

## The Mandalorian in Me – Dan Hitz

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Image from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/paultassi/2019/12/18/the-mandalorian-breaks-out-of-its-formula-for-a-thrilling-tragic-chapter-7/#17b521db3611>. Retrieved 4/1/2020

He woke up with me at red alert today. That Mandalorian in me. Many of us abuse survivors have them. Some deep inside. Others right on the surface. Ready to swing into protection at a moment's notice. Heavily armored. Full helmet and mask. Full body armor. We have to make sure that no one – NO ONE – messes with the fearful, vulnerable part of our hearts. NO ONE. Sometimes he's actually effective. Usually he creates a bigger mess and causes even more problems. Sometimes. Just sometimes. He actually sees the need in other people and risks something of himself to help them.

Actually... for some Mandalorians... they risk a lot for other people. Is it too much? They don't want others to face the same devastation they... themselves... have faced... Maybe even a broken motive? If we help others, maybe we won't feel like such a useless failure. Maybe we're trying to fabricate our own significance. Nevertheless. The armor remains. Even with those they've helped... No one sees behind the mask... NO ONE!

Okay, it might be obvious by now that I've spent some time during our stay at home order for COVID-19 watching *The Mandalorian* on Disney Plus. *Slight spoiler alert: I'm only on episode six or so, so I don't even know how the season ends. The stuff I'll share here is pretty much what you would figure out even before you get through the first couple of episodes.*

*The Mandalorian* is a series on Disney Plus based on the *Star Wars* film series. It follows an intergalactic bounty hunter who goes after notorious bad guys, and a few others whom the bad guys, themselves, are looking for. Of course, he carries himself like he's not afraid of anything. Mandalorians don't show much emotion. Maybe he just figures he's got nothing to lose.

The Mandalorian wears special protective armor and a helmet – a mask – that he never takes off in front of anyone. Someone once asked him what happens if he takes off his mask. He said that he would never be allowed to put it back on. Forget taking off the armor. That's not going to happen. He never gives up his protection. NEVER. Sound familiar? Many of us worry about taking off our mask. What if someone sees that vulnerable part of us underneath? What if we can never go back into hiding again?

I was triggered this morning when I woke up to an email from someone who had wounded me deeply. They were asking me for a favor. I'm not the only person on this planet who could help them, so I found myself wondering what their motives were. Past history had shown me that things aren't usually what they appear to be with this person. I could feel the adrenaline rush hit me as I read the email. I could feel the anger. The vulnerability. The questioning of what to do. Would I listen to the upset and angry part of my heart? Would I do what the Lord would want me to do for the sake of many others? This Mandalorian found himself reaching for his weapons. Not sure if I was going to need them. Not sure if I was going to use them. Wondering if I was protected. I had actually been secretly hoping this person would ask me for help someday so I could say no. I wanted paybacks. Now that day is here. Will I get my paybacks? Other people would benefit from what they're asking me to do. If I lower my weapon and become vulnerable, will I be protected? Will God really come through?

If you're an abuse survivor, the battle might just sound familiar. We wear a mask. We've created our own heavy armor. We guard the fearful, vulnerable part of our hearts and rarely – if ever – allow it to be seen by anyone. Just like the character in the show, we try so hard to be self-sufficient, yet we find ourselves needing the help of other people. Like it or not, we end up letting others help us. Sometimes they're good. They help because it's the right thing to do. They don't want anything from us in return. Sometimes their motives stink. They help because they want something from us. Their eyes seem to wander, and their hearts seem to be grabbing while they're helping us. Truth be told, the Mandalorian in us isn't much different from them. We've worked so hard at staying behind our own protective armor that we realize our own efforts are lacking. We have some deep voids. We start gravitating to people who have what we think we need. Sometimes they're good people. Sometimes they're not. Yup... Sometimes we help others with no ulterior motives. Sometimes we don't. Like the Mandalorian in the show, we find ourselves making deals with some pretty unsavory people because we don't know how else we're going to survive. A lot of times that just seems to make things worse. Sometimes it even convinces us we need even more armor.

There is one aspect in the heart of many abuse survivors I haven't seen in the show yet. After all, explosions and narrow escapes are much more exciting than the other side of the equation. We may spend a lot of time behind our own protective armor, but many of us also have an "anti-Mandalorian" buried deep inside our hearts. That's the part of our hearts that actually does give up. The part of our hearts that ends up agreeing with our abusers. We surrender. We lie down in defeat. After all... if we give up and surrender the battle ends. Then we can try to convince ourselves that it all makes sense. "No wonder they treat me like garbage. That's what I am." Usually we use stronger words than that, but I'm trying to be nice. Instead of fighting like the Mandalorian, our anti-Mandalorian just rolls over and lets others walk all over us. We're hoping that the destruction just gets over with quickly, and then the problem will leave us alone. When it does drag on, we tell ourselves it's what we deserve. Maybe that one battle did end. But the war goes on.



So what is the answer? How do we let the Lord touch our hearts so that our inner Mandalorian stops trying to be self-sufficient and stops fighting our battles in our own strength? The "easy" Christian answer is to lay down our own armor and put on the armor of God. That answer is true. We do need the armor of God. But for people who have experienced significant trauma, exchanging our own armor for the armor of God is a lot easier said than done. Yet... it still needs to be done. But how? Even deeper than the Mandalorian in the heart of an abuse survivor is that part of our hearts that wonders where God was during the trauma. Was He there? Did He care? Why didn't He stop it? I would say that those are questions that every abuse survivor has to wrestle with multiple times in their lives. We might not bring it up in general conversation. I doubt we would freely bring it up in a typical church Bible study where, unfortunately, this level of vulnerability is rare. But God really does have answers to the questions buried deep in our hearts.

God knows we have these questions. God isn't insecure or emotionally unstable. He won't get upset if we talk to Him about our questions. In fact, He even encourages us to talk to Him about our questions in Isaiah 1:18 which reads, "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool." Reasoning implies disagreement. I don't need to reason with someone if I'm in full agreement with them. In fact, this section of Isaiah was written for Israel when they were in rebellion against God. Even then, He invited them to reason with Him and hear His heart. He reminded them of the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. Most of the time we bring those consequences

upon ourselves. Can you see how any of your past experiences with your own Mandalorian have caused more problems than they solved? How many pieces is your heart broken into?

Jesus came to heal the broken pieces of our hearts. One of my favorite sections of Scripture is Jesus' first sermon when He quotes Isaiah 61. That was actually a prophesy about Himself. He declares that the Father sent Him to "heal the brokenhearted" and set the captives free. In the original language, the term "broken hearted" refers to shards of glass as if you broke a mirror. As we reason with the Father and open our hearts to Jesus, He graciously begins to heal one shard of glass in our hearts at a time and put us back together. He sincerely answers those difficult questions we have deep in our heart. He builds trust. The energy and self-protection of our inner Mandalorian becomes transformed into a submitted warrior for God. The energy once used in self-protection is now focused on holy pursuits. The hopeless surrender of our anti-Mandalorian becomes transformed into hopeful surrender to God. We receive eternal benefits. Instead of trying to create our own significance, we truly grasp how our

significance is complete in Christ. We can forgive others while we maintain holy boundaries. Rather than grasping and clawing for what we need, we can serve others for the joy set before us and trust the Lord to provide for our needs. Best of all, we can surrender our own self-protective armor and truly put on the armor of God. Not just in our heads. It begins to grow deeper in our hearts. As we learn to become vulnerable to God, we find the strength... the love... and the security we've been craving all along.



After I finish writing this article, I'm going to go do the favor for the person who offended me in the past. Not out of self-protection, agreeing with my offender, or seeking significance. But because it's the right thing to do. Other people will receive eternal benefit from the action. Best of all, I now have peace.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

*Ephesians 6:10-17 NIV*

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