



### **Philip K. Hardin: Into-Me-See**

**Matt:** Today, we're going to be talking about some of the basic necessities that we as human beings have and on a base level, two things that every person needs are meaning and belonging, meaning being a purpose, something to live for strive for belonging, being a community, family, true friends, a partner, but in order to actually have a true sense of belonging, you have to have intimacy.

**Craig:** And I cannot think of a better person to educate our audience about intimacy than feel hardened. I met Phil when I was invited by a friend to this thing called deer camp. And what deer camp is, is a place where men learn intimacy, where they practice intimacy. And it's done in an environment where we learn to tell our story and having belonging and true community requires knowing and being known. And that is what deer camp is about. And that is a lot of what feel hardened has devoted his life and ministry to. So feel thanks for being here.

**Phil:** Thank you, Craig, Matt, good to be with you and an honor to not only sit with you guys, but to talk about something that I'm very passionate about. It's been life changing for me in terms of how we've developed this model that we use to bring a life giving experiences to men. Uh, most men can live a lifetime and never really have an experience with true intimacy, especially with other men, but there's a lot of things that we've done with couples and individuals and in, in men that I'm very passionate about. So thank you for allowing me to be here with you.

**Matt:** Yeah. And so, I mean, I'm really excited to hear about this topic because in my practice, I feel like the word intimacy is one of the most confusing words, possibly one of the most misunderstood words. People often, you know, think that intimacy is just sex or spending time with somebody or even having certain experiences with them. But I don't think that really defines intimacy I'm feel what, what is intimacy?

**Phil:** Intimacy at its base definition is knowing and being known. We see it in our children when they're first born, they want to be seen, they want to be known. Look, mommy, look, mommy, daddy, daddy, look, look. And, you know, after the kids have said that about 12 times, you want to just tell him to go play on the street or something, you know? And it's just like I've heard this over and over. But the way that God has made us is to be seen, to be known, to know others and to have know us and even eternal life in scripture is defined as a God knowing us and us knowing God for all of eternity. And that is intended to usher us in to a life lived in close relationship with God in those that we know. And I believe when we get to heaven that we will have this incredible eternity of knowing and being known of all kinds of characters as, as well as God. That's what we are made for feel.

**Craig:** You can't talk about intimacy without modeling it, and I've seen you model it, it deer camp. I've seen you model it in a men's round table, which you do on Thursday morning here in the Jackson area. Tell us your story.

**Phil:** Craig. I agree with you so much that this idea of intimacy is not intended to be something theoretical. It's kind of like, you know, I'm having a class on swimming and you never get wet. That would be stupid. Right? And so when we talk about intimacy, especially on our men's weekend, I mean, we're talking about getting wet or more importantly, we model it. We actually jump in the pool, so to speak and my own story. Uh, I would, I would say that until I learned this model, my early story would be summarized in three words, structure or even rigidity, number one, number two would be addiction. Or you could say, if it feels good, do it. And number three would be service. And so, my early life, I grew up in the mountains of East Tennessee. Elizabethton Tennessee grew up in a church going home and I was in church on Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. I learned a lot about the Bible, loved my life played basketball, went to college on a basketball scholarship. Just had a good life, but man, there was a hunger in me for something more than what that structure in rigidity in being nice and good could deliver. And so when I got to college, it was like, mom, ain't here, she ain't gonna be here. And it was just like its own.

**Craig:** Yeah. I think a lot of guys out there can, can relate to that. I know I can relate to that for, for me it was baseball. I was a baseball player and baseball created structure for me. It created community, it created a common goal, but then when baseball was over, yeah, the guide rails are down and anything goes, yeah, well, you know, not as somebody that grew up in a very structured household, I think that some of that boils down to what are the reasons that you're abiding by certain structure? Like you were talking about figuring out who you are or the, the needs that you had for what I heard was like gratification, essentially. If you are abiding under this structure, but it's fighting against baby, you know who you are, you're going with structured for maybe the wrong reasons, because that's just the rules. You know, when those rails come down, I mean, you're going to spend off of this planet.

**Craig:** Well I think a lot of guys can relate to this. We won't freedom. So you found yourself at the university of Tennessee with freedom baby.

**Phil:** Well and again what I wanted was intimacy, what I wanted and all those years of structured in rigidity even was to be known and seen. And, and I figured out that if I wanted to get a dog biscuit, so to speak, if a dog goes and gets a tennis ball and you want him to get it again, you give him a reward. And the way I would get rewarded by my mom and my dad and the family that I grew up in was to be good, to be nice, to go to church and not cause any trouble, but I was really wanting intimacy. So, that's how I got it, a form of being known. And then, you know, the years that I spent just partying and just doing whatever felt good, that was like, boy, that was like I'm accepted. I've got a bunch of idiots along with my idiocy that embrace my idiocy. And we were just idiots for fun, you know? And then, you know, I moved into a season of my life that I came to Christ and I really believed that the way to live a Christ oriented life was to learn as much of the Bible as I could, and to serve others even to the point of leading others to Jesus and just being as good, a Christian as I could.

**Craig:** And you actually went into professional ministry.

**Phil:** I was on staff with campus crusade for Christ, which I love for years, but it was in that context that I cheated on my wife, infidelity just about destroyed my life and my marriage, I wound up in a mental health facility for 30 days. And what I had been living was kind of what I felt like I had to do to be known and to experience intimacy. And what I began to learn was a whole different model of what true intimacy or being known really means. And what I would say that I learned at a core level was that I, that I began to accept the gifts that God had given me. But most importantly, I began to accept the broken parts of me that I had tried to hide all my life.

**Craig:** Phil, talk about that for a minute, because I think a lot of our listeners can, can relate to what you just said. You said, what was modeled for was to do right, to be a good boy to show up at church on Sundays. And in college you gave your life to Christ. And I know that you are all in and that you were doing that the best you knew, but there was a hunger for something different. And it led you down a dark path, talk to the men who might be listening about that journey.

**Phil:** Well, I think that, you know, we are made for connection and made for intimacy and when we don't get it and we don't even know exactly what we're searching for few men use the word intimacy by the way, much like what Matt was talking earlier, but when we're searching for the real thing, we'll take a lot of detours. And it took me a while to understand that what I really wanted and was searching for was an ability to be, as the Bible says, naked and unashamed, that I could reveal who I was. I could receive love and care from others, and I could live trusting that relationships could last. And that would come when I was able to share the gifted parts that I have, but also my broken parts and those broken parts for me had been so wrapped in shame and guilt, um, a sense of failure. And when I began to actually share those parts and risk what I feared as rejection from others, that is when I began to be free. And it's like sharing the times that I've failed have brought me more life than exercising and expressing all the gifts that I have that God's given me. I have seen God use my broken parts, my failures more than my successes.

**Matt:** Yeah. You know, I think that even though intimacy is a very base desire and every person, for whatever reason, we are not necessarily wired to understand it just right off the bat. And it is kind of one of those things that you encounter these different relationships or experiences throughout your life. And you are like, okay. I, I think, I think this is love, or I think this is intimacy and you, you go through it and it isn't until you actually experience it that you're like, Oh my God, I was everything that I thought was that just, isn't like kind of, you know it when you see it. Why do you think it's so hard for people to either recognize it or let their guard down and, and engage with it?

**Phil:** Because I think we're all afraid. I think we're all afraid to show that broken side of us. And so we hide when Adam and Eve broke connection with God, because they were deceived by the serpent. They hid themselves, they covered themselves and they did everything in their power to try to keep their life together and God confronted them. And he even asked them, he first asked them, where are you so that they could tell where they were and acknowledge that. And up until that time, God had just spoken in declarative sentences. He had told them what to do. Go enjoy, have fun rule subdue and have dominion. And when they broke connection with God, he started asking questions. And as a mentor of mindset, years ago, you'd never grow beyond your questions. And so, God invites us to be honest and open and vulnerable once again, naked, and unashamed. And the reason that's so hard is that we don't want to be exposed. We are afraid of being rejected. We are afraid that that, which we tell will cause people to turn

and run. And yet when we risked that with a safe environment, again, as I often say, I would, I'm not inviting anybody to go to Walmart and get on the Intercom and tell all your broken parts on the Intercom at Walmart. Nobody wants to hear that at Walmart, you know, they're busy, but when you are able to be in an environment and that's hard to find for men, but that's what we provide at our men's coaching weekends, that it's life changing. When men can get honest enough to tell that which they have hidden and felt ashamed of all their life, that is when they begin to experience intimacy. And it's not something theoretical.

**Craig:** As I think Matt put, it is something that we all deeply need. We are hardwired to want, but we don't fully understand it. And obviously we're divorced lawyers and it gets tricky in a broken marital dynamic because intimacy and sharing one's brokenness can be weaponized in the context of divorce. And so, I think finding that safe place to know, and be known sometimes is more challenging than it might seem because unfortunately our homes are not always a safe place to do that. And that is, I think the complexity that men experience in broken relational dynamics.

**Phil:** I totally agree. Craig and I think that, uh, for most men, what we are talking about is like trying to settle a unicorn and run a unicorn. It is like Dude really man? I have never seen a saddle on a unicorn. And so it's hard to find those environment, but that is what we've been doing for the last 20 years. Just one quote that I have, we just had one of our weekends. This guy was there. He is 43 married three times and has a profession that I'm not going to say just to keep his confidentiality in check. But he has a, just a manly profession. He is a man's man in every way. And this is what he sent to me the Monday after our weekend, he says, I ached for my broken brothers. I rejoiced still with a broken heart. After the men's coaching weekend, there is much to do this week. And in the coming days, weeks, months, and years, I think of the intimacy I experienced with the guys. And we'll never forget this weekend. My hope is to live up to the love and courage of my new lions that are now live amongst. I wish to love as much as I have been loved. What he told me on Monday when we sat together afterwards and he handed me this written piece is he said, I experienced more intimacy in the weekend with the group of men than I have in 43 years of my life up till now. And again, he's been married three times, so it's not like he's never been with a woman, but what he saw and what he experienced was an openness, a transparency, a vulnerability that he had never seen. He allowed himself to be known and he allowed himself to know others. And when that happens, that is like the difference between reading about swimming class and jumping in the water and feeling the water

**Matt:** Craig and I we've been, um, we've known each other for over a decade now. And I can't remember the first time that I actually heard about deer camp, but I've been hearing about it for years. I've never actually had the good fortune to go. I'd like to do that in the future, but can you just tell me what is deer camp?

**Phil:** First of all, Matt, I'd love for you to go and, and I want you to come for sure, because I think every man really wants to come and he doesn't even know what it is because what our men's coaching weekend, AKA deer camp is, and the opportunity for men to be in a safe environment and tell the story of their life in the way that deer camp came about is when I finished 30 days at a mental health facility years ago and began to work on the areas of my life that I was ashamed of and hidden and tried to keep it hidden. I was invited by the counselors at the mental health facility to begin to do live with a group of men that I wasn't leading the group, but that we would just openly share what was going on in our life.

And so we started meeting on Tuesday night, me and six other guys, and we just started doing life together. And my good friend Danny Gilbert was a Philadelphia Jewish guy and was a dentist. And Danny and I started doing deer camp because we wanted to provide an environment for men to be able to come to that had grown up in church, had never been church, uh, were all shapes and sizes. And so, we've been doing this now for over 20 years or almost 20 years. We'll be 20 years in September that we provide in, in, uh, a nonreligious environment for men to be open about their lives. Then we talk about it being done in a Christian framework. We're passionate about the Lord Jesus. We love the Christian framework, but we love it in such a way that we respect where every guy's coming from, whether he's church or non-church. And I think that we offer the Christian framework as God intended it to be an intimate encounter with the living God, not a moral religious overly structured, rigid sort of approach that sometimes that we can get in other church environments. And that I think everybody who is in church or even outside the church, is longing for intimacy and to know, and be known. And that's what we offer in our weekends for men.

**Matt:** Well, that's, that's really interesting to me because I personally feel like while it's not tinted this way, church itself can be a very intimidating place for people and where they can feel like they cannot actually open themselves up and expose themselves for fear of judgment or rejection. And so I, it sounds like an amazing idea to actually take it out of the, you know, religious framework, do it somewhere else, but keeping that faith based angle on it, how long have you guys been doing deer camp?

**Phil:** It be 20 years in September. And again, you know, I love the church, love my seminary education. I have two graduate degrees from reform theological seminary, and yet what's so often can happen for any man in church is that everything is good as long as you're good, but when you fail and you make that mistake morally, addiction wise, financially, you don't know how to resolve conflict with your wife, where do you go? You know, at best, sometimes you can stand up in the middle of Sunday school class and have them put your name on the prayer list and they'll pray for you, but it's like, where do you tell that story? Who are you going to tell that story to? And it can be a lonely place. I mean, some of the loneliest men that I know are men who are trapped between their church and their profession, and they don't know how to live out their family life because they are alone.

**Craig:** Well, and Phil, I'm glad that Matt brought this idea to the table because my wife, Rachel and I have been in church, our entire marriage, and we've been in couples groups, small groups, and a small group is a great way to get to know people and have community. But you know, it's not really a fully safe environment in a group of couples. I mean six couples, seven couples. I mean, cause let's just be honest. There's just things that I'm not going to share in the presence of somebody else's wife that I would share around a table of men. And so, one of the things that has been really meaningful in my life is finding a group of guys that I can get together with. And I've got a group that I get together with on Tuesday mornings. And most of the time we just check in with each other, what's going on, you know, what's going on at work, what's going on with your kids. What's going on with your wife. You know, what's going well in your life. What's going bad in your life, but that's not something that many guys have. And what men's coaching weekend is, and you guys also do it down in Fairhope now called fish camp, but that's what you do is you introduce guys to what living life and community looks like.

**Phil:** Life is a team sport. It is intended to put us in the context of brothers teammates. I mean, how many guys on a baseball team at one time on the field, you know, there's nine, how many guys on a football team, 11 how many guys on a basketball court at one time, five, how many guys on a life team four. The reason I say four is because it's the model that Jesus gave us. He had 12 disciples, but he had three of those guys. He was really close to David had 30 mighty warriors, but he had three of those mighty warriors that were like secret service guys that he was very close to. God has given us a model in scripture that we are to live, I believe, having three guys on our speed dial and that if I pull those three guys together and I said, guys, tell me about Craig, how's Craig doing. They would be able to tell me, 90, 95% of what's going on in Craig's life. You know, there might be 5% that wife knows her, or Craig's not even told, but my experience both personally and professionally is that I was isolated, and most men are isolated and alienated from themselves and others.

**Craig:** And you bring up a great point. And this is a word that I really think I was introduced to through the men's coaching weekend environment. And that is feedback. What is feedback and why is feedback important?

**Phil:** Feedback is the experience of being known by another, none of us are known by sitting under the Apple tree and just figuring out who we are, the way a baby forms an identity is by looking into the eyes of mother. And then after about a 12 to 18 months starts to connect with daddy. And so, a baby forms a sense of wellbeing by looking into the caring, nurturing, available, secure eyes of mama and daddy or the caretaker. If mom and dad are not available and that never stops, that is the model that, that God has given us, that we find out who we are when we look into the eyes of another. And so, feedback is the experience that we practice at the weekend of, as a God tells his story, that we, as a group offer him what it was like for us to sit with him. And we care for him and love him. It's not like, you know, we don't tell him what to do and we're not trying to fix your problems. And it's, it's definitely not a judgmental environment, but it is the experience of being loved and cared for, by looking into the eyes of another and hearing that person offer helpful understanding an experience of what it was like to sit together

**Matt:** So that, that feedback, it has to just be crucial because, you know, going back to what we're talking about a few minutes ago, I think people walk around sometimes in these groups that are feigning intimacy, but everybody's got their mask on their carefully cultivated mask of what I want everybody to think that I am, or my relationship is whatever. And when you're forced into a situation where you have to take that mask off, which was, would be terrifying. And I think number one, one of the best ways to get over that is to be in a situation where you're watching somebody else do it. They open themselves up and they're vulnerable, which allows you to, okay, maybe I can air my garbage, but then when you actually take that leap and do it, you're falling and you don't know if the nets there or not until because, okay, are they judging me? What are they thinking? What was there? And then when somebody responds to you, that's when you realize that you're safe.

**Craig:** Well, Matt, I think that's what, not to have a shameless divorce lawyer plug here, but really that's often what happens in our office is someone comes in, they tell their story and our lawyers are specially trained and I've been doing family law now for 20 years and I've heard lots and lots of stories and I've tried lots and lots cases. And that's the most important thing that I'll offer to a potential client. And that first meeting is it's feedback and it's look, you know, active listening. This is what I heard you say, and

this is why I think that could be a problem or look things aren't maybe as bad as you think they are. You know, if you guys do just some minor reparative work, you could write this ship and move on to have a healthy, rewarding relationship for, for both of you feel you've sat with hundreds of men, um, maybe into the thousands of men now over the course of your ministry and your career. Talk a little bit about the models that you use in deer camp and in your professional practice and specifically the model of the, the lion, the turtle, the chameleon, and the bull, because I know you wrote a book about that. That was very meaningful to me because I'm a recovering bull, put me in a China shop and watch out. I know you will call your insurance adjuster. That's great for your divorce lawyer. It's challenging being married to me and with me being your dad, but I'm growing and I've been growing really deer camp was a big part of that. So, talk about the teaching models that you use.

**Phil:** Yeah. Intimacy again, is the idea of knowing and being known. And I wrote a book several years ago that uses the Johari window diagram has been used in business and professional settings for a long time of the idea of knowing, not knowing, self or knowing and not knowing others or being known by others. And so when you put that grid out, there's a quadrant that would elicit the idea of knowing yourself and being known by others and knowing others. And that one quadrant is the optimum quadrant that the Bible invites us into and that we are most happy. And we call that the lion that the lion has a high degree of self-awareness and a high degree of other awareness and knowing others. And that's where the feedback, the self-disclosure, the honesty, the openness, the vulnerability all play in. What we always say about the lion is he does three things really well. He reveals, he makes himself known, um, naked and unashamed is the biblical model. He receives. He's able to receive feedback and he's open to others idea because we all have blind spots in the end. The lion really wants to know. And then finally, his trust that he trusts the resources outside of himself, doesn't try to self-generate life, which is impossible. Nothing alive stays alive without resources from the outside in, and then the other three models are maladaptive models. We are intended to be lions. And yet the bull, the chameleon and turtle is often where we live our life because we've maladaptive because we don't have the resources available to us as we would want. Nobody grew up in a perfect family. Nobody grew up as Jesus. There's only one Jesus, and you ain't him.

**Craig:** Right. And the maladaptive component to it is our, his personality really. It's how we function in the world. What, you know, we have an essence and the, our true self, but we develop a personality to be able to navigate life.

**Matt:** Well, it's your own unique brand of a defense mechanism.

**Phil:** Perfect. Absolutely. And it's, fear-based, uh, I'll often say, you know, what is the opposite of love? It's not hate, I mean, hate semantically is the opposite of love for sure. But life is about relationship. And so what is the opposite of love? Relationally is fear. And when we experience fear, we move into being a bull, a chameleon, or a turtle, the bull, we just have lots of blind spots. I don't see myself either in a good way or my weaknesses. So I've got all these, um, parts that I don't understand about myself, the chameleon he knows about himself, but he ain't sharing, all he's going to do is change his colors and his adaptive abilities to be what he believes will be acceptable. So, he's really working hard to not be rejected. And I am a recovering, a chameleon, and I left to myself. I'm going to only tell you what I want you to know. I'm not going to tell you the vulnerable parts that I'm ashamed of, but as I've grown, um, I've learned to move more into the lion paradigm. And then the fourth quadrant in the Johari window

diagram is the turtle in the, in the turtle is the, uh, quadrant that, uh, there's just a high degree of unconsciousness and unawareness the turtle is alive, but he is just playing it safe. And what a turtle, uh, needs to do to be a lion is to start to take some risk, to stop overplaying safety. What the chameleon has to do to be a lion is to reveal and make himself known and what the bull has to do, which is really just about impossible for a true bull is to start to trust others feedback that their feedback and their awareness of him might actually not only be helpful, but even more true than what he believes about himself.

**Craig:** Well, as a recovering bull, I can't agree with you more, that's the vulnerability challenged and it's based on trust because we have resources and talents as human beings and the bull relies on those oftentimes too much. Phil, man, we could talk for hours and we have in the past talk for hours about these different paradigms. Um, I know you guys have done a lot of new work on the resources that are available to the public. Tell our listeners a little bit about that.

**Phil:** My wife and I do a couples workshop, uh, down in Fairhope, uh, twice a year, we call it the passionate partnering couples workshop and those are powerful weekends to where couples are not just taught some principles, but it's a true workshop. I work with, um, volunteer couples in front of the whole group. And so, you actually see these skills that we teach worked out with couples and then we allow you to go into a private place and you practice these skills. And when you finish the weekend, you're better equipped to really have the intimate marriage and intimate relationship that you thought you had and warning when you first got married, but oftentimes just poor habits and to execute a true love connection. We now have, we also do a hard wired to heal a workshop that is really a trauma workshop. And we do those like three times a year in all of us are dealing with trauma on some level. Uh, as my wife likes to say, some people got hit by bicycles. Some people got hit by trucks and some people got hit by trains, but everybody got hit. And what trauma is, is any real or perceived threat. And when you're in a state of threat you move into survival or a fear-based living. And when you're living in a fear based framework, you're not able to love or be loved. You are living on the fence and it's like some way you gotta play offense. If you're going to score a touchdown,

**Matt:** Phil, where can our listeners find the book that you've written or information about these workshops or even deer camp if they themselves want to go or not somebody that they feel like would benefit from that, how can they get more information about it?

**Phil:** Thanks for asking that, uh, Matt, we have a two websites, um, are a nonprofit website is, [www.BPOINTI.org](http://www.BPOINTI.org), which is business and professional outreach international. And that details all of our nonprofit men's coaching weekends, the couples workshop, that sort of thing. And then our counseling is [www.hardenedife.com](http://www.hardenedife.com), that tells more about our counseling practice. I'm a licensed marriage and family therapist and licensed professional counselor. And my wife is a licensed professional counselor. My daughter is a counselor in Dallas, um, and my youngest daughter is a life coach. And so we're a family of people helpers.

**Craig:** Phil, thanks for spending this time with us, for sitting with us for your ministry. Um, I don't know that I know anyone more committed to ministry than you and you do it so creatively. You do it with such passion and it's very inspiring.



**Matt:** and authenticity, man, just oozes out of you.

**Craig:** So feel, you know, my brother from the Hills of East Tennessee, thanks for being with us, man,

**Phil:** Craig and Matt, It's a pleasure being with you guys and so appreciate what you guys do, uh, because there's nobody that comes into your office any more than my office to see how you guys are doing. And that's true. And I'm fine with that. I don't expect that. Uh, but we have the privilege of working with very wounded people and you guys do a great job and I respect and appreciate what you guys do.

**Craig:** Thank you very much. Appreciate that Phil.