

Restoring the Foundation

One of the fundamental aspects of manhood is that the foundation of every man's heart is poured, formed and hardened when he was a boy. Every stage of his masculine journey will be impacted by the formative years of boyhood, years that lead to who he will become and what his kingdom will eventually be like. The examination of a man's foundation starts with asking the question, "How was I loved as a boy?" The core questions that a boy asks (girls, too, by the way) are: "Do you see me?," "Do you love what you see?," and "Do you want to be with me?" How these core questions were answered in childhood forms the raw materials on which a foundation of masculinity is to be built.

Confusing answers lead to a confused man. Wounding answers lead to a wounded man. It's not a question of if this goes sideways; it's when. Each stage of the masculine journey is like a floor constructed upon the previous one. The most fortunate men got through boyhood and maybe the explorer stage (adolescents) with minimal defects. By the warrior stage (young teen through 20s) and lover stage (mid-20s through end of life), the world has gotten a hold of a man, and Satan and emissaries do their worst to see that the construction of his heart does not go well.

The late Father Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk, was a champion of intimacy with God. He taught the practice and experience of contemplative prayer as a way to connect with God and have our core questions answered by the Father. He taught that we possess three motivational centers:

1. Affection and esteem.
2. Power and control.
3. Safety and security.

These “motivational centers” are the deeper wells that contain the collection of what we have come to believe about ourselves, God and the world; they therefore deeply impact how we respond to stimuli, how we act in order to be loved, seen and safe. From the time we arrive on this planet until the time we leave, these motivational centers are present, working and in need of examination, restoration, as well as maintenance and upkeep. When we first discover what is really going on deep within our hearts, how these motivational centers are compromised by either neglect, conditional love or wounding, they will need a renovation of God through healing and loving reconstruction. Everything we do and say, don’t do or don’t say, is motivated by these places. It is how we are made, what we are made for and what we will spend our days wanting, trying to arrange for until the day arrives when our deepest needs are met. What if that day could be far closer than you’ve had permission to think? It is.

Father Thomas Keating wrote, “Psychotherapy is what God has been secretly doing for centuries by other names; that is, he searches through our personal history and heals what needs to be healed—the wounds of childhood or our own self-inflicted wounds.”

Critical to repairing that foundation, however minor or major the damage was, is to turn to God for fathering. Healing the boy’s heart is the invitation to “trade in” what we got or didn’t get, what we heard or didn’t hear, anything and everything that pulled us away to fear, guilt or shame, and invite the Father to speak life to those moments of poor construction. It is a life-and-death proposal. With every healing moment with God, a part of our heart that is wounded, arrested through pain and now operating in the false self ways of self-protection, self-promotion or self-provision. Each and every memory we would rather forget, and all the things we forget that need to be remembered, can be part of a holy reconstruction; the healing and the reforming of us. Healing

is often so challenging because we have learned along the way to listen to the whispers of the enemy. In many moments that haven't gone well, we hear, "Don't ask for help; you are weak; you don't know what you're doing." We make the agreements: "I am weak and stupid." The enemy has a construction plan as well. The kingdom of darkness works through others and circumstances to deliver the message to our questions, "Do you see me, and do you love what you see?" "No and no," the enemy whispers. Just like Adam, a man learns when he is very young to hide—only with today's more modern, sophisticated and fashionable fig leaves. But ... it's still hiding.

There are many ways to hide. There's still the traditional lack of confidence and inability to engage, which manifests as passivity, but men also have learned to hide behind achievement, accomplishment and proving their worth. What appears to be "success" is one of the greatest ways we hide. The approval and applause of men is a symptom of the fear of man. The "performance life" is going to get you one way or another, sooner than later—either coming or going, it's going to get you. It's the way of the world, and it is that way because the enemy of our hearts is attempting to make certain we believe that life is up to us; love is conditional; and we are on our own. They whisper the message, "Your worth is in what you do, and love (validation, acceptance, belonging and significance) is based on your performance." When we sign for the deliveries, the payments begin.

The first step in healing the boy's heart is turning to the Father for fathering. No matter what age you are, a 20-something or a 70-something, sooner or later every man will be pursued hard by our Father God. Healing what was wounded and hurt during the foundational years is critical to God because it is there that things are in the way of receiving the love of the Father. Much will be set right when we bring our boyhood to God for both healing and reconstruction. Asking for help is the beginning of being helped. It's both a beautiful

confession and a strong declaration that leads to the invitation for God the Father to work. A man who is tired of being tired knows that something isn't right in the motivational centers of his being and prays, "I need help. I don't know what to do; I don't want to live uninitiated and unfinished anymore. I want to be loved, seen and known, healed, trained, initiative and validated." This is a man who is now awake and at the beginning of a reconstruction project so glorious and good he will finally become what he has longed to be his whole life ... free.

I invite you to explore more with me about how this all works on the *Exploring More Podcast* as my friends and I dive into the deep, wild and beautiful process of transformation: the steps to awaken, deepen and fulfill our hearts.{eo}