

NOT QUITE HEALED

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*40 Truths for Male Survivors of
Childhood Sexual Abuse*

CECIL MURPHEY & GARY ROE

*Not Quite Healed: 40 Truths for Male Survivors of Childhood
Sexual Abuse*

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SHOULDN'T I BE HEALED BY NOW?

MY NAME IS CECIL MURPHEY, ALTHOUGH EVERYONE CALLS ME CEC.

In the fall of 1985, I began to face my sexual and physical assaults. I'm still in the process. I'm closer to total victory, but I'm not quite healed.

Someone could counter with, "You're a slow learner" or "You haven't followed Jesus closely enough."

I don't try to answer such charges. I've moved as rapidly as I know how and don't feel I have to justify anything. After more than twenty years, when I talk about my healing, I say, "I'm almost healed."

Almost.

I wish I could say that I'm totally healed; but that would be a lie. This much I can say: I'm as straightforward and transparent as I'm capable of being. In the recovery process, I've searched relentlessly for total healing. I don't know if that labels me quick or slow, truly open or slightly self-deceived.

Some men heal quicker than others do—we know that. But I challenge the statement of anyone who boasts of total healing from sexual abuse in eight months or a year. Or even ten years.

I write this because I watched a once-famous and highly respected minister being interviewed on TV. He had previously admitted having a long-term sexual relationship with another man, and when the story came out, his church fired him. He also said a few words about being sexually abused as a child.

His admission of childhood abuse put him with the rest of us who have faced our pain and reached toward victory. That day I applauded him.

Less than a year after he had been publicly exposed, the man did an interview on national TV. These aren't his exact words, but he said

something like this to the interviewer: “I’m free, totally free.” He paused and smiled.

When pushed by the interviewer, he said, “I have no desires toward men.” He went on for another sentence or two, saying he had been delivered from every evil desire.

His words sounded wonderful.

I didn’t believe him.

I don’t think he intentionally lied. Instead, I would say that it’s what he wants to be true. I don’t believe he’s fully healed.

I wrote the previous paragraph without hesitation because I’m a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, and I’ve worked for several years with other former victims of sexual molestation. All of us who struggle with our past speak of a process—a long, long process. It’s also an ongoing battle.

I understand the man’s desire for instantaneous healing or quick deliverance. I’m sure we’d all like to have the pain wiped away and never be troubled again.

I absolutely affirm that God can produce such a miracle. I don’t know of any, but I still think that’s possible. As I listened to that man, I *wanted* to believe him. But his words didn’t have what someone called “the ring of truth.”

I’m sorry for him. If he’s totally healed, he has no struggles to face. That’s a positive factor, but it’s also a negative one. As I point out later, battling for victory strengthens us and enables us to hold up our experiences for others who go through the same combat.

I’d like to be wrong about that man. If he’s not fully delivered, he’ll probably be miserable and exhausted from pushing back and denying his emotions or he’ll slip and return to his old ways.



A few months ago I participated in a seminar in which one of the plenary speakers was a pastor who spoke of his abuse and that it had once made him afraid to allow anyone to get close. He said God had healed him.

As I listened, this thought raced through my brain: *he's still not going to let people get close*. Then I thought perhaps I was being judgmental and silently chastised myself.

A few weeks later, another survivor and I had coffee together. He had also attended that plenary session. Without my saying a word, my friend referred to that pastor. "He shouldn't have been up there speaking," he said. "He's not healed enough himself."

How did both of us—independently—come to that same conclusion? I can't give you three reasons or any concrete analysis. Yet both of us sensed he spoke more about his *hopes* than his *reality*.

That's a major reason Gary and I wrote this book. Gary hasn't struggled openly about his abuse as long as I have, but I believe he has healed sufficiently to help me coauthor this book. His words, for lack of a better phrase, have the right tone. When he talks, I sense he's speaking from experience and understanding, and not from yearning for what he doesn't yet have.



I understand the desire for complete emotional healing. In fact, after two years of facing my abuse, I often heard myself saying, "I should be healed by now." When I spoke those words, I didn't understand the pervasiveness of molestation. I wanted to be completely free from my past abuse and to have the memories wiped away.

It doesn't work that way. It *is* a process—and the word *process* means that it doesn't happen quickly. Or as I said in one seminar, healing from abuse is a process and not an event.

First, we need to realize that sexuality involves our total selves—mind, body, emotions, and spirit. God created us that way, and sexuality is a powerful force in our lives for good or for evil.

Second, our abuse took place in secret, and it happened when we were young and innocent. We lived with our hidden anguish for years. I turned fifty before my memories flooded over me and forced me to learn

to cope with my painful childhood. Gary was in his mid forties before flashbacks revealed the abusive childhood he had endured.

Here's a statement I've adapted from VOICE Today,¹ an organization that works with survivors of sexual molestation:

A victim of murder feels no more pain;
A victim of childhood sexual abuse feels pain
for the rest of his life.

Anyone may challenge that last phrase, "for the rest of his life," but I believe it's true. Terrible things were done to us, and it takes a long time—years, the rest of our lives—to work through the process and to undo the damage. *All our lives* is accurate because the damage is deep, painful, and we lived with our wounds a long, long time.

Deep. Painful. Those two words express why this is such a long journey. A major reason is that we continue to uncover layers of our inner lives tainted by the abuse.

MY NAME IS GARY ROE.

Sexual abuse was one of the cards I was dealt growing up. As a result, I have certain struggles or handicaps. I'm convinced that learning to deal with those handicaps and to heal is a lifelong process.

Not only is healing an ongoing process, but it demands courage to survive the barrages of hurt, sorrow, and self-accusation. The more we trudge forward, the stronger we become. The scars are subterranean and insidious, but there *is* healing.

At the beginning we may assume full healing is imminent—which I did—because we're unaware how severely we've been damaged or don't realize that our wounds have been festering for years.

For many, the abuse itself took place during a short period of time. It could have been a one-time assault or something that happened repeat-

1. See www.VoiceToday.org.

edly for three or four years. Regardless of whether once or forty-six times, the molestation worked like an undetected virus that invaded our souls, went systemic, and infected every part of our psyche. Among other things, abuse destroys our ability to see ourselves as we are.

At our core, we're sexual creatures, male and female. This is part of being created in the image of God. When others abuse us sexually, they touch us at the center of our being. Everything becomes skewed and produces a ripple effect that spreads through our entire personhood. The abuse alters the way we view ourselves, others, God, and life itself.

Here are two verses that help me understand this: "Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself" (1 Corinthians 6:18–19).

As I read Paul's words, I noticed his point that sexual sin is different from other transgressions because it has more pervasive, lasting effects than other failures.

How could healing not be difficult, excruciating, and time-consuming? We need to fight, not just for ourselves, but also for our families and all the others around us who've been touched by the abuse we endured.

When my flashbacks began to come, I told God that I wouldn't survive unless the purpose was bigger than myself. I wanted the war to be about more than myself and my survival. I hated the abuse, and I detested the idea that other boys—right now—are being molested by predators.

"I want to become a warrior against abuse," I told God, and invited him to use me in the war to fight such an insidious evil. The bigger picture of contending for other kids who couldn't stand up for themselves became a major driving force behind my desire to heal.

I saw not only my own life but also the lives of other victims and survivors in the balance. I was determined to do what I, as one person, could do to make the public aware and to reach out to other survivors.

That's one reason I've written this book with Cec. It's why I'm still relentlessly sifting through behavioral patterns and ways of thinking

that are victim inspired and fear focused. I'm determined to become a victorious warrior. I won't give up. I will fight. And in fighting this evil, I will learn, and I will heal.

Our own healing must become *the* primary focus for us, or we'll continue to follow the same dysfunctional patterns we've been stuck in for years. We have to make a conscious choice to let go of fear and be open so that God's love and compassion can motivate us. We need to experience that love and compassion ourselves before we can spread it to others.

But I want to be clear: true, deep healing *is* spiritual warfare. Sometimes our learned and long-established behavior is our enemy. We have to fight our natural resistance. It's hard work but well worth it, not just for us, but also for everyone we love and care about.

Abuse causes most of us to end up with little self-esteem (although some become braggarts or bullies to cover it). We were overpowered, and control often remains a big issue—fighting for it or surrendering to those who threaten us by their words or presence.

Because someone we trusted betrayed us, many of us are unable or slow to believe others. We may freeze when someone unexpectedly touches us. Some of us slide into substance abuse to deaden the pain. Sexual dysfunction of some kind is common.

This isn't an exhaustive list, but I mention these because they're symptoms of long-term issues. Even to be aware of them isn't a cure, but it's like a doctor analyzing our symptoms and prescribing the medicine.

I'm not quite healed,
but I am being healed.