NOW WHAT *Questions for reflection and conversation*

The Redeemed Man Podcast Featuring Eze Okebalama

Taking Male Friendships Beyond the Superficial

THINK ABOUT IT

Sit with these before you say anything out loud.

On a pedestal—and in the spotlight.

(3:45) Did your background or upbringing cause people to have certain idealized views of what your life must have been like or what kind of person you were? What assumptions did they make that didn't match with your reality, and what kinds of problems did that cause for you? Do you find yourself still running up against those assumptions as an adult?

- *What people thought they knew about me:*
- *The hardships those assumptions created:*
- *What I'm still battling today:*

Finding out who our true friends are.

(13:14) As you've opened up about traumas or failings in your past (or present), who is someone who pleasantly surprised you by being more understanding and accepting of your struggles than you thought they'd be? Have you been negatively surprised by anyone who rejected you or kept you at arm's length even though they'd be supportive? Looking back on both types of reactions, how have they changed your perspective on relationships in general?

- *The reassurance I hadn't expected:*
- *The rejection I wasn't prepared for:*
- *What I've learned:*

TALK IT OUT

These are worth saying out loud, in a group, with a brother, or with God himself.

When everyone's listening, but you can't speak the truth.

(8:59) When Eze explains his reluctance to be open about his struggles because of his prominent position in the church, does that resonate with you? As an adult, do you occupy any positions of prominence or influence that make you feel like you can't be completely open about what's going on in your life? What do you worry will happen if you open up about what's bothering you?

When friendships, like beauty, are only skin-deep.

(23:49) Did you, like Paul, go through a long period of your adult life where you settled for, or even sought out, superficial friendships with other men? Why was that kind of relationship preferable to you at the time? How did you finally come to a decision that those friendships weren't enough, and you needed something with more depth and honesty?

TAKE ACTION

Don't let this stay in your head. Do something with it.

Discovering what true community feels like.

(17:27) Before you got involved with The Redeemed, did you participate in any other men's groups or ministries that didn't provide the level of support or affirmation that you feel now? What do you think are the biggest differences between the two experiences?

- *What I was missing before:*
- *What I was glad to find at The Redeemed:*
- *What I'd like to tell other men:*

CLOSING

It's been said many times before, but it bears repeating—we can't truly deal with our traumas, failings, or struggles until we're willing to be open and transparent about them. Unfortunately, many of us have complicating factors in our lives that make that an especially daunting prospect. And if we feel like we can't find support and acceptance in our own churches, where can we find it?

As Eze discovered, there are always receptive, non-judgmental groups out there, even if we have to venture outside the four walls of our home church to find one. The Redeemed aims to be one such group, whether you're participating in an in-person small group or online from thousands of miles away. Don't let your fear of rejection prevent you from seeking out a community where your hopes and fears will be received in good faith and where God's healing love is palpable.