

Season 4 Episode 6: Ben Derrick

Craig: Well guys, welcome back to our show. Thanks for listening. I'm here with my friend, Roane Hunter.

Roane: Lose term.

Craig: Well you are my friend.

Roane: It's an attorney thing. It's just hard to trust.

Craig: I'm a work in progress.

Roane: Once again, you are the dark side in the room.

Craig: Yeah, I am the guy wearing the dark hat, especially when we have pastors and Christian counselors and things like that and speaking of pastors, we have my friend Ben Derrick.

Ben: It's going to be back. I have to say I get invited to a lot of places. I do not get invited back to a lot of places. So this is a unique experience for me.

Craig: If you don't know who Ben Derrick is, I'm going to encourage you to go back and listen to episode 32 and Ben did one of our most popular shows, "Heart, not habits with the Bible says about divorce." And if you'll go back and listen to that, and I'm not encouraging you to stop listening now, but maybe hit pause, go back to episode 32 and listen to episode 32, because you'll find out very quickly that we left a lot of things unsaid. There was just so much depth to that conversation. We've had so much great feedback from pastors and counselors. I mean, we have dozens of listeners worldwide.

Roane: Well, it's dozens and dozens,

Craig: dozens, and dozens of listeners worldwide, but I've gotten so much great feedback, man, about your take on what the Bible says about divorce and from former clients, just the sense of, you know, everything's going to be okay and that, you know, they're not outcast and they still have contributions to make, to life and to faith and to family. And so I think of it as a real encouragement to a lot of people.

Ben: Yeah. Well, thank you. I mean, at a very basic level, our relationship with brokenness is broken, but God's relationship with brokenness is not broken and he's able to operate inside of those relationships with his kids who have expressed pain and trauma and broken relationships. And he's actually very good at that. We're the ones that are not so great at that. So to shed a little light on that from a spiritual perspective, it was a true honor.

Craig: Yeah. And you know, I like to pick on my friend Roane, but he actually says a lot of smart things and one of the things that he said that was really smart is that the journey to God is an inward journey.

Roane: I do say that often, and of course I have the spiritual gift of plagiarism and Saint Augustane said that and Martin Luther said that and John Calvin said that. And if you look throughout church history, all the ancient church fathers, it was something that was just commonly known and practiced. And I believe today in our evangelical world we certainly don't cultivate that inner world hardly on any level, it's more of an external knowledge driven, focused.

Ben: Oh yeah. I can confirm from all my years working inside of a church and I know you as a therapist and you as an attorney, I mean, we said last episode, we see the results of pardon the term, but we see the results of the divorce between the external and the internal. The internal is an atrophy and has been for generations and we are experiencing a culture in a world that is a result of those decisions. So doing our part to reclaim that and to help people find freedom in reclaiming that it's scary to start taking the journey inward. You don't need to do it without a guide, but it is essential to live a happy and fulfilling life and most of us are after that.

Craig: And the idea of emotional health, I think, for the first time in my lifetime, I haven't lived nearly as long as Roane, but the idea that it's not that it's okay not to be okay. That you know, that we all have struggles. We have relational struggles. We have mental health struggles and the journey to good mental health and good emotional health and a sound sense of wellbeing is one that it seems like to me is getting more and more attention in a positive way.

Roane: It is, I think a lot of the stigmas are kind of falling away, but it it's, it can still be there. And one of the things that I see so often is I guess you might call it Hyper Spiritual where somebody is kind of like hiding behind Jesus in a way and everything is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. It's just another form of not living in reality and facing the truth of their life and certainly Jesus told us that, if we live his way and practice his life, then we will know the truth and then the truth sets us free and so just to avoid reality, hiding behind some religious jargon is really not emotionally healthy, mentally healthy, spiritually healthy.

Ben: Right. You can already tell through our conversation where we're bouncing up against the way that many of us have learned to be Jesus followers or spiritual, a lot of this results in spiritual bypass, what you're describing and that I can either go through this town called reality, or I can take the bypass around it. It's going to be faster. I will avoid the traffic. But if you keep taking that spiritual bypass where everything becomes hyper godly and very holy and these where these phrases come out, like if God closes a door, he's opening a window and I'm like, why is God forcing me to climb out a window? Why doesn't he just leave the door open? You know, all these things that well-meaning people say that are actually very destructive to the inward journey, because it encourages us to basically pull the shoot instead of experiencing the journey that God's calling us on and as you read the Bible, you will see it over and over and over again. This is why it's just an incredible fact that churches are able to dodge this over and over and over again. God is forcing men and women towards an inward journey to face reality, but we teach it very differently than that, unfortunately.

Craig: And that's what today's show is about. Really it's emotional health and the church. And so Ben, take us there. How do you see where we are as a society and as Christ followers with regard to that connection between emotional health and the church?

Ben: I think the best way to do that for me is to be personally vulnerable if that's okay. I can speak to this again, as an insider, as a man who lived as a pastor for a decade, one of our largest problems is that we have emotionally unaware men leading congregations, and it becomes difficult to lead people to a place that you haven't been yourself and I found myself in that conundrum. It was my job to lead people, to grow and to

develop and to understand God more and the true facts of it are that I didn't understand myself very well. So I was in essence, passing along these strategies of spiritual bypass and I was taking the narrative of the Bible and turning it into three points or four points or 10 points of things that you should do to please God, because I was operating from a place of performance-based acceptance. And without even knowing it, I'm passing that along to hundreds of people on a regular basis. Let's perform so that God will accept us. I was preaching and teaching and operating within a community in my early days there with this huge father wound that I kind of knew about, but didn't want to face. That made me particularly dangerous because I could use the language of being wounded and arrows and dealing with that. And then pretty quickly I could move to a passage in Proverbs or Romans 8:28 was a favorite one of mine "that God works everything together for the good, let's pray." This is a big part of our problem right now and that we have promoted people through a system to lead churches that have not been on their awareness and health journey and I was one of those men. I'm admitting I was one of those men. If you look at my 10 years inside of church work, the first five, were me discovering myself and the next five or me trying to take that discovery and call people into that journey well. So I think that's a big part of the problem and then you have just the after of the silent generation is a huge impact here. People who saw some very traumatic things had a lot of trauma came back home and they started building things and they did a great job building things. What they were not doing was building emotional aware children, they were building very big things like denominations and very large churches and there was a lot of external success and this is kind of where I'll pause my part of the story. There was a lot of external success and a lot of internal sickness and those two things coexisted for a very long time.

Craig: Okay, Ben, you dropped a lot of words. We need to unpack the father wound. Explain to the listener who might not have heard that phraseology before.

Ben: Oh yeah. Sorry. I think this will be some very freeing information. All of us were raised by very broken people and many of those people were good people. We talk about this a lot in our world. We're looking back on the people that raised us not to judge them, but to evaluate the effects of their efforts on our lives, none of our parents were perfect and if we believe that maybe that would be step one to try to untangle that but I was wounded by my father. He's a great man. We have a great relationship, but he has deficiencies that he passed along to me. The other side of that, are there things that I need growing up that he was not capable of giving me, and that's not necessarily his fault, but as a result, you have a wounding there, the best way to picture it would be an arrow that goes in. Arrows are designed to penetrate. They're not designed to come back out. So taking the messages that those arrows brought into your life, for instance, I'm not worthy of time or it may be that, my father was just busy trying to provide. He was trying to make sure that we didn't get evicted, but the message I received because of the practice or the ball game or whatever it may be, I'm not worth my dad's attention.

Craig: I saw two, I've been watching a lot of movies lately because I've got teenagers. They do things that don't involve me and Rachel and so we're not quite empty nesters, but we're, we're getting closer and closer. So I've been watching a lot of movies and two movies that I watched recently. One was Johnny Cash's story, Walk the line. Great, great movie and you talk about the concept of fathering and if you go back and watch that movie, if you like Johnny Cash, you'll love the movie, but Johnny Cash lost his brother to a horrible accident when he was a child and basically his father told him, you know, I lost the wrong son. I mean, you know, I wish it was you that would have been lost and it talks about his struggle with addiction, even though he had this massive, incredible success as a musician and became this incredible success. He was sitting at his beautiful lake house with June Carter who became his wife and the love of his life and children everywhere. And he looked over at his dad and said, dad, what do you think about this house? And he's like, well, I've seen

bigger houses, you know? And so just no approval and to contrast with another baby that I saw recently, that we were talking about before we started the show today Rudy, I mean, if you're a man who can hear my voice right now, and you've never seen Rudy, I'm going to have to ask you to turn in your man card. The story about Rudy who was five foot, nothing, a hundred and nothing but he was a star in it, on his high school football team. He led the team in tackles. And his family were huge Notre Dame fans and they would crowd around the TV on Saturdays and watch the Irish take on their rivals. And I was just a big deal in his family, but, you know, Rudy wasn't very athletic and so he went to work at the local factory with his dad until there was this terrible accident and he lost his friend, Pete. Rudy had always dreamed and desired to go to Notre Dame, even tried to get on a bus route to go visit Notre Dame and basically the teacher said, yeah, this is for people who are serious about possibly going to school. Rudy loses his friend, Pete, he travels to south bend, he talks to the security guard and the security guard quickly realized Rudy needed a priest and he met his friend and he basically got him into junior college. Rudy worked really, really hard in junior college, found a mentor and a coach and a tutor and one day he is sitting on a park bench and he opens a letter where he's finally been accepted to Notre Dame. So what does Rudy do? He rushes home and he shows the letter to his dad and his dad immediately picks up the loud speaker to announce to all of the factory my son's going to Notre Dame and so it sounds Ben, when I hear the word father wound, it is that complex relationship that we all have with our dad, whether we're Rudy or Johnny Cash or Roane Hunter or Craig Robertson.

Ben: That's right. I think Johnny Cash is a great example for those of us struggling with this idea, to understand that messages from a father can cripple an icon like Johnny Cash. Why would we believe that we're any different? And this is put inside of us by God, the need for validation. Spiritual word for it would be blessing and God loves to distribute blessings. The problem is other people often get to us first, very young. And those messages that begin as external are then internalized and they happen often so young, they are buried so deep. They're driving so much of our behavior, but we're almost unaware of them in a sense and we're especially afraid of so when we get in relationships where people are asking us to face those things, to have alignment with reality, that is a very, very scary process, but those things are driving our behavior. We would rather deal with the consequences of an unintentionally lived life than the consequences of an intentional inward journey.

Craig: Roane, talk about that. Ben's talking about this idea of awareness and how we often live as men and as human beings, just simply unaware

Roane: Yeah, totally. And this whole idea, it really is about reality. There's the, you know, the ideal world and the real world and we come up with a story in our heads of what the ideal should be and we don't live in that world. We live in the real world. And then there's this gap between the two and, and that's where we live and we try to escape the pain in some form or fashion. It's interesting, William Glasser, his mode of therapy that he came up with in the fifties was called reality therapy and one of the things that he said was people that suffer from mental illness are not living in reality. There's some illusion, there's some fantasy, there's some non-truth that they are living out of and so this idea of the father wound is simply whatever dad is doing. We come up with a story in our head and then oftentimes we call it, those are toxic shame messages because it's not the truth. It's not reality. Sometimes we could call it painful implicit memories because implicitly we're coming up with a story based on the circumstances and then there's no correction. And so we just began to form our belief system because all of this is what I would turn, basic spiritual formation because our spirits are being formed from the day we're born until the day we die for good or for evil and until we begin to correct that and become aware and start living in the reality of what's going on, we'll never change. It will just repeat.

Craig: We're here with Ben Derrick and Roane Hunter and we're talking about the journey inward. We're talking about emotional health and we're talking about the church. Ben, let's dive a little deeper into this idea of awareness. Yeah, those who know this language, I'm an Enneagram eight and so I have a hard time expressing feelings, sometimes even feeling feelings but talk about that. I mean, this idea of awareness and being in touch with our feelings, our limitations how the past impacts our present. I mean how others perceive us and I think Roane, that's just what you're talking about. This idea of, of living in reality.

Roane: It is. And oftentimes, you know, we use the illusion, the fantasy becomes the escape mechanism and that comes in a lot of different forms, right. It can come through work. We get validation there. It feels good. At home, the relationship is hard, so I'll just start working more and cause I'm getting some validation. Certainly, I mean the low hanging fruit, I mean pornography, affairs, all of that. That's just another form of fantasy and escape, you know, alcoholism, drug use but I believe that you can boil it down to those messages that we all got, we all received and the wounding that occurred that we've known and done the work and figured out what's really going on up underneath this stuff

Ben: Absolutely and I think the biggest danger in my life and most of the men that I sit with on a regular basis, the biggest danger about this fantasy, that is a literal part of the addiction cycle as it's been defined, the most dangerous part is that it almost works. It almost works like that felt good and it solved the problem for a moment or a minute or a season, but we all looped back around to figure out it did almost work and we will settle for that almost working over and over and over again, rather than something actually working and those things you were describing a moment ago, they're just kind of a roadmap to the interior world. So a funny story about me a couple of years ago, I was sitting at, we can question my decision making, but I was sitting with Roane as my therapist and he said, Hey man, have you ever seen emotions written out before, I'm like, I mean, I don't know, what are you talking about? And he hands me this feelings wheel that has these six core feelings and there's all these feelings around it, our listeners should Google it. It will be just a, just a great exercise in a way.

Roane: I think you went into a coma.

Ben: I did. I looked at Roane and I said there's no way there are this many emotions.

Craig: And you know, it's interesting Ben that you, that you're talking about that cause actually in our initial client notebook, I've got the feelings wheel in it and you'll see it in a lot of therapists office.

Ben: That's right. If you're looking for, if our listeners are looking for a roadmap. That's it. You've convinced me, I'll take the inward journey. I'll start to try to get that figured out and the thing that we can promise is the more experience you have with this, the better your relationships are going to go. That's a guarantee. So if you're taking the inward journey, you need to start thinking about feelings. What am I feeling? The trouble with that is we've often learned from our families of origin acceptable feelings, and we use those to cover over a lot of things. One of the acceptable emotions in my family growing up was anger. I'm an expert at anger because I learned from two anger experts, right? The other emotions I'm not very comfortable with so often I will cover over or cope with, for instance, embarrassment with anger 'cause that's easier for me to operate in. So you start to think about your feelings. What am I actually feeling? You define those, and then you start to think about your limits. This is a really interesting part about marriage and about divorce as well. I believe your spouse will begin to make commentary about your limitations and if you're not comfortable... But here's the fact of life, God built limitations into his creation. I mean, science would tell us we need to sleep roughly

eight hours. Right? Well, there's how many other hours in the day, God basically set it up to where yes, you need to work, but you've got to rest at least half as much as you're working. That's how we designed our bodies to operate at optimal levels. So, you have to be able to embrace your limitations and admit your weaknesses and then you move into the really difficult part of trying to figure out, what's going on in my past the phrase that Roane taught me years ago, if it's hysterical, it's historical, it was in a knock down drag out with my wife about four years ago and I was winning and I was very proud of myself, which is kind of how that went and then she says in the middle of this argument and I was being the big angry bear husband, you know, so we're in the middle Sergeant and she looks at me very calmly and she says, why is this such a big deal for you? And I knew that was God speaking to my wife at that moment, because I had to say back. I don't know.

Craig: Roane, break that down for our listener, this idea of if it's hysterical, it's historical,

Roane: So often, we were sitting with couples and I know it well, we've all done this, you know, you get into this fight about, you forgot to take the garbage can to the street or something, or just something benign and then all of a sudden it's like world war three and then six hours later you go, what are we even fighting about? You know, that's a clue right there to go, man something deeper is going on here and so often just using the forgot to take the garbage cans to the street. It's like, okay, Eva reminds me that I forgot to take the garbage cans to the street and then I go defensive. Right? Well, I remembered the last three months. I haven't forgotten. What's happening is it's tapping into something inside of me that says I'm just not enough. I don't measure up. I have failed her, the family. It's a deeper message. And all she had was a complaint, I took it as a criticism. Because it tapped into some old wound, some message that we were talking about.

Craig: the key of course is to understand as best you can in the moment, may be what that historical thing is, the thing behind the thing.

Roane: If I can take a deep breath and kind of step back and, and go, wait a minute, what? This is just a simple, yeah, garbage can discussion, but like what's going on inside of me. Where's this coming from? I've got to investigate and identify the source error cause there's some error in my thinking. It's never really the person in front of us. Nope. Unless they're calling you a piece of crap. That's different. But, so often the piece and the thing in front of me is not really the problem. The problem is what's going on inside of me.

Craig: Ben, you said even as a person. I was standing up in front of everyone on a Sunday morning, professional Christian, that you are not immune to this reality.

Ben: That's absolutely true, you know, and it's how we get into this pattern in our lives, where it's the same, different jobs, same problem, different spouse, same problem. We have to understand, I believe and I'm saying this emphatically because of this journey that I've been on, we have to understand what's going on is always about more than what's going on and when we can get to that place to think, man, why am I triggered right now? What is it that's being tapped into? What is it that hurts? Then suddenly somebody has hit that arrow and it feels like digging in and I've been trying to ignore that for the past 25 years.

Craig: The thing that we bring to all of our relationships is ourself, right? Whether it's a relationship at work, whether it was a relationship at school, whether it's a relationship in the church, whether it's your marital relationship with your first, second, third spouse, the constant in all of those is you. So then to have healing and restoration and to live out of a joyful place, then you are suggesting, recommending thinking about this idea of journeying inward.

Ben: Yes. I would make this proposal today that we are generations into taking an intellectual approach to an emotional issue.

Craig: Okay. You're going to have to break that down and beyond because you're a really smart guy.

Ben: Yes. Well, let's just break it down for those who have been around religion or Christianity and have consumed for 20 plus years information about God, if you will just learn this, or if you will listen to enough speeches and now we have people even going to YouTube and Spotify to listen to even more speeches, intellectual, intellectual, intellectual ideas will solve that deep, emotional problem that's going on. All I have to do is modify my habits and part of the biggest problem we have going on in the North American church right now is that we were rewarded modified habits. This is how someone can get engaged in activity that is completely detrimental to their relationships with their lives and the first thing we say is, man, that guy was a deacon. That guy was a pastor. You know what? He was a really good, solid guy. We don't know the guy. We just know that his habits were in check and that's what we reward inside of Christianity.

Roane: or the missionaries that put their kids in boarding schools to go out in the jungle and save natives.

Craig: Well, it's back to this idea of performance-based I mean, because that's how we, I mean, it's a scoreboard, right? Cause we, you know, we as human beings and Americans, we like a scoreboard and when we're out, you know, doing good things and feeding, hungry children, and I mean and caring for orphans and widows, I can say this from personal perspective through the ministry work, that my wife and I did for a decade. I mean, this idea of God wants me to perform for him.

Ben: or he needs me too. That's an even more toxic message like God needs me to do. Does he really need you to do this? Or is he inviting you in to do this? Those are two different things. So what I'm saying is we can engage with people through speeches and megachurches and programs at an intellectual level, but unless we are providing safe environments for them to engage with their emotions, the needle is not going to move and that's where we are experiencing right now in our churches. The needle's not moving and people aren't growing and becoming more healthy here. Here's a big way to think about this. We've been describing these wounds. We believe very firmly. What's broken in a relational context, must be healed in a relational context. You've got to feel something in order to heal that something. There are just certain jail cells that my brain can't get me out of. I've gotta be able to feel my way through those things and to be able to sit with other people. God's desire is to be in relationship. I think that's incredibly evident inside of scripture. God's desires to be in relationship with us. Certainly there are boundaries and guard rails in our behavior and things that he wants us to do because they're good for us but his major goal is to be in relationship with us and we are missing with our church, in my opinion, we're missing with our church efforts.

Craig: Ben, when I hear you talk about a jail cell, I can't get out of my mind, goes straight to the idea of trauma.

Roane: My mind goes to Otis. Otis was the town drunk, right? And Otis would come in and walk into the open jail and he would close the jail door, the cell door, and he would grab the key off the wall and he would put the key in the lock, turn it, lock himself in and put the key back on the wall. And I believe that's kind of a metaphor for most of the way that Christians live. It's like we live in these Hills of our own choosing and there is a way out, but we choose by not doing the work and getting whole and getting healthy and beginning to have boundaries becoming a well bounded person. Jesus was the most well bounded person, human being that ever

walked the planet and he modeled it and he lived it and he offers that to us. And that's what he's talking about. The freedom to the captive.

Craig: I was sitting with a woman, gosh, just last week and she talked about this miserable relationship that she was in, and those of you who know me, or who've heard this show before, I'm not an advocate for divorce. I don't have to be, they happen. I have nothing to do with the divorce rate, the divorce rate in Mississippi or anywhere else and I never encouraged divorce, but this woman talked about how miserable she was, and I told her, you have the keys to your own jail cell. It's just a matter of whether or not you'll choose to use it and turn the key and step out of that and that doesn't necessarily mean step out of your marriage or out of your relationship, but out of the place that you have put yourself

Roane: A hundred percent, we always say that love is a choice. It is not a failure.

Craig: Break that down Roane because I think that's really important and I don't want to skip over that love is a choice, not a feeling because I mean, you know, every movie that we're a romcom movie that we see, it's all feeling, what do you mean at the choice?

Roane: Well, when you get into a long-term relationship, you know, those feelings are just not going to be there. From a scientific approach, the infatuation stage of a relationship is kind of that rose colored glasses stage. I mean, one reason we don't do Premarital counseling anymore is because it's really pointless. I mean, they're in a fog, but chemically what's going on in the brain, they literally are and they can see no wrong in the other until they're married, move in together and then life happens and two years down the road, they're at each other's throat, you know, like what happened? Well, what's happening is all the old stuff that the trauma, the experiences, what they grew up in, is beginning to surface. And so you have to begin to make a choice if you're going to be in a long term relationship. I will love this other person with their baggage, with their stuff and hopefully two people are willing to grow, willing to change and that's what it takes and so love is a choice. I mean, we think of love even when we talk about Jesus is kind of like Jesus is just some surfer dude that walks around just, I love everybody and, well, that's stupid because that's not who he was. I mean, he mostly walked around picking fights just go read the text. He was not nice. He was not sweet. He told the truth and that's called boundaries and when those dynamics begin to get into place, nobody likes it when the dynamics in a relationship change. You have to confront, you have to, one of the gifts and marriage is the gift of accountability. So often people think that marriage is just about, you know, I blindly trust you and I don't ever ask about what you're doing or where you are. Well, that's stupid. That's naive. Scripture's clear our hearts deceive us. We have hearts that are prone to wander and we face temptation every day and the gift of marriage with this high level of accountability, man, I always say thank you, Jesus, because I think I need it and my wife would tell you she needs it too, but, it's the way we think of love in the Hollywood version. It's so off. And so often I sit with Christians and here, like, well, we just fell out of love.

Craig: It also underscores the dangers associated with these extra marital infatuations, because you talk about premarital counseling and how they're in a fog. Well, I could say the same thing about people who engaged in an affair?

Roane: Very much so and you know, one of the things that we work with under the umbrella of sexual brokenness, as what we call, love and relationship addiction, and it is just an addictive state of mind, you're hooked on a feeling and, and you're just seeking that rather than really developing your character and all the good things that certainly Jesus offers us.

Ben: If you want your relationship to last two hours and five minutes, Hollywood will give you a great template for that. That's true. If you want your relationship together, the long haul, you've got to put yourself in front of another template and learn that template and learn from other people that have gone before you and one of the basics here that we're discussing is if you have an avoidance model to the parts of your own self that you determine are unlovable, then how do you believe you're going to treat the person that you're in relationship with when the unlovable parts of them began to surface, you have a track record with how you deal with that and it mostly is avoidance and that's where addiction comes in. So it's of primary importance for you to have a healthy relationship with yourself. If you're asking to be in a healthy relationship with someone else.

Craig: And that's interesting that you bring that up in that context being because I'm a very big fan of therapy, especially when you're in a life transition, like even thinking about the possibility of divorce. And it's not uncommon when I'm sitting with a person, man, or woman and I ask them and say, you know, are you working with a therapist? And they immediately think, oh, well, I don't want to go to marriage counseling with that son of a bitch or nine times out of 10, I'm like, look, now I'm not talking about saving your marriage. I'm talking about you're in a pretty difficult spot. I'm talking about putting your own oxygen mask on first, before you try to help anybody else around you.

Ben: Yeah. Yeah. Perfect advice. Yeah. Just going on that process of self-discovery and understanding that there are going to be painful and joyful parts of that process. It isn't all pain. There will be some things that you discover about yourself that are way more beautiful than you realized in the beginning. Things that have been obscured by these messages that came into your life very early it's it is a very rewarding journey in the truest sense of the word.

Craig: Let's get practical. So somebody is hearing our voices right now, and they are engaged in the discussion and they're interested in next steps. All right. I'm in, what do I do now?

Ben: Okay. Yeah, maybe we could go in like a scale, like an ascending scale. I think one of the easiest steps is to get this feelings wheel in front of you and get practice assigning a name to what you're feeling, and then try to discover in my family of origin in my past relationships, what are my pet feelings? What are the feelings I'm most comfortable expressing? And where did that come from? The weakness and limitations thing can be a little bit hard to do, especially if you're in a really difficult transition in your life and people are assigning those to you. I will tell you the most, if the feelings is kind of the entry level, I'll tell you the most courageous thing I've ever had to do in my life and then I've seen other people do in front of me is to ask the question. This is a huge awareness question. What's it like to be in a relationship with me and to be able to receive that answer. And if you want to be more specific about it, and this is an exercise that I've done with my 14 year old son, it was one of the best and worst days of my life. What's it like for me to be your father? And my son thankfully trusted me enough, to be honest with me, that is beginning to build awareness. That is external that mirror, because God has designed us to be able to, you see it in little children, we mirror facial expressions very early. That's part of the human experience. We have grown out of the practice of allowing other people to mirror. Who we are back to us to cut through some of that confusion. So that gets to the idea of your internal world. How do other people experience you?

Craig: Yeah that's a really dangerous question. I mean, you know, it's, it's, you know, run, what's it like to be a podcast host with me?

Roane: We don't have enough time with it. That's a whole season.

Craig: That's what I'm saying. It's a dangerous question. It's a dangerous question. We don't want to live in the here and the now in the present. We want to live in whatever makes us comfortable, because I think we, as human beings, gravitate toward comfort and sometimes it takes the uncomfortable to take us to the next level.

Ben: My son looks at me in that conversation. He says, dad, I feel like you already know the answer that you want me to give before you ever asked me the question. And I said, bingo, then I had to follow that by saying. I wasn't taught how to do this. This is my first go round. And he said, great. I'm in it with you.

Craig: That's that's great. Um, well the truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable.

Roane: Yeah. Yeah. Well, and I, I just, I want to say too, cause when we talked. You know, just our families going up, fathers, father wounds, there's mother wounds too, you know, but scripture is so very clear about this, because in some ways it kind of sounds like we're blaming, right and that's not what this is about at all. This is about awareness and God speaks to it over and over again. Foundationally, I believe when he says honor your mother and father, the Hebrew word for honor, there is cabed. And it is the word picture of a scale. And even in that, like, okay, a scale, but what God is saying, he is saying, weigh it out. You have to see the good, you have to say the bad mom and dad are broken, just like we are and you got some good stuff and then you got some stuff you need to change because of their own brokenness and it has a double meaning because it carries weight, a scale weighs, it carries weight. It will have an impact on every relationship you will be in for the rest of your life, if you don't begin to become aware. And then that's just affirmed over and over and over again throughout scripture. And there's so many examples. I mean, even the sins of the fathers will be passed on to the third, fourth, fifth, forever generations. But even that word sin there is really what it's talking about is dysfunctional behavior. These relational issues, if you don't deal with it, will continue. It will be modeled. You will learn it and you will pass it on.

Ben: and sermons won't solve this.

Craig: All right, Ben, you've used the F word, feelings. So what's next? We're in touch with our feelings. We ask dangerous questions. What are practical steps that we can take on this journey inward?

Ben: I think one of the most empowering questions someone can ask is what did I need that I didn't get? It forces you to think about as you look past the, into your past, which by the way, most of us are used to thinking in 24 hour forward cycles, not what happened the last 24 hours, but what's coming up the next 24 hours. I wouldn't encourage people to think about their life story and at least decade increments and to go back and say, all right, one to 10, what did I need that I didn't. That's a very self-centered question and I think it's a great place to drive someone inward. You're not playing the blame game, but you're thinking, man, there's, there's something I needed that I didn't get there.

Craig: I mean, it's hard to do for me. My parents are both gone and I'm a, I'm a pretty loyal guy and you know, it's hard to stop and think all right, cause they're your primary caregiver of course, between those early ages of one to 10 and to stop and think, all right, how did my dad fail me? How did my mom fail me? Because it feels disloyal.

Ben: It absolutely does. That's why you have to keep in mind. This isn't about mom and dad. This is about me. What did I need that I didn't. And sometimes mom and dad are the culprit. They're sometimes personality driven. These are the culprit there. Sometimes the way that we view the world, I mean, we often say that, uh, children are great observers and terrible interpreters. We put these interpretations on the things that happen to us based on our observations that most likely weren't correct, because we're the center of our universe, especially during those years. So reaching back and asking these questions, isn't trying to figure out who can I blame? That's the wrong direction. You're asking this question to say what needs went unmet. That's where the pain works into our story and it doesn't just happen one to 10, it happens 10 to 20 and 20 to 30. Every decade that we live there unmet needs that occur. That's just part of the human condition.

Roane: You talked about being just the idea of like these things that happened to us. They're relational and emotional and the corrective experience has to be a relational and emotional experience and just tons of examples, but I think one of the best examples is Jesus with Peter. It's really the first example of experiential group therapy. I mean, Jesus is the master counselor and like, I mean, he could have taken Peter behind the boat and said, Hey, dude, I just wanna know, you know, I want you to know, I forgive you for denying me three times, right? Let's talk about it. Yeah. But no, what Jesus did in front of the group, in the healing of Peter's shame in the denial of Jesus, is he created the exact scene. I mean, the fire, the smoke, the time of day. I mean, it is a recreative, I mean it's experiential therapy. Yeah. that's what it is and it's in a group.

Craig: As we are coming to an end of our time being let's, let's continue to, to think through just practical steps that someone can take. Now, we've been talking about thinking about our life in these 10 year increments and asking questions about, and the F-word feelings and what we didn't get that we need. But also, I've heard you speak about recognizing patterns and I think that's partly what, what Roane was talking about was pattern breaking that Jesus did with Peter. So why is it important to pick up on the patterns of our life?

Ben: Well, it's foundational to the character of God. Actually, if you look at the world that he's created, it's full of patterns. If you look at the main point of God revealing who he is to us and in the Bible, the Bible is full of patterns. We are not used to looking for patterns in our own story. The trouble here is that if we're not familiar with the narrative of our lives, we're going to miss those patterns in the imagery that God is trying to use to communicate to us. So we have to become familiar with the story enough to be able to identify. Man, you know what? That was a really pivotal point in my life and this one feels kind of the same way and that one feels a little bit the same way as well. Maybe these are signposts or signals that God is sending to me. I'd like for you to dive a little bit deeper into this. I want you to be a curious investigator. People assume that God is trying to solve our problems from a distance because he really just kind of can't stand us because we're dirty and messy and ugly and all of those things. But God is calling us, wooing us into relationships so that he can be our guide. Every great story involves at some point, the character stopping the activity and the momentum and looking back and putting pieces together. It's an, if you watch movies this way, you're obviously a big movie fan. You'll see this over and over and over again. Our lives involve, uh, our pride will inflate us to believe that we can separate from the patterns of our. It never works. You always will have patterns that emerge because those patterns are driven by these internal things that often aren't addressed. So looking back over your story and then inviting God, I can't be more emphatic about this, inviting God into that reflection because as a guide, he will help you see things that you would miss.

Craig: Ben, so much to us, rich information, and, uh, you're in life transition. Let's talk about that as we're ending our time together.

Ben: So speaking of the inward journey and awareness, just feeling that as identified these things in my life and have gone on my own journey years and years ago now, still in process, but I have developed a very strong passion to help other people pursue this kind of life and I very much believe in the local church and, I pray to God that it keeps succeeding in so many ways. But I also believe that there's other work to be done outside of a programmatic service context and that's the sort of work that I'm involved with now, sitting with people on a one-on-one basis and providing, creating these opportunities to be in front of groups, to be validated, addressing all of these things, specifically, men, man, it just gets me excited to think about when a man is able to change his heart and his approach to life. The generational impact there. That excites me and that's the work that I've joined in now getting evolved as a counselor and a coach and helping people become aware of certain things in a safe environment. That's what I want to be about

Craig: tell our listener where they could connect with you in the work that you're doing.

Ben: Yes. Yeah. So we're, I mean, we're located in Mississippi as you, and as you guys announced often, but I will be, I'm involved with cornerstone counseling. They have offices everywhere, but you go to cornerstone.com. You could look me up there. If this is the kind of conversation that you enjoy, obviously enjoy having it as well, as long as this episode has gone on. So it's going to be, and has been a great privilege of my life so far to be able to join with people in the discovery process and see those things come to light and then see people come alive. It's just an incredible part of the journey for me.

Roane: Man, thank you for being here, dude. It is always just, it's just fun to sit together and kind of talk about this stuff. I am excited about the adventure that continues to unfold in your life and mine and ours together.