

How do we find authentic hope and wholeness based on God's truth and reality? Dr. Kathy Koch draws on decades of seminars and workshops geared to the educational community to show us how intelligence and worth take different forms in each of us while having their ultimate roots in Jesus.

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# Becoming Whole

Not too long ago, while I was watching a movie at home on a stormy night, the power went out with about fifteen minutes left in the movie. Not knowing how it ended was frustrating.

I used to enjoy watching *M\*A\*S\*H* with my dad. Have you seen the episode where B. J. and the others are reading a mystery book, only to discover when getting to the end that the last page is missing? They're so frustrated that they call the author in Australia from South Korea to ask who committed the murder.

My family enjoys jigsaw puzzles. Do you? Completing the puzzle is always a great feeling. We'll often call everyone who worked on the puzzle to come in and watch the last piece being set. On my jigsaw puzzle app, when I place the last piece, the puzzle lights up. Being complete is celebrated.

We, too, need to be complete. We need to be whole. Some women only know or believe in their beauty. They are secure that they'll look good. They want people to notice their beauty. They choose relationships based on beauty. Their purpose is to be beautiful. If you asked them what they're good at, they'd say,

“I’m beautiful.” Certainly, they’re so much more than that. They must know and believe! Their present and future depends on it.

Or do you know people who put all their eggs in the career basket? They trust they’re good engineers. When asked about themselves, they only talk about their career. They meet their need for relationships only through their career. When reflecting on their purpose, they might think, “to be the best engineer I can be.” And if they’re asked what they’re good at, again they only mention their engineering. What will happen to them if their basket breaks and they aren’t chosen for a significant project or they lose their job? They may feel like nobody with nothing.

We need to be whole. Being incomplete and unfinished isn’t God’s design for us. Having a narrow perspective on ourselves isn’t healthy. We’ll be unsteady, unsure, anxious, and unable to fully contribute or serve.

What do I mean? Aren’t we created whole?

No, we’re actually created with holes—with *core needs* that must be met. God creates us with these needs so we turn to Him. We can try to meet them on our own, and something is better than nothing. But it’s God and His solutions that make us whole. When we relate to the wholeness of God we can become whole. Knowledge doesn’t complete us. A relationship with God, the Father, Jesus, His Son, and the Holy Spirit does.

We long for wholeness. Before we know Jesus, we’re empty. When we choose to trust Him for our salvation, we’re complete. In who God is and through what He does for us,

we're made whole. He fills emptiness. He repairs brokenness. He stills confusion. He lifts sorrow.

We are at peace in Him. We are satisfied in Him. We are secure in Him. We are known in Him. We belong in Him. We have purpose in Him. We are competent in Him. God meets our needs. Holes disappear and He makes us whole in Him.

## HOW WHOLENESS MEETS OUR NEEDS

Until you read this, maybe you didn't know you needed to be whole. Now what do you think? Does the word or concept resonate with you? What if I suggested that your desires are desires of your heart precisely *because* they make you whole? They fill holes and meet your needs. For example:

### AN INCOMPLETE (!) LOOK AT PERSONAL WHOLENESS

| DESIRE                            | CORE NEED |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| People you can depend on          | Security  |
| Peace                             | Security  |
| Confidence in who you are         | Identity  |
| Not being controlled by your past | Identity  |
| Love that's accepting             | Belonging |
| People to serve                   | Belonging |

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| Reasons to live    | Purpose    |
| Hope that lasts    | Purpose    |
| Fulfilling success | Competence |
| Growth and change  | Competence |

There's also the wholeness of God to embrace. I would suggest it's much more important than our personal wholeness. We might not realize we need that wholeness either. For years, I didn't know what I didn't know about God. After trusting Christ for my salvation, I still didn't realize how much of my remaining emptiness was because I hadn't related to the whole of God. As I began experiencing more of God's love, strength, wisdom, and forgiveness, I wanted more. Now I can't get enough!

God is whole! Again, in who He is and in what He does, we have all we need. As David wrote, as recorded in Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Trusting Christ as our personal Savior changes our status—from lost to found, unsaved to saved, broken to healed, and incomplete to complete. We are made positionally whole as compared to our old selves. Because we live in this broken and sinful world, we won't be totally whole—wholly whole—until we die our earthly death and enter the reward of heaven. There, we'll finally be "wholly whole." Wholeness will be ours!

## AN INCOMPLETE (!) LOOK AT BIBLICAL WHOLENESS

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>GOD HAS SECURITY.</b></p>   | <p>He is truth. He is honest. (And so much more.) God can wholly and authentically meet our need for security. We can trust Him.</p>  |
| <p><b>GOD HAS IDENTITY.</b></p>   | <p>God's name is "I am." Jesus' name means "He will save His people from their sins." (And so much more.) God can wholly and authentically meet our need for identity. He knows us.</p>   |
| <p><b>GOD HAS BELONGING.</b></p>  | <p>There's unity in the Trinity. God is love. (And so much more.) God can wholly and authentically meet our need for belonging. He wants us to know Him.</p>                              |
| <p><b>GOD HAS PURPOSE.</b></p>    | <p>He is intentional. He knows what He is doing. (And so much more.) God can wholly and authentically meet our need for purpose. He created us on purpose, with purpose, for purpose.</p> |
| <p><b>GOD HAS COMPETENCE.</b></p> | <p>He is more than able. He is wise. (And so much more.) God can wholly and authentically meet our need for competence. He has given us gifts to use.</p>                                 |

When we invite God to meet our needs, He makes us complete. He finishes us and we become whole. Being biblically whole equips us to become personally whole. Both equip us to become relationally whole. Now our families, friendships, and relationships will most likely be healthier.

## HOW DOES GOD MAKE US WHOLE?

God creates us with five core needs. Therefore, He is the One designed to meet the needs. When we invite Him to do so, He makes us whole. Here are our five needs, their corresponding questions, and brief life-changing answers:

**Security:** Who can I trust? *I can trust God. He does not lie, His Word is true, He is always able and available to help, and He forgives me and loves me no matter what.*

**Identity:** Who am I? *I'm someone God loves whom Jesus Christ died for!*

**Belonging:** Who wants me? *God wants me because of who He is, not because of what I do. Because of my faith in Jesus Christ, I belong to God.*

**Purpose:** Why am I alive? *I am alive to glorify God through who I am and through what I do.*

**Competence:** What do I do well? *I can do anything*

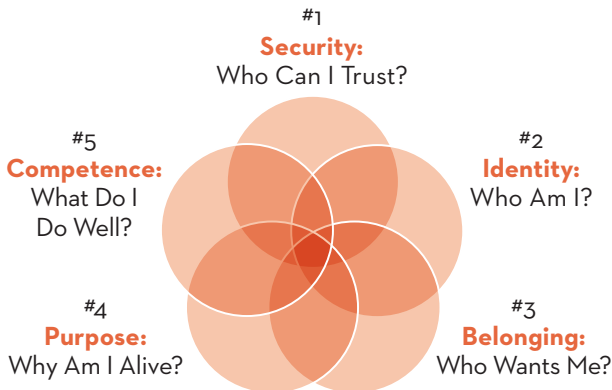


*well God asks me to do with His strength, power, energy, love, and wisdom working in me through the Holy Spirit.*

There are reasons I structured the needs in this Core Needs Model in this particular order. I've seen more complete wholeness take place in people's lives when they have a place to start from (security) and then follow a progression that makes sense (all the way to competence). We will explore this further in the rest of the book. But here's a visual picture of the five needs that will be helpful as we begin.

All the needs are connected to and affected by each other. They are inseparable. The health of one affects the others. A small break isn't small. It can do major damage. A small breakthrough is never small. It will make a major difference. They're very responsive. Notice the overlapping areas on the diagram:

## INTERACTIVE CORE NEEDS DIAGRAM



After I trusted Christ as my Savior at the age of nineteen, I was satisfied with my “fire insurance” for longer than I wish I had been. He met my need for security, but that was about all. Because I didn’t know what I didn’t know, I didn’t actively study Scripture or attend church-based classes so I’d grow. I regret my years on the plateau trying to meet needs on my own that God is designed to meet.

Desiring more of God and more from God and doing what is necessary to get it honors Him and makes us whole. When we get to know the whole God experientially and by studying and learning, we become whole because we discover He authentically and wholly meets our need for security, identity, belonging, purpose, and competence.

I’ll share many ideas in this book to help you move beyond your current understandings about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit so you become whole. I’m excited for you because I know the difference He makes!

## WHAT ABOUT OTHERS?

God creates us to have a relationship with Him *and* to have healthy relationships with people. I’m grateful! People enrich our lives. Especially whole relationships with family members and friends are beautiful. We’re complete in Christ, but people complement us. They don’t make us whole—only God can do that. But we are created for community and relationships.

Who can you trust? They help meet your need for **security**.

Who have you allowed to truly know you? They help meet your need for **identity**.

Who wants you for who you are? They help meet your need for **belonging**.

Who values you and your skills and encourages you to meet people's needs? They help meet your need for **purpose**.

Who helps you develop your skills so you can fulfill your purpose? They help meet your need for **competence**.

Hopefully you thought of several people who meet each need for you. When one person meets all five, the wholeness that results solidifies the relationship. The resulting love, commitment, and joy strengthen the friendship. These are the people we may most regularly rely on. These friendships last.

Our desire for quality relationships motivates us to evaluate our beliefs and behaviors and make adjustments. For example, our need for security motivates us to shift our behavior and make decisions as we search for trustworthy people to connect with. In the process, we discover more about who we are and who we want to be and establish healthier belonging.

Have you chosen to invest more time to develop a talent or interest to broaden your identity and increase your competence so you can fulfill your purpose? Have you made sure some people know more about you than they used to so you can establish deeper belonging around similarities?

Security, identity, belonging, purpose, and competence are

legitimate needs. Without people to serve (belonging), reasons to live that engage us (purpose), and skills, attitudes, and beliefs that allow us to be successful (competence), life doesn't have much meaning.

Can you think of some decisions you recently made and behaviors you changed so you could discover your purpose or fulfill a purpose you know you have?<sup>1</sup> Maybe you started attending Bible classes at your church. Maybe you now listen to some podcasts or TED talks about certain topics. You're gaining understandings so you can go further in your career or make a bigger impact where you volunteer.

Because God created us with these five needs—security, identity, belonging, purpose, and competence—we will always need them met. As we mature, we'll decide to meet them in healthy ways that allow us to experience the hope and wholeness that God desires for us. Before they're met in healthy ways, and especially when we're young, we need parents and others to help us meet our needs. In fact, if your needs weren't met in healthy ways during your childhood, you may be struggling today.

## WHAT ABOUT EXPERIENCES?

Throughout the book, to help you understand these core needs and how people, experiences, and your childhood matter, I'll share healthy and unhealthy ways these needs can be fulfilled and how the resulting hope can be either authentic

or counterfeit. I'll start with an example from my childhood. Then, at the end of the chapter, I'll share a slice of life from my friend Emily.\*

Even at six years old, fitting in was important to me. It was so important that, one day during first grade, I sat down in the middle of my parents' bed and announced to my mom, "I don't want to be tall or clumsy anymore!" Both my clumsiness and my height made me stand out. I tripped over things that weren't there and ran into things that were. I couldn't hide in a crowd. I squirmed when I caught children and adults staring at me.

**My mom heard  
my heart's cry.**

My mom heard my heart's cry. She didn't proclaim, "Well, get over it, you're going to be tall!" Instead, she talked with my dad about it, and they realized I had a perceived problem that could be changed (my clumsiness) and one that couldn't (my height).

You know what they did? They problem solved. I praise God they were solution-focused parents! They enrolled me in dance class, and I thrived! Through tap and ballet, I quickly overcame my clumsiness. Because of my height, I was assigned the center of the back row—which I decided was a position of high honor! (When a perceived problem is an unchangeable characteristic, changing one's attitude toward it is the next best thing.)

\* Her and her husband's names have been changed.

Perhaps you can relate to my need to change a negative quality or to fit in, even if your circumstances weren't anything like mine. Were you teased and left out? Did you want to make a football or volleyball team, but you weren't chosen? Is working math problems slowly in front of your peers a lasting painful memory from elementary school? Did you not fit in with your youth group and you're not even sure why? Did you miss out on a promotion at work or not get assigned to your requested committee at church?

My parents' solution to enroll me in dance classes took care of my perceived problems. God also used dancing to meet in healthy ways my legitimate need to belong. I fit in with other dancers and became more comfortable with my height. My other core needs were fulfilled too:

|  |
|--|
| <b>CORE NEED #1: SECURITY<br/>WHO CAN I TRUST?</b>   |
| I can trust my parents because they solved my problem.<br>I can trust myself because I no longer trip over things. |
| <b>CORE NEED #2: IDENTITY<br/>WHO AM I?</b>  |
| I am a tall dancer who is no longer clumsy.  |

|   |
|---|
| <b>CORE NEED #3: BELONGING<br/>WHO WANTS ME?</b>                        |
| The other dancers want me.<br>They don't have a problem with my height. |
| <b>CORE NEED #4: PURPOSE<br/>WHY AM I ALIVE?</b>                        |
| I'm alive to dance!   |
| <b>CORE NEED #5: COMPETENCE<br/>WHAT DO I DO WELL?</b>                  |
| I tap dance well.   |

At the age of six, those were my answers. I anchored myself to them to meet my core needs. I was satisfied and I began to thrive.

I lived for Fridays, when dance lessons took place after school. I even assisted the teacher when I was too old for lessons in her class. Many years later, when teaching second graders, I volunteered to teach tap after school to second- and third-grade girls. I wanted to share some of the blessings I'd received. Memories of those afternoons and year-end recitals are still vivid and positive.

As you can see from the Core Needs Model's questions and answers, one experience can be a solution that meets all five needs. Since I was a tall child and uncomfortable with my height, my primary needs were to accept myself (identity) and fit in (belonging). Dancing gave me purpose, and the more dance lessons I took, the more competent I became.

My need for security was also met. Not only did I appreciate how much I could trust my parents to solve problems with and for me, I could trust myself more because I was no longer clumsy. I also knew I could trust the other dancers and my beloved dance teacher. They didn't laugh at my height. My security became broad-based. All it took was my parents' act of enrolling me in dance lessons to constructively take care of all five of my core needs.

## LIVE LONG AND BE STRONG

Are my dance-based answers to the model's questions relevant to my life today? Absolutely. If I had questioned my body image (part of the *Who am I?* identity question) even a little longer, I might not be able to stand in front of large crowds as a public speaker like I do today. Also, if I had continued to view my height negatively, that toxic point of view might have seeped over into other areas. I would not be who I am today if I'd been allowed to grow up negative and pessimistic. So even "little" decisions can make a big difference.



The core needs and their defining questions remain the same throughout life. The answers change because we mature as we learn more about God and ourselves. Maybe your situation when you were young or as recently as a year ago was less than ideal and you didn't have healthy answers to the core-needs questions. Your future can be very different. I tell people all the time to live long and be strong to find out why you are who you are. When we keep believing in ourselves and, more importantly, believe God did a good thing when He chose to create us the way He did, confusion and past unhappiness can lift.

I admit that it's easier now to maintain a positive attitude about my height than when I was a child. Even though I became comfortable with my height through dance lessons, I didn't view it as a strength. I just

thought I was tall because my parents were tall. I never dreamed God might have a purpose for it. As an adult, it's been exciting to discover that He did!

For instance, when teaching second graders, I could hang chains of spelling words and other things from the ceiling without using a ladder. This made things easier for me—and my coworkers. They could come get me instead of the ladder stored at the other end of the building! But that wasn't the only benefit.

**Even “little”  
decisions can make  
a big difference.**

If you've flown overseas, you know how high the overhead bins are for carry-on bags on those big planes. I have no trouble lifting bags in and out of those spaces. My first flight overseas was from Los Angeles, California, to Taipei, Taiwan, on my way to Manila in the Philippines to speak at a conference for teachers at Christian schools. Can you picture me—all 6'1" of me—on a plane with people heading to Asia? I'll never forget the look of desperation on the faces of the Asians who smiled at me and pointed to their suitcases after I easily put my suitcase in the overhead bin. I knew what they wanted me to do! And I did it, getting stronger with every bag.

Since I'm a public speaker, there's at least one other professional advantage to my height. Audience members can see me, even if I'm standing behind a podium on the same level as their seats. That's not what makes me an effective speaker, but it helps that I can see everyone and they can see me.

God makes no mistakes. He has reasons for creating each person with certain attributes. Every person you know is a unique "package deal," an unrepeatable miracle, not an accident in a meaningless society. The same is true about you. Absolutely. Learning to actively discern the truths about ourselves matters. Without knowing what is true and who God has made us to be, we can find ourselves passively wallowing in our weaknesses as we reject our identity.

My height contributes positively to God's complete plan—involving more than just my legitimate childhood

identity of being the center of the back row. God intentionally and purposefully equipped me! Even though I view my height as a strength, it's not the source of my security (the first need). That would be foolish. It would mean I'd be insecure every time I was with people taller than me.

Later I came to realize that I was someone who could use words well and who found joy in both talking and reading (shaping the second need for identity). These characteristics helped me acquire the nickname "Chatty Kathy." My mom remembers her mother first calling me that when I was about three years old. This love of communication, and my parents' desire to hone it, affected my belonging (the third need) and purpose (the fourth need) because I participated in community theater from a young age and joined the speech team when I was in high school.

It wasn't an accident that I emphasized literacy when teaching second graders. Nor was it by chance that I chose to study reading and educational psychology for my doctoral work. Usually my dictionaries and thesauruses are within an arm's reach and I have several loaded on my devices. (The plurals aren't mistakes. One volume of each is not enough!)

Do you see how my identity, belonging, and purpose allowed me to discover and believe in my competence (the fifth need)? Realizing my strengths of speaking and reading (part of my identity) led to my belonging in theater and speech and part of my purpose, which was to earn theater parts

and speak well. Eventually these strengths (my identity) led me to become a teacher and professor. All of these identities motivated and equipped me to gain competence. My competence increased my positive security (our first need), which demonstrates the circular, looping-back effect of the linkages between this model's five core needs. Directors and teachers who proved themselves trustworthy also influenced my security. They pointed out my strengths, influencing my identity and overall wholeness.

If my need for security had not been met, eventually the rest wouldn't have held up. They would have tumbled down like a house of cards. Security forms the base of the Wholeness Model. If security is not met in strong and healthy ways, we

won't be able to meet our other needs in healthy ways. Although I could have attempted to meet my need for security through my height and ability to communicate, I wouldn't have been successful. Not surprisingly, people made the

difference. (The best answer to our security question involves a *who* not a *what*.) I knew I could trust my coaches and teachers. My parents helped me rehearse and eagerly attended performances. I sensed their support and approval, both when doing well and when I didn't. Therefore, I could continue investing in my activities, and my core needs were met.

**Everyone has a story  
to live out!  
You can thrive!**

So this tall one who chatted in school now earns a living by writing and speaking. God is good! And I have no doubt that He has excellent things in the future for you, no matter your past or present circumstances. Everyone has a story to live out! You can thrive! Does this ring true in your heart, or does it feel impossible right now to believe God has designed a positive future for you and the people you love? Either way, stick with me. You'll get there.

## NEGATIVE COUNTERFEITS

These five needs are *core* to our well-being. When they're met, we can thrive. We can be whole. If they're *not* met in healthy ways, we'll be incomplete, broken, and unfinished. We'll be full of holes rather than wholly secure and complete.

For example, if we are not secure, we won't take risks, so we won't learn as much or grow. We won't be resilient so we'll be afraid to stretch ourselves. When we do make mistakes, we may not be able to recover quickly or at all. We may be very self-absorbed and fearful. We may be anxious, overwhelmed, and angry because there's so much in the world or our particular part of the world that's unstable.

If we try to meet our need for security in unhealthy ways, we're also at risk and so are those around us. For instance, maybe we try to meet this need by being powerful. We always have to be in charge so we won't be hurt. We may become

bullies. Or maybe we are secure only when we are popular. This can mean we'll relate to people only in ways that keep us popular even if it means we lie, gossip, or bully to get welcomed by the popular group.

An unhealthy security contributes to an unhealthy identity. For instance, we might only know our negative qualities (e.g., we don't enjoy cooking, we're consistently late, our hair is too thin) and we might believe they're all permanent conditions when they're not. This can limit how we serve, how well we learn, who we try to relate to, and so much more.

An unhealthy identity makes healthy, solid, long-lasting belonging less likely. When we try to meet our belonging need in unhealthy ways, we might need to be in control or be right. We may prioritize the number of likes or followers we have rather than quality, personal relationships. We can actually end up being alone or lonely even when surrounded by people.

Without a healthy security, identity, and belonging, it's almost impossible to believe in our purpose. We may not know why we're alive or we'll only have negative or unwise purposes in mind—to have more money than anyone else in our family, to make people we don't like miserable, to avoid all pain, and more.

When we have no purpose (reasons to live), we don't need to be competent (able to fulfill our purpose). This is the main negative connection between purpose and competence. Or perhaps you're familiar with this purpose—being perfect.

When this is our purpose, we'll only feel competent when we get everything right. Perfection isn't realistic, so believing this is how we meet our competence need sets us up to never be satisfied and to be angry and frustrated. This circles back and contributes to our unhealthy identity and belonging. We will also doubt ourselves so our security is weak. The connections between the core needs are powerfully important.

### WHEN IT “WORKS” FOR A WHILE . . .

Answering the five life questions according to my involvement with dance worked well for a while. For example, you might remember that the question representing our belonging need is *Who wants me?* When I was a dancer, I could answer that in this way: “The other dancers do. They don't have a problem with my height.” But what happened when I no longer danced regularly?

I'm confident you have experienced a shift in your answers to the core needs questions. Perhaps that's been the result of positive growth over time, like my shift from dancing to speech to so much more. Or perhaps your needs were met for a while and then you were dissatisfied. You got involved in something new, your needs were met for a while, and then you again floundered. Are you or people you know living in this kind of unstable reality?

All people want their needs met. They *need* their needs met. Unless we've already given up, we're all looking for hope.

However, many people don't understand which needs are core and *must* be met, so they're asking the wrong questions and looking in the wrong places for answers. That leads them to find only false, temporary, counterfeit solutions that don't really satisfy. They're synthetic impersonations, not built upon the reality and truth of what really does satisfy. False hope and wholeness may result in even more despair than we knew before our search for solutions began. Ultimately, these counterfeits won't help and won't last. They will disappoint us. And once again, people hooked on what's false soon believe there's nothing to count on. But there is a true, permanent, authentic source for hope and wholeness!

You know what made the difference for me? Actually, I should reword that. Do you know *who* made the difference for

me? Jesus Christ, God's Son. How did that difference happen? I humbled myself by accepting that I'd always be inadequate on my own. I saw my needs and, thankfully, drew the conclusion that I was in need of a Savior and that Jesus was

**The core questions didn't change. But my living answers did.**

the One. He is my Authentic Hope. My needs didn't change after anchoring my life to Jesus as my Rock. I still needed security, identity, belonging, purpose, and competence, just as I do today. The core questions didn't change. But my living answers did. God met all five of my core needs, resulting in authentic



wholeness. He was the permanent, rock-solid answer, and He still is. I've stopped floundering. Have you?

## HOW WE DECEIVE OURSELVES

There are at least three ways we can deceive ourselves as we seek to meet our needs. We can:

- confuse wants with needs,
- ask misleading questions, and/or
- attempt to meet our needs in unhealthy ways.

### *Confusing Wants with Needs*

We can confuse wants with authentic needs. Have you ever declared, “I need coffee!”? Unless you were actually dying of thirst, you didn't need coffee; you wanted some. How many children say they need to go to the movies? Do you know teens who declare they need to be on social media? What about our need for happiness, cool friends, smart children, more money, or more \_\_\_\_\_? (You fill in the blank.) What have you heard yourself say recently? Was it a need or a want? Authentic needs involve life-or-death issues. Without them attained, we die physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and/or spiritually. We need people who know us as we truly are, people we can comfortably cry and laugh with, and people to learn and grow with. Wants only parade themselves as matters of life and death.

### *Asking Misleading Questions*

We can easily be tricked, because wrong questions disguise themselves cleverly. For example, asking, “*What* can I trust?” causes trouble every time. Things fade away, so finding your security in things is dangerous. Beauty, fame, fortune, position, academic grades, dancing ability—none of these last forever. It is better to ask, “*Who* can I trust?” The only answer for authentic security is Jesus Christ.

Belonging is defined by the question “Who wants me?” and not “Who needs me?” When we try to meet this need by being needed, we’ll only pay attention to people who need us. They are weaker than we are or they need something we have. This always puts us in a position of power. It wasn’t until after my first year of teaching second graders that I realized I had used my students to meet this need. I enjoyed hearing “Miss Koch! Miss Koch!” I floundered at the beginning of my summer break because I didn’t feel needed.

### *Attempting to Meet Needs in Unhealthy Ways*

We can wrongly anchor ourselves to unreliable and inaccurate answers and use unhealthy methods to find answers that suit us. For instance, in regard to the core need of competence, have you ever needed to feel competent so badly that you lied to a friend about your score on a popular video game or cheated in school? Eventually, when we attempt to meet

needs in unhealthy ways, the lies catch up with us. Pain and trouble often follow. Cheating may result in feeling competent, but not in a true state of competence. We may be known as bright students, but we're not. Perhaps we really could be, but we'll never know because we cheat. Either way, the lie wins. Ultimately, we lose.

**Asking, "What can I trust?" causes trouble every time.**

### *The Results*

These counterfeit errors in judgment may produce results that look like authentic hope and wholeness. However, the results won't last because they are built on lies. What do these principles look like in a person's life? Let me share a slice-of-life story about my friend Emily.

## **EMILY: FROM ROCK BOTTOM TO ROCK-SOLID**

Although physically present, Emily's mother wasn't able to be emotionally present. Her dad wasn't very involved in her life either, but he did at least pay attention when she brought home perfect papers and straight A's. He also went to every band concert. We all need attention, so Emily greatly valued her relationship with her dad.

Emily's dad only recognized her competence (#5). The older Emily grew, the more clearly she understood from his comments and behaviors that only perfect performances mattered to him. Being perfect and earning her dad's approval became so important to Emily that she didn't say a thing to anyone about the ways he sexually abused her. She needed to be "Daddy's perfect girl." If she weren't perfect, who would she be? That was her only identity (#2). Emily desperately wanted a healthy relationship with her dad (belonging, #3). All she knew was an unhealthy one, but at least she had one.

Because of her dad's priorities and expectations, Emily tried to meet all five needs through her competence (#5), meaning perfection in her mind. Imagine how Emily felt and related to others while growing up with these beliefs:

**Security:** What (not who) can I trust? *My excellent grades; I earn A's.*

**Identity:** Who am I? *I'm an A student.*

**Belonging:** Who wants me? *My dad notices me when I earn A's.*

**Purpose:** Why am I alive? *I need to make Dad proud and have him notice me by earning A's.*

**Competence:** What do I do well? *I earn A's.*

Since Emily was trying to answer the life questions through her competence (#5), all five answers evaporated when she earned her one-and-only C. Overnight she went from having a strong sense of what Martin Luther King Jr. called “somebodyness” to “nobodyness.”<sup>2</sup> She had nothing to be secure in (#1) and no identity (#2). She believed she had no one to belong to (#3), failed at her reason to exist (purpose, #4), and, supposedly, she did nothing well (competence, #5).

I’ve met many teenagers and adults who tell me that they feel this way, like “no one with nothing.” Some give up trying once they determine they can’t be perfect anymore. Their past failures negate hope for tomorrow and shatter hope and wholeness in the present. When competence (#5) is all they strive for, they end up with nothing when they “fail.”

*Emily went all the way through school, including college, earning just one C in college calculus.* Before the C, all her basic needs for wholeness were met—though met in unhealthy ways. After the C, none of them were fulfilled.

Emily didn’t totally give up, but she faced many more struggles. Her perfectionistic, performance mindset

and her high need for approval resulted in continued stress, so much so that she developed an eating disorder. How unfortunate! Emily, her husband, and her Christian counselor believe this was a direct result of her dad's abuse and valuing her for competence (#5) rather than for the woman God created her to be.

Emily struggled even after she became a Christian and turned her life over to God. She learned that anchoring herself and her life securely in Jesus didn't guarantee quick fixes to major problems or a smooth, effortless path to healthier living. It took her a long time to put off her old ways of thinking. Through Bible study, discipleship, worship, and counseling, Emily learned to change her mindset and trust God to meet all five basic needs. Watching her develop the following truthful beliefs has been a privilege and joy:

**Security:** *Who (not what) can I trust? God has proven Himself faithful. I can depend on Him to love me even when I'm not perfect.*

**Identity:** *Who am I? I am a child of God, saved by grace! I am so valuable to God that He sent His perfect Son, Jesus Christ, to die for me even though I'm imperfect. And I am more than my performances.*

**Belonging:** *Who wants me? God wants me, and I want Him to be a part of my life. I don't have to earn God's love or do anything special to have Him pay attention to me. This is also true of my relationship with my husband and a few trusted friends. It's getting easier to think of God as my Father.*

**Purpose:** *Why am I alive? I want to glorify God in who I am and all I do. This includes my health and body image.*

**Competence:** *What do I do well? God is becoming my source of strength and wisdom. Therefore, I'm learning to turn my struggles over to Him and rely on the Holy Spirit's power day by day. And when I don't feel very competent, it's okay because God is my foundation, and He is more than competent. He's the One who is perfect.*

Did you notice how Emily based her new set of beliefs on realistic assessments and truths instead of faulty assessments and lies?

A personal, dynamic, and complete relationship with God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, and reliance on the Holy Spirit working in us, is the core of the model. This can be difficult initially for those who, like Emily, have personally experienced deep pain or believe tomorrow is uncertain. Whether we are new believers, mature Christians, or people searching

for what to believe, personal knowledge of God and following Him are the keys to meeting all five needs and experiencing authentic hope and wholeness.

## BECOMING WHOLE

- What do you think about what you've read so far? How does it strike you? How do you currently answer the five core questions? You may want to write your answers here or on a piece of paper:

**Security:** Who can I trust?

**Identity:** Who am I?

**Belonging:** Who wants me?

**Purpose:** Why am I alive?

**Competence:** What do I do well?

- Were you surprised by any of your answers?
- Did you feel like leaving any of them blank? Why?
- Are you satisfied with how your basic needs are being met? Why or why not?
- At this point in your life, is meeting one need more important than meeting another?
- Perhaps voice a prayer of gratitude because of how your needs are met.



## NOW

Wholeness is an important and achievable goal. Biblical wholeness happens when we invite the triune God to meet our needs. Personal wholeness happens when we have healthy and solid answers to the five core needs questions. The synergy of getting answers for all five needs is powerful and stimulating. Both biblical wholeness and personal wholeness contribute to our ability to be relationally whole.

## NEXT

In chapter 2, you'll read more about how the core needs are connected and inseparable. I'll introduce another diagram that emphasizes the responsive, dynamic, and complete sequence of the five needs. I'll demonstrate the model's responsiveness with a slice-of-life from my niece Betsy.



Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD  
is an everlasting rock.

—ISAIAH 26:4

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