

# The Journey to Biblical Manhood

## Challenge 3: Relationships

### Session 3: Some Wounds Are So Deep That Only a Friend Can Heal

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men. If you would, please turn in your Bible's to Proverbs chapter 27. We are doing the Journey to Biblical Manhood. We are in challenge three: relationships. We're going to go ahead and do a shout out before we get going here today. We have a brand new group of 15 men who've decided to join us. They are part of the West Side Church in Saint Ann, Missouri. Phil Warren is their leader. These men passionately want to grow in their love for Christ, their families, the church and each other. It sounds like what we're all about here too, doesn't it? I wonder if you would join me in giving them a warm, rousing Man in the Mirror welcome? One, two, three; hoorah. Welcome, guys. We are so glad to have you as part of the Bible study.

We have 6,000 downloads of this Bible study every week. Isn't that exciting? A lot of those are in groups. We have for each of these challenges some faith and life objectives. I don't see the cards on the table today, but you've had those. The focus is on relationships. Today the title of this talk is going to be "Some Wounds Are So Deep That Only a Friend Can Heal." We're going to be talking in more depth about the subject of friendships. I want to review though from the last time I spoke. I offered \$100 to anybody who could recite the marriage prayer word for word, who had not previously memorized it. Since that time, has anybody memorized the marriage prayer and would like to stand, look me in the eye so I know that you're not cheating, and recite that for the hundred dollars? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody even thinking about doing this or should I just stop asking?

All right, well for \$10, does anybody remember what the skeleton key to Biblical manhood is from a few weeks ago? You can look at your notes on that one. Anybody? This would be a good thing to know. If there is a skeleton key to Biblical manhood, that would be a good thing to know. Yes? Okay, well you will recognize ... Nobody gets the \$10 now, okay. You will recognize this, you will remember this when I mention it. A group, a Bible, and serving someone else will do what? Solve 90% of your problems. A group, a Bible, and serving someone else will solve 90% of my problems. A lot of what's involved in this skeleton key idea is found in this area that we're going to be talking about this morning: some wounds are so deep that only a friend can heal.

Now, when you walked in here this morning there are on a continuum, just to pick three of the places on the continuum, three possibilities that I'll mention. You could be on top of the mountain. A lot of you came in here this morning, and you are absolutely on top of the mountain. Everything is golden, you feel great, and God bless God for that.

Second, you could come in here and feel like you're on top of the mountain, or you could come in here and you could feel like the mountain is on top of you. A lot of us have had weeks where the pressures, the frustrations, the setbacks, the bad news, it can be overwhelming. You feel like the mountain is on top of you, but you're moving.

The third category is that not only are you not on top of the mountain, the mountain is on top of you, but you're actually down in the valley under a pile of rocks. In other words, you barely could muster the courage to come in here this morning. You didn't want to be around anybody this morning, you just have wounds so deep that it just seems like they can't be dealt with.

I've talked about this before. When women have problems like these, they tend to move toward relationships. Women migrate toward each other when they have deep problems. Men, on the other hand, when they have these deep problems they migrate toward isolation, towards isolation. I want us to begin this morning and talk about the problem of isolation. I wasn't here last week. I was hiking on the Appalachian Trail. I found a hostel that also offered a shuttle service so I could park my car at the hostel. They would drive me to point A, and then I could hike to point B. Usually you have to do these out and back, so I thought that was pretty exciting because I only had to hike through this part of the trail once instead of twice, you know out and back. I waited around until they had these three vehicles going to three different places.

I wanted to go to Yellow Mountain Gap Trail Head. As it turned out, I was the only one that wanted to go there, so this delightful woman, 70 years of age, took me. She put me into her car and started driving. I found out she's the owner of this hostel. She told me, I mean I really got an education about the Appalachian Trail. They actually deal with, they house about 1,500 through hikers on the AT every year. She was going on and talking about all these things, and just seemed like a buoyant, wonderful, great person. I said, "Well, tell me something about yourself." Then she began to tell me about how her husband had died just a little over a year ago of a heart attack, and how much all the bad advice, all the bad things, stupid things people have been saying to her, most of which boiled down to, "Well now that your husband is dead, why don't you go out and see what you're missing." Then she said, "Missing? I haven't missed a thing. I chose this life! I loved my life!"

Then we continued talking and it just became very clear that because of the way the people had talked to her and so forth, that she had slowly been withdrawing from these people. Anyway, we go all the way up this winding road, and then it becomes gravel, and it goes another couple of miles. Now, I had parked there the day before and done an out and back in the other direction, so I knew this road. I had been going 30, 35 miles an hour down this gravel road. Well, we're going up the trail head, she's now going three miles an hour down this gravel road. She's just pouring her heart out about her relationship with her husband, and how for five years she had to take care of him.

We got to the destination and I said to her, "Would you mind if I said a prayer for you?" I said a prayer, I said "Amen", and I looked at her and she was just bawling. She was just bawling. It was just such a release for her, because she had been in such isolation. It meant so much to her. Now, I thought about giving her a hug, but here's this man and this woman out in the middle of the woods, so I thought maybe I'd just, so I didn't hug her, but we did pray. It was just an awesome experience. That's the first level of isolation.

Life can be hard. Life can be hard. There are three seminal questions that we're all trying to figure out the answer to about God: Does He know, does He care, and can He do anything about it? Does He know

what I'm going through? Does He have the knowledge? Is He involved, is He engaged with His creatures in His creation? Does he even know? Look what I'm going through. Does He even know what I'm going through? Secondly, does He care. Does God love His creatures personally? Then number three, can He do anything about it. Does He have the power to help?

The problem with isolation is that there's a thing in theology. We call it the Noetic Influence of Sin. Big words, right? Noetic, nous, the mind. The Noetic Influence of Sin is basically, the idea is that because of the fall, the mind is also fallen. You know this is true because the result of that is human fallibility, human fallibility. Human fallibility is compounded by isolation. The way I've begun to say it over the last six months or so is that any narrative constructed in isolation is necessarily wrong. In other words, if you're thinking through your situation by yourself, you come up with a narrative, and that narrative is necessarily wrong. The only narratives that have any possibility of even approximating the truth are the ones we construct in community. That's a very huge, a very huge thing, a very huge idea, but it's too long to be the big idea.

I hope you will engage with that idea, because when we are in isolation, as I say, it compounds this human fallibility. Then you start to think you're a victim. Then you start to think you're a victim, and then you start over reading your circumstances. Then you start feeling self-pity. Then you start assuming the worst in the motives of other people. Then your mind starts to eat itself. If you're living in isolation, eventually your mind will eat itself. What it eats first, is it eats faith. Everybody has faith and doubt all the time. Everybody has faith and doubt all the time, but if you are in a community and you're working through these things, faith abounds. When you live in isolation, your mind begins to eat itself, and it eats faith first.

What happens is if you're 90% faith and 10% doubt, eventually when that faith gets all eaten up you're left with doubt. You're left with doubt. Now that 10% becomes your 100%. You see?

I got all of the work done on the trailer. I still have some other things I'm taking to the factory for anyway. Thank you, Lord. Now I need to take it to the factory for the bump, the dent I put in it when I was backing it up. Anyway, that's a different story. I was over there getting the work done. It's a little bit less joyful than I mentioned. I said, "Look, I'm coming, this is the day I'm coming and I'm not leaving until it's done." Anyway, I said that more nicely than I said it just then, but I didn't feel nice when I said it. Anyway, I took it over. Then I went over to the library in this little town, public library, so I could do some work, do my devotions, do some work.

A young man walks in. He sits over against the wall, tee shirt, shorts, sneakers, looked like he maybe had been walking by and wanted to get out of the heat. Came in, was working on his smartphone or whatever kind of phone for about ten minutes. Then he engaged me. He was a very engaging young guy. He began to unfold this story about ... He said, "man, my life sucks." I said, that's his lead, so I said, okay he wants to talk about how his life sucks. The woman at the well wanted to talk about water, so Jesus talked about water. He wanted to talk about how his life sucks, so I said okay well I'll talk to him about why his life sucks. I said, "Well, tell me about that."

Long story short, he was in an accident 11 or 14 years ago, I can't remember, with a train. He's been on Social Security, SSI. He lives in a closet. He lives by himself. He lives in isolation. He is dependent, codependent on his mother. His mother, he's been smoking some pot and drinking some beer, so his mother turned him into the Social Security and somehow they've cut him off or something like this. You

know, you rarely get the whole story. Anyway, he's going on and on, and on, and on. He said, "I hate my mother. She's ruined my life." He talked for about 30 minutes.

Then he said, "What are you reading there?" I said, "Well, I'm reading the Bible." He said, "Oh man, I really should be reading the Bible." He said, "You know, I've got a Bible, I just never read it. I really should be reading the Bible." I'm thinking, yeah you probably should. Then I said, "What's your name?" He told me his name. I'll say his name is James. Not really. I said, "James, let me ask you a question. Why are you telling me all this?" He said, "Oh, you know, I don't know."

I said, "Well, you know when people tell you something, sometimes they just want to unload, sometimes they're looking for some input. How about you? Are you looking for some feedback on all of this or not?" He said, "Yeah, yeah. I really would like that." I said, "Well, you know, James I'll give you some feedback. First thing is that sometimes a man needs a hug, and sometimes he needs a kick in the pants. James, you need a kick in the pants. Victim, victim, victim, everybody else at fault. Everybody is against me. The whole world is against me. You're talking like a victim. You need to make a decision, James. Are you going to be a victim, or are you going to be a victor? Let me tell you what the core issue here is from my perspective. The core issue here from my perspective is that you have been living in isolation and you have made up a narrative in your mind, and it's wrong, because you don't have anybody to sharpen you. Do you have a friend? Do you have any friends?"

He said, "No, man. All of my friends are bad people. I don't need to hang around with them anymore, because every time I get with them they get me in trouble. No, I don't have any friends." Here's a guy who is living in isolation. He's made up all of this narrative about his life, about how horrible it is, and that he's the victim in all of this. I may not get all these things in exact right order, but I did say to him, I said, "If I were you", and I told him this story, I've told it here before about how anybody who has ever watched National Geographic understands that the lion doesn't go after the herd, the lion always goes after the, what? The weak one that has become what? Isolated.

That's because every predator understands the strategic value of isolation. Whether it's in the animal kingdom, or the criminal world, or the spiritual realm, every predator understands the strategic value of isolation. You become isolated. I said, I quoted 1 Peter 5:8, "The devil, your enemy the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Who does he look for? He looks for someone like you. He looks for someone like you." I said, "So, you have a choice to make, and it's time for you to be a man. It's time. You need to decide. Are you going to live the rest of your life like you've lived the first part of it?", he's 35, "The first 35 years of your life, you're going to live the next 35 years of your life as a victim like you have the first? Or are you going to be a victor?"

He said, "Man, I want to be a victor." I said, "You know, there's some research that shows that at about the age of 35 in most men a switch gets flipped." You know, plus or minus 35, 35 plus or minus. "A switch gets flipped and they decide: I want to be a good husband and a good father to my kids, or I want to get a wife and get some kids. These 35 year old men will begin to take jobs that ten years ago they would've disdained." He said, "Oh, that's me. That's me. That's all I think about. That's all I think about is I want to get married, I want to have a family. I want to get a job. That's all I think about."

I said, "How do you think you're going to make that happen if you keep thinking like a victim all the time? How can you become a victor? Would you be interested in the thoughts of somebody who has been down the road?" He said, "Yeah, yeah, man. Please, please, tell me, tell me." I said, "Well three things. Number one, you need to get un-enmeshed from your mother." I've left out a big part of the

conversation, obviously. "You need to take a break from your mom. Number two, you're a high school dropout. Go get the GED. You got the time because of the Social Security, well maybe not, I don't know. Anyway, you've got time. Got get your GED. Start taking a night class at the community college. Education is the key to unlocking a lot of different things in the area of especially vocations." Then I said, "The third thing is that you need to get right with God."

He said, "Yeah, yeah, man. I need to do all those things." I said, "Well, let me tell you what I would do immediately. Of course, you need to get this, obviously, the Social Security thing worked out, but what I would do immediately, I'd walk out of here down by the place where I live. I would walk into five churches. You're not going to hit this on the first church. I would walk into five churches, and I would walk up to the receptionist and I'd say, 'My name is James and I have nothing to offer you but problems. I have been living in isolation, and I would like to become part of a community if you would have me. Importantly, I need to find an older man who can take me under his wing and show me the ropes and teach me how to be a man.'"

He said, "I'm going to do that." I took him out to the car, gave him a copy of the Man in the Mirror. By the way, all this time I didn't know if he was going to ask me for money, ask me to take him somewhere. He didn't do any of that. This guy, he decided that he was going to be a man that day. I'm pretty sure he decided that he was going to be a man. You never know. I'll never see him again probably. The point is that he has a plan to move from victim to victor if he wants to. How did he get it? He didn't get it in isolation. He didn't get it in isolation.

This is the problem of isolation. Paul, what was Paul's Bible? Paul's Bible is the Bible we have in front of us here in the Old Testament. Proverbs 27. There's so many verses that pertain to this. This was the Bible that Paul was reading. 27, verse six. "The kisses of an enemy are profuse; but faithful are the wounds of a friend." Verse nine, "Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel." Then famously verse 17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Then Proverbs 18:24, "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Then Ecclesiastes, chapter four, talking about two are better than one and all these things, nothing worse than a man being alone. Paul took all these things to heart. There was probably nobody in the Bible that I can think of who is more task oriented than Paul.

He was a man on a mission, and yet, when you look at his writings at the end of Romans, at the end of 1 Corinthians 16, and I put those verse in your outline so you can look at them, he's recalling, "Say hello to my dear friend so and so. Say hello to my dear friend so and so. My dear friend so and so was such a comfort to me." Then in Philippians he says about Timothy, "I have no one else like him." Paul, what made Paul's life doable was that he understood this emphasis that the Bible places on being in relationships, not doing life in isolation.

What is it that Paul understood that James did not understand? It's the big idea today. We are made for relationships. That's it. We are made for relationships. Guys in particular will tend sometimes to think that we're made for the task, and we are. A man's greatest need is this driving need to be significant, to make a difference, to leave the world a better place. You can't do that without relationships. You can't do that without relationships.

The second thing I want us to talk about is how good this journey can be when you do it with a few brothers. I talked about being on top of the mountain, the mountain on top of you, or down in the valley under a pile of rocks. You're coming in here each week. Here's the thing, is that this week you're coming

in on top of the mountain, and somebody else is under a pile of rocks. A month from now, they're on top of the mountain and you're the guy under the pile of rocks. This is how, this is why we need each other, because we're not always in the same rut or the same problem at the same time. There are some other brothers there who can lift us up, who can encourage us.

Then these three questions. When you do feel like you're under a pile of rocks, does He care, does He know, does He care? I mean, I've been praying my eyeballs out. My knees have blood on them, they're blistering. I've worn myself out praying. I don't think He even knows. I don't think He cares. Maybe you think He knows. He knows and He cares, but He just doesn't like me. Or He knows, He cares, but He's impotent. It's all a hoax. These are the kinds of things that happen when the mind starts eating itself. That's why we need brothers to help stabilize these fallible minds that are subject to this Noetic Influence of Sin.

The Bible says it this way, Hebrews 10:25, "Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as some are in the habit of doing." You could just say we're made for relationships. We are made for relationships. Then finally, just a few steps and then we'll go to some discussion time. I've got way too many, that I can't give you all of these obviously. Well, if you saw the list you'd say obviously too. One thing we can do is we can emulate Jesus.

We can emulate Jesus. His mission: total global conquest. His method: men. Men were his method. His strategy: form a small group. Jesus bet his entire mission of total global conquest on the success of a single small group. Think about that. Basically, Jesus came to earth to redeem us from our sins by offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world by paying a penalty that he did not deserve, but before he left he wanted to make that available to future generations, John 17:20,21. He basically said, Okay, I'm going to die. I'm going to form this small group and then it's up to you. Look, here we are. It's a strategy that works, so emulate the strategy of Jesus.

Number two, be a good listener. Be a good listener. Sometimes you are the person who needs to be listened to, but sometimes, and probably most of the time, you're the person that can do the listening. I made a huge mistake this week. A friend of mine is going through a tough time, so I kept texting him every day, "how's it going? How's it going?" Then he sent me a text yesterday or the day before, and he says, "Why do you keep asking me how I'm doing?" I realized, oh my gosh, I violated one of my own principles. I learned this principle at the gym one time. I was walking by an acquaintance. He was obviously down. I said to him, I said, "Lee, sometimes when I'm down I want to talk about it, but sometimes when I'm down I don't. Would you like to talk about this?" He said, "No, not really", and then he walked away. Came back about ten minutes later. He said, "You know, I really would like to talk about it."

Then in his own timing he basically was able to unburden his heart. You could see little ways that his mind had started to eat itself as well, by the way. He was able to process through that and he just felt a whole lot better. I told this story to the friend and then asked him to forgive me for being insensitive to whether or not he wanted to talk about this problem that he was going through. Be a good listener, but be sensitive to whether or not somebody wants. Part of being a good listener is really mostly asking good questions. Being a good talker is not asking any questions at all, right? Being a good listener is really about asking good questions. Start with a few questions.

Then, by the way, could I just say this? I've discovered, really I've always known this, but I discovered this in a much more profound way in the last five years, just four and a half plus years, that there are

people who are very fragile in the world. Now I always knew that, but what I discovered over the last four and a half plus years is that we are all fragile. We are all fragile. Men, when any of us come in here on a Friday morning, every one of us is fragile, so could we try to be a little bit kinder to each other? Could we just try to be a little nicer to each other?

Those are three steps. There are probably many more. The point of all this is that isolation is a bad thing. It's the problem. God has provided. How has God provided for us to solve this problem of isolation? He has provided us relationships, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together", because we are made for relationships.

Now, what I would like us to do is turn our attention to these three questions and discuss them at your table. Then when there are a few minutes left in the hour I'll come back. Then what I'd like to do is have feedback from different tables on the answers that you came up to these questions. Then I'll give a closing comment.

We're coming back now at the end. Hope you have had a good discussion online. Just in closing, I just want to reiterate that the problem, the problem that all men must at various points in their life struggle against, rail against if you will, is this idea of allowing ourselves to become isolated from other relationships. When you live an isolated life, your mind will begin to eat itself. It really will. This is true. You've had it happen. I just want to encourage you. Especially of course the time we withdraw is the very time when we need other people the most. Let's apply these principles, continue to apply these principles, love one another, be a good listener, emulate the model of Jesus.

Let's pray. Our dearest Father, we come to you. Lord, every single one of us is here because we want to lead a more Godly life. We want to walk rightly with you. It is transparent from these scriptures that we do this best when we are in community with each other. Lord, help each of us to resist any temptation to isolation. Then, Lord, give us also this courage to be vulnerable that was mentioned. Then, we would just ask that you grant each of us in our marriages, for those of us who are married or will be married, a best friend in our wives as well. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Have a great weekend. See you next week. Challenge four.