



The Wounded Inner Child as an Inhibition to a Christian's Spiritual Growth

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ABSTRACT

Inner wounds experienced from childhood can hinder a Christian's spiritual growth. A wounded inner child often leads to feelings of inadequacy, distrust of God, and difficulty in building healthy spiritual relationships. This study aims to analyze the influence of inner wounds on spiritual life as well as explore theological and pastoral approaches to recovery. Using the methods of literature study and qualitative interviews, the study found that grace, spiritual discipline, and church community play a role in recovery. The conclusion suggests that the healing of the wounded inner child allows individuals to experience deeper spiritual growth, find true identity in Christ, as well as experience sustained emotional recovery through pastoral accompaniment based on grace and love.

INTRODUCTION

The Meaning of the Inner Child in Psychology and Its Relationship to the Spiritual Life

In psychology, the inner child refers to the part of a person that stores experiences, emotions, and mindsets from childhood. This concept is often associated with unresolved traumatic experiences or inner wounds, which can affect the way an individual interacts with the environment, builds relationships, as well as understands himself.

In the context of spiritual life, a wounded inner child can be an obstacle for a Christian to fully experience God's love and grace. Inner wounds that stem from childhood can form negative mindsets about God and yourself, such as feelings of inadequacy, fear of punishment, or an inability to accept unconditional love. This has an impact on the growth of faith as well as the individual's relationship with God and the church community.

The Phenomenon of Inner Wounds that are Often Experienced Since Childhood

Inner wounds can stem from a variety of traumatic experiences, such as emotional abandonment, loss of a parent, verbal or physical abuse, and authoritarian or unsupportive parenting. These negative experiences are often embedded in the subconscious and affect the way individuals live their spiritual lives.

A Christian who has experienced inner wounds often has difficulty praying with conviction, believing that God loves them unconditionally, or building healthy relationships with others. Unresolved wounds can create fear, insecurity, and even a tendency to walk away from the spiritual community because of feelings of inadequacy or fear of rejection.

The Relevance of this Issue in the Context of Christian Theology

In Christian theology, recovery from inner wounds has a solid foundation in the concept of God's grace and love. Scripture speaks of healing broken hearts and restoration to those who are wounded (Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 61:1). Christ came to free man from the burdens of the past and to give a life of love, acceptance, and restoration.

The Church has an important role to play in accompanying individuals struggling with inner wounds, offering pastoral assistance centered on love and healing. Pastoral approaches and Christian psychology can help individuals recognize their wounds, experience recovery through God's word, and rebuild their identity as God's children. Thus, overcoming the inner child's wounds is not only about emotional recovery but also deeper spiritual growth in Christ.

METHODS

In this study, a qualitative approach is used to deeply understand the theological aspects in healing inner wounds. This research focuses on literature analysis and interviews with resource persons who have experience or expertise in the field of pastoral and Christian counseling.

Qualitative Approach with Literature Study and Interview Methods

The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to explore the meaning and deep understanding of the process of healing inner wounds from the perspective of Christian theology. The method of literature study involves the analysis of various sources, such as books, academic journals, and ecclesiastical documents that address the concepts of spiritual and pastoral restoration.

In addition, interviews are used to gain first-hand views from pastoral practitioners, Christian counselors, as well as individuals who have experienced the healing process of inner wounds. Semi-structured interview techniques are applied so that respondents can share their experiences and reflections openly, but still within a systematic research framework.

Respondent Selection Criteria and Data Analysis Methods

- a. *Pastors or church leaders who have experience in accompanying congregations with mental wounds.*
- b. *Christian counselors who use a faith-based approach in psychological therapy.*
- c. *Individuals who have undergone healing of inner wounds through ecclesiastical programs or pastoral counseling.*

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, where the main patterns and themes in interviews and literature were categorized based on the principles of Christian theology. This process involves codifying data, grouping themes, and interpreting results in the context of pastoral restoration.

Data Interpretation Techniques in the Context of Christian Theology

The interpretation of the data is carried out with a theological hermeneutic approach, which is an analytical method that considers biblical teachings and Christian doctrine in understanding the phenomenon of healing inner wounds. Some of the principles used in data interpretation include:

- a. An exploration of the meaning of grace in the process of recovery.
- b. The role of prayer and a relationship with God in helping individuals cope with emotional trauma.
- c. The concept of faith community as a healing agent for individuals who experience inner wounds.

The results of this interpretation provide not only academic insights but also recommendations for churches and pastoral practitioners in developing more effective mentoring approaches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Inner Wounds on Relationships with God

The inner wounds that a person experience can have profound consequences for their spiritual relationships. In a theological perspective, one's understanding of God's love is often affected by painful emotional experiences, causing obstacles in accepting and feeling closeness to God.

Disturbances in Understanding God's Love

Many individuals who experience inner wounds find it difficult to fully understand God's love. Emotional wounds, especially those stemming from betrayal, loss, or trauma, can blur the concept that God is the source of unconditional love. In some cases, individuals feel that God's love should be "earned" through perfect obedience or personal effort, not as a gift given freely.

Psalm 136:26 states: "Give thanks to the God of the heavens! That His love is forever and ever." Although God's words emphasize His eternal love, individuals who experience inner wounds often doubt this promise, especially if they have become accustomed to receiving conditional love from their fellow humans.

Fear of Divine Rejection or Punishment

Inner wounds that come from bad experiences with authority whether in the family, social environment, or church can create a fear of God as a punishing person. Some individuals feel that their sins or weaknesses will drive God away, even punishing them with further suffering.

Romans 8:1 affirms, "So now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Although Scripture teaches that salvation comes through faith and not judgment, traumatic experiences make it difficult for some people to believe that they are fully accepted by God without fear.

Feelings of Unworthiness as a Child of God

Feelings of unworthiness to be part of God's family often arise as a result of low self-esteem that is formed by inner wounds. Individuals with emotional trauma may feel that they have been "too broken" to receive God's grace or to fit into the community of believers. They may withdraw from ecclesiastical life, feel alienated from God's presence, or experience a deep sense of shame.

Isaiah 61:1 conveys the promise of restoration: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to care for the broken-hearted". This verse serves as a reminder that God is the source of healing and that every individual, no matter how deep their wounds, remains precious in His eyes.

Inner wounds can present challenges in understanding and accepting God's love, often leading to fear of rejection and feelings of inadequacy. However, through healing that comes from God's love, community of faith, and reflection on His word, individuals can experience spiritual recovery and regain a sense of closeness to Him.

The Restoration Process Based on Christian Theology

Healing of inner wounds in the perspective of Christian theology is not just a psychological process, but also a spiritual journey that brings the individual closer to God. In this approach, prayer, God's word, and the practice of spiritual discipline play a key role in overcoming emotional trauma and finding true healing.

The Role of Prayer and Meditation on the Word in Healing Inner Wounds

Prayer is one of the main ways in which individuals can communicate with God, pour out their hearts, and receive spiritual strength in the face of inner wounds. Prayer serves not only as a form of supplication, but also as a means of inner healing that strengthens a relationship with God.

Philippians 4:6-7 emphasizes the importance of prayer in overcoming anxiety and uncertainty: "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*"

In addition to prayer, the contemplation of God's words becomes the foundation for individuals to understand the love and restoration that God provides. God's Word provides comfort and guidance to those who are suffering from inner wounds. Psalm 119:105 states, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path," indicating that God's word gives direction and strength to individuals who are struggling.

Spiritual Discipline Practices to Overcome Emotional Trauma

Spiritual discipline is an integral part of restoration in the context of Christian theology. Some of the key practices that help in the healing process include:

- a. Meditation and Contemplation of the Word
Meditating deeply on God's words helps individuals gain a new understanding of God's love and His purpose in their lives. Meditation on the word is also a means for individuals to strengthen their faith in the promise of restoration that God gives.
- b. Fasting as a Form of Purification and Renewal
Fasting is often used as a form of spiritual discipline to control thoughts and emotions, as well as bring the focus back to God. Through fasting, individuals can learn to let go of emotional burdens and rely entirely on God in the process of recovery.
- c. Worship and Fellowship Involvement in worship and fellowship with the faith community is one of the important factors in the healing of inner wounds. Through interactions with fellow believers, individuals gain emotional support, motivation, and faith strengthening that help them cope with trauma.

The Testimony of Individuals Experiencing Spiritual Transformation through Healing of Inner Wounds

Many individuals have experienced life changes after going through the process of restoration in their faith. One example is someone who has experienced emotional trauma from the loss of a loved one, but then found solace in God's word and the church community. Through prayer, fellowship, and spiritual discipline, individuals experience inner healing and a peace that was once elusive.

Another testimony comes from someone who experienced self-doubt as a result of past experiences, but through a deeper understanding of God's love, he was able to overcome his emotional wounds and find new meaning and purpose in his life. This spiritual transformation shows how healing of inner wounds in a Christian perspective brings not only emotional healing but also a profound change in the relationship with God.

Healing of inner wounds in Christian theology is not only about overcoming emotional trauma, but also a journey toward spiritual healing that strengthens a relationship with God. Through prayer, devotion to the word, spiritual discipline, and community of faith, individuals can experience healing that brings them to peace and closeness to God.

Church and Pastoral Strategies in Assistance

Pastoral assistance is a crucial aspect in helping individuals who are experiencing inner wounds. The church serves as a place of spiritual and emotional recovery through various strategies centered on love, acceptance, and faith strengthening.

A Love-Based and Acceptance Counseling Approach

One of the main approaches in pastoral mentoring is love- and acceptance-based counseling. This principle emphasizes that individuals who are wounded need to feel unconditional acceptance from the church, just as God receives everyone with His love.

Ephesians 4:32 emphasizes the importance of this attitude: "*Be kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*" In the context of Christian counseling, this approach is carried out through:

- a. Empathic listening, where the pastor or counselor provides space for individuals to pour out their hearts without fear of judgment.
- b. Provide strengthening based on God's word, so that individuals can find hope and restoration in God's promises.
- c. Develop trust-based relationships, so that individuals feel safe and comfortable in their recovery journey.

The Role of Small Groups and Spiritual Assistance in the Church

Pastoral assistance is not only carried out individually, but also in smaller communities. Churches that are effective in dealing with inner wounds often rely on small groups as a forum for building interpersonal relationships that support healing.

Small groups function as:

- a. A space to share experiences more intimately, so that individuals feel that they are not walking alone in their struggles.
- b. A place to build spiritual closeness, where joint prayer and reflection on the word are carried out regularly as a form of strengthening faith.
- c. A safe environment for individuals to grow and be restored in a caring community.

James 5:16 emphasizes the importance of community interaction in healing: *"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."* A church community that is active in spiritual mentoring has a great impact on the healing process of individuals who have experienced inner wounds.

Comparative Studies with Pastoral Approaches of Different Deeds

Pastoral approaches to dealing with inner wounds can vary depending on the church denomination. Here are some examples of frequently applied approaches:

- a. The Evangelical Protestant Church emphasizes restoration based on God's word and personal relationship with Christ. Mentoring is provided through support groups, Bible-based counseling sessions, and prayer and fasting as part of inner recovery.
- b. The Catholic Church uses sacraments such as Confession as part of spiritual healing. The Catholic Church also emphasizes the importance of spiritual direction by priests or priests in overcoming inner wounds.
- c. Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches Pastoral approaches are often more expressive, with a focus on restoration through the ministry of prayer and healing. Prophetic prayer and intense worship are used to help individuals experience inner recovery.
- d. The Orthodox Church Emphasizes liturgical aspects and reflection as part of pastoral accompaniment. The Orthodox Church teaches restoration through involvement in the sacraments, personal prayer, and spiritual community that supports the healing journey.

Effective pastoral care is based on love and acceptance, supported by a church community that strengthens faith through small groups and spiritual accompaniment. Different denominations have different approaches to dealing with inner wounds, but the main goal remains the same to bring individuals to true recovery in Christ.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the healing of inner wounds in the context of Christian psychology and theology is rooted in an understanding of the inner child, God's grace, the role of the Holy Spirit, and pastoral accompaniment. A wounded inner child can affect a person's character and behavior into adulthood, but recovery can occur through spiritual reflection and a supportive community.

An effective pastoral approach to dealing with inner wounds involves faith-based counseling, church community support, and God's word-based recovery strategies. Case studies show that churches that implement small group-based mentoring and spiritual mentoring are more successful in helping congregations experiencing emotional trauma.

Developing Pastoral Mentoring Programs

- a. The Church needs to provide recovery groups for individuals who have experienced inner wounds, focusing on reflection on God's word, prayer, and spiritual formation.
- b. Training for church leaders and Christian counselors in pastoral counseling strategies to be more effective in providing guidance to the congregation.

Integrating Psychology and Theology in Christian Counseling

- a. The Church can work closely with Christian psychologists to provide a thorough recovery, covering the psychological and spiritual aspects of the healing process of inner wounds.

- b. Using crisis intervention methods and the Restoring Your Heart (RYH) approach in supporting individuals experiencing emotional trauma.

c.

Building a Community That Provides Social Support

- a. Organize recovery retreats, reflection sessions of God's word, and mentoring for congregations in need of emotional support.
- b. The church ought to be a safe and loving environment, where individuals feel accepted without judgment.

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