

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Healing the Father Wound:

Part 3

Maura Preszler

Hello, welcome back. I'm so glad that you're joining me for the next part of this video. Let's start with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Heavenly Father, thank You so much for this time that we can gather together to learn more about You, to learn more about how we are Your sons and daughters. We just ask for Your Holy Spirit to be here upon us. We ask this through the intercession of Your Most Holy Mother Mary. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I just want to delve deeper into the Father Wound, what that is, and how it affects men and women differently, and how can we grow as sons and daughters of God and develop a deeper relationship with Him. And maybe we know about God the Father, but it's more about moving our relationship from our head to our heart. And I know that can be very challenging, and I just want to share some tips that learned in therapy along my journey of recovery, and I just want to share those with you, so hopefully you can delve more into your son-ship, your daughter-ship as a son or daughter of God.

So, Pope Francis says that the Father Wound is the most universal wound in our world, and I truly believe this to be true. And God designed a father as head of the household; He designed a father to specifically answer certain questions that are innate in a little girl and a little boy. And the questions that a little girl asks internally, and she's seeking attention from her father are: "Do you delight in me? Do you find me beautiful? Am I enough? Do I have what it takes? Am I worthy of love?" And a little boy asks the questions: "Do you delight in me? Do I have what it takes? Am I strong? Am I courageous? Will I be good enough?"

And when a father does not answer these questions, when he does not appropriately show a little girl and a little boy affection, and love, and encouragement, and admiration, and validate their feelings and emotions, these children are left with a question mark over their head. They are left trying to find those answers on their own, and oftentimes this results in addiction, disorders, alcoholism, depression, pornography addictions. And it's the way God created the bonds between a father and a daughter, and a father and a son: to affirm them, to show them God the Father's love.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

And a child and a young adult – man, woman – can certainly have depression, and an addiction, and an eating disorder even if the father was, you know, amazing, and super-present, and affirms them. But the likelihood of these things happening are far greater when a father is not present. And when a girl is told by her father that she is beautiful, when she is shown appropriate love and affection, she is a lot less likely to seek out that affection and attention from men. And when a little boy and a young man is shown that love from his father, when he wrestles with him, and plays, you know, goes camping with him, and does outdoor activities, and father-son, builds that father-son bond, the son is a lot more likely to find his security and worth in God the Father. He is a lot more likely to have that sense of surety, to have that sense of belonging. And when it's not there...

So, again, it's so important, the presence of a father in a son and daughter's life. And he fills that need, that void that they have in a unique way for a male, for a female, and that is the way God designed it. So I just want to... I just want to next validate your feelings. I want to validate what you may be thinking or feeling at this time, because before I discovered... before I discovered this, I always thought "Oh, this is so ridiculous." Like "Why would I need a dad? You know, I didn't have one growing up. He wasn't present and he was very abusive. Why would I need someone to tell me that I'm beautiful? What good would that do?"

But really, it's okay that you're feeling hurt, it's okay that you might be feeling upset, or angry, or betrayed. These are all feelings that you need to feel. These are feelings that need to be validated so that you can find hope, that you can find healing, that you can start the journey of recovery. And I remember, I just want to share some personal thoughts and feelings that I went through. I went through a lot of resentment. I went through a lot of feelings of hatred and anger towards my dad. And my dad grew up in a... when I was about 17, I discovered that my dad had grown up in a very abusive home. And when I was in therapy I talked to my therapist about this, and my doctor helped me see that this behavior that he exhibited when I was a child was what was modeled for him. This was what he learned.

That absolutely does not make it okay. He was a grown man, he knew right and wrong, he certainly could have gotten help that he needed. But I was angry, I was angry that his father hurt him and then he went on to hurt me, because he must of have known what it was like to be hurt. And it hurt me so deeply that my only father would do to me the wrong that his father had done to him. And it didn't become, you know, I kind of... I made this vow, so to speak. A lot of victims of abuse, people who have grown up without a father will make a vow or a promise to themselves, like "I'll never let anyone hurt me again like that. I'll never let anyone tell me that I'm not good enough. I'll never let anyone tell me that I'm not

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

beautiful, I'll always have to be a certain weight to be loveable." And these are normal reactions, and I just want to tell you that they're normal to validate what you could be feeling or going through at this time. And I always said that I would never let anyone hurt me the way that my dad has hurt me.

And this took, you know, this took a lot of twists and turns. When I was dating after... when I started dating again, you know, I was very, very selective about the men that I would go on dates with, or if I... I was very, very selective about the men that I would go on dates with. And when I finally met my husband, it was really important for me not to project what my dad had done onto my husband, Michael. And everyone is going to enter into a relationship with certain, you know, with certain wounds, with certain hardships, and for me it was I never wanted to be hurt the way my dad had hurt me. And, of course, you know, my husband has never, never been violent or anything like that, but there are little things that he does that can definitely trigger a response.

You know, there are definitely little things that he can do that can trigger a fight-or-flight response within me. And at those moments, I really need to stop, recognize that this is a trigger for me, and, you know, just ground myself in. "Okay, I'm not going anywhere, he's not going anywhere, take a deep breath." Maybe I go for a run, or go for a jog, or go for a swim, or go spend some time in prayer. Just step outside and just breathe, just be. Because, oftentimes, the past, you know, those experiences that we've had – you know, my dad was constantly saying he was leaving, or, you know, we weren't good enough, things like that – and I can definitely project that onto my husband, which is not... which is not good. And that is what therapy is so vital for, that helps me a lot, not to project someone's past mistakes onto the future. A future relationship you may be in, your vocation, etc., and that's really important.

And I just want to encourage you that if you're going through that, to reach out to someone, reach out to a counsellor, reach out to someone who can really help you learn, give you the tools to learn how to respond to those fight-or-flight situations with integrity, with strength, with courage. And it's definitely possible because if I can do it, I guarantee you anyone can do it. And it's just... it's so... that's where freedom lies, that's where freedom is, and God wants you to live in freedom. He wants the absolute best for you. And He is claiming you as His son, as His daughter, and He wants you to live in His light.

When I was in college I, you know, was sitting in prayer one day in front of the Blessed Sacraments, and it just came to me that my whole life, I searched for my earthly father's love in other things. Whether that be trying to be the best athlete I could be, or trying to lose weight, or trying to be popular, or trying to get good

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

grades. Whatever it may be, I searched for that affirmation, that validation from outside things. And it came to me that I just need to stop, you know. I just need to stop, and breathe, and be, and only search for that love in God. Because my dad wasn't there, and that's just reality, and I can either spend the rest of my life trying to grasp after love, trying to grasp after earthly things, or I can find rest and comfort in God the Father.

And let me tell you, it's hard work, but it's worth it. And I know when my heart is at peace, when my heart is at rest, and that is when I am praying, when I am taking active steps in my recovery, when I am loving my husband and my children, and sacrificing for them, and serving them well, and that is where... that is where I find peace, that is where I find hope. But when I'm grasping after trying to do this, or do that, or do everything that I definitely can't do, trying to do all the things, it doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. And we need to focus on what is in front of us, we need to focus on that freedom and that peace that is only found in God the Father.

And you may be wondering "How can I get that? How can I achieve that peace and that freedom?" And that's a really great question, because the answer lies in spending time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; the answer lies in spending time going to mass, receiving communion, going to confession, getting out of yourself and serving others. Maybe you've never done any volunteer work before, maybe you don't even go to Sunday mass, maybe you've never prayed the Rosary. Then start small: start by going to mass once a week, start by praying a decade of the rosary, start by carving out 5, 10 minutes, 15 minutes of your day with prayer.

It's so important to, no matter where you are in your relationship with God, just to start. It can be so easy to look at someone else and think "Oh my gosh, they do, you know, they do all these Novenas, they go to mass every day, they do this, this, and this, and I don't do that." And then you can feel shame, and you can get down on yourself. But just stop, breathe, and pick 1 or 2 things that you're going to start with this week to deepen your relationship with God. I would highly recommend that you find out when a local parish has Eucharistic Adoration, and spend time with God in prayer.

I am such a firm believer in therapy and counseling, and medications if that's what you need. But going to counseling is not enough in and of itself. Going to pray is not enough in and of itself. You need both of those components. God created these doctors, these mental health professionals to help us and, you know, if you're sick, if you have cancer, you go to the doctor. If you're struggling with a mental illness, whether that be depression, an addiction, a disorder, you need to go talk to someone who is specialized, who can help you, and my life is living proof that

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

counseling works. Counseling is hard, and it's challenging, and you're going to cry, and you're going to laugh, but it's going to be so incredibly rewarding.

So maybe call a local counselor, and definitely check and see when your church has Eucharistic Adoration and go and spend time with God there. Some things that I used to take to Adoration, I would jot down in my journal things I wanted to ask God every day, and I would always start by giving Him thanks and asking Him to show me what it means to be a daughter of God. To show me what it means to be beautiful. And I would say something like "Jesus, You see beauty in me. Teach me to see it too."

And maybe you're a woman and you're thinking the same thing: You don't know what it means to be a daughter of God, you don't know what it means to be beautiful in the eyes of God, because He sees beauty in you, and He wants you to see it too. So go, go and ask Him, go spend time with Him. You know, if you had a question for a friend, you would just pick up the phone and you would call them and you would say "Hey, this is my question." And they'd give you an answer. And with Jesus, it's a little different, but you definitely have to ask Him the question, just the same way you would ask a friend.

And maybe you're a man, and you're really struggling with security, you're really struggling with wondering if you have what it takes. Go and spend time with your Father. Go and spend time with Him. He is waiting for you, and He wants you to come and see Him. He wants to fill that void in your heart and in your mind that was left by your earthly father. He wants to show you that you are enough, that you do have what it takes, that you are strong, that you are courageous, that you can move forward, that you can get past this. Because when we hold on to the past, honestly, the only person that it affects is ourselves.

You know, your dad, he might be deceased, he might not be in your life, he might be in your life, but the truth is, moving forward, this is your life; this is your future; this is your happiness. And you need to go out there and you need to claim your recovery, you need to spend time with the Lord, who's going to show you your authentic identity as His son, as His daughter, and you are going to get past this.

And, you know, Father's Day has always been an incredibly hard day for me, well, until recently. Ever since getting married to a wonderful man, and we have 2 little boys – Pio who is 2, and Noah who just turned 1 – and Father's Day has been so joyful the past few years, watching my husband become a father. And what I focus on now is not that I can't call my father and wish him a happy Father's Day, but that my husband is a wonderful father.

So, on Father's Day, that's what I focused on: I focused on the beauty, I focused on the good. And it can be so easy to, you know, my mind can get the best of me, and

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

I can wish that, you know, I wish I could buy my father a Father's Day card like they sell at Target with all of those really sweet messages, but that's just not the case. But instead of getting, you know, getting down or getting upset – it's perfectly fine to get upset if that's where you are at in your life – but for me, I can focus on my husband, I can focus on my boys, and I can focus on being the best wife and mother that I can be. And I just want to encourage you, I want to encourage you to spend time with God, to discover your dignity, because I guarantee you that He is waiting to show you a marvelous, miraculous love as His son and as His daughter.