

Session 1.8 The Wounded Self

Objectives:

- To give the participants an awareness of the concept of “wounded self”
- To help the participants respond appropriately to their wounds
- To give them the necessary skills to begin the process of healing their wounds
- To encourage them to reach out to help the wounded in society

Introduction:

Each of us has been wounded. Everyone, during the course of his/her life has been hurt. Nowadays a lot of people remain anxious about their wounds. But many do not realize that their inner wounds affect the way they behave and act towards others in society, especially the ones they love. Coming to terms with our wounds is the Christian path. According to Hildegard von Bingen, by becoming truly human we transform our wounds into pearls. How is this possible? This session helps us to recognize the process in which we can begin healing our wounds so that we may become “wholly” human.

Scripture Passage: Luke 10:25-37 - The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

26 What is written in the Law? he replied. How do you read it?

27 He answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

28 You have answered correctly, Jesus replied. Do this and you will live.

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 In reply Jesus said: A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

37 The expert in the law replied, The one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, Go and do likewise.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you understand by the term “wounded self”? How have you been wounded? Are you able to recognize your deepest wounds?
2. Do you feel that you have the resources and the strength to begin a process of healing your wounds? How can you do this?
3. How have you experienced Christ as Good Samaritan in your life – raising you up, offering you healing and new life when you have been lying by the roadside?
4. Who is the person to whom Christ is calling you today to become neighbor, to help bind his/her wounds? It may be someone in your own home or at your workplace, someone in your neighborhood or parish. How do you think you can help that wounded person?

Reflection:

Shakespeare's great tragedy, *King Lear*, begins with Lear asking his daughters to tell him how much they love him. Two of his daughters comply; the other says she cannot quantify her love with words - that her love is more than words can say - appropriate to her bond as a daughter, no more, no less. Lear cannot feel love because his heart is closed. It is Lear's wounded self, or course, who thinks that love equals how well his daughters can articulate their love. It is his wounded self that takes the initial action. He bans the daughter who truly loves him, while giving his kingdom to the daughters who say they love him when actually all they want is his property. What makes the play a tragedy, by definition, is that Lear's awareness of what love truly is comes too late to save his life or the life of the daughter who loves him.

Lear still resonates with audiences because as human beings we are still searching for love. Our primary motivation in life is to experience love. And we too, like Lear, have a wounded self that remains confused about what love is. The wounded self gets confused about love because of what happens in our childhood. As children, we needed to be loved, to feel the divine love of Spirit. This is an evolutionary, innate need. We needed our parents to be loving adults - connected to a personal spiritual source and able to take responsibility for their feelings. We required this so that their love could reflect back to us our essence. As children, because we needed love - as a plant needs water - we interpreted however our parents were as 'loving'. So, if our parents 'loved' us when we cleaned our room, then our wounded self confuses love with neatness and order. If our parents 'loved' us when we did things perfectly - received A's, for instance - then our wounded self believes that we are only lovable if we achieve perfection. If our parents 'loved' us when we were quiet and nice, then our wounded self may think that if we speak up we won't be loved. If our parents 'loved' us when we took care of them, then our wounded self equates love with caretaking. If our parents

'loved' us when they sexually abused us, then our wounded self may equate love with sex. If our parents 'loved' us with food, then our wounded self equates love with food. And the list goes on.

Part of the exploration and healing of the wounded self is to find out, through dialogue and awareness, just how your particular wounded self defines and experiences 'love', to understand how, when you are in a wounded place, love is distorted. What the wounded self sees as love isn't really love at all. It can't be. The very nature of the wounded self is who we are when we are separate from love, when our heart is closed.

Codependence

Codependence is an emotional and behavioral defense system which was adopted by our egos in order to meet our need to survive as a child. Because we had no tools for reprogramming our egos and healing our emotional wounds (culturally approved grieving, training and initiation rites, healthy role models, etc.), the effect is that as an adult we keep reacting to the programming of our childhood and do not get our needs met - our emotional, mental, Spiritual, or physical needs. Codependence allows us to survive physically but causes us to feel empty and dead inside. Codependence is a defense system that causes us to wound ourselves.

We need to take the shame and judgment out of the process on a personal level. It is vitally important to stop listening and giving power to that critical place within us that tells us that we are bad and wrong and shameful. That "critical parent" voice in our head is the disease lying to us. . . . This healing is a long gradual process - the goal is progress, not perfection. What we are learning about is unconditional Love. Unconditional Love means no judgment, no shame.

We need to start observing ourselves and stop judging ourselves. Any time we judge and shame ourselves, we are feeding back into the disease, we are jumping back into the squirrel cage. It is through having the courage and willingness to revisit the emotional 'dark night of the soul' that was our childhood, that we can start to understand on a gut level why we have lived our lives as we have. It is when we start understanding the cause and effect relationship between what happened to the child that we were, and the effect it had on the adult we became, that we can Truly start to forgive ourselves. It is only when we start understanding on an emotional level, on a gut level, that we were powerless to do anything any differently than we did that we can truly start to Love ourselves. The hardest thing for any of us to do is to have compassion for ourselves. As children we felt responsible for the things that happened to us. We blamed ourselves for the things that were done to us and for the deprivations we suffered. There is nothing more powerful in this transformational process than being able to go back to that child who still exists within us and say, 'It wasn't your fault. You didn't do anything wrong, you were just a little kid.' As long as we are judging and shaming ourselves we are giving power to the disease. We are feeding the monster that is devouring us. We need to take responsibility without taking the blame. We need to own and honor the feelings without being a victim of them. We need to rescue and nurture and Love our inner children - and STOP them from

controlling our lives. STOP them from driving the bus! Children are not supposed to drive, they are not supposed to be in control. And they are not supposed to be abused and abandoned. We have been doing it backwards. We abandoned and abused our inner children. Locked them in a dark place within us. And at the same time let the children drive the bus - let the children's wounds dictate our lives.

It is through healing our inner child, our inner children, by grieving the wounds that we suffered, that we can change our behavior patterns and clear our emotional process. We can release the grief with its pent-up rage, shame, terror, and pain from those feeling places which exist within us. That does not mean that the wound will ever be completely healed. There will always be a tender spot, a painful place within us due to the experiences that we have had. What it does mean is that we can take the power away from those wounds. By bringing them out of the darkness into the Light, by releasing the energy, we can heal them enough so that they do not have the power to dictate how we live our lives today. We can heal them enough to change the quality of our lives dramatically. We can heal them enough to truly be happy, joyous and free in the moment most of the time.

Lord Jesus, risen with the wounds of your crucifixion, you have been Good Samaritan to us, you have been neighbor to me. Show me how to become neighbor to those to whom you send me each day. Remind me to stop and not to rush on in haste. Give me your eyes to look with compassion on those in need. Give me your hands to tend to the wounds of those who need to see you in me. For I want to be friend to you, Lord Jesus, and I want to be neighbor to them. Give me, Lord, the grace I need to become neighbor to those around me.