

The Mother Wound: Dan Hitz Answers Questions from Drew Boa

Dan Hitz is the Executive Director of Reconciliation Ministries of Michigan, Inc. He is a licensed professional counselor, an ordained minister, and an EMDR trained, certified clinical trauma professional. This article was inspired by questions from [Drew Boa](#), Founder and Director of [Husband Material](#), an excellent ministry that helps men overcome pornography. Drew sent Dan some questions to prepare for a podcast on the mother wound that was posted to the Husband Material website on June 21, 2021. You can see that podcast by [clicking here](#).

Drew: What is a “mother wound”?

Dan: Mother wounds are voids that we have in our hearts as a result of not receiving the nurturing and love that God intended our mothers to give us. They may be intentional in cases of overt neglect, or unintentional in cases where our mothers loved us but were unable to care for us. Mother wounds may also be wounds we received because our mothers harmed us in some way, such as abuse. Mother wounds show themselves in deep emotional emptiness, codependency, self-sufficiency, and anger. Those with mother wounds don't know how to comfort themselves appropriately. Since they feel a deep emptiness, they are susceptible to addictions and enmeshed relationships as they try to fill up the emotional void. Some mother wounds are huge. Others are subtler.



Dan before and after the healing process began.

Drew: Why is this topic so important?

Dan: Mother wounds rob us of our ability to have healthy relationships, and to take the necessary risks that allow us to embrace the challenges of life. Mothers lay the foundation for our emotional development. They are intended to impart a “sense of being” in us. That means we learn that we exist as a valued individual, our needs will be met, our thoughts and emotions matter, and we are capable thriving in this world. If the enemy can make us feel like we don't matter, or keep us from developing a healthy sense of initiative, he can rob us of living up to God's individual design for us.

Drew: How do you know if you have a mother wound?

Dan: If you walk around with a sense of anxiety, or aren't comfortable in your own skin, that's a good indication that you may have a mother wound. If you have trouble feeling accepted by others, and feel unable to follow through on your goals, you may have a mother wound. One of the unscientific tests I have people do is to try to sit alone in their living room for a half hour or so with no TV, no radio, no smartphone. Just sit quietly and be aware of the present, without escaping to a fantasy world or finding some meaningless task to perform. People with mother or father wounds usually can't sit still with no distracting stimuli for any length of time without getting antsy.

Drew: Have you been personally wounded by your mother?

Dan: Yes. I was the youngest of five children with a paranoid schizophrenic mother. Unfortunately, she sexually abused me throughout my childhood, yet was very over protective. I wasn't allowed to do many of the activities that a lot of other kids could do. I didn't feel comfortable in my own skin and didn't learn how to develop friendships as a small child. I learned how to comfort myself by jumping into a fantasy world. I was afraid to take appropriate risks in the real world.

Drew: In what ways did your mother affect your sexuality?

Dan: She was very aggressive with the sexual abuse. That caused a lot of confusion and made me afraid of women. I had some sexual encounters with males while I was growing up. Somehow boys seemed safer. I didn't really know how to make friends and didn't feel like one of the boys. When the sexual abuse from my mother reached its peak, I was devastated and made a promise to myself – an inner vow – that I would never get married. I was afraid my wife would turn out like my mother. At the same time, I wanted to have the classic life with a wife and kids. I was very confused. I spent most of my time in a fantasy world of having sexual encounters with men in my mind. My goal was to find the right guy and settle down with him, even though I wanted a wife and kids. I was an emotional mess.

Drew: When and how did God intervene? What began to change?

Dan: I grew up in the church, but didn't know how to have a personal relationship with Jesus. I liked the idea of living for Him, but He didn't seem like much help in the abuse. I can remember being in college and making the decision that God didn't exist. From that point on things went from bad to worse. My sexual fantasies about guys and isolation skyrocketed. I turned to bulimia to try to fill the void. That lasted for about three or four years, and was a very dark time in my life.

When I graduated from college, I worked with a guy who was a spirit-filled, born again Christian. One day he witnessed to me and said that there would be a day for everyone when God would ask them if they would serve Him or not. The Holy Spirit was all over that statement and I was confronted with that question deep in my heart. I didn't know what would happen if I said no to God, but I knew it would be bad. A few days later I said yes to God. Instantly my bulimia ended, and I assumed that God would take my same-sex attraction away just as quickly. He didn't. I was devastated. I was hoping that He would take away my sinful sexual desires the same way He took away my bulimia... without me having to face the pain in my soul that was driving the desires. I was serious about living for Christ, but I didn't want the Holy Spirit "messing" with the pain in my heart. I jumped into the Christian disciplines of prayer, Bible study, church, and even Bible school. I was hoping that if I did all the right external things, God would just fix me without having to look at the pain. He did honor the Christian disciplines enough that the terror of women reduced to a fear of women, and He brought me a beautiful wife a few years later. Even though we're coming up on our 35th wedding anniversary, I learned that marriage doesn't fix sexual brokenness. Only God does. God doesn't fix sexual brokenness on our terms. He fixes it on His terms.

What God was really after was a deeper relationship. He wants to have honest conversations with us about our wounds. A deeper relationship with Jesus is what began to bring deeper healing in my heart. God brought me to the point of desperation where I was finally willing to let Him into the darker places of my heart. I was finally willing to admit the abuse, be honest about the pain I was still feeling, and let the Holy Spirit do His work. I also had to "forgive God" for "giving me" a mentally ill mother who sexually abused me. I know that last sentence isn't theologically sound, but the pain in our souls isn't going to make theological sense. The bottom line is that I had to surrender to the Father, and trust that He is good and truly does have a good plan for my life. The moment I surrendered to the Lord and accepted the fact that I had a sexually abusive mother – accepted that He is good and He really can work all things out for my good if I let Him – the Father spoke to me and said, "I always raise up Moses under the nose of Pharaoh!" I realized that no matter what happened in the past, God could redeem it, heal my heart, and empower me to help other people overcome the pain in their past. In other words, the struggle wasn't in vain. God can use it for His glory, for my eternal benefit, and for the eternal benefit of others.

My deeper surrender happened around 20 years ago. That opened the door for a deeper relationship with God, and deeper healings from God, that are still happening today. He really does care about the pain in our hearts. He really can bring healing in the worst moments of our lives.

Drew: For men who want to deal with these types of things, what advice do you have?

Dan: The first thing we should do is surrender to the Lord and admit that we have emotional wounds. Ask the Lord to show you how your wounds have affected your life. It's not just going to be the porn or sexual brokenness. Mother wounds affect how we see ourselves, how we interact with others of the same and opposite sex, and how we relate to God. They affect our ability to live the fulfilling life that God wants us to live. The second thing we need to do is find a healthy Christian community that we can be honest with about our struggles. God brought me into a [Living Waters](#) program. There are other great communities out there as well including [Husband Material](#) and [Celebrate Recovery](#). Finally, we need to embrace the process and be gracious to ourselves. Transformation doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. As we grow in our healing, we learn to grow in healthy relationships with others in the Body of Christ. As we learn to walk with others, we learn to live according to God's unique design for our lives. Life gets a lot more fulfilling.

***Great recovery resources are available from
Husband Material at www.husbandmaterial.com.***

Questions Written by Drew Boa of Husband Material.

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