

Becoming a Wounded Healer

We are among your called
We have heard and answered your summons.
You have addressed us in the deep
places of our lives.
In responsive obedience we testify,
as we are able, to your truth as it
concerns our common life.

We thank you for the call,
for the burden of that call,
for the risk that goes with it,
for the joy of words given us
by your growing spirit, and
for the newness that sometimes comes
from your word.

We have indeed been in the counsel of your
Summoning spirit,
And so we know some truth to speak.

But we are, as well, filled with rich
imagination of our own,
And our imagination is sometimes
matched and overmatched
by our cowardice,
by our readiness to please,
by our quest for well-being.

We are, on most days, a hard mix
of true prophet and wayward voice,
a mix of your call to justice
and our hope for *shalom*.

Here we are, as we are,
mixed but faithful,
compromised but committed
anxious but devoted to you.

Use us and our gifts for
Your newness that pushes beyond
all that we can say or imagine.
We are grateful for words given us;
we are more grateful for your word fleshed
among us.¹

¹ Called beyond Comfort Zone, on reading Jeremiah 23 in *Prayers for a Privileged People*, Walter Brueggemann, pp. 127-128

In the beginning of the previous mentoring section on **Going Beyond Yourself with God** we noted Luke 6: 12-19 where it says:

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him...He went down with them... A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over ...who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases...[NIV]

And mentioned Henri Nouwen's reflection

I've been fascinated by the sequence of prayer at night, community in the morning and ministry in the afternoon. Notice the order—from solitude to community to ministry...these are the disciplines we are called to practice...communion with God...recognizing and gathering together in community...ministry or compassion in the world.²

And then concluded

Solitude, community, and ministry—this is spiritual life. *The lives of mature Christians exhibit all three.*

Having examined in our mentoring sessions what **solitude** [Attending to God's Voice] and **community** [Going Beyond Yourself with God] can mean in your life, we want to look at **ministry**--what it would mean for you to become a wounded healer and be of service to God and to others inside the community of faith as well as those who have no experience of faith in Christ.

Wounded Healer is title of a 1972 book by Henri Nouwen³. The title captures the sense of Jesus life and work from the gospels and particularly from Isaiah 53. It is worth the time to read slowly Isaiah 53 and be reminded once again how it is that Jesus' wounds heal.

Here it is from The Message:

*Who believes what we've heard and seen?
Who would have thought God's saving power would look like this?*

*The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling,
a scrubby plant in a parched field.
There was nothing attractive about him,
nothing to cause us to take a second look.
He was looked down on and passed over,*

² *Spiritual Direction, Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*; Henri Nouwen with Michael J. Christensen & Rebecca J Laird; pp. 110-111.

³ "Wounded healer" was also a phrase used by Carl Jung to describe the dynamic between therapist and patient when the wounds of the therapist activated memories in the patient, also called countertransference. Jung derives the term "wounded healer" from the ancient Greek legend of Asclepius, a physician who in identification of his own wounds creates a sanctuary at Epidaurus in order to treat others

*a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand.
 One look at him and people turned away.
 We looked down on him, thought he was scum.
 But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—
 our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us.
 We thought he brought it on himself,
 that God was punishing him for his own failures.
 But it was our sins that did that to him,
 that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins!
 He took the punishment, and that made us whole.
 Through his bruises we get healed.
 We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost.
 We've all done our own thing, gone our own way.
 And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong,
 on him, on him.*

*He was beaten, he was tortured,
 but he didn't say a word.
 Like a lamb taken to be slaughtered
 and like a sheep being sheared,
 he took it all in silence.
 Justice miscarried, and he was led off—
 and did anyone really know what was happening?
 He died without a thought for his own welfare,
 beaten bloody for the sins of my people.
 They buried him with the wicked,
 threw him in a grave with a rich man,
 Even though he'd never hurt a soul
 or said one word that wasn't true.*

*Still, it's what God had in mind all along,
 to crush him with pain.
 The plan was that he give himself as an offering for sin
 so that he'd see life come from it—life, life, and more life.
 And God's plan will deeply prosper through him.*

*Out of that terrible travail of soul,
 he'll see that it's worth it and be glad he did it.
 Through what he experienced, my righteous one, my servant,
 will make many "righteous ones,"
 as he himself carries the burden of their sins.
 Therefore I'll reward him extravagantly—
 the best of everything, the highest honors—
 Because he looked death in the face and didn't flinch,
 because he embraced the company of the lowest.
 He took on his own shoulders the sin of the many,
 he took up the cause of all the black sheep.*

The New Testament has many examples of Jesus as a healer, fulfilling the Isaiah 53 description. The word for *save* in New Testament Greek, *sozo*, means *to heal*. The salvation that Jesus brings is healing in the fullest sense. To become a wounded healer is simply to become like Jesus. The spiritually mature not only look after their own wounds, but offer themselves to God to be Jesus' hands and feet to others. The question here is, "how can I be of service to God and others?"

Nouwen comments:

The question in ministry is not, "How do I bring all these people to Jesus?" or "How do I make these people believe?" or "How do I help all these people?" Ministry happens...I am not concerned with fixing the marriage....or of convincing the [one] who doesn't believe in Jesus to have faith. I am here to say this is who I am, and this is who God is for me and to be there for others. You have to trust that if you are the son or daughter of God, a healing power will go out from you and people will be healed.

Ministry is the fruit of finding your gifts and offering what you have...it [does] not require professional credentials...if you are living in communion with God, if you know you are the beloved, and if you make yourself available for service, you cannot do other than minister.⁴

How? Nouwen offers valuable wisdom

1. It is harder to minister alone—the culture's style of individualism and the temptation to see ministry as something "to succeed in" make being faithful to Jesus difficult when ministering alone. Better to ministry with the support, prayer, encouragement and accountability of others.
2. Be on the receiving as well as giving end—we like to be givers and find it more challenging to receive. But it is an essential part of ministry to receive the gifts of others. You won't be able to fix all the problems, change all the circumstances, or even answer all the questions of those who are weak, poor, suffering, or dying—[the little, least, lost, last, and nearly dead, to use a phrase common around Cap], but you can be with them. When someone knows that they are important enough to have your presence and that you receive from them whatever they have to offer even if it is just their pain, and then a bit of joy and gratitude begin the healing process. This is the essence of compassion as Jesus modelled it—"suffering with those who suffer".
3. Downward mobility and voluntary displacement—we live in a culture that calls us to "come up". Upward mobility—more success, more money, more "security", more attention, and the like. The gospel of Jesus turns this upside down and calls us to a **downward mobility** in our outreach service and ministry—we are called to "be like Jesus".

⁴ *Spiritual Direction, Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*; Henri Nouwen with Michael J. Christensen & Rebecca J Laird; pp. 130-131.

- a. **Downward mobility** is obvious from New Testament passages like Philippians 2. Consider the middle part of the passage before the first part.

Jesus example of downward mobility

⁵⁻⁸*Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.*

⁹⁻¹¹*Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honoured him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honour of God the Father.*

Your call to follow Jesus example

¹⁻⁴*If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favour: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.*

- b. **Voluntary displacement** is simply going where the little, least, last, lost and nearly dead are in order to be with them. We are not talking about career. We are talking about following Jesus to maturity. Your particular talents may require the pursuit of a certain career. But your life with God is never just about your career.

In the bigger picture of your life God calls you to career, to family, to wholeness, to community **and** in the midst of these things to always be on “the Jesus way”—to have an orientation, an openness to follow what the Spirit is doing among the little, least, last, lost, and nearly dead.

Nouwen comments:

For Thomas Merton, displacement meant leaving the university and going into a monastery. For Martin Luther it meant leaving the monastery and becoming a reformer. For Dietrich Bonhoeffer, it meant returning to his country from the safety of the United States and becoming a prisoner of the Nazis. For Martin Luther King Jr., it meant leaving the “ordinary and proper place” of blacks and leading a movement for civil rights. For Mother Teresa, it meant leaving the convent and starting an order to care for the “poorest of the poor”...

for many people, displacement means persevering faithfully in their unspectacular daily life, leaving grand fantasies aside to be faithful to their ministry in the marketplace...

many people are...displaced involuntarily. For them, the challenge is not moving out of "the ordinary and proper place" but making the given circumstance [a calling from God].

the remarkable paradox...of displacement and downward mobility is that it creates community...others are inspired to join.⁵

4. Cap's Wounded Healers – currently Cap community members' minister in several different venues offering who they are and what they have in Jesus name. One of these may be for you.
 - a. **Alpha**—inviting friends to consider Christian faith and community
 - b. **Anvil Camps**—ministry to preteens and teens
 - c. **Barnabas Family Ministry**—ministry to families, single moms, moms and daughters, fathers and sons, premarriage and marriage enhancement
 - d. **Bufukhula**—compassionate friendship and community development via child sponsorships and visits to Uganda
 - e. **Cap's Compassionate Task Force**—serving Cap's disadvantaged
 - f. **The Harvest Project**—assisting people in transition with food, clothes, and counsel
 - g. **Jacob's Well**—serving the marginalized in Downtown Vancouver
 - h. **Justice Hub@Cap**--addressing root causes of injustice in a local and international selected area and supporting Cap advocates doing justice work
 - i. **Keats Camps**—ministry to preteens and teens
 - j. **Missions Team**—calling the community to go beyond themselves and supporting those who do
 - k. **Open Door**—supporting single moms in their challenges
 - l. **Operation Baby Bottle**—a fundraiser in support of local Crisis Pregnancy Centre
 - m. **Premarriage Mentoring**—mentoring couples and preparing them for covenant marriage
 - n. **Samaritan's Purse**—via the Christmas shoebox gifts for children in the developing world
 - o. **Union Gospel Mission**—serving the marginalized and mentoring children from displaced and non-intact families
5. The following spiritual exercise is intended to help you discern where God is leading you to offer who you are and what you have in Jesus name if you haven't already decided

⁵ *Spiritual Direction, Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*; Henri Nouwen with Michael J. Christensen & Rebecca J Laird; pp. 140-141.

Spiritual Exercise: Becoming a Wounded Healer

1. Goals:

- a. help you discern where God is leading you to offer who you are and what you have in Jesus name if you haven't already decided
- b. to plan the next step for ministry for this season of your spiritual journey
- c. to be accountable in the mentoring relationship to follow through

2. Listening for God's call via the Bible

- a. Read the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 which defines who our neighbour is in God's eyes.
 - i. Read the passage slowly. Pause after the reading to picture the events.
 - ii. Reread the passage quietly and place yourself in the story. Notice what is happening in your body; your emotions; your spirit.
 - iii. What from your reading jumps out at you, commands your attention?
 1. Stay with this word, image; emotion for a while—chew on it.
 2. Ask God if there is a personal word for you or a perspective on whom you are called to serve.
 - iv. Discuss your experience in your mentoring session
- b. Here are some background notes to enlighten your reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Use them only if this enhances rather than hinders your listening prayer experience.
 - i. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a dangerous road in Jesus day—it was known as the Way of Blood because ambushes were common.
 - ii. Samaritans and Jews hated each other. Though they believed in the same God, the same law, and in Moses as the law giver, over their history Samaritans believed that worship should take place on Mt. Gerizim in the north, not in Jerusalem in the south. in the early decades of the first century tensions high because Samaritans had desecrated the Jewish Temple at Passover with human bones. When Jews would travel from Judea to Galilee in the north, they would travel around Samaria which was in between rather than travel through it and risk contact with Samaritans.
 - iii. For Jesus to portray the Samaritan in positive light would have come as a shock to his audience. This is nothing less than a critique of the failure of the Jewish leadership to value what God values—mercy. Here, in a great reversal mercy is performed by an outcast.
 - iv. In Jesus' culture, contact with a dead body was understood to defile one. The priest and Levite may have assumed that the fallen traveler was dead and avoided

him to keep themselves ritually clean but showing that they failed to understand mercy or the importance of neighbour love.

- v. Some commentators have suggested that the beaten man symbolizes Jesus who is rejected and left to die by the Jewish leaders. This fits well with the themes in the central section of Luke's gospel, but is not developed in the parable.
 - vi. Jesus tells the parable to answer the question, "who is my neighbour?"
 - vii. Today the story is often recast and the characters are from social groups who show disrespect and even hatred for each other. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, described the Samaritan as "a man of another race,
- c. The parable of the Good Samaritan—Luke 10:25-37

Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?"

He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?"

He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbour as well as you do yourself."

"Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live."

Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbour'?"

Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

"A Samaritan travelling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back.'

"What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbour to the man attacked by robbers?"

"The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded.

Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

3. Where will you serve?

- a. Where do you sense that God is calling you to be a wounded healer?
 - i. Read over the list of Cap's existing wounded healer ministries. Does one of these seem to fit with where God is leading you?

- ii. If there is something not on that list describe as fully as you can where you sense God leading you to serve.
 1. Who are the people?
 2. Where do you need to be to be with them?
 3. How do you see yourself as a wounded healer serving them?
 4. What encouragement do you need to get started or continue?
 5. What do you need to let go of in order to get started or continue?
 6. What do you sense that God will do in you as a result of this?

4. **Choosing and changing.** Change, like stopping a problematic behaviour and replacing it with a positive behaviour or starting a new venture such as caring for people or being involved in a ministry is complex. We all go through predictable stages when making these kinds of choices.
 - a. We go from "not thinking about it" to "weighing the pros and cons"
 - b. From "weighing the pros and cons" to "making little changes and figuring out how to deal with the real hard parts"
 - c. From "making little changes and figuring out how to deal with the real hard parts" to "doing it!"
 - d. From "doing it!" to "making it part of our lives".

Many people "fall off the wagon" and go through all the stages several times before the change really lasts. Doing something you haven't done before can also have an element of apprehension—the "old fear of the unknown" kind-of-thing.

5. The following suggestions are meant to assist you in responding to God's call. Use them if they help. Stop if they don't.
 - a. Break the new complex venture down into smaller bits. Which smaller bits are doable now to start?
 - b. Is what you are envisioning realistic for you? Unrealistic ideas increase apprehension. Apprehension increases the probability of nothing happening.
 - c. What do you envision satisfying about your involvement? Focusing on this will heighten motivation and action.
 - d. If there are hard realities to your envisioned ministry involvement what aspects will you look back on and say, "in spite of all that, it was worth it"?
 - e. How do you envision managing your involvement to "stay in the game" and not be overwhelmed and burnout?
 - f. Perfect ministries don't exist, and neither does perfect learning situations. How do you imagine you will respond when you encounter your first major obstacle?
 - g. Start small, baby steps. Accept God's smile on the direction you are headed and the service you are offering.

6. **Assessing where you are at**—on the grid below mark what is true for you “right now”--your reluctance/readiness/already involved status

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not ready yet									Already involved

7. Questions for where you are at

- a. If your mark is on the left side of the line:
 - i. What do you think you need before you consider getting involved?
 - ii. What is important to you in “staying where you are at”?
- b. If your mark is somewhere in the middle:
 - i. What has allowed you to come this far?
 - ii. What would it take to move further to the right?
- c. If your mark is on the right side of the line:
 - i. What have you found satisfying?
 - ii. What challenges do you have to endure? How are you doing that?
 - iii. What has worked to get you this far?
- d. If you have been involved in ministry but are currently not even on the grid don’t kick yourself, but consider:
 - i. What caused you to drop off?
 - ii. What did you learn from the experience that will help you when you give it another try?

8. Next Step

- a. As a conclusion to your discussion pick a small doable next step and decide on the who, what, when, and where of this step.