Discussion Questions



Based on the Testimony of Robert Sandwith

Overview

This guide is designed to help your group process and respond to Robert Sandwith's testimony. His story moves from profound childhood trauma, addiction, and hopelessness to redemption, healing, and a calling to serve others. The themes of identity, shame, belonging, grace, and community run throughout, and they invite honest reflection from every person in the room, regardless of their background.

Key Takeaways

1. Shame lies about where blame belongs. Robert carried for years the false belief that his pain was his own fault. That lie kept him trapped. Healing began when he encountered people who spoke truth into him rather than confirming the lie.

2. God uses the broken to reach the broken. Hand in Hand was not built on credentials, strategic plans, or financial security. It was built on one man's willingness to show up and give away a pair of boots he had received for free. Availability matters more than ability.

3. The church is a body, and bodies need all their parts. Robert made it clear that the men in his ministry need the people in the church, and the people in the church need the men in his ministry.

Genuine community does not sort people by how put-together they appear.

4. Healing is a journey, not a single event. Pastor Ike noted this directly: the ongoing nature of healing is not a sign that something is wrong. It is an invitation to keep walking with Jesus one day at a time.

5. No story is insignificant. Robert was deliberate in saying his story is no better or worse than anyone else's. What you are carrying matters. What you are struggling with is not too small to bring to God or to your community.

Discussion Questions

These questions are meant to ease the group into the conversation. Not every person needs to answer every question.

1. What moment or detail from Robert's testimony stayed with you after you heard it? Why do you think that particular part stood out?
2. Robert described a feeling after that first worship experience as being like "a warm glass of milk." Have you ever had a moment where you felt unexpectedly at peace in a way that was hard to explain? What was that like?

3. Robert said that when he told his mother something felt wrong inside him, her response confirmed the lie that it was his own fault. Have you ever had an experience where someone's response to your pain, even unintentionally, made you feel more alone rather than less? How did that shape the way you saw yourself?
4. Robert described the "God-sized void" that people try to fill with substances, behaviors, or anything other than God. What

are some of the things people commonly reach for to fill that void? What have you personally been tempted to reach for?

5. The branch broke. Robert described that failed suicide attempt as leaving him feeling even more worthless. But Pastor Ike reframed it as God intervening with a different plan. How do you respond to the idea that God can be present and purposeful even in our darkest and most desperate moments? Is that easy or difficult for you to believe?
6. Robert walked into the Salvation Army that morning not knowing why he was doing it. He described something inside him that moved him through the door. How do you think about the Holy Spirit's role in those kinds of moments? Have you ever felt drawn somewhere or toward something without fully understanding why?
7. Robert said, "We're all hurting from something," and that what you are struggling with is not insignificant. Is there something you have been minimizing or dismissing in your own life because it does not seem as dramatic as someone else's story? What would it look like to bring that to God and to a trusted person in your community?

For Personal Reflection

9. Robert told his sons that no matter what, they can always come home. How does that image connect to the way God relates to us? Is there any area of your life where you have been staying away because you feel like you cannot come home?
10. Hand in Hand operates on the principle that everyone who goes through the program has an opportunity to become part of the program. The way to the top is through the bottom. How does that model challenge or affirm the way you think about leadership, service, and your own role in the church?

Practical Applications

These are concrete steps your group can consider taking individually or together.

This week:

- Identify one person in your life who may be carrying something heavy and simply ask them how they are doing. Not to fix anything. Just to be present.
- Spend time in prayer asking God to show you if there is a lie about your identity or your past that you have been believing. Write it down and bring it to a trusted person or counselor.

As a group:

- Consider attending a Hand in Hand event or finding a way to connect with the ministry. Robert was direct that the men in his ministry need the people in the church, and that relationship goes both ways.
- Discuss whether your group is a safe place for honest conversation about struggle. What would need to change for someone in your group to feel comfortable saying, "I am not doing well"?

Ongoing:

- If anyone in your group is struggling with addiction, mental health, suicidal thoughts, or trauma, encourage them toward professional support alongside spiritual community. Both matter. Neither replaces the other.
- Memorize or meditate on a passage this week that speaks to identity in Christ. Consider passages like Romans 8:1, which speaks to the absence of condemnation for those in Christ, or Psalm 34:18, which describes God's nearness to the brokenhearted.

Closing Prayer Guide

Close your time together by praying through these themes as a group:

- Gratitude for what God has done in Robert's life and in the lives of the men at Hand in Hand
- Honesty about what each person in the room is carrying
- Courage to believe that healing is available and that no one has to carry their story alone
- A renewed sense of calling to be the kind of community where people feel safe enough to come home

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"We're a church body, and we need each other." -- Robert Sandwith