WISDOM FROM OUR SCARS

Companion Discussion Guide

45 stories. 225 questions. A place for honest conversations and meaningful next steps.

NCMiM
NATIONAL COALITION of MINISTRIES to MEN

Before Your Group Begins

The purpose

This guide is meant to start real conversations, not test how closely anyone read the book. Each chapter offers five questions, moving from reflection to personal application. You do not need to ask every question. Give the conversation room to breathe.

Set the tone

Begin with a brief prayer. Remind the group that no one needs to have a polished story or a perfect answer. Lead with humility, and be willing to share honestly without making the meeting about yourself.

Agree on ground rules

Respect confidentiality: do not repeat another man's story outside the group without permission. Listen without interrupting, judging, preaching, or rushing to fix. Allow anyone to pass on a question. Make room for quieter voices; do not pressure anyone to disclose painful experiences.

Handle sensitive stories with care

Some chapters address addiction, pornography, childhood wounds, grief, anger, and strained relationships. Avoid graphic details and shame-based responses. A discussion group is not a substitute for professional care. If someone shares abuse, immediate danger, or a serious risk of harm, seek appropriate help and follow applicable safeguarding and reporting responsibilities; do not promise absolute secrecy.

A simple meeting rhythm

Invite everyone to read the chapter beforehand. Open with prayer, briefly recap the story, discuss selected questions, then close with the three prompts under "From Discussion to Action." Encourage men to check in with one another between meetings.

Keep the focus on Jesus and one another

The goal is not simply to finish a chapter. It is to recognize where God may be at work, take a practical next step, and build the kind of brotherhood where men do not have to walk alone.

1. You Cannot Manage Sin

Chuck Stecker

1. Chuck kept believing he could manage his drinking. Why is it so easy to convince ourselves that something isn't really a problem as long as we think we still have it under control?

2. What is the difference between managing a sin and actually confessing, surrendering, and turning away from it?

3. Chuck finally saw not just what alcohol was doing to him, but what it was doing to his wife. Who else is affected by the choices you make—even choices you think are private?

4. Is there something in your life you've been trying to control rather than completely surrender to God?

5. Chuck warns that the sin we tolerate when we're young can follow us—and even affect the next generation. What pattern would you want to make sure ends with you?

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2. Summer Rain

TJ Greaney

1. TJ's memories of rain changed from something joyful to something associated with abandonment—and eventually became joyful again. What does that tell you about God's ability to redeem painful parts of our story?

2. At thirteen, TJ was essentially on his own. What do you think a boy in that situation most needs from an adult man?

3. A relatively ordinary man at a church took enough interest in TJ to share Christ with him. Who has shown up at an important moment in your life?

4. TJ's greatest wound eventually became connected to his calling to mentor boys. Where have you seen God use something painful from your past for a good purpose?

5. TJ says, "Your story is your story. Unfinished and unfolding." What part of your story would you most like God to redeem or use?

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3. Feel Her Pain

Roy Abbott

1. Roy initially entered counseling prepared to explain everything that was wrong with his wife and marriage. Why is it often easier to identify another person's failures than our own?

2. What changed when Roy stopped defending himself and actually saw the pain his behavior had caused Kim?

3. When you've hurt someone, do you tend to explain yourself, minimize what happened, apologize quickly, or really listen to how the other person was affected?

4. Roy eventually connected his anger to wounds from his own father. How can unresolved pain from our past show up in relationships today?

5. Is there someone whose pain you need to understand better—or someone from whom you need to seek forgiveness?

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4. Give Up and Grow Up

Brian Doyle

1. Baseball wasn't bad, but Brian allowed it to occupy a place in his life that kept him from maturing. What good things can become unhealthy when they become too important?

2. What do you think separates simply getting older from actually becoming a man?

3. Brian says an older man challenging him toward responsible adulthood would have helped. Who has permission to challenge you when you're settling for less than you're capable of?

4. What "childish ways" are hardest for young men today to leave behind?

5. What is one responsibility you know you need to embrace—or one distraction you need to put in its proper place?

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5. Expose Your Lie and Your Idol

Jeff Kemp

1. Jeff's football failure exposed something deeper: much of his worth was tied to who he hoped to become. Where are young men most tempted to measure their worth today?

2. Complete this sentence honestly: "I'll finally feel like I'm enough when..." What does your answer reveal?

3. Jeff distinguishes between an identity we receive from God and one we try to achieve through performance. How would those two approaches change the way you live?

4. What lie about yourself have you believed for so long that it sometimes feels like truth?

5. Jeff emphasizes bringing our struggles into the light with a few trusted friends. Who are the men with whom you can be completely honest? If you don't have them, what keeps you from developing those relationships?

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6. Fired for God

Tom Cheshire

1. Tom sensed God telling him to leave his job, but fear and practicality kept him from responding. Have you ever known what you should do but delayed because the alternative felt safer?

2. Losing his job exposed how much Tom trusted his paycheck and his own ability to provide. What are you most tempted to trust instead of God?

3. How do you distinguish between irresponsible risk and a genuine step of faith?

4. Tom emphasizes finding men further down the spiritual road who can invest in you. Who is doing that in your life right now?

5. If your career disappeared tomorrow, what parts of your identity and purpose would remain?

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7. Face to Face with Evil

Rob Thorpe

1. Rob describes realizing that his comfortable understanding of Christianity had not prepared him for spiritual warfare. How seriously do you think most Christians take the reality of spiritual opposition?

2. What are some ways temptation, accusation, fear, deception, or division show up in everyday life?

3. What is the difference between being spiritually fearful and being spiritually alert?

4. Rob's experience changed how he viewed his responsibility as a husband and father. What does spiritual leadership and protection look like in practical terms?

5. Where in your life do you need to become less passive and more intentional spiritually?

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8. Put Down the Wrench, Back Away from the Door

Tim Brown

1. Tim came within moments of allowing anger and revenge to permanently alter several lives. Have you ever had an emotion become so strong that it almost made the decision for you?

2. What's the difference between experiencing anger and allowing anger to control you?

3. Tim later recognized God's protection even while he was making terrible choices. Looking back, can you identify a moment when God may have protected you from yourself?

4. What tends to trigger anger in you—disrespect, rejection, injustice, embarrassment, betrayal, loss of control, or something else?

5. What practical action can you take before anger reaches the "wrench at the door" stage?

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9. Encounters with the Holy Spirit

Ken McKenna

1. Ken describes moving from seeing God as somewhat abstract to recognizing God's involvement in his life. Where have you seen evidence of God's direction when looking backward?

2. Why can something that seems random in the moment look very different years later?

3. How can a man become more attentive to the Holy Spirit rather than simply making every decision on his own?

4. Have you ever sensed God redirecting, protecting, convicting, or opening a door for you? What happened?

5. If God is already at work in your story, where might He be asking you to pay closer attention right now?

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10. Your Most Valuable Asset

Jonathan Daugherty

1. Jonathan describes the enormous burden created by secrecy. Why do we work so hard to hide the very things that are hurting us?

2. How does a secret life eventually affect a man's peace, relationships, and sense of identity?

3. Why is integrity about more than simply avoiding getting caught?

4. Where are you most tempted to present one version of yourself publicly while living differently privately?

5. What would "living in the light" look like for you this week?

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11. Bearing the Yoke

Jason Chio

1. What does "bearing the yoke" communicate to you about responsibility, hardship, and perseverance?

2. How have difficult seasons shaped you in ways that easier seasons probably could not have?

3. When life becomes heavy, are you more likely to withdraw, work harder, ask for help, pray, or simply endure?

4. What role have Scripture and prayer played during your hardest seasons?

5. What burden are you carrying right now that you need to entrust more fully to God?

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12. The Cost of Doing Nothing

Scott Haima

1. Passivity doesn't always look destructive in the moment. Why can doing nothing sometimes be as consequential as making a bad decision?

2. Where are men most tempted to become passive—in marriage, fatherhood, faith, friendships, career, or personal integrity?

3. What is the difference between being physically present in a family and intentionally leading and investing in it?

4. What relationship or responsibility in your life currently needs more intentional effort from you?

5. If nothing changed in that area for the next five years, what might it cost you and the people you love?

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13. Walking Through the Wounds

Sam Black

1. Why do men often try to walk around their wounds rather than through them?

2. What are some common ways men numb, hide, or compensate for pain?

3. How can bringing a wound into the light change its power over us?

4. Who has earned enough trust in your life to hear the parts of your story that aren't polished?

5. What might one healthy next step toward healing look like for you?

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14. Don't Let the World Define You

Neil Getzlow

1. What voices have the greatest influence on how men define success, masculinity, and worth today?

2. Which labels placed on you by other people have been difficult to shake?

3. How is God's definition of who you are different from the identity offered by achievement, money, sexuality, appearance, or popularity?

4. Where are you most tempted to seek approval?

5. If you genuinely believed your identity was secure in Christ, what might you stop trying to prove?

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15. Eventually, the Dots All Connect

Jay Payleitner

1. Looking backward, what events in your life make more sense today than they did when they happened?

2. Why do we often demand an explanation from God while we're still in the middle of the story?

3. Which "dot" in your life currently doesn't seem to connect to anything?

4. How can trusting God's providence change the way you respond to uncertainty?

5. What would it look like to remain faithful even if some of your dots don't connect for years?

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16. Practice Discomfort

Mike Young

1. Why are comfort and growth often in tension with one another?

2. What is something difficult that ultimately made you stronger?

3. Where has comfort become too important in your life?

4. How can deliberately choosing appropriate challenges prepare a man for hardships he doesn't choose?

5. What healthy discomfort could you intentionally embrace this month—physically, relationally, spiritually, or professionally?

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17. Forgiveness

Stuart Sullivan

1. Why can holding onto an offense sometimes feel easier than forgiving?

2. What is the difference between forgiveness, reconciliation, and pretending something never happened?

3. How does unforgiveness continue to give another person's actions influence over us?

4. Is there someone you have "forgiven" verbally but still punish internally?

5. What would taking one step toward forgiveness look like—even if the relationship can never return to what it was?

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18. Out of Wedlock Dad

Matt Haviland

1. How can an unexpected responsibility reveal what kind of man you're becoming?

2. When circumstances aren't what you planned, what does taking responsibility look like?

3. How does our culture sometimes separate fatherhood from the responsibility of being a father?

4. What examples of fatherhood—positive or negative—have most shaped your expectations?

5. Whether or not you're a father today, what kind of father or father-figure do you want to become?

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19. Only God Can Lift Us Out

Steve Etner

1. Why do men sometimes wait until they hit bottom before admitting they need help?

2. What is the difference between trying harder and surrendering?

3. Where have you experienced a cycle you couldn't break simply through willpower?

4. How can another man help without becoming responsible for rescuing you?

5. What do you need God to lift you out of—or keep you from returning to?

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20. The Day the Devil Came to Church

Kevin DeVries

1. Why can spiritual attack be especially damaging when it involves the church or other Christians?

2. How can disappointment with people distort our view of God?

3. When you've been wounded by another believer, what helped—or would help—you separate Christ from the failures of His followers?

4. How can a church pursue truth, grace, accountability, and restoration at the same time?

5. What unresolved church wound might you still be carrying?

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21. Breaking the Cycle

Jeff Frick

1. What unhealthy patterns can be passed from one generation of men to the next?

2. Which patterns from your family do you want to continue? Which ones need to stop with you?

3. Why is recognizing a destructive pattern not always enough to break it?

4. Who can help you recognize blind spots that you've come to consider normal?

5. Twenty years from now, what would you want the next generation to say changed because of you?

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22. Easy Money

David Maddox

1. Why is "easy money" such a powerful temptation, especially for a young man trying to establish himself?

2. How can money move from being a useful tool to becoming a measure of identity or success?

3. What compromises become easier to justify when there's money on the other side?

4. How do you personally define "enough"?

5. What financial principle or boundary do you want established now before you're confronted with a larger temptation later?

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23. A Father's Redemption, A Son's Healing

Rick Magee

1. How deeply can a father's words, presence, absence, approval, or rejection shape a son?

2. Can a relationship be redeemed without pretending the damage never happened? What might that require?

3. What did this chapter show you about the relationship between forgiveness and healing?

4. What do you wish you had heard more often from your father or another important man?

5. Is there something you need to say to your father, your son, or a younger man while you still have the opportunity?

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24. Surrendering to God's Favor

Thomas McMillan

1. What does surrender mean to you—and why can surrender feel threatening to a man who values independence?

2. What's the difference between pursuing God's favor and trying to force the outcome you want?

3. Have you ever fought against circumstances that God eventually used for your good?

4. What are you currently holding tightly because you're afraid of what might happen if you release it?

5. What would trusting God with the outcome look like in practical terms?

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25. Frame Your Wife Well

Jim Ramos

1. The way a husband describes his wife influences how he thinks about her. What happens when men routinely complain about or joke negatively about their wives?

2. When talking about someone you love, do you tend to magnify their strengths or their weaknesses?

3. What does honoring your wife—or future wife—look like when she isn't present?

4. How can gratitude change the atmosphere of a marriage?

5. For married men: what is something admirable about your wife you haven't told her recently? For unmarried men: what habits can you develop now that would prepare you to honor a future wife?

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26. The Silence of a Heartbeat

C. Marsh Bull

1. What part of this story affected you most emotionally, and why?

2. Why do grief and loss sometimes leave men without words?

3. What unhelpful messages do men receive about how they're "supposed" to handle grief?

4. How can we sit with another man's grief without trying to fix it?

5. Is there a loss in your own life you have never really allowed yourself to grieve?

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27. Don't Be a Lone Wolf

Mike Sandlin

1. Why does independence appeal so strongly to men?

2. What's the difference between being capable of standing alone and choosing to live alone?

3. What do men lose when nobody truly knows them?

4. Who are the two or three men you could call at 2:00 a.m. if your life fell apart?

5. What is one thing you could do to move one male friendship from acquaintance to genuine brotherhood?

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28. Questions I Wish I Asked at 27

Jeffrey K. Butcher

1. What questions about life are you currently avoiding because the answers might require change?

2. If you could ask your 50-, 60-, or 70-year-old self one question, what would it be?

3. Who is an older man whose life you respect enough to ask about his successes and his regrets?

4. What decisions being made in your twenties or thirties could have consequences for decades?

5. If an older, wiser version of you could sit across the table from you tonight, what do you suspect he would tell you?

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29. Created Different to Be a Difference Maker

Elmo Winters

1. Have you ever viewed something that makes you different as a disadvantage rather than a gift?

2. Why do we spend so much energy comparing our gifts, personalities, appearance, or opportunities with other men's?

3. What strengths has God given you that you may be underusing?

4. Who benefits when you fully become the man God designed you to be?

5. Where could you use one of your unique gifts to make a difference right now?

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30. The One Thing

Don Manning

1. If someone watched how you actually spend your time, what would they conclude is most important to you?

2. What competes most strongly for your attention and affection?

3. How do good things become distractions from the best things?

4. What would simplifying your priorities around God change about your schedule, relationships, or decisions?

5. What is the "one thing" you most need to keep at the center of your life right now?

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31. Idols

Jim Martin

1. When we hear the word idol, why do we tend to think of something ancient rather than something we might actually have?

2. What modern things can become idols for men—career, money, sex, family, sports, recognition, comfort, ministry, or even reputation?

3. A useful test is, "What am I most afraid of losing?" What does your answer reveal?

4. Can something good become an idol? How?

5. What might you need to loosen your grip on so that it occupies its proper place beneath God?

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32. Where is the King?

Mark McGaughey

1. Who or what is really "king" when you make everyday decisions?

2. In what areas is it easiest to say Jesus is Lord while still insisting on your own way?

3. What does submission to Christ look like beyond church attendance or Christian language?

4. How does recognizing Jesus as King affect ambition, relationships, sexuality, money, and career?

5. What territory of your life are you most reluctant to surrender to His authority?

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33. Leaning Into Transitions

Glen Nash

1. Which life transitions have been hardest for you so far?

2. Why are we tempted to cling to a season that God may be asking us to leave?

3. What can a transition expose about where we've placed our identity?

4. How can you distinguish between "my best years are behind me" and "God is preparing something different"?

5. What transition are you currently facing, and what might it look like to lean into it rather than merely endure it?

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34. Prepared for Leadership

Howard Pike

1. What is the difference between wanting a leadership position and being prepared to lead?

2. Which matters more over a lifetime—charisma, competence, or character? Why?

3. How can small responsibilities prepare a man for larger ones?

4. Who has influenced the way you lead, for better or worse?

5. If God gave you significantly more influence tomorrow, what weakness in your character would you want Him to strengthen today?

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35. From Porn to Freedom to Impact

Dave Howe

1. Why does pornography thrive in secrecy?

2. How does pornography affect more than just the person viewing it?

3. Dave emphasizes fleeing sexual immorality rather than negotiating with it. What practical difference does that make?

4. What boundaries, relationships, technologies, or habits can help a man pursue sexual integrity?

5. If someone in this group is struggling, what would it take for this to become a place where he could ask for help without being shamed?

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36. Be All You Can Be

Jack Ward

1. Jack expands "Be all you can be" into "Be all God wants you to be." What's the difference?

2. Of the qualities he emphasizes—learning, courage, kindness, encouragement, generosity, and awe of God—which do you most need to develop?

3. Where has fear or insecurity kept you from becoming the man you're capable of being?

4. Who brings out courage and character in you?

5. Pick one of Jack's "BE" principles. What would practicing it intentionally this week look like?

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37. New Dad

Rick Wertz

1. Rick initially equated being a good father with financially providing. Why is provision important but insufficient?

2. If you had 936 marbles representing the weeks from a child's birth to age eighteen, how might watching them disappear change your priorities?

3. What did your father model that you want to repeat—and what would you do differently?

4. Rick emphasizes physical presence, emotional engagement, and spiritual leadership. Which is easiest for men? Which tends to be neglected?

5. Whether you're already a father or might become one someday, what kind of relationship would you want your adult children to remember having with you?

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38. Identity

Derek Handley

1. Derek says sports weren't merely something he did; they became who he was. Finish this sentence: "Without _____, I wouldn't know who I am."

2. Why can success sometimes hide an identity problem that failure exposes?

3. Derek originally saw his physical scars as evidence that God had abandoned him but later saw them differently. Have you ever reinterpreted a painful event after gaining perspective?

4. What temporary thing are you asking to carry the weight of your identity?

5. If every accomplishment, title, possession, and role were stripped away, what would remain true about who you are?

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39. Life is Precious

Dave Wertheim

1. Dave's son's wrecked car suddenly clarified what was valuable and what wasn't. What things seem important until something truly important is threatened?

2. If you genuinely believed life was short, what relationship would receive more of your attention?

3. Dave learned to ask, "Lord, what do you want me to learn from this?" How is that different from only asking, "Why did this happen?"

4. Is there an important conversation you've been postponing because you assume you'll have more time?

5. Is there someone you need to speak to about putting their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior to ensure they will spend eternity with Him? Who is it, and when will you do it?

FROM DISCUSSION TO ACTION

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Talk to God: What do you need to ask God for as you take that step?

40. Secondhand Passion

Rich Gerberding

1. Rich describes "secondhand passion" as enthusiasm borrowed from the excitement of people around us. Where have you experienced that?

2. How can you tell the difference between something you're genuinely called to and something that simply looks exciting because someone else is succeeding at it?

3. Why is quitting the wrong pursuit sometimes harder than starting a new one?

4. How can experimenting with something before making a major commitment help clarify calling?

5. Is there anything in your life you're continuing mostly because you've already invested too much to admit it's time to stop?

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41. Accountability: A Powerful Guardrail

Rod Handley

1. Why is isolation particularly dangerous for men who appear strong and capable?

2. What is the difference between having friends and having men who hold you accountable?

3. What question would you least want another man to ask you every week? Why might that be exactly the question you need?

4. What qualities would you need in a man before giving him permission to challenge you?

5. Who currently knows enough about your private life to recognize when you're drifting?

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42. Why Doesn't This Work?

Joe Storr

1. Have you ever sincerely tried to change something about yourself and wondered, "Why doesn't this work?"

2. Why are information and willpower sometimes insufficient to produce deep character change?

3. What recurring issue in your life might be pointing to something deeper beneath the behavior?

4. What does it look like to become honest with Jesus about something you would rather fix privately?

5. Instead of asking only, "How do I stop doing this?" what deeper question might you need to ask?

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43. From Bitterness to Brotherhood

Bobby Lutes

1. How can shame and bitterness drive a man toward isolation?

2. Bobby experienced men who didn't merely tell him what was wrong but walked with him. Why is that distinction important?

3. What does it mean to restore a fallen man without minimizing his choices?

4. Who helped lift you when you were down? Have you ever told him what that meant?

5. Who in your life may need you to pursue him rather than waiting for him to ask for help?

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44. Let Go of the Past

Rex Tignor

1. Rex says, in effect, that our past can teach us without defining us. What's the difference?

2. Which has more power over you: what actually happened in your past or what you've come to believe because of it?

3. What "rope" from your past might still be holding you even though, like Rex's elephant illustration, it may no longer have the power you think it does?

4. Which sign of being stuck—bitterness, unforgiveness, disappointment, anger, blame, hurt, regret—do you recognize most readily in yourself?

5. If you gave God your past and your pain, how could He potentially turn it into purpose?

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45. My Urgent Plea

Patrick Morley

1. Patrick's central plea is essentially, "heal the boy and you heal the man." What experiences from childhood can continue shaping a man decades later?

2. Patrick describes several ways men cope with pain. What coping strategy are you most likely to use when you're hurting—withdrawal, anger, control, achievement, humor, addiction, busyness, or something else?

3. Patrick describes naming the wound, grieving, forgiving, making amends, and parenting/mentoring differently. Which of those steps seems hardest to you?

4. Where might you still be responding to life as a wounded younger version of yourself rather than as the man you are today?

5. Patrick urges men not to wait. What is one concrete step toward healing that you could take now?

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