steve Von Fange.

If you didn't get training on something, seek it out now. Utilize the community God's given you.

- If you didn't see what spiritual leadership looks like at home, then find someone to talk to and ask them questions and ask if you can come over and see it in practice.
- If you really struggle with how to make wise decisions and manage your life, find someone who seems to do it pretty well and ask them how they think about it.
- If you weren't trained well in how to handle the stresses and complexity of parenting, find someone who is good at it and ask them.

The goal in all of it is to get the training you need so you don't hand that deficit down again.

We briefly hit on the idea of older people mentoring us last week, and I want to mention that sometimes I think we have a mentor myth that says I need to find the one perfect older man or woman that I have perfect chemistry with to help mentor me forever. Scripture tends to talk more about having a number of counselors. You don't necessarily need to find the "one" perfect mentor. You need to find a handful of peers and mentors who have skills in specific areas of life that are weaknesses for you.

**Step 6: Help others deal with their wounds and deficits.**

I want to end our time with one of my favorite passages that summarizes so much of this picture in a beautiful way:

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

This is the people we get to be. This is who God's calling us to become.

We all have wounds. We all have red in our chart. We all have pain and unhealthy normative patterns inherited from our family and because of our own sinful decisions. And as we receive healing in the gospel, as we receive comfort from the God of all comfort, we get to share it with others as they learn to deal with their pain and wounds.

**Soul Care:** A church we got to connect with in California had a ministry called Soul Care. It was a lot like our ministry Recovery. They said that what they had found was people who only focused on themselves and their own recovery tended to continue to struggle compared with those who did the same steps but also went out as part of a service team to a local nursing home.

Once a week they would go and visit with folks there, tell stories, share the gospel...just love them and be there for them as a friend. Those folks tended to do way better in the program and once they were out because of how they were taking their focus off of themselves in service to others.

As you are facing your past, dealing with your wounds, finding healing and hope in Jesus... it's not just for you. God gives you His comfort for you to then become part of the hospital staff helping point others to Jesus.

When the church is full of these kinds of people - people who know and are fully honest about their own wounds and deficits ... the church becomes the most welcoming place for the hurting, wounded, lacking

people.

And the church becomes a place that is continually sending out healthier and healthier people to love others and help others get to the hospital. Help others meet the Great Physician.

This week, in the LG guide we've got a blank family chart for you to fill out and spend some time processing your wounds and deficits. Just trying to help you identify them and bring them to Jesus. For some of you, there's going to be a lot of rejoicing about all the blue in your chart. For some of you, this will take time and emotional energy and you need to ask some people to pray for you as you do it. As you start or continue to become aware of the red in your chart, bring it to Jesus. Then bring it to your LG at group time.

As you're doing that, for any of you who have a lot of red in your chart or some wound or deficit that you just can't seem to shake, Recovery is starting February 1st. The safest place I know of to deal with this stuff and find healing in Jesus.

**Pray.**