



FROM THE MERE

Created for Connection

Spiritual warfare
and tending
to your wounds

FROMTHEMERE.COM

“What happens if we don't treat our emotional wounds regularly?”

Enemy tactics revealed

A few nights ago God gave me a dream. Since it was a dream that revealed some of the tactics of the enemy, it wasn't a pleasant one. But important none the less. *

The dream starts out with a friend and I visiting a conference. Everything is fine between us, but my emotional state quickly changes when my friend ignores me and clearly doesn't want to sit with me. I become insecure and want to withdraw into myself.

As I try to find a seat for myself where I can calmly think about what happened, I run into my brother. He invites me to sit with my sisters, but when I arrive at their seats they're gone. All but my youngest sister, who's about 10 years old. I wonder why they would invite me and then leave themselves. 'Do they not like me? Did someone gossip about me?'

When I ask my youngest sister about the other sisters, she's very kind, but also secretive and vague. Because of this entire situation, I felt abandoned, rejected and worthless.

At this point, several witches entered the room and engaged my younger sister and I engage in a severe and horrible battle with them. I survive barely, but my sister gets taken by the witches. The attack was so terrifying that I woke myself up when a second battle was unavoidable.

Downward spiral

It took a while for me to understand that the dream was from God and what He wanted to speak about. When God started elaborating on the dream while I was in church, I suddenly understood: this dream reveals what happens if we don't treat my emotional wounds regularly. Though the downward spiral in the dream was exaggeratedly fast, it does show a clear buildup:

Phase 1: We get emotionally wounded

This rapid downward spiral started with the hurt of my friend ignoring me and not wanting to sit with me. Whether she hurt me on purpose, couldn't stand the sight of me or simply needed some alone time is unclear in the dream, but it was hurtful.

We all get hurt. And, knowingly or unknowingly, we also all are the cause of someone else's emotional pain. Our current western society is particularly hardened, individualistic, fast-paced and highly demanding. This creates numerous possibilities to get hurt daily: someone could make a joke you feel is inappropriate, a child could call you fat or ugly, you can hear about a disaster on the news, you can get ignored or passed over, you can see a video on the internet that sparks pain, someone on social media can be offensive to you, etc.

“Untreated emotional wounds can become infectious and spread throughout our system”

While I was in church talking to Him about this dream, God showed me a heart that represented our emotional hearts. The heart had different weapons stuck in it: daggers, syringes and needles. Each weapon shows a kind of hurt.

- Daggers are very painful wounds, often deliberately caused
e.g.: a friend betraying you, a parent abandoning you or being bullied
- Syringes are subtle wounds on the surface, with a deep and long-term effect. It changes something in the 'chemistry' of your heart
e.g.: being manipulated, belittled, gossiped about or subtly humiliated
- Needles are small surface wounds, usually caused unintentionally.
e.g.: a kind person making an unintentionally insensitive remark, a friend not recognizing you in the supermarket

A heart is a sensitive and vital organ. Though a pinprick or paper cut is 'no biggy' for our skin to deal with, in our heart even tiny wounds can have very serious consequences.

Phase 2: Untended wounds will increasingly infect

When I looked at the heart God showed me in church I knew the weapons were put into it over a period of time. No one had taken the weapons out or tended to the wounds. If our biological hearts would be stabbed we'd call 911 and get to a hospital because we'd fear for our lives, yet with our emotional hearts we tend to ignore the weapon and keep going about our day.

Untreated hurts and wounds will lead to infections. This way what started as a 'clean-cut' can start spreading throughout our system, multiplying and intoxicating. This happens with untreated emotional wounds as well. In the dream, the infection looked like feeling worthless, rejected and abandoned. These are the infections my heart tends to have often. But it can also look like: bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, depression, isolation, distrust and many more things.

Once again: an infection will spread. So the little pinprick my friend gave me in the dream caused pain. I wanted to find a place to deal with it but ignored it because my sisters invited me. I gave the tiny little wound room to infect, because I didn't deal with it. When my sisters weren't there the infection rapidly spread. When my youngest sister was being secretive the infection spread to a degree that my heart was severely infected and intoxicated.

Phase 3: Demonic attack

So now our heart and system are weakened and our immune system works overtime to fight the infection created by unattended wounds. We're in no shape to fight and Satan knows this very well.

“Thankfully God is always ready to get us back on track.”

Now, Satan doesn't do fair play. He is specifically looking for opportunities to give us the death-blow that will leave us hopeless, severely depressed, backsliding into sin and giving up on God. So he will often wait until we are weakened. This is exactly the moment where he will seize the opportunity to hurt you where it hurts most.

Please notice that Satan didn't cause my friend to ignore me or my sisters to be gone. This is all normal human interaction. We all make mistakes and- whether we mean to or not- we all cause hurt to others. Satan isn't using your friends to hurt you, he is taking advantage of the weak state your heart is in.

Proverbs 4:23 says: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. " This verse doesn't only mean we need to avoid situations that are dangerous for our heart, but also that we need to tend to emotional wounds. An emotionally strong heart will still be attacked by the enemy, but it won't fall victim to his strategy to kick us when we're down. If we leave our hearts in a vulnerable state, we're at risk of being severely battered, leaving church or giving up on God.

In the Old Testament, there is a lot of talk about city walls and protecting cities. Just because God is Almighty and very capable of defeating Israel's enemies all by Himself, didn't mean that Nehemiah could ignore the city wall and keep it in a broken-down state. They had to build the wall back up, despite the incredible resistance. The same way we can't just trust the Lord to guard our heart, while we allow our defenses to remain in a broken-down state.

Thankfully God is always ready to bring us back on track! However, wouldn't it be so much better to avoid all this? So let's make it a habit to tend to our wounds regularly!

Why keep it in the vault?

If we ignore our emotional pain it's like we put it in a vault in our heart.

This vault is a very practical thing that will allow us to postpone dealing with the emotional issue until we're in a place where we can do this properly. A work meeting isn't usually the right timing to deal with your pain, just as shopping in a mall or babysitting kids aren't great moments. Unless the issue is too big to ignore, we can temporarily park it in the vault and open the vault up at a more convenient time. I guess the vault can be compared to 'first aid': a quick way to stop the wound from bleeding until you get to the Doctor.

The vault is a gift of God if we use it correctly. However, most of us have permanently parked way too many wounds. Once the bleeding has stopped, we fail to have the Doctor take a look at it.

“Sometimes you can be so used to your wounds that they have become your normal.”

So the first thing to understand when it comes to tending to wounds is why you haven't made emotional healing into a habit. This can be for many reasons, but I want to highlight a few that I feel are very important to realize.

#1: You're not aware you are wounded

Sometimes you can be so used to your wounds that they have become your normal.

For many years I went in-and-out of hospitals. I had a long list of neurological symptoms, but no doctor could find the cause of it. During those 5 years I lost my job, my house, my car, my savings, the respect of many friends and the trust in myself. I've seen just about any department when I visited an ENT for an unrelated issue. He asked me: "Do you happen to have sleep apnea?" Several tests later I was diagnosed and finally received the needed treatment. No one thought of sleep apnea, because my symptoms weren't typical and when they asked me if I slept well I always said I had a normal sleep pattern. I was so used to being tired that I couldn't even recognize it anymore, not even when my brain was so utterly exhausted that it literally stopped functioning. My legs forgot how to walk, my memory sometimes lasted for less than 1 minute, I daily ran into the door frame because I couldn't aim for the door anymore and most of my days were spent on the couch or in bed.

There can be something severely wrong in your emotional heart, without you even noticing. Sometimes the symptoms look different than expected. Maybe your emotional hurt doesn't come out with tears, but with headaches, fights with your wife, overeating, faking your smiles, hoarding, addiction or gossip. Also: you can be so used to your wounds that you don't even recognize it as abnormal. I would advise you to ask God to reveal if you have untreated wounds.

#2 Not knowing the importance of emotional healing as a Christian

Growing up I learned that Jesus died on the cross for me. Jesus' death took me out of the kingdom of darkness, into His Kingdom of Light. Subconsciously I also learned that 'now that I'm in His Kingdom it's up to me to do a good job here'. So I worked hard at being a proper Christian. Following God's voice, being faithful and obedient and serving Him every opportunity I had. The more my pastors would tell us to do, the more I put on my plate. Eventually, this led to the greatest faith crisis I ever had in my life.

I remember one particular evening when I was so tired and overwhelmed that I realized I was utterly broken. I realized that if God wouldn't do a supernatural thing immediately, this was the end of my journey with God. I would stop being a Christian. I told Him this and then went to bed, tears still running down my cheeks from disappointment and brokenness. That night as I closed my eyes, I saw an image with a Bible verse: "Whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved".

“For a wound to get treated, it needs to get looked at”

This verse was my breakthrough. Suddenly I realized I thought that 'whosoever' meant that any nonbeliever, no matter how great their sins were, could come to Jesus and be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light. But 'whosoever' actually is everyone. That includes me! So the 'saving' isn't only being saved from a life in sin, but also includes being saved from anything else we need to be saved from. Like demonic attacks, mental torment, physical issues, financial problems, insecurities, painful memories, sicknesses and so on.

Jesus came to give us ABUNDANT life. He came to heal the brokenhearted, comfort those who mourn, set the captives free. That's not just for non-believers, as believers we need it just as much! God wants to be a Father to the fatherless, a Defender of the widows, place the lonely into families. He wants to gather the lambs and carry them. He asks us to come to Him if we're tired and heavy burdened. The fruit of the Spirit includes peace, joy, kindness, love, patience, those are the things He wants to blossom in our hearts.

(John 10:10, Isa 61:1-3, Romans 10:13, Ps 68:5-6, Isa 40:11, Matt 1:28-29, Gal 5:22- 23_

#3: Fear of reliving your wounds

I have been bullied as a child, but since I tried to be 'such a good Christian', I put most of the pain into a vault. As a teenager, I probably had a severe depression because the wounds infected my entire system. I was super insecure, felt worthless and rejected to the core of my being. Every now and then I treated some painful wounds, but never the infection and it eventually turned into self-hatred.

To keep up appearances I lived my life controlling my emotions and circumstances until God told me: "Stop controlling your life and emotions". I told Him: "No God, I can't! If I don't control my emotions I will fall into sin. I will hurt myself and speak badly about myself because I know that's what's in the vault." God: "This vault and control is keeping you captive. I would rather have a messy daughter that's working through things, than one that will never find the freedom I have for her." It took me a very long time, but slowly I let go of control.

I was right. It was very messy. I hurt myself, I screamed at myself, I told myself how awful I was, I fell into sin. But every little step I invited Him in and He would come and comfort me. Little by little I found freedom.

For a wound to be treated, it needs to get looked at. We really do need to face what's been hurting us. If you've been avoiding the vault for a long time, you probably developed it into a habit. Your brain may give you warning signals when you approach it. 'Danger vault ahead!' Dealing with our wounds requires us to learn to ignore the warning signs. Oh, I know about those warning signs!

“Strength will help you on the battlefield, but wounds are not a sign of weakness”

If you are afraid to look at your pain: I'm with you! But I'm also the evidence that God is gentle and kind. He is faithful to be there every step of the way. Believe me: it's worth every part of the process!

#4: Seeing forgiveness as a substitute for healing.

In the Bible, we are taught to forgive people that have wronged us. This is very important in finding healing and freedom from what went wrong.

Forgiveness means to no longer hold your pain against someone. This sets both you and the other person free to move beyond what happened and move on with your life. But it doesn't mean the consequences of what happened are instantly erased for either party. Just as the one who caused pain will need to live with it (or even receive punishment), the victim will still need to deal with the pain and hurt.

Again: growing up I wanted to be such a 'good Christian' that I 'obediently' forgave everyone that hurt me and immediately moved on. Even the bullies that had deliberately humiliated and wronged me. I confused the pain of being bullied with unforgiveness. So when I felt pain, I concluded that 'I was unforgiving' and tried to become an even better Christian. This was what it meant to follow Jesus, right?

By the time I was a teenager my life seemed so much better: I had friends, a job, sang in a band and wasn't bullied anymore. I should have been celebrating life! But my heart was broken and my entire system was severely infected, leaving me in many years of severe depression and feelings of worthlessness.

Forgiveness is not a synonym for healing. We need BOTH.

#5: Confusing woundedness for weakness

In society as well as in the church, there is still a lie going around that says that being wounded is a sign of weakness.

Let me ask you this: Which soldiers got wounded on D-Day? Did the bullets and landmines only hurt the weaker soldiers? Where the muscles of the stronger soldiers impenetrable, because they did more push-ups?

Strength will help you on a battlefield, but wounds are no sign of weakness. Wounds are a sign that you were on the battlefield. Maybe you were at the wrong place at the wrong time, maybe you were specifically targeted or maybe you were fighting on the front-lines, where the casualty count is highest (but the soldiers are bravest).

“The first thing we need to realize is that it’s not us dealing with the hurt”

In our daily social interactions usually can hardly be compared to facing enemies on the battlefield, but if you bravely put yourself out there you will inevitably get hurt. That's not a sign of weakness, it's a sign of life.

Treat the untreated.

I'm sure you already know this article will be challenging you to make a habit out of treating your wounds. What really touched my heart was realizing that there is very little knowledge in the church on HOW to treat wounds. So here's what I've learned from my own process

The first thing we need to realize is that it's not us dealing with the hurt.

The Bible tells us to 'cast our cares unto HIM' and that 'HE will heal the brokenhearted and bind the sorrows', 'HE will set captives free, HE will comfort those who mourn, HE release us from the darkness'. Jesus Himself invites us to 'COME to Me, all who are tired and carrying heavy loads'. We're not supposed to solve these things ourselves. Instead, God invites us to bring them to Him and have Him take care of it.

(1 Pe 5:7, Ps 147:3, Isa 61:1-3, Mat 11:28,29)

Letting Him heal our hearts, doesn't mean we just give our heart to Him, ask Him to fix it and then leave the room. You can compare God to a heart-surgeon and us as the patient. We can't simply drop off our hearts at the hospital, tell Him what needs fixing and go about our lives while He fixes it. That might be how we get a phone repaired or clothes mended, but not our hearts. To get our hearts healed, we need to show up, lay down on the operating table and follow the instructions of the Surgeon.

Getting our heart fixed by Him requires us to do a few things as well:

1) Recognize we have an issue that needs to get dealt with.

Before you get to solving the issue, the issue needs to be clear. When you go visit a heart surgeon, he's not going to cut you open at the first meeting unless you are dying. First it needs to be clear what is going on. Of course God already knows our problems, but it is actually important that we understand as well what's happening.

Sometimes I came to God being very clear on what I needed to sort out. However most of the times I simply see the symptoms, tell Him and ask Him if He knows what's wrong.

“God, can you please reveal to me why I feel so down and stressed-out?”

“Father, I know I'm overeating because there's an emotional issue, I'm afraid to find out what that issue is, but I know it needs to get dealt with. Will You please shed Your light on it?”

“God, I keep having this anger flare up, will You reveal to me what's in my heart?”

“God LOVES it when we even take the smallest step towards Him”

2) Ask Him to fix it & talk about boundaries if needed

Just like a surgeon wouldn't cut you open without your consent, God will not do this either. He respects our free will and our boundaries too much to 'just start cutting'. So we need to let Him know that He is allowed to start healing our hearts.

You can also talk to God about your boundaries. Sometimes we have so much pain locked in our vault that it's too much to deal with at once. Or we haven't yet experienced that we can trust Him to be gentle and kind with us. When this happens it's much better to deal with the issues little-by-little.

Setting boundaries for God almost sounds like heresy, but if working little-by-little is the only way we can allow Him to work on our hearts, He will be over-the-moon about it! He LOVES it when we take even the smallest step towards Him. He is Almighty and He can work with the smallest degree of faith we can give Him!

"I'm completely yours and I will let you heal my heart completely. But today this is all I can handle, so will You help me through this little part today?"

3) Allow Him to fix it by following along what He's doing.

Now all you need to do is let Him guide you through it. You can do this by sitting quietly and see what comes up. Be open to everything, even the unexpected. Let me give you a few examples that God uses with me often and explain a little how I respond to God:

- A lot of times tear well up in my eyes. Tears literally precipitate chemicals from your body that create an emotion imbalance. So I learned that if God is making you cry: let it happen! This isn't a sign of weakness, but a war strategy that's embedded in our DNA. Remember: we're doing this to guard our hearts! When He makes us cry, He's activating this strategy that is lying dormant in all of us, by restoring our chemical balance. The Bible even specifically mentions several times that Jesus cried. So why would we be afraid to cry or feel that it's a sign of weakness?
- Anger usually shows itself as a surge of energy. The energy often needs a physical release like dancing, running or beating a pillow. Dancing is my favorite because can transition into something else more easily than beating a pillow. However, I learned that anger almost always is 'sadness-in-disguise'. So besides finding a healthy release for the energy surge, I try to ask God: "Will you show me what sadness is the root of this anger?"

For instance: When you're angry someone didn't listen to you, this is often the sadness of feeling rejected or powerless. When you're angry because you're having a bad day, this can be sadness because you feel you missed out on an opportunity.

“God doesn't want to quickly heal a surface wound only, but deal with the entire infection”

- *He could show you old wounds or memories. Usually, it's Him saying that the current issue is linked to these old wounds and therefore have deeper roots than you suspected. This is your cue to dig in a little bit and ask Him about it: "Lord, why are you showing me this?", "How are these wounds related?", "How can I find healing from the old wounds?" You're basically returning to the first step (recognizing the issue), but now on a deeper level.*

God doesn't want to quickly heal a surface-wound only but deal with the entire infection. I learned through not-so-fun experiences that if you only allow Him to deal with the surface, you'll be back on the operating table with the same issue over and over again. This only leads to frustration. So if He points you to a root-issue, you'd be smart to let Him deal with that as well. (again, you don't need to work through every thing at once)

- *God can give you prophetic insight. This may sound very official, but it just means that God is communicating with you. Maybe there's a song popping into your thoughts, an image or word. Maybe you feel a strong urgency to listen to a certain sermon, or study a certain part of the Bible. When something like that happens: just go with it. Meanwhile ask Him: "Why are You pointing this out to me?" Usually, it takes some time before it becomes clear what He wants to say. Sometimes minutes, sometimes hours, days or weeks. No problem! Just don't give up on the process.*
- *I am a curious and explorative being. God created me this way and He knows I can't let go of an issue that I don't have a fully understand. So a very personal thing that God does for me is helping me understand by giving me words, art, images, dreams or stories. As soon as I'm satisfied with the explanation I can let go of it much more easily.*

For instance: The dream I shared at the beginning of this article was very helpful in understanding what happens in my brain when I don't deal with issues.

Also: During a difficult time, I felt rejected, overlooked and out of synch with the Lord. God made me sketch a piece of plowed farmland with tiny little green leaves coming up. This image helped me understand that He is growing something inside my heart out of this situation. I'm not off-track, but the growth just isn't very visible yet.

- *God will lead me into dance, art or making music. These are ways for me to express and relieve what's in my heart, but also to have fun and focus my attention elsewhere. Some times this is the right way to go.*

“Jesus died on the cross and became the Ultimate Victor. He’s humble, respectful, patient and gentle”

Emptying your vault

Having a wounded heart and ignoring it, is like a continuous fight with ourselves. It's exhausting and frustrating, like trying to move forward while pulling the brake.

Maybe you're not as hurt as others: that's an amazing blessing! I would still encourage you to search your vault and see if there's any hurt left in there. Any daggers, syringes or even pin-pricks that are weakening your heart. The stronger it is, the more space there is for God's deep love, joy, peace, hope, faith and all those other wonderful things!

Also I would recommend to search your heart regularly, just so you can keep it nice and clean.

But maybe you're one of that large group of people that have accidentally parked way too many problems in the vault, without having taken them to the our Awesome Heart-Surgeon.

If that's you, I want to first of all tell you that I know where you're at. It can feel like an emotional train-wreck, a time-bomb waiting to explode, or – on the other end of the spectrum – numbed and emotionless. Whatever the case is: most of us will feel scared facing what we've been hiding, but trust me that God knows how to deal with you. Jesus died on the cross and became the Ultimate Victor. He is humble, respectful, patient and gentle towards you, and He'll be the Lion that fights for you against anything that isn't healthy in your life.

A few tips:

- I wholeheartedly believe that God knows us best and the best Person to guide us through this. However He can use others in this journey as well. I would however recommend asking God the wisdom and guidance in finding the right person. He did that for me, He can surely do it for you.
- You read a lot about my journey and hopefully that provides a helpful starting point. However, since you're not me, let God guide you through the process the way that fits you best. He knows you inside and out, so He's the best source for guidance.
- I can't stress this enough: talk to God about how much you can handle and when to pause. This is not about 'getting it over with' or 'proving to yourself how brave and fast you are'.

If the pain in your vault is stacked up high you would get trapped underneath an avalanche of painful memories if you would just rip it open. Instead, talk to God about tackling this one step at a time. He's the Surgeon and He knows the right strategy for your specific case. Again: feel free to also communicate about your own boundaries. When you're scared and overwhelmed because you push yourself beyond your limits, this will only create new obstacles for healing. Be kind and patient with yourself.

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“Tending to your wounds is part of our spiritual warfare. Our victory is in Jesus!”

- Also, be careful not to give too many people a say in this process. Taking in many different opinions can easily lead to confusion or make you deviate from God's direction. Ultimately this is a process between you and God. Your heart and God's guidance determine the course of action.
- Take care of yourself the way you feel God leads you, but be extra careful if you are:
 - sorting through severe trauma's like domestic abuse, sexual abuse, severe accidents, trauma from army deployment, etc. (PTSD)
 - dealing with a (former) addiction, eating disorder or self-harming tendencies
 - having suicidal thoughts or psychotic tendencies
 - other issues that might flare up when you sort through painful emotions

If this is you: I'm so sorry that life beat you so hard that this is where you're now.

Father loves you and wants to heal you so so much! I'm not judging you, but I do want to ask you to be extra careful to follow God's instructions. When life has hit you this hard it's easy to get overwhelmed when you're facing those things and you could wonder into unwanted territory. Also I would recommend a few things for your own safety:

- Ask God in advance if this is the right timing for you. No shame if it's not. I am still waiting for the right timing to deal with some issues and I've been on this journey for over 10 years.
- Ask God in advance if He wants you to involve a professional therapist, pastor or friend. He can work through them very well. He has used several therapists during the heavier parts of my journey.
- Write down in advance what the symptoms of a possible relapse would be for you. God doesn't want you to relapse, so make a clear agreement with Him and yourself of what you will do when one of these come up. Allow yourself a break of a few days, weeks or even months (as long as you need), before continuing.
- Be willing to sort through it extra slow if needed. You are hurt way beyond the average person, so it's completely normal to also take way more time in finding healing.
- Inform at least one trusted loved one about this process and ask him/her to frequently check up on you as long as you are sorting through your deepest hurts.

Tending to your wounds is part of spiritual warfare. You're not just doing this for emotional comfort, but to limit open doors for demonic attacks in your life.

Our victory is in Jesus!

** Though I mention things like 'my friend', 'my home town' or 'my sister', none of these people or places are ones that I actually know in real life. These people do not represent or symbolize the actual people in my life at all. God just uses the situations in the dream to teach me about warfare.*



“From the Mere is all about the journey of learning to connect with God in a deeply personal way.”

God calls Himself our Father, Friend and Bridegroom: some of the most intimate relational language we know on this earth. Yet for many Christians that's not what our relationship with God looks like. We all call Him our Father, but many of us relate to Him differently, for example like a boss, fixer or school principal.

I grew up in church, learning all about God and how to cultivate a relationship with Him. I prayed, sang songs, read my Bible, attended church and served in many tasks. Yet despite doing everything right I still felt disconnected to Him about 99% of the time.

In 2002 I started my journey of learning to hear the voice of the Lord. This opened up a whole new dimension. As I grew in using the prophetic gift & slowly learned to leave behind my religious fears, I discovered the greatest thing so far:

God really DOES want that deep heart-to-heart connection. He really does want the inside jokes, laughter, and the friendly discussions. He really does want to be a part of every little detail of my life. And I love and respect Him for it more than I ever have.

From the Mere is my attempt to have you tag along on my journey. On the website, social media and in other materials you will find the revelations and experiences God used to help me on my journey. Since we're all created differently, copying my relationship with the Lord will never be fulfilling for you. However, the resources might be an inspiration, recognition or even a starting point for your journey.

I hope this ebook is helpful in your journey with the Lord. Please feel free to use and spread it as you want. Feel free to check out other content at fromthemere.com or send me an email at info@fromthemere.com

Sjoukje (Shawkya)