

# Marked Men For Christ ministry

## Theological Presuppositions

1. MMFC believes everything expressed in the Apostles' Creed.
2. MMFC believes in the authority of Scripture.
3. MMFC believes that God has revealed himself as transcendent, yet utterly near.
4. MMFC believes that God made the human person in his image and likeness.
5. MMFC believes that the image of God in us has been wounded by sin.
6. MMFC believes that the human person cannot heal his own wounds.
7. MMFC believes that God wishes to heal our wounds through the wounds of his Son.
8. MMFC believes that God respects our freedom to accept or reject this healing.
9. MMFC believes that we accept healing only by embracing our woundedness.
  - We embrace Christ and let Him embrace us, for it is "by his wounds we are healed" (Is. 53:5)
  - We embrace our own woundedness "pressing on" toward transformation into the image of Christ (Ph. 3:12-21)
10. MMFC believes that this healing transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit.
  - The Holy Spirit restores us to communion and wholeness with God, self, and others.
  - The Holy Spirit stirs us to love and strengthen one another as brothers.
  - The Holy Spirit empowers us with different gifts for the mission of healing the whole world.

## PREFACE

Marked Men For Christ was founded in prayerful response to the call of the Holy Spirit to strengthen the men of this time in history to face the unique challenges they encounter as followers of Christ ( the lack of meaningful rituals of initiation, absent/abusive fathers, busyness, emotional numbness, workaholism, substance abuse, internet pornography, utter self-reliance, pressure to succeed, etc.). Building on the wisdom and experience of others, MMFC calls men into a sacred space and time outside their normal "comfort zone." After building an atmosphere of trust, men are encouraged to open their hearts to Jesus Christ, the Truth. In other words, men are invited to "get real" and be honest with God, themselves, and the other men. MMFC helps men to acknowledge the wounds of deceit/denial, fear, anger, sadness, and shame, to commend these wounds to Christ, to receive healing in the midst of brotherly love, and to respond to this gift by embracing their God-given mission in life. MMFC fosters continuing growth (Matt. 13:1-9) through "soul groups" and other gatherings after the initial weekend.

## mission

Marked Men For Christ seeks to help Christian men embrace more fully the gift of the Holy Spirit and the mark with which they were sealed at Baptism (2 Cor. 1:22). Working as a complement to others who proclaim the Gospel, but without affiliation to any denomination or pretense of becoming one, MMFC responds to the spiritual needs of men in contemporary society by sharing wisdom, exhorting holiness, and strengthening one another for mission in Jesus Christ.

## DETAILED THEOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. MMFC believes everything expressed in the Apostles' Creed (1 Cor. 15:3-5). We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

This synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. And just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and New Testaments.

- Cyril of Jerusalem

2. MMFC believes in the authority of Scripture. We believe that God in his great love freely wished to reveal himself to human beings and invite them into a covenant with himself. Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's revelation (Heb. 1:1-4). Jesus called disciples, formed them into a family of faith, prayed that they be one, gave them the Holy Spirit to lead them to all truth, and sent them to proclaim the Good News to all nations (1 Tim. 2:4, John 14:6; John 16:12-13; Luke 24:45). We believe that the Scriptures faithfully record all that God wished to reveal for our salvation (2 Tim. 3:16-17, Ps. 119:105). Therefore, personal subjective experiences that claim to be God's voice are always governed by the objective spiritual authority of Scripture and the community of believers (Acts 20:17-21; Luke 10:16; Heb. 4:2; Matt. 18:18).

3. MMFC believes that God has revealed himself as transcendent, yet utterly near (Isa. 49:15-16; 55:16; John 15:1-11). God is completely "other," and yet "in God we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:24-28). Therefore, we acknowledge that God is God, and we are not (John 15:5). Still, despite our powerlessness, God is always reaching out to us and communicating his love to us through religious experiences. The Scriptures offer many descriptions of how the human person can encounter God (Matt. 5:1-12; Gal. 5:22-23; John 13:1-20; Mark 8:27-30; Acts 9:1-9). In similar ways, we believe that we can come to know God personally.

4. MMFC believes that God made the human person in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-28). We believe that God made each person to be a unique finite

expression of his infinite beauty (Ps. 139). We believe that the image of God is most evident in us through our desire for the communion of love between persons, which is a reflection of God's own Trinitarian love. We believe that human life is of inestimable worth and significance in all its dimensions. We believe that God made the human person, male and female, to be equal in dignity, with different and complimentary characteristics. We believe that God created the human person to know, love, and serve him, and to be happy with him forever. We believe that human beings are capable of discovering the truth and freely choosing love. We believe that God has a plan for each of us, and that we can discover and choose to cooperate with his will. We believe that the human person is a composite being of body, mind, and soul (1 Thess. 5:23; Eph. 1:18; Mark 12:30). As such, we have physical needs, psychological needs, and spiritual needs. God created us in integrity, harmony, and radical connectedness in body, mind, and soul. But something went wrong.

5. MMFC believes that the image of God in us has been wounded by sin. We believe that the human person, enticed by the Evil One (who seeks to destroy the communion between man and God, man and woman, man and himself), abused his freedom at the very beginning of history. The human person succumbed to temptation and did what was evil (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23). We were wounded by this "original sin" (Rom. 5:12). We find ourselves weak in love, and subject to error and deception. We find ourselves divided against ourselves. We experience a war within our members (James 4:1; Rom. 7:23). Because of our wounds, we often forget that we are made in God's image and likeness, acting like beasts, setting up false gods, or creating God in our own image (or in the image of our fathers).

Sin, thus, disintegrates us, Sin perverts our radical connectedness into a radical self-centeredness. Apart from God and full of fear, we are fixated on meeting our own physical and psychological needs, even to the point of denying that we have a spiritual dimension. We develop coping mechanisms that attempt to meet these needs, even to the point of destroying ourselves (and others) in the process. Scripture bears witness to sin's proliferation of disharmony and alienation on the cosmic, social, religious, family, and personal level (see also Gen. 4; 6; 11; 16-25; 2 Sam. 13-18; James 1, etc.). We are divided at the very level of the soul, where the false self puts up a good appearance, while the heart is full of filth and dead men's bones (Matt. 23:7). The alienation within us can be so severe that we push it out of our conscious awareness. We trade the fullness of life for which we were created for a life of aimless wandering in pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain (John 10:10).

Far worse than paralysis, leprosy, or demonic possession, sin and its effects are fittingly described as "wounds." Woundedness includes the actual sins (commissions or omissions) of individuals and societies, as well as the devastating effects of those evil choices upon oneself, others, and society. In this broader sense, an individual is usually not culpable for, or even aware of his wounds. A large component of our woundedness is spiritual blindness (John 9:39). Nonetheless, the wounds can destroy a man's life through any number of symptomatic compulsions, which, in turn, wound others, especially his own children. As each person has a unique gift from God, each person often has a core wound that militates against that gift. Five very significant wounds in men are deceit/denial, fear, anger, sadness, and shame.

6. MMFC believes that the human person cannot heal his own wounds. "In all the world has there ever been such sorrow? O daughter of Jerusalem, to what can I compare your anguish? O virgin daughter of Zion, how can I comfort you? For your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?" (Lam. 2:13). As Israel's

repeated failure to heed the covenant bears witness, the best healing we can hope for without Christ is a shallow external religiosity that leaves us wounded and slaves to the Law (Rom. 7:18-24). Despite our longing for wholeness and communion, we continually confront our weariness, neediness, powerlessness, and loneliness (John 15:5; Isa. 55:1-11; Jer. 2:5,12-13). Though we should be the happiest of all generations considering the abundant physical resources we enjoy, our hearts grow more restless than ever. We pummel our senses with constant activities and successive pleasures in order to avoid the screaming of our souls for a whisper of love. No best-selling self-help book in the world will ever come close to providing the healing we really need. In the midst of this darkness, however, there is hope (John 1:9-12; 16:33).

7. MMFC believes that God wishes to heal our wounds through the wounds of his Son. We believe that God is actively pursuing each of us, desiring a deeper relationship (Heb. 4:11-13). God is taking initiatives to draw each of us into deeper communion with him, with others, and with ourselves (Gen. 3:9; Isa. 45:22; Luke 19:10; John 1:38; 3:16; 5:6; 7:37; 17:11-22; Mark 10:51; 1 Tim. 2:4). The Father's Spirit desires only to give us consoling love as we struggle with our woundedness (2 Cor. 1:37). Though time and time again we broke the covenant, God, unlike many of our own parents, did not abandon us (Isa. 54:10; Hosea 11; Rom. 8:14-16; Ps. 27:10; Eph. 2:1-10). In fact, "for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21; see also John 14:8-13). Jesus went about healing all who ill or in the grip of the devil (Luke 4:18-21; Matt. 4:23; Acts 10:38). Our deepest wounds, however, he healed on the Cross. By his wounds we are healed: body, mind, and soul (1 Thess. 5:23; Isa. 53:3-5; Matt. 8:16; 1 Peter 2:24).

It is precisely in the Passion, when the mercy of Christ is about to vanquish it, that sin most clearly manifests its violence and its many forms: unbelief, murderous hatred, shunning and mockery by the leaders and the people, Pilate's cowardice and the cruelty of the soldiers, Judas' betrayal so bitter to Jesus, Peter's denial and the disciples' flight. However, at the very hour of darkness, the hour of the prince of this world, the sacrifice of Christ secretly becomes the source from which the forgiveness of our sins will pour forth inexhaustibly (Heb. 9:22). No wound cuts more deeply in a man's heart than being abandoned emotionally and/or physically by his Father. Our hearts should shrink from the story of Abraham readying Isaac sacrifice (Gen. 22). Yet this is precisely the unthinkable love the Father has shown us through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:25-27). He heals us as he wounds (Isa. 30:26; Deut. 32:39). Jesus' cry "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" is the labor pain that gives birth to the hope of adopted sons (Ps. 22, Mal. 4:6; Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; 1 John 3:1). Through Jesus' experience of abandonment, we are reconnected to the Father, to ourselves, and to others (John 3:14-15; see also Num. 21:4-9; 1 John 4:4-16).

8. MMFC believes that God respects our freedom to accept or reject healing faith. Unlike the gods of the pagans, our God will not rape his creatures. Created in his image and likeness, we are faced with a fundamental choice (John 18:37). The way of Christ "leads to life"; a contrary way "leads to destruction" (Mt 7:13; see also Deut. 30:15-20; Josh. 24:15; Jer. 21:8). Men have and do reject God's will (Jonah 1:2; 2 Sam. 12:7-15; James 1:14-15; Rom. 8:4-9). We even hide from God (Gen. 3:8-10). This is the essence of sin, the ultimate source of our wounds. God's only desire is to heal. Jesus stands at the door and knocks, but we need to listen for his voice and open the door (Rev. 3:20). Sins and woundedness certainly impair our freedom (Rom. 6:17), but we can resist the devil (Gen. 4:7; Matt. 23:32; 2 Tim. 2:19-26). Jesus invites us beyond the Law, beyond the principle of pleasure and pain, beyond our coping mechanisms, to true

faith, hope, and love (Matt. 5; Gal. 5:1). Faith, our free response to God's healing love, is necessary for healing. The Lord himself affirms: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Jesus makes it clear on many occasions that true discipleship depends upon a desire to seek after and do the will of God in all things (Luke 1:34-38; Mark 14:32-37; Matt. 7:21). The heart of the Lord's Prayer is: "Thy will be done." Although we can forget God or reject him, God never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find the fullness of life and happiness (Ps. 105:3). This quest for God demands all the effort of body, mind, and soul (Col. 1:21-23; 3:2; Heb. 12:1-2; 1 John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:13; Eph. 5:8-10). Our salvation began with the perfect YES of Mary, and was consummated with the YES of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the Cross (Luke 1:38; 23:46; Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; 6:38). The battle remains for our YES to God (Eph. 6:10-17; Rom. 5:3-5). And it is a battle that will entail suffering (Matt. 7:14; Rom. 5:3; 8:18; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:3-13; Heb. 12:12; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 2:20; 3:13; 4:1-19; 5:10; James 1:2-3; Rev. 2:10; Jude 3).

9. MMFC believes that we accept healing only by embracing our woundedness. Perhaps Jesus' greatest frustration was the Pharisees' refusal to admit that they needed a savior. Jesus continually tried to convince them that "healthy people do not need a doctor; sick people do" (Luke 5:31). A man cannot repent and believe the good news if he does not acknowledge that he needs to repent. This reality often gives rise to a man's actual unconscious denial of his need for help. A shallow, performance-oriented religious facade becomes a mask for the wounds that need Christ's healing. A man's zealous, over-confident attitude of self-righteous disdain camouflages his own need for deeper transformation (Matt. 7:1-5). A man often operates under the lie that he must be successful. This lie is shattered by the Cross of Christ, the ultimate sign of victory through failure, strength through weakness, life through death. Jesus accomplished our redemption through surrendering our brokenness to the Father in and through the brokenness of his own body. In like manner, we must surrender our brokenness to Christ. Jesus came to call sinners. St. Paul, after acknowledging his brokenness and surrendering his own wounds to Christ, would come to say: "Let no one trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17; see also 2 Cor. 4:10-11). Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche movement in Canada, puts it this way:

I have learned more about the Gospels from handicapped people, those on the margin of our society, those who have been crushed and hurt, than I have from the wise and prudent. Through their own growth and acceptance and surrender, wounded people have taught me that I must learn to accept my weakness and not pretend to be strong and capable. Handicapped people have shown me how handicapped I am, how handicapped we all are. They have reminded me that we are all weak and all called to death and that these are the realities of which we are most afraid.

A man, therefore, will accept healing only by embracing his own woundedness. We embrace our woundedness through fully embracing Christ and letting him fully embrace us. We believe that salvation effects a new birth in faith by water and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit initiates and sustains the process of each Christian's ongoing transformation and continual growth into the image of Christ (Phil 3). The individual "presses on" by embracing their woundedness as they follow the Holy Spirit's guidance to effect this transformation. He dies to the false self, and puts on the new man (Eph. 4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21). He is reborn by faith to become no longer a

slave, but a son (Rom. 8:15). Even the pains and tragedies of life take on meaning in this mystery. This is the paradox of grace into which we are immersed: To live, a man must die (Matt. 16:25; Mark 8:35). To be strong, he must become weak (1 Cor. 1:26-31; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; 13:4). To reach the fullness of manhood, he must become like a little child (Mark 10:14-15; Matt. 18:3-4). To be healed, he must let the divine physician do surgery on his wounds. This paradox pulls a man beyond seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. It identifies him with Christ. Salvation initiates a man into the family of God, restores the lost image and likeness of God in his soul, and marks him as belonging to God forever: "He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor. 1:22; see also Eph. 1:13-14).

MMFC believes that the Christian life is the gradual transformation of the whole person into the image and likeness of Christ. Salvation, in other words, is not the end of faith, but the beginning. The free gift of faith can be squandered! St. Paul makes this clear to Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith" (1 Tim. 1:18-19). Faith, like a tiny mustard seed, must grow (Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5). In another place St. Paul warns: "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Salvation marks a man at the core of his being, restoring him to the image and likeness of God, but his entire being must be configured to Christ, despite struggles, inner divisions, temptations, and even falls (Matt. 12:25-30). "You are not your own; you have been purchased, and at a price! So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Jesus calls us to take up our cross every day (Luke 9:23). Jesus came not only to save us, but to give us an example of a life "worthy of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27)," "dead to sin but alive to God" (Rom. 6:11). He calls us to be holy (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:4; 5:3; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:8; Heb. 10:10-14; 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 3:11; Rev. 22:11). For most of us, this is not a once for all occurrence. Healing takes time. This is an ongoing process, made up of many little choices each day, until we are thoroughly reunited, reconnected, healed and transformed in paradise: "When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete" (St. Augustine, Confessions 10, 28, 39: PL 32, 795). Paul prays that we reach this completion of our true self:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:14-21)

Many have reflected on the myth of the grail castle, the story of every man's quest for wholeness. The "wise fool" in each of us must be wounded and seek the divine physician. Jesus himself summarizes this point when he uses "grail imagery" in telling his disciples: "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized" (Mark 10:39). Every man who believes in Christ and is baptized becomes a son of God (Eph. 1:4-5). This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and doing good. With the help of grace a man grows in virtue, avoids sin, and, if he sins, he entrusts himself as did the prodigal son to the mercy of our Father in

heaven. In union with his Savior, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Ultimately, he attains maturity in grace, which is eternal life in the glory of heaven. Until then, however, a man makes his quest. He contributes to his interior growth, making use of any and all means available to help him reach Christian maturity. MMFC believes that it provides many powerful means to help a man in this process.

#### A NOTE ON METHOD

Many may ask how MMFC helps a man to embrace his woundedness: What are the means MMFC uses to foster ongoing transformation into the image of Christ?

The answer to this question is rooted in Paul's letter to the Romans: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom. 12: 2). This age of ours is especially difficult for men due to the peculiar poverty of our own culture with regard to meaningful rituals of initiation into manhood. Men in our age tend to get stuck (psychologically and/or spiritually) at an adolescent, shallow phase of asserting independence (which at its extreme leads to isolation) without any interior foundation beyond the pleasure/pain principle. MMFC seeks to help men experience a "renewal of their minds" through a deeper experience of the word of God through initiation into the body of Christ in the midst of a community of committed Christian brothers. The methods used are really no different than those used by Jesus in his ministry: story, imagination, remembering, dialogue, teaching, and ritual. The use of imagination, in particular, breaks through a man's duplicity, and helps him to encounter the Truth.

Repentance is certainly the way that a man approaches the throne of mercy, but too often experience shows that he falls back into the same sins no matter how often he repents. MMFC believes that a man needs to repent of more than symptomatic behaviors. He needs to encounter his wounds and bring them to Christ. The wounds are the roots of sin lodged deep and infected far beneath surface thoughts and behaviors. The wounds contain the lies coming from the "father of lies" (John 8:44; Luke 10:17-20) that obscure our identity, foster the false self, and direct our bad decisions and destructive actions. When Jesus confronts the doubting Thomas after the resurrection, he invites Thomas not merely to repent of his doubt, but to touch the mark of the nails and the wound in his side (John 20:27). In other words, he invites Thomas to put his own wounds into the five wounds of Christ. This experience gives Thomas new insight and clarity into the identity of Christ, and into his own identity (John 20:28). MMFC seeks to help a man put his wounds into the wounds of Christ as well, and thus experience a "renewal of his mind." As the wounds of the risen Christ become signs of victory rather than shame, so too the wounds of Marked Man for Christ. Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by his Word (Heb. 4:12) and by his Spirit, casts a living light on a man's wounds. Through the courageous encounter of a man with his wounds, he opens his heart to true transformation (Ezek. 36:26) and true healing from the Messiah who has come to set captives free (Luke 4:16).

This process involves four distinct phases: Acknowledging the wounds, Relating the wounds to Christ, Receiving the love of God in light of the wounds, and Responding to this love by a life in mission. In his own ministry, Jesus often helped the sick and wounded to follow these same steps toward healing. In his encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42), Jesus invited her to move beyond talking about a physical drink of literal water to acknowledging that her heart was thirsty for love, despite her five past "husbands." She then relates

her longing for the messiah, and receives Christ's revelation of himself. Finally, she responds by going off to the town to announce Christ's presence to all who will listen. On the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), Jesus invites the disciples to acknowledge and relate to him the devastation in their hearts after Good Friday had dashed their hopes. They then receive burning hearts as Jesus opens the Scriptures to them, reveals himself in the breaking of the bread. They respond by returning to the brothers and sharing their story. Peter, wounded by fear and having denied Christ three times (Luke 22), is invited to three times acknowledge and relate his love to the risen Lord, receive the Lord's forgiveness, and respond to the call to "feed my sheep" and "follow me," even in the face of the prophecy of his own death (John 21:15-19). Even the prodigal son story (Luke 15) describes the young man acknowledging that he is starving, relating that he is no longer worthy to be called son, receiving the Father's embrace, robe, and ring, and responding by entering his home and participating in the Father's celebration.

Most retreats and spiritual programs involve this dynamic, but often their fruits fade over time. MMFC believes that it offers two essential components of Christian life that many programs lack: brotherhood and action. One of the reasons brotherhood is often lacking is that men need to feel safe before they can find the courage to reveal the truth about themselves. There are very few places in a man's life where he is safe to be vulnerable. MMFC seeks to be a safe place for men to get real with God, themselves, and others. Other retreats may offer brotherhood and offer wonderful wisdom and insight, but often they fail to help a man DO something about the insights he gains. MMFC helps men to get out of their heads and to re-connect to their bodies, their hearts, and their lives by offering opportunities not only to think, but to respond in action. It is not enough to cry "Lord, Lord" (Matt. 7:21). The four phases of healing prayer in MMFC involve acknowledging, relating, receiving and responding to Christ AND to the brothers internally AND in action. Psychology affirms that the many insights gained by honest reflection cannot be integrated and put to full use until spoken out loud to a significant other. The very nature of MMFC is men ministering to men. The brotherhood of MMFC provides wisdom, support, love, faith, hope, action, and accountability.

The pleasure/pain principle makes a man run from his wounds and try to forget them. All the while, they grow in power over his freedom. By contrast, Jesus commanded: "Do this in memory of me" (1 Cor. 11:25; Matt. 26:28), for "when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Jesus wanted us to remember his wounds, and to put our wounds in his: "By his wounds we are healed" (Isa. 53:5; 2 Cor 11:23-27; 1 Peter 2:24). He tells us to come to him with our burdens (Matt. 11:28). He wants us to ponder and treasure his workings in our lives (Luke 2:19). The wound of FEAR leads to a slavery (Rom. 8:15) so terrible that it must kill all threats to its power (Matt. 2:16; 1 Sam. 18). The love of Christ, however, casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). We must be willing to be partner with him in the suffering if we wish to share his glory (Rom. 8:17-18; Heb. 2:10; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1). The wound of DECEIT and DENIAL leads to blindness and delusion (Matt. 23:13-39; John 9:40-41; 1 John 1:8-9). We must forgive as the Lord has forgiven us (Col. 3:13; Luke 23:24), but we cannot forgive (or be forgiven for) what we hide or deny (Heb. 4:13-16; 1 Cor. 3:9). The wound of SADNESS leads to discouragement and despair, but Jesus wept and promised that our sadness will turn into joy (John 16:20-24). The wound of ANGER leads to indiscriminate violence and aggression, but can, in Christ, become the force to overcome injustice (Mark 11; Matt. 15; 18:34; 21:22, 23; John 8:44). The wound of SHAME threatens to rob us of our sonship and the beautiful power of our sexuality, but God's mercy clothes us with justice and the dignity of his restored image within us. From the blood of



his circumcision to the wounds of his naked body on the cross, Jesus Christ was wounded to heal our wounds. MMFC's method is simply to help a man ACKNOWLEDGE his wounds, RELATE his wounds to Christ's, RECEIVE healing love, and RESPOND by a life in mission. A Marked Man for Christ seeks to give his entire being to the Lord, for a house divided against itself cannot stand (Matt. 12:25-31).

10. MMFC believes that this healing transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. The same spirit that breathed on the waters at the first creation is at work in the new creation of grace through the waters of salvation and ongoing transformation into the image of Christ. Jesus sends us the Paraclete to lead us to all truth (John 16:13). This same Holy Spirit is healing the wounds of sin. The Holy Spirit restores us to communion and wholeness with God, self, and others. MMFC believes that the presence of the Holy Spirit among us is ever bringing about the reign of God. We believe that the reign of God is not merely something distant and after death, or merely something we create among ourselves. The reign of God is at hand (Matt. 10:5-8; Luke 4:42-43). God dwells in our hearts, and the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised, is pouring out gifts upon God's people to bring the whole world to holiness, to the communion of faith, hope, and love. Like the gradual healing taking place in each of us through the Spirit, the reign of God is "already" and "not yet" (See Rom. 8:21-23). "If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

The Holy Spirit stirs us to love and strengthen one another as brothers. MMFC believes that the primary sign of the wholeness and connectedness that the Holy Spirit reestablishes is brotherhood: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35; 17:22-23; Rom 12:10; 13:8; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2-6, Heb. 10:24; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; 1 John 3:11-23; 4:7-12). Reconciliation, in fact, must precede worship (see Matt. 5:23-24; 1 Cor. 12; 1 John 2:8-11; 1 John 3:14-18; 4:20-21). By contrast, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity É There the Lord has lavished blessings, life for evermore!" (Ps. 133:1,3). Though Cain denied it and slew his brother (see Gen. 4; see also 1 John 3:12), God made us for brotherhood. In a real sense we are our brother's keeper. In a world where independence, selfishness, apathy, and violence still rule the day, we declare that we need one another (Eph. 2:14-22). Love is an end in itself. In a special way, men need the friendship of other men. Moses needed Aaron and Joshua (Ex. 4:13-15; 17:9-13), David needed Jonathan (see 1 Sam. 13-2 Sam. 1), Jesus needed the Twelve (John 15:13-16), and Paul needed Barnabas (see Acts 14, etc.). Scripture puts it beautifully:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.  
Ecclesiastes 4:8-12

Faith is indeed a personal act, but it is never an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. No man has given himself life, and no man has given himself faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. The Scriptures call us time and time again to strengthen one another (Rom. 14:19; 12:10; 15:7; James 5:16; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 5:21; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24; Col. 3:16; Phil. 1:27). As the Good Samaritan poured oil into the wounds of the man who fell among robbers (Luke 10:34), or the four men opened the roof and lowered to paralytic to Jesus (Mark 2:3-4), MMFC seeks to help men find healing in Christ.

The Holy Spirit empowers us with different gifts for the mission of healing the whole world. As a member of the body of Christ, each believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others as only he can (Eph. 4:15-16). Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith (1 Tim. 4:14). The Holy Spirit empowers us to do so with unique gifts for a specific mission (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 3:7). As Jesus received his identity from the Father along with the mission of our salvation, so each man finds in Christ his unique identity and mission (John 17:4; 1 Peter 4:10). As Jesus washed the feet of his apostles, so each man is called to use his gifts in service of others (John 13:12-17; Phil. 2:1-8). As Jesus' identity was constantly attacked, so each man must prepare for battle "like a good soldier for Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). It is often a man's deepest wound and greatest weakness that points to his greatest gift and strength in Christ. Jesus chooses each of us and calls us by name. Knowing our brokenness (Heb. 4:14-15), Christ still commissions us to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-2; Matt. 28:18).