

*The hearts of the fathers
and the hearts of the
children*



Amanda Buys' Spiritual Covering

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Introduction

Definitions

1. Dependence

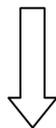
- You need to have others provide things for you that you cannot provide for yourself, e.g. babies, children, the sick, the old, etc.
- Also Christians who recognize the depth of their need for Christ. We acknowledge His right and responsibility to lead us, to provide for our needs and to, someday, take us home. Our deepest needs and longings are in His hand; His plans are in our hearts. In its truest sense, dependency on God allows us to accept and respond to His role as our Heavenly Father in our most intimate relationship.

2. Independence

A person does not feel the need to open his/her heart, soul, mind and strength to anyone.

God is only called upon in time of need, but not as a daily companion, guide or authority.

Others are allowed to come close enough to be useful, but are stopped short of intimacy = self-disclosure.



RESULT: Loneliness & isolation.

3. Interdependence

- It is found in healthy relationships of all kinds.
- You acknowledge the emotional need of intimacy and enjoy its mutual benefits.
- It recognizes a healthy need for others, but knows when to let go.
- This concept is good between humans relating to each other, but must not be found in their relationship with God.

1. ♦ God's Design

PS 71: 5-6 *For You are my hope; O Lord God, You are my trust from my youth and the source of my confidence. Upon You have I leaned and relied from birth; You are He Who took me from my mother's womb and You have been my benefactor from that day. My praise is continually of You.*

1. Has God created us to be dependent upon Him?
2. Why is it so hard?
3. Why, at times, does He seem so distant and aloof?

The World's View

To need is to lack;
To lack is to be weak;
To be weak is to be despised –
It produces a level of self-contempt.

The Truth

To acknowledge weakness and dependency is to acknowledge humanity; to be human is to need.

If we are **independent**, we need only those things that are impersonal, for we have learned to despise dependency.

Many of us have built walls to protect ourselves, but the piercing reality of our shame causes us to tremble with fear.

We will choose someone or something to feed our longings and insatiable desires. These, however, will never go away, for God made them to live.

We must depend on God to teach us to love dependency and to despise our own futile efforts to strive to be independent of Him. Choosing to be dependent requires that we yield our own direction and control. It necessitates a trust in a God Who is very good to those who love Him, but Who turns His face from those who become His enemy.

Areas to look at to understand God's ways

1. God's standard for the provision of basic security needs in the areas of physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development. In other words: What do we need to grow up healthy?
2. Who is supposed to provide these needs?
3. What happens if, through neglect or abuse, these needs have not been provided?
4. How do we heal when our basic needs have not been met?
5. God's response and solution to all these questions.

We need a resource that will help us understand why we struggle as adults; one that will be useful as a Biblical standard in our own healing process as well as one to use while training our own children.

The fact is that most parents, including Christians, replay what they learned, even in those areas that were personally hurtful.

To break well-defined generational habits, we need to understand not only Biblical solutions, but also how experiences from our early development impact the rest of our lives. To heal, we have to trust Him. To trust, we have to deal with the reasons we don't trust anyone and be willing to yield control.

To stop controlling, we have to become willing to let someone else dictate our destiny; someone we may believe failed us when we needed Him most.

To heal means we lower our walls of self-protection and allow Jesus to restore us in His own way. To do that, we must see Him as Someone Who is safe.

Most people who were injured emotionally as children believe that no one is safe and trustworthy. Consequently, victims of childhood abuse or neglect seldom let the One they need most into their fragile hearts.

Unfortunately, many of us are still worldly, looking for quick fixes and new drugs of choice to soothe our damaged souls. Or we try to get our insatiable needs fulfilled through others.

Unfulfilled expectations becomes a long list, with each loss hardening the wall of self-protection and deepening our numbness.

Because of God's great kindness and tender love, we can experience a level of emotional healing that will allow us to honestly know and love Him in the depths of our hearts. We do not have to be victims or survivors; rather we can be servants and children of our glorious God. Instead of focusing inward to find strength, we will cry out to Jesus for help in our time of need and embrace our weaknesses (Heb 4: 14-16).

Our relationships will improve, not only because of new boundaries we set, but also as a result of **obedience** to Biblical truth, an obedience that flows out of earnest love and relationship with the Lord.

2. *Wounding the Hearts of Children*

During recent years, it has become evident that the single greatest cause of problems faced in adulthood can be traced back to family of origin.

Painful events of the past have left deep wounds and festering emotional sores. In most cases, the result of childhood trauma is evident in unhappy marriages, family break-ups and strained relationships.

A counsellor can help people understand the roots of their problems and work with them on a gradual plan of healing and restoration. Searching for the roots inevitably leads back through a maze of denial, pain, anger and sadness.

The raw emotions of **rage** become clear as each layer of abuse is removed. Exposing this darkness has two facets:

1. An **external element** that can be seen and operates in the physical realm.
2. And, less obvious, but clearly more dangerous, is the darkness that occurs in the **spiritual realm** of creation.

Physical Warfare

There is no way to calculate, in addition to the wounding caused by sexual abuse, the damage done to children in the areas of emotional and physical abuse.

A major obstacle to recovery is getting past a legalistic, religious theology that forbids people to work through the wounds of the past honestly and instead commands an instantaneous choice for forgiveness. True healing requires that we look at our pain honestly, commit to a forgiveness **process**, and then pray for the courage and commitment to do the hard thing - CHANGE!

Unfortunately, the Christian community often fails to identify roots, largely because of a theology that considers digging up the past akin to treading on sacred ground! We have tried to pray the pain away, believe it away through our faith, stuff it away - and still we suffer - angry and disillusioned.

PROV 19:3 *The foolishness of man subverts his way, ruins his affairs; then his heart is resentful and frets against the Lord.*

Spiritual Warfare

Satan's plot

- Satan's temporary kingdom is of the world (John 12:31; 2 Cor 4:4).
- His warfare is ultimately against God (Is 14: 13-14).
- It involves humanity (John 13:27).
- But is played out in the spiritual realm (Eph 6: 12-13).
- He comes disguised as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14).
- He comes to create anxiety, doubt, fear and panic (1 Pet 5:8).
- He pricks us with thorns (2 Cor 12:7) with ongoing frustrations, nagging problems, discouragement, etc.
- He blinds us to the Truth (2 Cor 4:4; 11:3).
- He tempts us with false enticements (Eph 4: 26-27).
- He attacks with words (James 3: 6-10).
- He creates careless accusations (Rev 12:2).
- Blaming (Jude 16).
- Criticizing (Acts 11:2).
- Slandering (Eph 4:31).
- Gossip (Rom 1: 28-32).

Satan appeals to a prideful human nature that aspires to be “like God”, which, in essence, is the desire to be independent of the Lord and in control of our own destinies.

Recognizing that intimacy with God requires willing submission and heartfelt obedience (Phil 2:8; Is 66:2), Satan purposefully attacks the souls of the young, attempting to pervert their understanding of God, His character and His ways. Satan seeks to separate us from God through many devices. They can include:

- Idols (addictions).
- Illusions (incorrect thinking).
- Unresolved bitterness from the past.
- Wrong priorities (people, work, play, etc.)
- The use of anything that turns our hearts away from, rather than toward, Biblical Truth.

Believers are tired of “fake it ‘till you make it”. They cannot understand why, after years of sound Biblical teaching, they still are unable to feel anything for the Lord and feel very little for anyone else. Far below the surface, hidden behind erected walls of self-protection, lies the truth.

Doesn't time heal?

Shouldn't we be able to put things into perspective and go on?

Why can't we forgive and forget, as we were taught?

Children lack the knowledge, maturity and internal strength to stand alone against evil. They are dependent on their caretakers to protect them from the warfare and to shelter them from the storms of life until they have matured.

When Satan is able to influence parents to disregard the way of life that God has ordained and, through generation after generation, pervert their beliefs about the Lord, the foundation is laid for self-centred abuse and aggression towards children.

Dissociation / Emotional Detachment

God has designed a method to keep the little souls of children intact when they are abused. This process is called *dissociation/creating multiple personalities/emotional detachment/hiding*.

People are able to distance themselves emotionally from the trauma they are experiencing. Such distancing can occur after one painful incident or as the result of long-term, continuous abuse.

The abused children “go away” and hide inside themselves; they make themselves feel numb. The ability to develop emotional maturity has decreased and, for some, has been eliminated as a result of the trauma. Long after the violations have stopped and the perpetrator is gone, the wounded victim is unable to emotionally reconnect. Even as bodies and minds continue to develop over time, the individual is stuck emotionally, wounded and immature. Usually the victim finally seeks out help as a result of intense anger or depression.

Satan purposefully targets the hearts and souls of small children because abuse is the most destructive weapon he can use to harm them. During formative development, young hearts and minds are greatly influenced by the events and messages they experience. Being immature and incapable of rationally analysing their experiences, children concretely accept the distortions of abuse as fact. In addition, Satan knows that the lessons learned in childhood are difficult to root out, even if they are exposed later in life.

Consequently, if he is able to wreak havoc in the lives of little children in such a way as to neutralize their ability to trust or risk relationally, he has won. Wounded and often feeling betrayed, victims of child abuse and neglect inevitably struggle with emotional intimacy throughout their lives.

Feeling “bad” and not understanding why God does not stop the abuse, the child concludes that God also believes he/she is bad and therefore does not love him/her.

This creates internal confusion and self-devaluation. The child feels rejected and fearful and learns to distrust everyone.

To escape painful feelings of badness and reality, the child creates an internal fantasy world that is safe, though often described as sad and lonely. As adult Christians they learn to embrace rules but not relationships. They guess at “normal behaviour” by watching others and desperately trying to “get it right”, hoping to earn God’s love, which they do not feel.

Believing they are inadequate, these victims grow up introspective and fearful. They seldom have a heart to share a faith with others that they do not feel themselves.

Ultimately, we have to confront the lies we have believed and embrace the Truth. Let’s open our eyes to Truth and ask God to show us how Satan has damaged our souls. Let us then endeavour to take back the territory of our hearts that the enemy has stolen and commit ourselves to believe and to practice Truth.

God designed most of His creation to go through a process of stage-related growth. Whether it is a flower blossoming or a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, it is God’s master plan that we all develop in a systematic way. If traumatic events inhibit a child from learning the skills necessary at various stages, the child’s growth is impeded, sometimes indefinitely.

Questions

- Did I learn the tasks I needed to in order to mature?
- Was there trauma that may have stalled my emotional growth?
- Am I still trying to get needs met that should have provided when I was a child?

3. *Understanding how children develop*

EZEK 16:7 *I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels...*

Feeling safe is important for infants and small children because they lack the ability to take care of themselves. Being protected by and dependent on a loving parent or caretaker sets the foundation for future relationships.

Core Beliefs

A child comes into the world an empty little vessel, ready to be filled with information and experiences. Developmental psychologists believe that as much as 85 % of a child's personality is formed by age seven. This means that most of what children believe about life and relationships has taken shape before they are ten years old.

These early years are also the time when children are the least developmentally mature and the most susceptible to lies, distortions and deception. Most children do not develop the ability to accurately analyse information cognitively until they are between ages 11 and 15.

Core beliefs are foundational values that we embrace as fact. They are seldom rational, but they are always powerful!

Example

If Mom or Dad or anyone else abuses a child, he/she does not have the ability to recall a correct response, since he/she has never learned one. Instead, a core belief is developed that abuse is normal and that belief becomes the standard by which experiences are compared. It is concluded that people are not safe; his/her environment is not safe; therefore nothing is safe.

Each developmental stage brings the ability to learn new tasks and skills. Victims of childhood abuse or neglect persistently avoid emotional closeness and have no concept of emotional intimacy.

To venture out relationally or otherwise, a child must learn to **trust**. A great deal of research suggests that failure to learn to trust before the age of two can result in severe damage to a child's ability to mature emotionally. Fear-based child development always produces emotionally immature adults.

Neglect

Passive abuse implies that the parent/s failed to provide the necessary nurturing and love needed for the child to grow and develop emotionally.

Personal oversight by and interaction with parents are critical. We often fail to understand emotions because we can't see them.

Results of Neglect and Abuse

- Bed-wetting.
- Recurring nightmares.
- Anger outbursts.
- Withdrawal.
- Teen suicide.
- Depression, etc.

As the wounded child grows physically, his/her unmet needs become self-centred and unrelenting. Driven by conflicting motives, the adult child progresses through one relationship after another, always needing too much and unable to give enough. Desperately longing for something the child does not understand, the emotional emptiness renders the heart numb and distant. Eventually, the adult tires of the battle and resigns himself to a life of emotional isolation and self-contempt.

To heal, a person must return to those places in his/her emotional development where trauma caused the derailment. Finding the location may be difficult to do alone, especially if childhood memories are sketchy or non-existent, as is the case with many adult victims (see book *Things your Mother never told You*).

4. Understanding how children learn

DEUT 4: 1, 2, 9, 10 *Now listen and give heed, O Israel, to the statutes and ordinances **which I teach you, and do them**, that you may **live** and go in and **possess the land** which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.*

*Only take heed, and guard your life diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your mind and heart all the days of your life. **Teach them to your children and your children's children** – especially how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, the Lord said to me, Gather the people together to Me and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn reverently to fear Me all the days they live upon the earth and **that they may teach their children**.*

God taught life principles that would result in good physical health, prosperity and loving relationships. Clearly, Scripture is full of how-to principles for parenting that provide the foundation for creating a long, satisfying life. God's architectural design for dependency has always been an integral part of His master plan.

Instruction as a requirement for growth sets a premise that children can be secure if they develop a clear, consistent belief system that they are able to follow. Likewise, it recognizes that what children learn during their early years is what they hold onto as adults. Parental teaching and a life style that rightly reflects and represents God are critical to healthy growth and child development.

God began the building with a foundation of Truth. Through the Ten Commandments He set a mandate for how His children should relate to Him and to others.

Later He added bricks of moral principle that would provide not only direction but also consequences if violated (Deut 28). He knew that weak or compromised bricks, if left undetected, could and would tumble a building to the ground.

If we are to restore Christian and family values as taught by God, we must be committed to obeying Scripture and following Biblical principles and instruction.

Scripture supports two major concepts in relation to the teaching of children. Firstly, we see God personally instructing parents and then providing guidance and oversight. Secondly, we see parents being instructed to follow God's example.

PS 25: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8-10, 12, 13 *Unto You, O Lord, do I bring my life. O my God, I trust, lean on, rely on, and am confident in You. Let me not be put to shame or my hope in You be disappointed; let not my enemies triumph over me.*

***Show me** Your ways, O Lord; **teach me** Your paths. **Guide me** in Your truth and faithfulness and **teach me**, for You are the God of my salvation; for You, You only and altogether, do I wait expectantly all the day long. Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He **instruct** sinners in His way. He **leads** the humble in what is right, and the humble He **teaches** His way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and steadfast love, even truth and faithfulness are they for those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.*

*Who is the man who reverently fears and worships the Lord? Him shall He **teach** in the way that he should choose. He himself shall dwell at ease, and his **offspring** shall inherit the land.*

Humility is an essential quality that one must possess to experience God's mercy and direction (Prov 15:33; 18:12).

The fear (or respect) of the Lord – which suggests willing submission – is critical to all that is truly meaningful.

The **major responsibility for the education of children is placed on fathers** (Deut 4, 6; Prov 4), although several passages

encourage children to likewise listen to the instruction of their mothers (Prov 1:8; 30:17; 31: 1, 26).

PS 78: 1-8, 10 *Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark saying of old that hide important truth – which we have heard and known, and **our fathers have told us**. We will not hide them from our children, but we will tell to the generation to come the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonderful works that He has performed. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, **commanding our fathers** that they should make the great facts of God's dealing with Israel known **to their children**, that the generation to come might know them, **that the children still to be born might arise and recount them to their children**. That they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but might keep His commandments and might not be as their fathers – a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their hearts aright nor prepared their hearts to know God, and whose spirits were not steadfast and faithful to God. They kept not the covenant of God and refused to walk according to His law.*

The consequence of disowning the Lord or maintaining only lip service was that the children were reared as **religiously legalistic** or **completely ungodly** (Is 29:13; Matt 15:8).

By design, fathers are to raise their children to experience God's goodness through them and to learn firsthand what happens to the family that prays together. The children in such a family will develop a maturity that will motivate them to grow and continue to learn God's ways long after they have left home. Modelling is important.

5. *Physical Needs*

If childhood included severe deprivation the child may lack the consistency necessary for healthy development.

Housing is more than a roof attached to four walls. It describes a certain kind of relationship.

Food is a basic need that many people use in ways other than to sustain life. In your home, was food ever used as a replacement for intimacy or comfort; reward or punishment?

Clothing, once intended to cover our nakedness, is now more commonly used to reveal it! Fashions are also very expensive!

Health care is becoming very expensive and many can no longer afford basic medical and dental coverage. Children who grow up suffering from disabilities or diseases that could have been treated fight an internal war against bitterness.

Questions

1. In the area of physical provision, express what you learned in childhood about
 - a. Housing (its importance, purpose, etc.)
 - b. Food / Water.
 - c. Clothing.
 - d. Health care.
2. Do you feel anxious or fearful when you think about any area of physical provision?
3. As a child, did you feel confident that your parents would provide every need you had?

4. How did you feel about expressing needs to your parents?

I TIM 5: 7, 8 *Charge the people thus, so that they may be without reproach and blameless. If anyone fails to provide for his relatives, and especially for those of his own family, he has disowned the faith by failing to accompany it with fruits and is worse than an unbeliever who performs his obligation in these matters.*

God's Standard for Physical Provision

1. Divine provision is tied to relationship with God.
2. It is possible to be in God's will and suffer homelessness, hunger, thirst, nakedness and/or physical problems (Paul), although this is rarely the case for believers.

The consistent theme of the Old and New Testament is that the Lord desires His people to be blessed with provision and good health (Prov 13:23; Rom 8: 35-39; Luke 6:21; Rev 7: 14-17).

3. God has ordained that parents, in obedience to Him, provide for their children until they are old enough to seek God themselves.
4. God can and will withhold basic necessities from adults as a form of judgement for disobedience, unbelief, unthankfulness and rebellion. Generally provision is reinstated when His people turn back to Him (Ezek 4: 16, 17; 12: 18-20; Joel 1: 14-18; Prov 13:25).
5. God promises to take care of the weak and needy if they cry out to Him in the absence of a father or husband (Ps 145: 14-16; 146:7; Deut 10: 17, 18; Ps 107:9).

6. God's hand of provision often comes through His people. We are exhorted to provide for the poor and needy, widows and orphans, etc. (Prov 22:9; Is 58: 7, 8; James 2: 14-17; Acts 2:45).

Even though many people are the recipients of far more than their basic needs, it should not be assumed that experiencing increased prosperity is an indication of blessing. Nor should it be assumed that living in poverty (or modest circumstances) is necessarily the result of God's displeasure.

The prosperity doctrine that many embraced in the 1980's seems to have produced a generation of spiritually bankrupt believers who equate God's goodness with physical wealth and **the absence of struggle**.

Maturing in the faith is learning to be content regardless of one's circumstances (Phil 4: 11, 12; I Tim 6:8; Heb 13:5).

REMEMBER DEUT 8: 17, 18

And beware lest you say in your mind and heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. But you shall earnestly remember the Lord your God, for it is He Who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

We are told to ask of God, for He loves to generously pour out His goodness to all (James 1: 2-8).

Dependency on God allows us to hold onto Him in times of poverty and neediness, knowing that He **will** provide for us as we cry out to Him.

Dependent but hard working, expectant and yet content, we journey through life playing out the heavenly contradiction of our reality as believers.

We look to the Creator with a wide-eyed confidence that Abba, our Heavenly Daddy God, recognizes His responsibility to care for what He has created and does so perfectly when we cease our useless efforts to care for ourselves independent of Him.

Common problems of Unmet Physical Needs

1. Housing

Instability can lead to...

- Frequent moving.
- Rigidity (refusal to move, even when necessary).
- Fear of losing home or being forced to move.
- Tendency to live above means, resulting in financial problems.
- Lack of responsibility in caring for home.
- Rigid requirements that everything be in its proper place.
- Inability to settle down.
- Frequent discontent over living situation, including relationships.
- Inability to develop long-term relationships.
- Lack of meaningful relationships due to frequent moving.

2. Food / Water

Insecurity often leads to...

- Hoarding.
- Eating disorders/addictions.
- Health problems related to obesity and poor nutrition.
- Emotional dependency problems.
- Isolation from relationships.

- Inaccurate sense of self-value.
- Obsessive-compulsive thinking and/or behaviour.
- Preoccupation with physical looks and weight.
- Profound mood swings.
- Hiding food.
- Comforting self with food.
- Lying about food consumed.
- Preoccupation with food.
- Guilt and shame.

3. Clothing

Lack of adequate provision can lead to...

- Stealing.
- Exaggerated focus on looks and attire.
- Compromised dress ethics due to peer pressure.
- Financial problems related to overspending.
- Immodest clothing to draw attention to self.
- Relational problems within family due to inappropriate focus.
- Violence.
- Excessively large wardrobe.
- Inaccurate sense of personal worth of identity.
- Obsessive concern about being embarrassed by wardrobe.
- Refusal to wear generic or inexpensive labels.
- Need to flaunt wardrobe to friends and co-workers.
- Inappropriate attire or hygiene habits.
- Refusal to buy necessary or appropriate clothing.

4. Health Care

Lack of provision can lead to...

- Unnecessary physical ailments in adulthood that could have been avoided with proper treatment.
- A belief that physical problems are to be tolerated, not treated.

- A tendency to ignore health problems in your children unless critical.
- Hypochondria (obsessive worrying about own health).
- Financial problems related to hypochondria.
- A tendency to fake illness to gain attention.

NOTE: These indicators can also be caused by other factors or a combination of problems. People respond differently to trauma and deprivation. Ask the Lord to show you how you learned these behaviours and during which ages you were exposed to deprivation or excess in each category.

6. Protection Needs

PS 36: 5-7 *Your mercy and loving-kindness, O Lord, extend to the skies, and Your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God, Your judgements are like the great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge and put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.*

Physical Abuse

This is any non-accidental physical injury that results in welts, bruises, scars, broken bones or serious internal or pathological injury, including brain damage.

If you were physically abused, you came to associate touch with pain. You learned to associate feelings with hurt. The very people you turned to for love and protection became your tormentors. You could find no safety with your parents.

Sexual Abuse

This is any contact or interaction (visual, verbal or psychological) between a child/adolescent and an adult when the child/adolescent is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or any other person.

Sexual abuse, whether physical or emotional, is quite possibly, the most damaging to a child's soul, leaving the victim in an inescapable prison of pain.

Sexual abuse victims seem to have a perception of self-badness that far exceeds that of victims of other kinds of abuse.

Emotional Abuse

This exists when a child is subjected to demands put on him/her that are beyond his/her capabilities, e.g. teasing, belittling, yelling and cursing at a child, along with any verbal attacks; in addition, requiring a child to emotionally fulfil the role of an absent or negligent spouse falls under this category.

Consequences

Children who are abused often get off track emotionally. They literally stop taking in new information at a heart level and continue to live their lives as if the values they accepted as a child were true.

Whether physically, sexually or emotionally abused, children who have been mistreated grow up believing the lies and living out the distortions they learned in childhood.

Symptoms of Physical Abuse

- Inappropriate anger or rage.
- Aggressive or violent behaviour.
- Chronic depression.
- Chemical addiction.
- Process Addiction.
- Abusing spouse.
- Abusing children.
- Resistance to authority figures.
- Engaging in pornography.

- Engaging in fantasies of hurting others.
- Difficulty developing or maintaining intimate relationships.
- Emotional difficulty being vulnerable.
- Verbally and emotionally abusive to others.
- Tendency to be moody and unpredictable.
- Tendency to be controlling and manipulative.
- Personality splitting.

Symptoms of Sexual Abuse

- Irrational fear.
- Eating disorders.
- **Precocious** sexuality.
- Loss of personal identity.
- Withdrawal.
- Distrust.
- Self-destructive behaviour.
- Sexual promiscuity.
- Sexual identity confusion.
- Passive dependence (the doormat syndrome).
- The need to control.
- Sexual dysfunction.
- Suicidal tendencies.
- Difficulty developing or maintaining intimacy.
- Personality splitting.
- Anger control problems.
- Chronic depression.
- Chemical and/or substance addiction.
- Pervasive feelings of shame.

Symptoms of Emotional Abuse that did not also include Physical or Sexual Abuse

- Feelings of inadequacy.
- Poor self-identity.
- Feelings of abandonment or rejection.
- Chronic depression.
- Sexual promiscuity.
- Anger control problems.
- Passive dependency.
- Inability to develop or maintain intimate relationships.
- Resistance to authority figures.
- Passive-aggressive behaviour.
- Addictive tendencies (especially workaholic).
- Perfectionism.
- Pervasive feelings of shame.
- The need to control others.

7. *Emotional Nurturing Needs*

Many areas that affect the child's core beliefs about life, relationships and God, such as the extending of compassion, freedom, forgiveness, empathy and eventually separation, are necessary for healthy development.

Until about the mid-1970's emotional nurturing was an aspect of parenting largely dismissed by both academic and the Christian community. Most of us grew up in an era where the ability to provide physical needs was the measure of success in parenting.

Following the depression of the 1920's and 1930's, providing for a family's basic necessities generally meant that Mom and Dad had to work long hours. That which started out as a need to survive progressively turned into a norm. Children began to experience less maternal nurturing and more day-care madness.

Ultimately the greatest loss has been in the area of relationships. People no longer have time, energy or heart to experience and share in the joy of emotional intimacy. Many have become masters of task and losers at love. People have long ago lost the ability to love one another deeply from the heart, if, in fact, they ever had it.

So, what is the problem? We have all read enough books to be experts by now. We have memorized every Scripture on family and have attended numerous workshops and institutes. Yet we still grapple with failure and confusion. Even in Christian homes where parents attempt to practice a Biblical standard and are knowledgeable of the concepts, application is difficult. Why is that?

In theory, the problem is that you cannot pass on what you have not experienced.

Emotional Nurturing Needs

1. Bonding / Attachment

The first crisis that we face in life – as the umbilical cord is severed and the first independent breaths are drawn – is a state of isolation. The terror of being disconnected causes the new infant to cry out in panic. After a brief interlude the small bundle is placed in the mother's arms to be comforted and bonded.

IS 66: 12, 13 *For thus says the Lord: Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; then you will be nursed, you will be carried on her hip and trotted (lovingly bounced up and down) on her (God's maternal) knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

It is the **essential bond** that conveys the **goodness of dependency** and the **rightness of belonging**. God has designed life that way!! During the first two years babies must learn they can trust; their environment is predictable; their world is relatively safe.

Harm to the infant results in the infant's withdrawal and isolation. Connecting becomes more difficult and can threaten the child's ability to mature in this essential characteristic.

During this first stage of life babies begin to collect a sense of who they are. They respond to kind words and gestures of their primary caregivers and display the first signs of personhood and belonging.

2. Belonging / Significance

Children learn about their value and purpose largely as a direct result of their parents' actions and emotional expressions toward them. Gestures that convey importance and family belonging are critical if the toddler is to feel grounded and stable. *Many a tear has been shed by confused and rejected children as they have tried to understand why their mommy and daddy don't want them.*

JOHN 15: 5, 6 *I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much fruit. However, apart from Me you can do nothing. If a person does not dwell in Me, he is thrown out like a broken-off branch, and withers; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and they are burned.*

The condition of being isolated from the Vine is the equivalent of being disconnected from our mother.

A **purposeful effort** must be made to develop a sense of belonging and significance. Special family bonds must be formed.

Many children have forfeited their own personality and giftings in an effort to win their parents' approval. To belong means that one is special just the way he/she is.

If this was not the case with you in your family, draw comfort from God's response to all your isolation and disappointment.

PS 27:10 *Although my father and my mother have forsaken me, yet the Lord will take me up [adopt me as His child].*

PS 67: 5, 6 *Let the peoples praise You [turn away from their idols] and give thanks to You, O God; let all the people praise and give thanks to You!*

3. Love / Acceptance

Many of us grew up singing, *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*

When it came to experiencing love as little ones, we learned distortions to this tune and grew up to believe that it, too, was a nice idea, but probably not true.

Little children need the kind of love that wills their highest good and carries a smile with it. Such love is demonstrated in the expression of praise when a child wins and the look of compassion when he/she loses.

Love is not skin-deep or shallow. It is impossible to “make” – it must be carefully and tenderly **developed**.

A child who is loved will grow up believing he/she can do anything. A child rejected or ignored will struggle to find his/her way in life.

Love makes us live, and it makes us die. It sacrifices itself for the sake of the beloved and doesn't show regret.

The need to **experience** and **feel** love is designed into the heart of a child by God. Without **consistent demonstrations** of “good touching” from parents, children will struggle with core beliefs of **abandonment** and **rejection**.

4. Self-concept / Identity

“...one of the most important things we can do for our children is to develop within them an emotionally healthy and scripturally accurate self-concept. Without self-worth, our children will not only have a miserable life, but they will also be unable to reach the potential God has called them to reach. I firmly believe that all emotional pain ultimately comes from three root sources:

- i. Lack of self-worth.
- ii. Lack of intimacy with others.
- iii. Lack of intimacy with God.”

[from *Christian Child Rearing* by Dr Paul Meier]

Having a healthy self-concept (that is, a God-centred concept of ourselves) requires that we see ourselves as we really are. It means that we are thankful for our strengths and use them so serve God and others. We also recognize our weaknesses and endeavour to change them with God’s help and with the help of our families and friends.

It means that we are free to make choices and are responsible for the choices we make. We blame no one but ourselves when we fail, and we humbly acknowledge praise when we succeed.

A God-centred concept of ourselves allows us to respond to truth without fear that the truth will change.

A concept of self based on God’s standard lets us rest, for we know that the standard will not change.

5. External Control

When a child’s well-being is **dictated by outside circumstances** the child suffers and it is almost impossible for the child to feel stable, and in any crisis can alter the child’s value or sense of happiness.

This is typically found in adults whose parents failed to give them **freedom in decision-making**, e.g. Mother picks out the child's clothes, friends, activities and even tries to control the child's thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

6. **Internal Control**

Internal points of control means that the individual's decisions are primarily dictated by the individual's internal sense of direction – what the person thinks or feels – that's what counts!

We make decisions based on what we see, feel and think. Adults with this problem often struggle with authority figures, especially those who manipulated them in the past.

Answer: Look up!

We must derive our value and that of others based on God's foundation. Since God does not change and perfectly loves and values us, we need not fear instability. God's standard for our worth or self-concept is what we look to.

PS 139: 13, 14 *For You did form my inward parts; You did knit me together in my mother's womb. I will confess and praise You for You are fearful and wonderful and for the awful wonder of my birth! Wonderful are Your works, and that my inner self knows right well.*

God does not have favourites!

To break the distortions learned in childhood, we each need to relearn the truth God intended us to experience. As we grow "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet 3:18) and our hearts begin to open to Him, some of the losses we sustained in our youth can be worked through and grieved.

Common Problems of Unmet Emotional Nurturing Needs

- Poor self-concept (either external or internal point of control).
- Rejection and feelings of abandonment.
- Feelings of worthlessness.
- Withdrawal and isolation.
- Inappropriate venting of anger.
- Promiscuous sexual relationships.
- Distrust of authority figures.
- Problems attaching in healthy relationships.
- Depression.
- Perfectionist tendencies.
- Negative and critical toward self and others.
- Extreme distortions about God, self and others.
- Lack of purpose and goals.
- Compulsive behaviour.

8. *Biblical Standards for Emotional Nurturing Needs*

Scripture is full of exhortations for parents to walk in the ways of God so their children will be blessed.

Likewise, the Lord's personal involvement and emotional intimacy with His children has always been regarded as the foundation from which adults should draw their parenting skills.

What does love really mean?

PS 36: 5-10 *Your mercy and loving-kindness, O Lord, extend to the skies, and Your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God, Your judgements are like the great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge and put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They relish and feast on the abundance of Your house; and You cause them to drink of the stream of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light do we see light. O continue Your loving-kindness to those who know You, Your righteousness (salvation) to the upright in heart.*

Two different kinds of love that Scripture addresses:

1. Agapé love – God's love for us.
2. Human love – A Biblical mandate for us.

It is important to remember as we look at God's Word that His standard was never intended to be burdensome. We were designed with the natural capacity to love and receive love.

The inability to love is learned for the most part and is not at all an inner characteristic.

God's Love

The richest, purest form of love is found in God's love. There is no flaw in His devotion to us or in His actions towards us.

- God's love is **unfailing** and **endures**.
- It abounds and is ever before us.
- It is wonderful and priceless, directed and great.
- It is better than life, is faithful and stands firm.
- It supports us in our pain and is just when recalling our mistakes.
- It is compassionate, protective, everlasting and quieting.
- God's love is for those who love and fear Him and it fills the earth.
- We are told that His love slows His hand in judgement.
- It is poured out on us and is demonstrative.
- His love cannot be robbed from us or driven away.
- His love compels us, it completes us, it is sacrificial and without remorse.
- It is perfect and has the power to drive out fear.
- It initiates when we cannot and chooses our best in righteous indignation.
- His love disciplines us at times, but always for our good, and seeks to comfort us with the assurance of His forgiveness.
- His love is patient and kind, trustworthy and deserving of our hope.
- God's love is the greatest of all qualities and characteristics.

And God loves perfectly!

Human Love

As Christians, we are to mirror the qualities of love that God demonstrates (we cannot do it perfectly of course!).

I Corinthians 13 teaches us that love is not noisy, self-seeking or selfish; not proud or arrogant; not possessive or envious. It is not boastful or rude and is not easily angered. Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Instead it says that love is patient, kind, protective and continuous. Love hates evil and rejoices in the Truth.

Of all the attributes we should seek to emulate, the ability to love is regarded as the highest.

Paul's letter to the Philippians addresses the attitude that Christians should carry toward one another:

PHIL 1: 9-11 *And this I pray: **that your love may abound yet more and more** and extend to its **fullest development** in knowledge and all keen insight, that **your love** may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment, So that you may surely learn to sense what is vital, and approve and prize what is excellent and of real value, recognizing the highest and the best, and distinguishing the moral differences, and that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless so that with **hearts sincere** and certain and unsullied, you may approach the day of Christ, **not stumbling nor causing others to stumble**. May you abound in and be filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the honour and praise of God, that His glory may be both manifested and recognized.*

PHIL 2: 1-5 *So by whatever **strengthening** and **consoling** and **encouraging** in Him, by whatever persuasive incentive there is in love, by whatever participation in the Spirit, and by whatever depth of affection and compassionate sympathy, fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the **same mind and one in purpose**, **having the same love**, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention.*

Do nothing from factional motives [through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends] or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance. Instead, in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself. Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not merely his own interests, but also each for the interests of others. Let this same attitude and purpose and humble mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus [let Him be your example in humility].

COL 3: 12-15 *Clothe yourselves therefore, as God's own chosen ones (His own picked representatives), who are purified and holy and well-beloved by God Himself, by putting on behaviour marked by tender-hearted pity and mercy, kind feeling, a lowly opinion of yourselves, gentle ways, and patience which is tireless and long-suffering, and has the power to endure whatever comes, with good temper. Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if one has difference against another, readily pardoning each other; even as the Lord has freely forgiven you, so must you also forgive. And above all these put on love and enfold yourselves with the bond of perfectness. And let the peace from Christ rule in your hearts, deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state to which as members of Christ's one body you were also called to live. And be thankful (appreciative), giving praise to God always.*

9. Teaching Yourself the Truth

JOHN 8: 31-32 *So Jesus said to those Jews who had believed in Him, If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples. And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.*

Core beliefs are hard to change.

Because of unmet emotional needs, many adult Christians, although being born again, still do not really know what love is. They are still looking for a mommy to love them and a daddy to give value to their existence. Being able to tell the Lord that they cannot feel His love and being able to cry openly before Him is the beginning of restoration.

The journey home is normally a painful one. We **know** the Truth, but can't feel it, and consequently we cannot get ourselves to embrace it. Being a "good girl" or "good boy" is not the ultimate goal. By learning to take down the walls around our heart little by little, we can, and probably will, experience a level of emotional intimacy with the Lord and others that we have never known before.

Set your goals modestly. Tell the Lord your concerns and feelings as honestly as you can. Don't be afraid to ask Him for the ability to feel Him in your heart or to understand His will for you.

In, in a private moment with the Lord, you begin to weep, let yourself grieve openly before Him. It may feel uncomfortable or awkward at first, but it needs to happen.

If hardness and indifference distance you from Him, you may find that you have a greater tendency toward pride and independence.

Allowing yourself to come to the Lord with an open heart produces a spontaneous desire to repent without so much as a word from Him. Don't look for a special "experience" as you journey down the road, and try not to gauge your success by a particular feeling.

If emotional intimacy is an area of your life that has been difficult for a long time, it may take a while to work through your core belief distortions. Depending on the areas of wounding and severity, you may experience rapid growth, or your growth may take a long time.

Realistically, the process will continue throughout your life. New revelations of areas the Lord wants to heal or restore will appear until He takes you home.

Sometimes people working through problems have replace "being" for "doing". Workaholics have difficulty addressing their form of addictive behaviour. Slowing down long enough to evaluate core belief distortions produces such discomfort and anxiety that such people are quick to return to the grind before the lessons have been learned or changes can be made.

True restoration always takes place in the context of relationship.

Even though the effects of the abuse have endured since childhood, the actual abuse ended long ago. Nevertheless, many of us have erected walls to protect ourselves at all costs, and in so doing, we may have hurt others.

By keeping our emotions closed off from others, we selfishly refuse to give of ourselves in healthy ways. We may harbour anger and bitterness that damage our current relationships and we may tend to hang on to past wounds much longer than is necessary.

By allowing the Lord to show us the things that keep us victims, we are able to begin the process of changing from the inside. Developing the strength and courage to grow empowers us to mature and act responsibly.

True forgiveness = true remorse and it always longs to see the wounded person restored and the wrongs righted.

Ultimately, to change, it is important to identify the core beliefs you learned between birth and age ten and determine how those beliefs are manifested in your adult life. Compare your present core beliefs with Scripture. What are the areas of inconsistency?

Example

- a. I am supposed to trust in the Lord with all my heart, but I don't do that. I can't trust Him, because He has let me down in the past.
- b. Scripture says my parents were supposed to protect me and provide my needs, but I blame God for their failure to do so. I believe that He should have met my needs anyway.

What specifically do you need to do to change? Write it down.

Sometimes the problem is that we don't think we can change because of repeated failure in trying to overcome specific sins. Feeling hopeless and guilty, you may try to avoid dealing with the problem rather than facing feelings of defeat or bondage.

Many victims of childhood abuse have learned that they have no power and consequently give up very easily. Control was taken from them and they feel incapable of changing their situation, just as in childhood (this is a core belief!). No one likes to feel that way, but it's normal.

Remember that our battle is spiritual and the enemy does not want us to love and serve God. The fight will not be won easily! In your own strength you won't make it, but by accessing the power of the Holy Spirit we can continue to be renewed, transformed and energized by the authority of God and through His help! It is the Lord who heals us and enables us to be free from the wounds of our past.

Conclusion

God's design for dependency has your best interest at heart and is full of wonderful adventures as you journey toward home!

- If you will take the time to ask God to help you resolve past pain, He will respond.
- If you will allow Him to direct your healing process, it will go more smoothly.
- If you will allow others to hold you up in your struggle, you will find the sadness will dim.
- If you will allow yourself to enjoy dependency on God, the struggles of life will not overwhelm you.

See you when we get home!!

Amanda