

# Overcoming the Mother Wound – Dan Hitz

Dan is the Director of Reconciliation Ministries of Michigan, a ministry helping men, women, and adolescents overcome sexual and relationship issues. He was the last out of five children living emotionally detached from his father with a paranoid schizophrenic mother. This article addresses the emotional effects of living in an environment that was predictable only by its unpredictability. It shows the power of Jesus Christ to heal the deep wounds inflicted upon the soul through a “mother wound”.

*I still remember watching TV and hearing my dad tell my mom, “They should be able to give you a shot to make the voices go away...” They walked out of the house and came back later. Life as I knew it would never be the same.*

*It was a typical day. I was a typical little kid. My mom and I were getting into the car on our way to the store. My mom told me that my cheeks were too pale, took me back in the house and put rubbing alcohol on my face. It made my cheeks red. It also made my eyes burn. I cried. Doesn't everyone's mom put alcohol on their face to make their cheeks nice and red?*



Growing up with my mom was like growing up in the Twilight Zone. How does one separate weird from reality when reality is weird? How does a little kid know what is normal when normal is not normal? My mom was paranoid schizophrenic. Things were strange, but not all the time. Sometimes landmines would go off if you rocked the boat. Sometimes they didn't. Sometimes what causes explosions one day doesn't cause them the next. Then again... maybe it does...

Andy Comiskey likens the **mother wound** to having a heart like a strainer. No matter how much love is poured in, there is no capacity to retain it. In the Living Waters text he writes,

That maternal deprivation can express itself in an inordinately powerful hunger for feminine touch, which in either sex can become eroticized. It can also fuel powerful emotional dependencies that are characterized by grasping, clutching, “infantile” tendencies. Others may experience this void as a dreadful aloneness, an emotional abyss, that is accompanied with feelings of abandonment. Some define this state as a profound emptiness, with little or no felt sense of being at all. (p. 26)

Andy Comiskey is right. The mother wound goes deep. It is at once a bottomless void and a pressurized container of pain. One can try to drown out the void through unplugging emotionally or through overachievement... through sin or through religiously inspired perfectionism. Unless we bring the mother wound to Jesus, the void full of pain remains.

My own mother wound ran deep and began in the womb. I was born with a sense of rejection. As an adult I had trouble interacting with the authority figures in my life and would often say “they don't know what to do with me”.

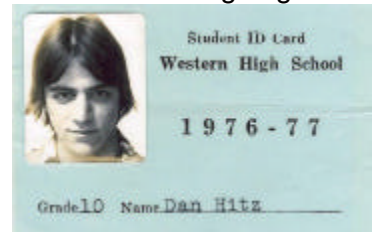
Before I entered kindergarten my mother molested me while giving me a bath. I dealt with that by turning off the “emotional circuit breakers” in my heart. On another occasion I can remember her calling me into the bathroom while she was taking a bath. When I asked her what she wanted, she replied that she just wanted to show me what a naked woman looked like. I still remember leaving the bathroom and staring into the corner of our dining room. What does a little boy do with information he was never intended to receive?

A few years after the bathtub incidents, I was at my friend's house and he showed me his father's pornographic magazine. I freaked! I turned away in fear. Doesn't everyone? My friend laughed at me. I guess not every little boy turns his head away in fear from a picture of a naked woman.



I can still remember the day my dad took my mother to the hospital for the shot that was supposed to “make the voices go away”. It didn’t work. There were many seasons with a lot freaky behavior – yelling, slamming doors, crying – and then mom would finally go to the hospital. A zombie came home for visits. She talked real slow and moved real stiff. Her eyes glared. She would make bizarre religious comments about holy things that were supposed to be safe. The demonic forces that controlled her were careful to bring “God” into the equation. The day my mother manifested a weird demonic display in the front of the church was the day I crumbled under the weight of shame and closed my heart off to God and His people. I was an early teenager at this point and could have really used the support of community. Another casualty of the mother wound.

I struggled with same-sex attractions since early junior high, although I can remember checking out the other boys on the playground in grade school. My biggest wound came later in high school. Mom was going through a particularly bad psychotic/demonic episode and drew my dad and me into the hurricane. In the middle of the storm she threatened to expose herself and prepositioned me. I freaked. By God’s grace my dad was able to calm both of us down, but much damage had already been done. From that point on all women were dangerous. I desperately needed someone to protect me so I declared that all men were safe. I consciously put the truth on the shelf when I remembered that one of my friend’s dads was also mentally ill. I didn’t know how to survive if I didn’t fashion my own reality. I also decided that I would never get married because if my wife was freaky like my mom, I would lose it myself and there would be no hope.



At my mother’s mental competency hearing in Traverse City, the prosecuting attorney and the defense attorney were father and son. My mother’s defense lawyer was defending her demonic behavior. She has a right to live her life as she sees fit? I remember being numb as I gave my testimony. I knew the stories of the violence, the hallucinations, the attempt to burn down the house... My mother burst into tears, yelled that I was lying, and declared that I was no longer her son. Nurses comforted her as they led her out of the room. I sat there alone. No one comforted me.



I tried to fill up the void in my heart with compulsive homosexual fantasies and masturbation. My goal in life was to find “Mr. Right” and live happily ever after. High School theater offered a brief reprieve from reality. When homosexual lusts, fantasies, and encounters failed to satisfy I turned to food to numb the pain. Anorexia brought me down to 125 pounds and I was still too fat for “Mr. Right”. Starving turned to bingeing and purging as I spent the next three years trying to fill up the void with bulimia. Andy Comiskey was right when he wrote, “Others may experience this void as a dreadful aloneness, an emotional abyss, that is accompanied with feelings of abandonment. Some define this state as a profound emptiness, with little or no felt sense of being at all.” (p. 26)

### ***But God...***

I remember the day on June 24, 1984 when I asked Jesus Christ into my heart. The bottomless pit in my soul began to close. Jesus Christ began to fill up the emptiness I was trying to pack with food and I have not binged since that day. I wasn’t ready to share my heart fully with Him in the beginning. That required too much trust. I knew how to keep my emotional circuits turned off. I knew how to build emotional walls. The Lord loves us enough to work in our hearts at a pace we can accept and help us learn to trust Him one step at a time. My relationship with Christ was extremely timid in the early years. I read my Bible, worshiped, soaked up the teaching, and did all the right Christian things, but I didn’t let Him reach too deeply into my soul. I prayed to surrender to His will and that He would do whatever it took to make me like Him, but I didn’t let Him into the depths of my pain.

The Lord doesn’t violate our personal boundaries – our free will – He meets us where we’re at. He worked in my heart as deeply as I let Him, one step at a time. He gradually began to redefine me. I was losing my identification with my past abuse, my mentally ill mother, and my sin. I was beginning to be identified by Him – accepted by God the Father and becoming just like His son, Jesus. The Lord began to heal my fear of



*Dan and Marianne Hitz on their wedding day, October 25, 1986, and July 2011.*

women and brought me a beautiful best friend who became my wife. Marianne and I have learned to walk together through the mountains and valleys of life as we grow in our love for each other and the Lord. My wife and I both realize that we can't fix each other. Only Jesus can do that. She is not the answer for my problems. I am not the answer for hers. This frees us to seek the Lord for each other and to enjoy the blessings of our relationship more fully.

Becoming more like Christ is not automatic. Neither is overcoming the mother wound. We must open up our hearts to Jesus, the only one who can truly redeem that which was lost in our lives. The biggest step in my healing came as the Lord and I began to wrestle with the deep pain still trapped in my heart. I had some pretty strong defensive walls in my

soul and I used them to avoid pain. I used them to keep God out of the terrified areas of my heart where I thought that I had always been on my own. After years of marriage and working in the ministry, I began to lose the strength to ignore the pain and prop up the walls. They began to crumble the day I cried out to the Lord and admitted that everything I had tried to do to fix myself had not worked. I truly gave Him permission to do as He saw fit. The walls further crumbled as I began to allow Him to walk with me through the pain of my life, admit that it still hurt, bring it to the cross, and accept His resurrection life in the broken areas of my heart. He began to connect me to community in a deeper level. Some of the healing came through Living Waters, some from healing prayer, and some from traditional counseling. Further healing came as I walked in obedience and relationship with my Savior.

When I attended Living Waters training, one of the altar workers gave me a word that the Lord wanted to break my sense of self-sufficiency. I had believed the lie that "I was on my own" and that no one was going to protect me for so many years that I didn't know how to live without it. Through multiple ministry sessions the Lord showed me that He always was, and always will be, there for me. I could now start to dismantle the defensive walls I erected for self protection the day that my dad took my mom to the hospital for a shot "to make the voices go away". The Lord is my protection. He always was and He always will be. I can now learn to safely interact with the world around me knowing that Jesus is my fortress.

I continued to drop my guard, admit my pain, and meet the Lord in the middle of it. I met Him through healing prayer in the memory of my mother molesting me. My mother, who should have been the safest person in my life, was the most dangerous. A bath that was supposed to make me clean, brought defilement. As we prayed, I could sense Jesus cleansing me of the fear and shame as He dried me off, wrapped me in a towel, and held me close to Him. His hands were in the right places. Areas of the little boy part of my heart came back to life and I began learning to trust people again and learned to accept my sexuality. Jesus is my protector.

During another healing prayer session we were praying about the time my mother exposed herself to me in the bathtub. When we asked Jesus to show me other memories that were related to that experience I pictured the time my friend showed me the centerfold of his dad's pornographic magazine and I freaked. I wept as my prayer partner asked me what my mom stole from me the day she exposed herself to me. I realized that my mom had stolen the inherent appreciation for the feminine that the Lord had designed in every male's heart. Yes, pornography is sinful, but any little boy should have been intrigued by a picture of a naked woman, not terrified. Through that prayer session, the Lord restored the proper appreciation for the feminine body.

The Lord has healed many wounds from my mother's mental competency hearing. I am no longer bitter at the nurses who comforted my mother while they left me sitting there alone. I have forgiven the legal system and the father/son prosecuting/defense attorney team. Most of all, I can accept that I am a son of God the Father who loves and accepts me up even when my own mother has forsaken me. I am His son first and foremost.



I can accept the Body of Christ as my family even with all of her imperfections and challenges. The Lord has healed many of the strongholds that were created the day my mother had her demonic manifestation at church. The couple who drove me home from church was not sitting in judgment towards me – thinking that I was also crazy because I had a mentally ill mother. They were offering compassion as they drove me home and tried to use humor to help me feel better. I have forgiven the priest who resisted coming over to our house to pray for my mom when I called begging for help. I can have compassion on him now recognizing that he was overwhelmed and untrained for the intensity of my mother's condition. After all, he did end up coming over and my mom did end up going into the hospital that day. I just couldn't see his contributions in my bitterness. Godly good and demonic evil coexist in this world today. Wholeness and brokenness coexist in the Body of Christ today. Jesus' love helps us to forgive the broken and celebrate the whole.

The power of God demolished the strongholds created the day my mom had a demonic episode in the kitchen and threatened to expose herself. As I began to trust the Lord more and more, He was able to walk with me through deeper and deeper levels of pain and bring deeper and deeper levels of healing. In one of the most intense healing prayer sessions of my life, the Lord walked with me step by step through the trauma. He showed me that I wasn't the "spineless wonder" that I had always described myself to be, but that I had specifically remained in the house to protect my dad if my mother were to become violent again. He showed me that my mother didn't actually preposition me, but that she prepositioned my dad. He showed me that He kept me safe in the middle of the storm and that all the forces of hell could not destroy me because He is my strength. He didn't give me "a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a strong mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). He showed me that while not every woman is dangerous and not every man is safe, He is powerful enough to lead me in a battle and bring me safely to victory. Best of all, God freed me to treasure and cherish my wife more without the filter of the fear of women between us.

I also know that God "created my inmost being" and "knit me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13). He showed me a vision of my mom yelling at my dad for making her pregnant with me. I could recognize the powerless look on my dad's face that I had seen so many times when he didn't know what to do. I saw my mom raise her fists in anger to bring them down on her stomach, only to cushion the blow at the last minute so she wouldn't hurt me inside her womb. I recognized the beginning of the thought, "They don't know what to do with me," as I heard the heart of God say, "I wanted you and I know what to do with you." I can now rest in my identity in Christ knowing that He loves me dearly and rejoiced on the day of my birth. I can now stand in my authority in Christ and take my rightful place in the Body of Christ.

At the end of an intense healing prayer session, I told my prayer partner that I wanted to pray and ask God to make me the man I would have been if I had not had a demonic, paranoid schizophrenic mother. My prayer didn't make it past the first sentence. The Lord showed me that through the redemption of the traumas I endured, He has made me an even better Man of God than I would have been if none of this pain would have happened. As we walk with Christ through redemption, we are drawn closer to His heart and learn more about His love for us than we could know any other way. In our surrender to Him, we receive His victory.



*Dan Hitz, Current Director of Reconciliation Ministries, and his wife, Marianne, at Dan's Ordination Service.*

The Lord has much more healing in store for me as He continues to reach into my heart in love and touch the hidden pockets of pain. I am learning more and more to trust in the heart of Father God to teach me the things that my mom and dad failed to teach me. I am learning to trust Him more and more as he continues to heal the mother wound in the deeper areas of my heart. God is love, and His goal for our lives is complete transformation into the likeness of His dear Son. The journey is not easy, but the reward is priceless.

If you are suffering from a mother wound, cry out to Jesus and seek the help of safe, Christian people to walk with you in the restoration path. The Lord has so much more to give you in your journey with Him. You will learn more of His grace and strength than you could ever imagine.