

Ministry

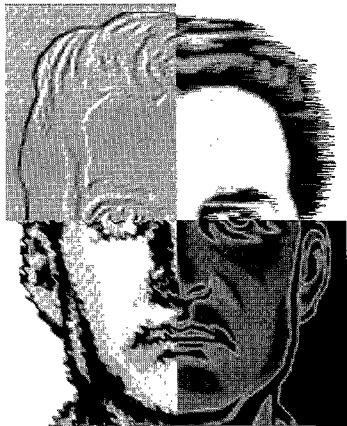
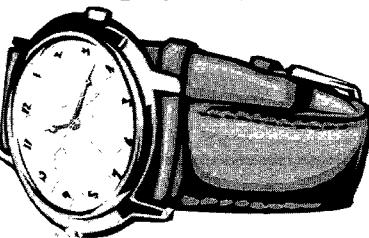
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November 1995

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If you're receiving *MINISTRY* bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *MINISTRY* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but we believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help to you too. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead.

Greetings to you in the name of our Wonderful Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The focus of this issue deals with a challenge facing every denomination and, increasingly, impacting pastoral families both as they meet the challenge in their congregations and even experience the trauma of abuse in their own homes.

In addition to the outstanding articles that we have compiled, you will also find an insert appropriate for any denomination which alerts members to the potential of sexual abuse of children and how to avoid this tragedy. Bulk quantities of this insert can be ordered for distribution in your congregation by calling 1-800-328-0525.

Another outstanding resource which I personally endorse is a brand new book by Bobbie Drake, a licensed therapist who has written the article, *Abuse: a sickness of us all*, for this issue. Her book is designed for parents to instruct children or for teachers and pastors to use as a teaching resource. It is titled, *Friends: Good, Bad, and Secret*. This illustrated book may be ordered at \$6.95 plus \$2.50 shipping from Protocol Seminars, Rt. 1, Box 1117-A, Homedale, Idaho 83628.

On a personal note, I'm already missing John Fowler's presence in our office as he undertakes his new responsibilities in the Department of Education. We still get to see him from time to time, however, because his wife, Mary, coordinates special projects for our staff. Although this issue contains his last editorial as associate editor, you will still benefit from John's writing from time to time.

Our new editor, Will Eva, is on board, taking good charge of the whole editorial process as he approaches January's deadline, the first issue for which he is responsible.

Blessings on your continuing service for the Lord.



Ministry is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association.

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Three affirmations

John Fowler

Of my 37 years of service in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the past five years at *Ministry* were among the most rewarding. The excellent work atmosphere, understanding and appreciative colleagues, a genuine satisfaction of serving an important constituency of the church, and the opportunity to advance the collective appreciation of clergy to what the Lord has done and what He expects us to do were all part of that reward. As I now leave *Ministry* to take up another assignment with the General Conference Department of Education, I wish to bid farewell to our readers by making three affirmations that define the uniqueness of the Adventist Church and its ministry.

First, our faith. My ministry as a layperson, a teacher, a pastor, an editor, a departmental director, or church administrator in no way has distracted my primary commitment to the One in whom I have chosen to believe. Jesus is the anchor of my faith. Ecclesiastic service is one way, not necessarily the only way, I have chosen to "cry aloud [and] spare not" that commitment. That is to say, whatever we do and wherever we are, we are called to affirm the uniqueness of who Jesus is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He is about to do. When the apostle Paul arrived at the conclusion that he would commit all his resources to the one single event of the cross and nothing else (see 1 Cor. 2:2), he was affirming his faith that Jesus is the key that unlocks the mystery of life: He makes the past, present, and future forge together in a meaningful symphony; He offers forgiveness, provides assurance, and ushers hope. Our ministry succeeds or

fails to the degree that we continually affirm personally and corporately our unfailing commitment to Jesus.

Second, our message. Our message is the outgrowth of our faith. And as such, our message is Christ-centered and Christ-based. When we express the Adventist faith in terms of 27 fundamental beliefs, we are not making a creedal statement to suggest that we have arrived at a closed and final understanding of truth. But we are saying that even in the temporality of time and in the inadequacy of human understanding, the Holy Spirit has guided the church to formulate its fundamental beliefs, keeping in view that Christ is the basis and that His Word is the unerring authority of those beliefs. These beliefs provide a detailed avenue through which we present Christ as meeting the needs of people everywhere. Any one of those fundamental beliefs, presented apart from that Christ focus, will remain only as an intellectual doctrine or a philosophical cushion. The genius of the Adventist message is its unchangeable constant: Jesus and the assurance that comes from Him for every human being. Our ministry succeeds or fails to the degree that we continually keep our commitment to the 27 fundamental beliefs within the context of Jesus, the arbiter of human life and destiny.

Third, our mission. The mission of the church is twofold: within and without. The mission within is a continual recognition that in spite of all the varied differences we may have and in spite of the various hues of our existence, we are Christ's precious body, created by His grace, carved out by His cross, nurtured by His love, directed by hope, and

testified by unity. God's grace—pardoning, empowering, sanctifying grace—is at the core of our unity as a body. Where that unity is imperiled, the body comes under satanic attack. No amount of preaching can safeguard that unity; only a deliberate renunciation of self to the preservation of the other, only a personal rejection of divisive factors, only a continued standing at the leveled ground of the cross, and only an eager awaiting for the Parousia can ensure a commitment to that unity. Our ministry succeeds or fails to the degree we nurture and care toward the preservation of that unity at every level.

The second part of our mission is without—the global extension of God's kingdom. Where there is no evangelism, there is erosion of the very purpose for which the church is called to exist. A survey of the delegates at the Utrecht session of the General Conference directed church authorities to continue to give evangelism and mission high priority. That's not surprising at all. For Adventism was born with a sense of global mission and of creating a global community that awaits the Parousia. This does not mean, as some cynics would suggest, that the Great Disappointment found its answer in the great achievement. But this does mean Adventism, rising out of the Great Disappointment, found its challenge in letting the world know that the Lord who broke through history in Bethlehem is about to break through again to let eternity reign. The good news of the cross and the Second Coming is too good to keep to ourselves. That's the basis of our global mission.

History tells us that when church members or leaders are preoccupied with anything less than total commitment to Jesus, His message and mission, there begins a decay. Hence the call to higher ground: power and pomp must give way to passion for ministry and modeling; ecclesiastic structure and positions must become instruments of church growth and service; institutions must become dispensers of grace to the communities in which they serve; a

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Abuse: confidentiality, reporting, and the pastor's role

Alberta Mazat

The church has a responsibility to cope with the problems of abuse.



Alberta Mazat is a retired professor of marriage and family therapy, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

As Christians we are distressed at the increasing reports of family abuse and violence. And we should be! As members of God's family, we must take seriously His commission to love one another.

But when we become aware of violence in our own church family, we are doubly saddened. We recall the words of Scripture that our loving interactions can demonstrate to the world that we are truly followers of Christ (see John 13:35). Any type of cruelty, battering, whipping, hitting, pounding, kicking, and sexual abuse is *never* the result of loving interaction. When churches are not sufficiently concerned to protect the victims or to help people control their evil passions that bring about violence in families, what a sad message that sends.

What *should* we do about violence and abuse? Should our parsonages be open to needless disgrace? Ought we to dismiss what's going on in families as private matters and ignore them? Should pastors hide behind confidentiality and not report instances of abuse? What should the church do?

The pastor and confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important factor in the counseling relationship between the helper and the one seeking help. It binds the therapist to respect the privacy of clients and to keep in confidence any information obtained in the course of their appointments. It is intended for the client's benefit. To be able to discuss one's problems in a confidential atmosphere is important in bringing help. Hurting people do not wish parts of their life experiences to become common knowledge. When this ethical

concept is ignored, it can bring negative results, such as painful embarrassment, loss of trust, broken relationships, and wreckage of life plans. Clergy of many faiths have long held the ethic of pastoral confidentiality.

When those seeking help are talking about personal problems that do not involve others directly, this poses no problem. However, when the situation involves abuse and violence, we have a dilemma. For example, we have received information about family abuse and violence. Should we report this to appropriate legal authorities? Does this information call for a different treatment on the part of the pastor? If pastors receive reports about a member's plan to hurt himself or herself or others, should they maintain silence in the name of confidentiality?

Should someone be warned if an arsonist mentions a plan for leveling a part of our national forest or blowing up a bridge during rush hour? Should one seek steps to deter a desperate AIDS victim from having unprotected sex? What about a client who exhibits a receipt for a gun just purchased to commit a crime or to settle a score?

What about the persons who are victims of such crime? Do they have rights too—the right to expect our intervention, our protection? Whose right takes precedence?

Take the case of a helpless child victimized by a family member or a teacher or a church worker. Is it questionable to report this abuse to authorities who have the power to protect the victim, and to set in action forces that can be redemptive not only for the victim but also for the perpetrator?

When confidentiality becomes the means of keeping in bondage even for one more day a person undergoing harmful and illegal exploitation, it is no longer serving its purpose. It must be replaced by a carefully thought-out program that can deal effectively with the behaviors of those who are involved. Many times the abusers are average persons we know and care about. Sometimes in reporting such abusers we may feel we are "letting down" these friends. But what we must realize is that with appropriate therapy, they could be helped. Abusers who have received counseling and therapy have gone on record that their own lives and those of their families were far better and happier after disclosure and therapy than before.

Sometimes the initial response of the abuse perpetrator to any suggestion of disclosure is anger, a sense of betrayal, and an urge to give the pastor/counselor a guilt trip. With time the abuser may be able to admit that the lives of the entire family have benefited, and express gratitude for disclosure and for making help mandatory. Of course there will always be some who will be in denial, who will make excuses for their behavior and seek to justify their actions. These are the people who need intensive therapy the most. They are not amenable to a few sessions of feigned remorse and glib promises. Too many pastors trusting a "quick cure" have found out later that the victims are still victims, many times having been moved to a new setting where there is no record of the crime.

Who must report?

Every state now has laws that make it mandatory for a person in a counseling/therapy/medical/teaching role to report evidence or suspicion of abuse. In some cases clergy are exempted, which often brings a sigh of relief that this difficult task is not expected of them. But let the clergy take heed. When, in the course of their ministerial duties, pastors assume the role of a counselor to a victim of abuse, they are mandated to report.

Marie Fortune states: "Confidentiality was never intended to be merely keeping of secrets. Nor was it ever intended to protect offenders from the consequences of their behaviors. Clergy who interpret confidentiality in this way are enabling the offender to continue offending."¹ David Delaplane, a pastor on the Clergy Advisory Board of the California Consortium to Prevent Child Abuse, says: "Regardless of the fact that in penitential communication clergy are legally exempt, they are never

Too many pastors trusting a "quick cure" have found out later that the victims are still victims, many times having been moved to a new setting where there is no record of the crime.

morally exempt from reporting to protect the abused child. The highest mandate of all faith bodies is to care for and protect the children."²

Nothing is surer than this: Violence will continue if it is not stopped by a strong legal force outside the family. Offenders need specialized treatment, which is most effective when the courts are involved to order, monitor, and evaluate the progress. Accountability must be built into the process. Only with this type of procedure can we communicate to the perpetrator this message: "What you are doing is very wrong. We will not allow you to continue this abusive behavior." When pastors communicate this kind of message, they are saying to the offending parishioner: "Your church cares enough about you to hold you accountable for behavior that is destructive both to you and your family. We wish to be agents of help, not suppression."³

The role of the minister

What can a minister to do to help those who are hurting and suffering because of abuse?

Believe the victim's account. Sometimes pastors do not want to take abuse seriously, because of the possibility that the report could be false. One representative study found that only about 8 percent of cases reported turned out to be fictitious accounts. In most of these cases the trained, experienced therapist was able to recognize the falsity of the accusations. To discredit 92 percent of true cases because of concern for the 8 percent seems hardly desirable.

Take the complaint seriously. It takes much courage for an abused and hurting person to come to the pastor. In taking such a step, victims often risk further harm. Far too often in the past, the clergy have not been helpful in these situations simply because they did not know how to intervene. They felt it was improper to break confidentiality. Yet they were not themselves trained to counsel their parishioners effectively in these problems.

Sometimes they have not realized that counseling the perpetrator alone is not effective in bringing about change.

Don't start giving glib advice. Pastors often tend to limit their role to simple words of advice, such as "Pray more"; "Be a better wife/child"; "Bear your load with Christian grace"; "I'll talk to him; things will be better." But things will not be better.

An abuser does not quit simply because a pastor had chosen to advise. Indeed, such an approach may leave the victim and the concerned family members in a disheartened and hopeless situation. They have already prayed long and earnestly. They have already done everything they could to be deferential, even abject, and the situation has not improved. They may feel powerless, hopeless.

Recognize that abuse is against the marriage vow. Sometimes pastors, with a view to prevent divorce and maintain the sanctity of marriage, work hard to bring couples together, even though one of the partners has been subject to continual physical and sexual abuse.

Marriage is indeed sacred. But the sacredness is already broken, the marriage covenant is already shattered by the abusive relationship and the suffering the spouse has endured. Does the argument of permanency in marriage justify battering a spouse? Abuse of a spouse is the abuse of the marriage itself, and the home is already "broken up." The marriage covenant is also broken when acts of deviance take place. The wife will not be mending the family by staying indefinitely with a battering/abusive situation that affects the entire family. Sometimes the best way to preserve the family is to call a halt to the abuse by separation. This demands a realization on the part of such perpetrators that they are being given responsibility for their behavior, and that change on their part is mandatory. If they continue to shift the responsibility onto others, promises to change create only false hope.

Don't promise the abuser absolute confidentiality. Pastors working with abusers should not promise absolute confidentiality. They should not make such statements as "Nothing you say will ever be spoken of outside this room. You can trust me to keep our conversations strictly private." Few people ask for this type of a statement. Sometimes it is proffered by the counselor in an attempt to enable the discussion of personal details. But the relationship that the counselor builds with concepts such as careful listening, empathetic regard, nonjudgmentalism, and acceptance will do more to encourage beneficial disclosure than sweeping assurances of confidentiality. The following statement would be more appropriate: "We will work together to bring help and healing to your problem. I don't wish to belittle your problem by working beyond my abilities as a minister. Sometimes we may need the assistance of another's expertise to fill in the gaps. But I will always be available for spiritual guidance and support for you and your family. I'll stay by you." Spiritual guidance and support are exactly what ministers are best at and what they are trained for.

The role of the church

The church should not expect pastors

to deal with these difficult situations alone. It is not their primary job. Plans should be made *in advance* to guide the process. A small committee of about three members could be formed. These may be chosen from professionals in the church: nurses, doctors, social workers, counselor/therapists, or psychologists. This committee could meet in advance to form guidelines as to what steps should be taken if abuse problems came to light. They may want to give immediate study to the reporting laws and the means of reporting in their community. They could outline guidelines for the confrontation procedures that should be adopted.

Plans for crisis intervention, awareness of local shelters, and provisions for emergency assistance to victims should be part of the church strategy. The perpetrator also may be in need of help.

Prevention is better. In cooperation with other church members with special skills, workshops or seminars could provide education as to what violence consists of and how to recognize it.

There should also be an emphasis on programs to aid in avoiding abuse. Included should be such topics as youth and dating, premarital counseling, parenting classes, and marriage enrichment opportunities. Seminars on conflict resolution, social skills, communication, and problem solving would be helpful. A congregation would more likely take advantage of all of these opportunities if they were presented to them, not only as a challenge to their personal growth enrichment, but in the context of meeting a real need.

This combined knowledge could be the means of alleviating some of the social stresses that often are associated with abuse and violence. Prevention of family violence should be a high priority in all our churches. ■

¹ Marie M. Fortune, *Violence in the Family* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991), p. 208.

² In Fortune.

³ Anne Horton and Judith Williamson, *Abuse and Religion* (New York, Macmillan Pub. Co., 1988), pp. 166, 167.

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Abuse: a sickness of us all

Bobbie Drake

Abuse is more than physical: it is destroying the other's self-worth and dignity.



Bobbie Drake is a licensed professional counselor. She is founder of Protocol Seminars and conducts seminars on sexual abuse gratis throughout the United States and Canada.

"Behold, a Pharisee stood in the church, lifted up his voice and gave thanks unto his Lord. He said:

"Oh Lord, I am so thankful that I am not like that sinner there. He abuses his wife. He beats up his kids. But I'm in Your work, Lord, and I try to set an example. I am always available to my parishioners 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The elders, board members, and the head deacon always have access to my office. They don't even have to go through my secretary."

"And Lord, I'm thoughtful, too, when I ask my college-educated secretary to get a person on the phone. I always tell her which alphabet to turn to in the phone book. To save my parish members time, I frequently meet them in the office lobby. Tasks can be solved more quickly if both of us are standing up. This lets me dwell on more important things like the letter I have to send telling one of the elders how to hand the collection plate to a deacon."

"Yes, Lord, thank You for making me Your servant."

You won't find that story in any of the Gospels. But the story is enacted again and again in many of our churches. The story is not an illustration of pride, but abuse in its most subtle form. Does it sound too exaggerated and too unrealistic? Not when you delink abuse from its most commonly understood form. The only way most of us conceive abuse is physical, particularly sexual. But a new definition of abuse is emerging from the helping professions: abuse is that act or attitude, in any form, that hurts another individual and denigrates that person's self-worth and self-esteem.

Abuse: can it be me?

Beyond the obvious physical and sexual types of abuse, consider the deadly and almost subtle forms that abuse takes.

Abuse can be verbal. A few weeks ago as I was walking through a department store, I heard, before I saw, a man berating his wife. The tone of his voice,

his stance, his body language, and his words told the world that this woman of his didn't quite measure up. I walked by them and stopped to examine a store item. Soon they walked past me, the verbal abuse still loud and clear. For the first time ever, I intervened. I told the man that whatever the woman had done, she didn't deserve to be spoken to in that manner.

Speaking to others in a tone of voice that denigrates their person cuts them to ribbons. Words like stupid, dumb, jerk, not again, you always, slob, bimbo, and others cut into the psyche of others, tearing away the self-worth God gave to them. At birth this self-worth is a thin veneer. As we grow, the self-worth should also grow. But abuse steps in. The cute baby begins receiving denigrating comments, so by the time the baby becomes a teen or adult, he or she is like a walking body, bleeding, torn, and mangled.

Abuse can be psychological and spiritual. Psychological abuse deprives those we love of their self-esteem and self-worth and leaves them hurting. No wonder we have a world full of hurting people.

Such hurt and insult, over a period of time, leaves people psychologically damaged and unable to reach their full potential. In fact, they may not even recognize they have any potential. A classic illustration of the long-term effect of abuse and hurt on the victim is the battered wife syndrome. The battered wife keeps returning to the abusive husband, not because she likes to be battered, but because she thinks that is all she deserves in life and is lucky to have that much.

Any time we denigrate, devalue, or

ridicule others we are psychologically cutting them to pieces, leaving them bleeding, wounded, and scarred for life. When we say things that build up others to the detriment of those present, we are psychologically abusive. When we fail to nurture spiritually when it is our privilege to do so, we indulge in spiritual abuse. When we don't take time to be with our loved ones, that's another kind of abusive relation. An attitude like that of the Pharisee, that he is somehow superior to the publican, is a form of spiritual abuse.

Abuse can be emotional and social. We hurt others emotionally when we fail to recognize their worth and appreciate their contributions. Self-worth increases to the extent it is recognized and appreciated. When we have the ability and the opportunity to build self-worth and yet fail to do so, to that extent we contribute to emotional abuse. It is abuse when we are so engrossed in our thoughts and activities that we neglect to understand

or appreciate others. It is abuse when we are short-tempered or even silent in our relationship to others. It is abuse when we fail to say please or thank you, for such failure sends a signal that the other person somehow is not equal in worth to us.

Abuse: what can I do?

In any case of abuse the most difficult thing to do is to recognize that one is an abuser. The wife beater does not recognize he is indulging in abuse. The child molester does not admit to his crime. In fact, secrecy is often the hiding place of the abuser. So the first thing to do is to recognize the problem for what it is.

Then recognize the worth of the other. Where there is this recognition—that the other person, be it a child, teen, spouse, or one who is different from me, is like me, a child of God—there will be full and total appreciation of the other.

Encourage the positive potential in the other. Give praise whenever it is due. Help the other to grow. Do not let words of negativism paralyze a person already hurting. Listen and try to understand what the other person is going through.

Use the spiritual weapons available to fight the sickness of abuse. Prayer is one such weapon. Submission to God's grace is another. Recognition and practice of love as a Christian duty demolishes any feeling of superiority of one over the other, which is at the base of abuse.

Church members have high expectations of their pastoral staff and families. Do you have a list of resources that you can quickly refer to? Do you have a network of agencies that can possibly help? Do we see others as people rather than as problems?

To acknowledge the existence of others and to affirm them in some small way is in itself therapeutic. ■

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The beautiful sin

John Glass

A pastor's frank testimony of sexual temptation.



John Glass is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Ogden, Utah.

Someone once characterized adultery as a "beautiful sin." That's the impression made by the secular media, but real life exposes adultery as a hideous, ugly killer. I know. Let me tell my story. Since adultery starts in childhood, I'd better start there.

Girls were something I used to worship from afar. Ever since learning that there are two kinds of people, I preferred the other kind. In the second grade I took great fancy to a pretty Brunette named Judy. One day I determined to kiss her. When she resisted my attentions, I resorted to pestering the poor girl for several weeks.

I used to dream about having a sister. In fact, I created an imaginary sister and spent hours talking to her. This desire for a sister and my obsession with Judy came, I think, from the relationship I lacked with my mother. She had been an adopted child, and the resulting feeling of abandonment must have left her with deep scars and a subconscious determination never to be hurt again. That would explain her emotional distance from me.

My brother was a couple years younger than I, and we should have been friends. We bickered constantly, though, which I understand is normal for children whose parents don't get along.

My father was spoiled by his mother and older sisters. Have you ever noticed the anger and impatience typical of spoiled people? They expect everyone to perform for them, and when that doesn't happen they become angry. My father was forever getting mad at me, whipping me furiously. He failed to

spend time with me and never seemed interested in me.

We were members of the small Adventist church in our town. My father didn't get along well with anyone there, and some of the members seemed to direct their animosity about him toward me. I came to view the church as a hostile environment.

After high school I attended a distant Adventist college, happy to get away from my "loved ones." For the first time in my life no one was perennially angry with me. That summer I gave my heart to the Lord.

In high school I rarely dated, because of the expense. I found dating in college to be more economical, so I proceeded to make up for lost time by dating 16 girls in the first 14 weeks. For the first time in my life I was enjoying life.

Just before my sophomore year, God called me to ministry. I was dating dozens of girls, but no one seemed quite suitable. It wasn't until my first church assignment that I found my future wife, and a year later we married. To this day she is still the most attractive and appealing person I know. On top of that, she's my best friend. So how could immorality ever invade our relationship? It's a sad but simple story.

Immorality intrudes

Several years and pastorates went by, and I found myself in a responsible assignment. Our children were the pride of my life. Seeing our sanctuary crowded with eager listeners provided an emotional boost each Sabbath. I felt like I was coming of age, with a real future in the church.

One of my parishioners was a young

wife who was raised in a difficult situation, leaving her with an unmet need for masculine attention. Jenny, as I'll call her, grew up familiar with sexuality—her mother brought home a different man almost every night. Jenny's idea of worth involved the power to use her figure to turn a man's head. She felt frustrated by the 50 extra pounds she still carried from her first pregnancy.

I became involved in Jenny's life trying to settle a running feud with her mother-in-law, who one day informed Jenny that she might as well get used to being plump. "I used to be thin until your husband was born, and you were thin until you had my grandchild. Face it, girl, you're going to be like this the rest of your life." Those were fighting words to Jenny, who proceeded through raw grit to lose all 50 pounds. To celebrate, she bought a wardrobe that did justice to her new looks. The effect was not lost on me.

In junior high I had contracted two serious problems: masturbation, and looking lustfully at girls, both of which provided me with "warm fuzzies." After my conversion, Jesus provided the solution to the sin of masturbation, but quite frankly, I was still "noticing" some members of my congregation. I knew that what I was doing was essentially immoral. People are multidimensional, not just sexual objects, and it is wrong to relate to them in a one-dimensional way. Besides, sexuality is restricted by the marriage covenant to my wife. My noticing was impairing our relationship, but I reasoned that it wasn't that serious a problem. I prayed about it now and then, but never became serious about quitting. I liked the warm fuzzies—the way I felt whenever I looked.

I still remember the day I first noticed the new Jenny. Her dress and the way she wore it would have been hard not to notice. Nice warm fuzzies. Jenny intuitively picked up on my looking, which fostered her sense of worth. More nice fuzzies. She began fawning over me. That gave me lots of fuzzies because, apart from my wife and children, no one had ever been really interested in me. I had always responded to anyone

who showed the least interest in me, and here was someone who was fascinated with me. My feelings for her were mutual; she "spun my wheels" every time I looked. We were contributing to each other's downfall. On top of that, my hat size was a little larger than usual, thanks to all those people who sat there listening to me each Sabbath.

Demonic idolatry

Human beings are not the only inhabitants of this earth. Although invisible, Satan and his angels prowl the planet, hunting for prey. Looking back, I recognize how zealously Satan sought my demise by taking advantage of a genuine human need. But what can I say? I was vulnerable because I was attempting to meet my own needs by providing warm fuzzies for myself rather than by trusting Jesus to meet my needs.

Soon I reached the excruciating realization that I was on the verge of an affair. This became painfully apparent to my wife also, who told me one Christmas Eve that if I walked away from her, even though I loved her and our children, I would never come back. I knew she was right, but didn't want to admit it. It was the saddest Christmas of my life.

Pray? I was doing it by the hour. The trouble was I was getting nowhere, and both Jenny and the devil knew it too. Like a hard disk crashing on my computer, I knew it wasn't a matter of *where* but of *when*. I was scared half to death because I was staring spiritual death in the face: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

New Year's morning the crisis came. I told the Lord what was going to happen, and with a brokenness of spirit I had never had before, I asked Him why that temptation had such a hold on me. My answer came in a flash of insight from the Holy Spirit: "You have an idol that you have never been willing to give up—you idolize the female form."

I suppose you could psychologically explain that my looking at girls was an expression of an inner need for an emotional relationship with a mother who had never let me be close. The warm fuzzies were a surrogate answer to my

real need for a loving mother. All psychology aside, the fact was that I had been cherishing temptation and that it was only a matter of time until I would commit the sin of physical adultery. It would destroy two families and my ministry.

That flash of insight brought me face-to-face with my besetting sin. "God," I pleaded, "I want to give this idol to You now. Please take it and forgive me."

Instantly the power of that temptation was gone. I was free!

Thank You, Lord!

That New Year's Day was one of the most wonderful I have ever lived. For the first time I was free from *having to look*. After dinner my family and I enjoyed several holiday telecasts with friends. I recognized the numerous appeals to visual lust that permeated the programs. The temptation was there to look, but in my newfound strength, my No stood firm. "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36, NKJV).

In succeeding months I had a difficult time quenching Jenny's advances. She incessantly chased me, apparently determined to ensnare me. I would be studying at my desk when suddenly she would enter my office. I had to be downright rude to her, and actually ran out of church one day before she finally stopped. I felt horrible about it, for my looking had incited an unholy response in one of God's children.

I had always thought that when Joseph was in the dungeon he sat there feeling sorry for himself. Now I believe he was telling God, "Thank You. Thank You! *She's* not going to be here!"

Since learning my lesson with lust, I've moved to a new district. More and more I'm experiencing God's true answers to my inner needs—which really do exist. I now know He will meet those needs in His own way. I also know that "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1, NKJV). He is building my "house," and with my idol gone, He resides in His rightful place at last. ■

The perversion of intimacy

Jeffrey Black

Sexuality is a spiritual act, not a biological one. It's a problem of not dealing with our drives but of sanctifying our hearts.



Jeffrey Black teaches at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, Glenside, Pennsylvania.

A lawyer once referred to me a counselee who had been involved in a series of sex crimes. He had been caught, arrested, and indicted by the time I met him. A believer in his late 50s, he was a widower with several children who lived out of state. At the time the sex crimes were committed, his wife had been dead for about 10 years.

The marriage had been very troubled; there had been fights, and he'd been thrown out of the house. His wife had been hospitalized on a number of occasions. She was said to have been clinically depressed. During those times the couple had had no sexual involvement, and the man revealed to me that he had engaged in several extramarital affairs when his wife had been hospitalized and unavailable sexually. He seemed to think that that made them less objectionable.

This man also told me that he had had several exploratory homosexual relationships, prior to his marriage, in his late teens and early 20s. During his marriage and after his wife died, he had had a very close relationship with his daughter, so intense that I thought perhaps there had been some incestuous things going on, but he said no. It was clear, however, that his daughter had functioned in other ways as a surrogate spouse for him. When she was in her 30s, she decided to move away. Approximately a year after that, he began sexual involvements with two adolescent males.

This case illustrates two aspects of sexual sin that counselors ought to bear in mind: *Immorality is a form of "cheating"* and expresses a pattern of "drifting."

Sexual immorality as "cheating"

What do we mean by describing sexual immorality as "cheating"? Typically we think of cheating in terms of having an affair with someone who is not your spouse. My meaning here is a little different. Ephesians 5:31-33 reads: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."*

Scripture is very clear that marriage is meant to "typify" the believer's relationship with Christ. Because God is both the creator of the marriage relationship and the revealer of the truths concerning redemption and our relationship with Christ, the meaning of the metaphor is authoritative. God Himself creates the similarity, rather than articulating a similarity that already exists. The principal subjects of the metaphor—the nature of the marriage bond and the believer's union with Christ—interact in ways that change or enrich our understanding of both. My experience of Christ in me helps me to understand what kind of spouse I am to be. Conversely, my experience of marital oneness helps me grasp something of the mystery of spiritual union (Gal. 2:20). As a result of my experience of union with Christ (Eph. 4:1,20, 21; 5:1), I am compelled to speak truthfully (Eph. 4:25), to build up (verse 29), to die to self, passion, or anger (verse 31) in relationships, especially in marriage.

Where does sex fit into the picture?

I believe it is intended to be at the end of the intimacy chain. Paul indicates that sex is the product or expression (1 Cor. 7:3, 4) of union. Sex never creates union. Not surprisingly, the world tells us the exact opposite. Sexuality as it is portrayed in the media leads to or produces intimacy or is divorced from the “problem” of intimacy altogether. In fact, it is often implied that the best sex is anonymous sex.

If marriage is intended to depict the sexual relationship as an expression of intense companionship and intimacy, then any sexual expression, even in the context of marriage, that does not express such a union falls short of God’s design. Scripture says that two become one, and God says that sexuality in marriage is supposed to be an expression of that companionship, an expression and consequence of that intimacy. If that is the case, then there are scores of husbands and wives within the church who are functional atheists.

What usually characterizes a marriage in which there are sexual problems? The wife complains, “My husband comes home, I haven’t had any kind of involvement with him, no communication. He says, ‘Honey . . .’ I look at him and say, ‘Who are you? Leave me alone!’ But he wants to make it better by going to bed. He thinks that it will make me feel close to him.” Though no flagrant immorality is involved here, there is “cheating”—sex without intimacy.

I called the behavior of my sex-offender counselee “cheating” because his whole sexual life—marriage, his extramarital affairs, and even the deviant sexual behavior he exhibited—was an expression of his desire to experience sex without intimacy. He was lazy. He didn’t want to strive for it in his relationship with his wife; hence, the adultery. He next found his intimacy in a convenient relationship with his daughter, which God says was no place for him to have it. I believe that is one of the reasons his daughter moved away. This man was a cheater. God had laid out a plan, and he had circumvented that plan to do things his own way.

As I counseled him, I asked about the possibility of getting remarried. He said, “Well, I just don’t want another marriage to turn out like my first one.” That’s understandable, but what was he really saying? He was saying, “I don’t want to work at intimacy. I want the consequence of sexuality, but I don’t want to achieve it in the way God designs it.” After his daughter left, this man attached himself to two kids who lived nearby. They began to serve this cheating purpose in his life.

Any time you see a person engage in illicit sexual behavior, you can be sure that person is a cheater. He wants sexual gratification without intimacy. That means that when you’re counseling someone who has a problem with pornography, a sexual problem in the marriage relationship, or even an involvement in some bizarre and perverted form of sexuality, at root that individual does not want to experience sexuality in the context for which God designed it. This person must be confronted with God’s program, and that program is intimacy.

Cheating and self-centeredness

When you counsel people who have problems with pornography, one thing to understand is that pornography has a very simple goal: masturbation. When someone produces a pornographic movie or magazine (in an industry obviously targeted toward men), the goal of that pornography is masturbation. Beyond that, the goal of the pornography and the masturbation is to create a substitute for intimacy.

Masturbation is sex with yourself. If I’m having sex with myself, I don’t have to invest myself in another person. People who are “addicted” to pornography aren’t so much addicted to lurid material as they’re addicted to self-centeredness. They’re committed to serving themselves, to doing whatever they can to find a convenient way not to die to self, which is the nature of companionship in a relationship.

The self-centeredness shows up in many different ways. When you talk to persons who are pedophiles (child

molesters), one of the most interesting things you will notice is their tendency to look at children as adult sexual partners. They don’t think, I’m having sex with a child; they tend to see the child as their sexual, physical, and emotional equal. To do otherwise would be to decenter, to see things through a lens other than their own desires and experience. That is dying to self, that is intimacy, that is companionship, that’s loving somebody else—which is precisely what they are unwilling to do.

Scripture offers the very best model for understanding this kind of sexual sin. The psychological literature offers countless explanations for these behaviors that are all designed to leave you preoccupied with your history, your experience, and your mother. But you will not have to face yourself and your own choices.

In contrast, Scripture always focuses on the heart. Because God plans sexuality to be an expression of oneness, any form of sexual perversion is also a perversion of God’s plan of intimacy. Whether you counsel a person whose sexual behavior makes you physically ill or someone with “garden variety” sexual problems in marriage, the problems always go back to intimacy and the root of God’s intention for sexuality. Genesis 2:18 (“It is not good for the man to be alone”) means that your most basic counseling intervention is to teach this person to die to self and to love others more than himself or herself.

An interesting sidebar in this particular case study reveals the divergence between biblical theological explanations and common secular notions about sexual perversion. While I counseled this man, I received a phone call from his attorney. He wanted his client to spend time in a sexual addicts rehabilitation center, believing that this would be viewed favorably by the judge at sentencing. I reluctantly agreed, since I did not believe that this person continued to be a threat. He seemed well grounded at that point, and I didn’t want to see him go to jail. I believed that he had repented, and was going on to do

some good work in counseling. So I agreed.

What a mistake! My counselee is not in jail; but in order to get a favorable sentence, he had to label himself as a sexual addict and agree to withdraw from relationships until he was cured. The irony, of course, is that he was being challenged by me to pursue legitimate intimacy in the context of a marriage relationship for the first time in his life. But because of the sex addict label, the court's goal was to keep him *out* of any meaningful relationship—the very root of the problem.

Sexual immorality as “drifting”

The second aspect of sexual immorality is “drift,” which is what I call a history of the heart. Let me give you an illustration.

When I was 17, I decided to buy my first pornographic magazine. This was a fearsome thing to me. I remember going to the local drug-store that had a little magazine section. I waited and watched to make sure nobody was looking. I picked up the magazine and rolled it up so that no one could see what it was. Then I stood around and wandered back and forth until I screwed up the courage to pay for it. Just as I walked toward the counter, the man behind the counter left and a woman took his place. I quickly turned around. I must have spent 45 minutes in that store trying to buy that magazine—but I did manage to buy it. As time passed, I bought a few more.

Then I noticed something: I wasn't rolling up the magazine anymore. I just picked it up, walked to the counter, and bought it! As a matter of fact, I started buying two. I still bought them only when the man was there. But after a while I didn't care who was behind the counter. Eventually I was even able to chat with the woman when I paid for the magazines.

People start out in what I call a “baseline comfort zone” in the way they deal with their own sin. God says that the nature of sin is such that as we continue to sin and quench the Spirit,

as we continue to sear our consciences, what was originally a very uncomfortable thing to do becomes comfortable. We begin to drift as we compromise. Sexual sin often starts as a terrible, anxiety provoking experience. But because of our lust, our desire, our heart set against God, after a while this reaction fades. We are in a new comfort zone. And after a while, if we do not repent, we drift even further.

Whenever I counsel someone with a sexual problem, particularly something viewed as deviant or bizarre, I expect to find a predisposing pattern or history that precedes the presenting problem. No one gets up in the morning and says, “I don't have anything to do today. I think I'll go expose myself!” Persons never leap into extreme forms of sin; they “drift” into them. When you counsel someone with a deviant sexual pattern, assume that he or she has a lengthy history of immorality that is unlikely to be disclosed without persistent probing. Typically, when you ask such persons what they did, they will tell you. But when you ask, “What else did you do? What led up to that?” they will answer, “I didn't do anything else.” Persist in your pursuit. Invariably as you spend time with such persons, you begin to see a history of compromise that makes the last thing not a leap but a baby step. In terms of sexual sin, the person has already drifted far away from God's standards.

Sinful “drift” is like going to the beach and falling asleep on a raft in the ocean. Suddenly your sleep is disturbed by the lifeguard's whistle. As you awake to the persistent, annoying shrill of the whistle, you ask yourself, “Who is that idiot whistling at?” You look up, and it's you! You hadn't planned it, but suddenly everybody on the beach looks like little dots, because you've drifted way out to sea. That's the way sin works. Sin always has a history. But remember that God also has a history with our hearts.

God's solution to “drifting”

That history is called sanctification. Sanctification is both positionally complete and dynamically progressive.

Psalm 119:9-11 reads “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” In John 17:14-19 Jesus prays to the Father, “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you would take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

Persons who drift live in a heart world of compromise and immorality. They continually think their own thoughts, scheming their schemes. But believers are called to sanctify themselves by meditating on the Word of God. This is God's solution to the sexual sins that trouble and torment many.

The Bible doesn't have anything specific to say about masturbation, because it doesn't need to. The problem with masturbation is not masturbation but the condition of a person's heart. Masturbation is merely one expression of that condition. Scripture is not inadequate, as some would say, because it fails to articulate a behavior mechanism for the purpose of dealing with it. God says that if my heart is kept pure by continually meditating on the Word in the context of God's sanctifying work, I will have the power to overcome the temptations that lead to indulgence, pornography, and masturbation.

Most people come for counseling because they are problem-centered. They ask for a technique to keep them from engaging in a certain behavior. They are hoping for a crash course that would enable them to utilize God to overcome a particular sin. Their desire for a quick solution may be understandable, but there is no technique, no mechanism—psychological, spiritual,

or otherwise—that will prevent them from indulging in pornography or masturbation.

God's sanctifying Word has not been steadily at work in these counselees, so in a crisis they discover that they're not equipped to deal with sin. They hope to find a quick solution that bypasses that ongoing work of the Word through the Spirit. In essence they say, "Quick! I need a little bit of God! I'm really in trouble here."

As a counselor, you can't give people something that God slowly perfects day by day. All you are going to be able to offer them is biblical information. What they really need is wisdom, but wisdom is what comes when God applies His Word to their lives. In the midst of a crisis, all the counselor can do is encourage the beginning of that process.

"Set apart" for God or the world

As we deal with the problem of sexual sin, it is important to acknowledge another factor at work. What the Bible calls "the world" is a system of values and beliefs that are aggressively seeking control of our hearts. The world also has (if I can use this expression) a "sanctifying" influence in that the world seeks to set us apart for *itself*, in contrast to God's desire to set us apart for Himself. Persons who come for counseling over sexual sins are those who have been "set apart" by the world, who have allowed themselves to indulge continually in the things presented to them by the world.

We must return to the biblical fact that sexuality is a spiritual act; it's not primarily physical. It always involves the human spirit, either in concert with the will of God, communing with the Holy Spirit, or in rebellion against that will, trying to push the Holy Spirit out of the way. The world wants to ignore that dimension and present sexuality as a biological act characterized by the buildup and necessary release of sexual tension. When the pressure is building, the world implies that we are powerless to resist. Even Christians think that way, misquoting 1 Corinthians 7:1-8 to bolster their argument

that marriage is a provision for passion: "Paul says it's better to marry than to burn."

But as many married people have discovered, the flesh is insatiable. It does not operate on the principle of tension reduction. The heart is insatiably pursuing evil. As Jeremiah 17:9 summarizes: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure." It is that problem that sexual sin reveals and that God's Word addresses.

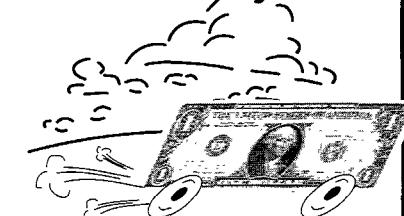
In that sense, everywhere I look in Scripture I see the issue of *porneia* addressed, the issues of masturbation, pornography, sexual perversion, child molestation, pedophilia, and all the other things people get into. The Bible does have a lot to say about them, but not from a technique standpoint. The issue is not psychological techniques. The issue is that God intended sexuality to be an expression of communion and intimacy. It's a metaphor for our relationship with Christ. We seem to find all manner of ways to circumvent that reality.

Sexuality is a spiritual act, not a biological one. It's a problem of not dealing with our drives but of sanctifying our hearts. When you counsel people, keep that in the forefront of their minds. Often, when people come for counseling they are terribly disappointed because they want a solution that doesn't require them to subject their wills to the Holy Spirit. Simply put, their approach to the problem is the problem. When you work with them, you're successful when you're able to help them recognize that the only solution is what the psalmist says—that if I hide God's Word in my heart, I will not sin against Him. ■

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When the problem is sexual sin . . .

John F. Bettler

A biblical model for counseling

How do you counsel someone with a sexual problem, particularly a problem of pornography or masturbation? This article assumes that a counselor has a sound biblical theology on matters related to sexual sin; it intends only to offer a brief sketch of a counseling model that might be effectively used. The model I often use is the three-level pyramid, which I call the pyramid of lust. The operative verse for this model is Galatians 5:16: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (NKJV). A person is either living in the flesh, which is this world's system (not necessarily the human body), or living in the Spirit. When you are energized by the power of the Holy Spirit, He works through the Word of God to enable you to live a godly life.

Lust object

This pyramid illustrates the different levels or degrees of lust or desire. At the top of this pyramid is the *object* of your lust for pleasure or release. It might be a magazine or an X-rated movie. Whatever it is, it is depersonalized in your mind and is simply an object for your use. For example, if you are promiscuous sexually, you are not having sex with a person; you are having sex with what to you is only an object. A man who is promiscuous is focusing only on objects of his lust, on breasts and vaginas. He is not focusing on the person who is his sexual partner. One of the first things I find out when I'm counseling somebody with a sexual problem is. What is the object of that lust? What are the objects of his desires?



John F. Bettler is the executive director of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, Glenside, Pennsylvania.

When
the unthinkable
happens...





"I don't think sexual abuse
is a nice subject to discuss!"
It isn't nice but such
discussions are necessary.

Abuse grows and thrives when
protected by Secrecy!

"I don't think anybody I
know could sexually
molest a child!"

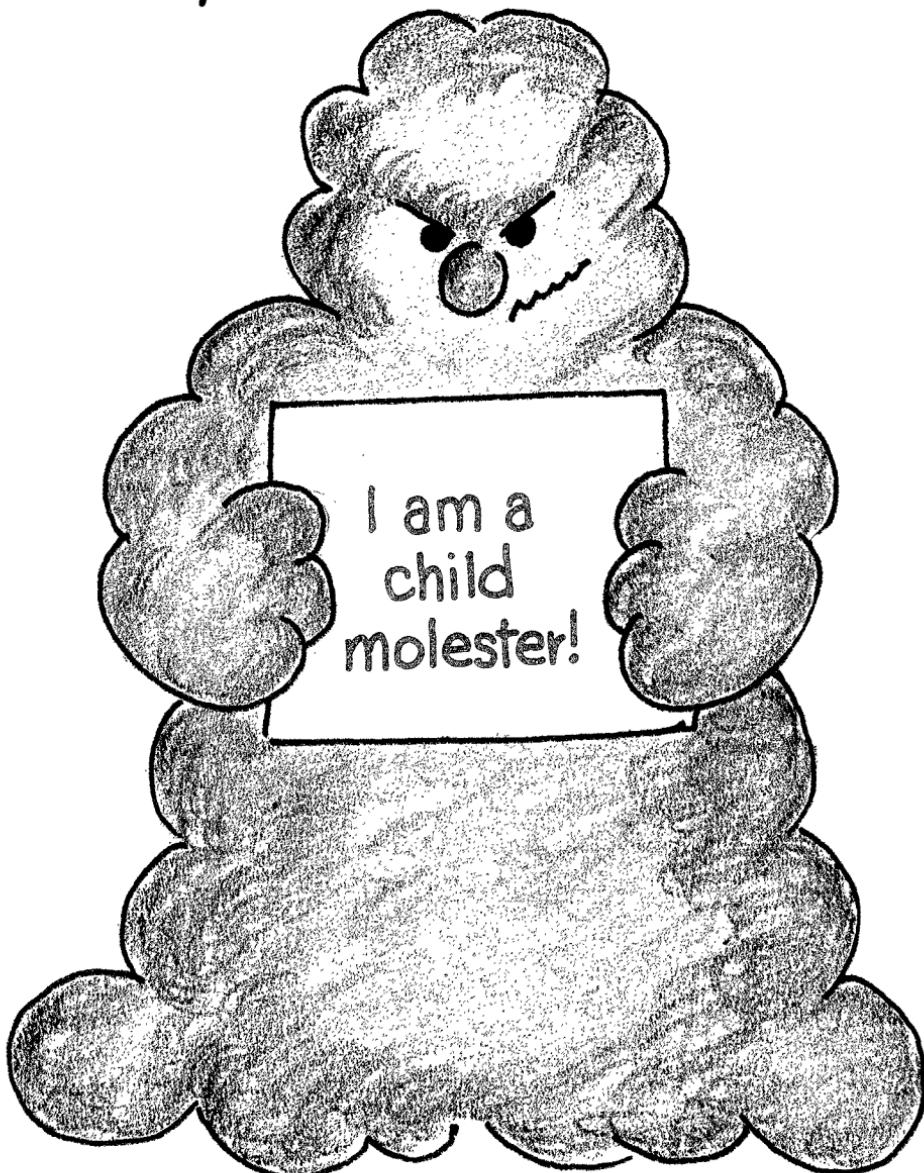


Unless you are a total hermit,
you almost certainly know at
least one abuser. One in every three
girls and one in every five boys is
sexually abused before age 18.

Somebody is doing it!

Most child molesters
look normal and act
very pleasant.

They don't wear a sign . . .





"I don't think we
should embarrass
anyone. Can't we
forgive and forget?
He said he's sorry..."

... That he didn't mean to ...

... He won't do it again ...

... It was her fault, etc., etc., etc.,"

No matter what the excuse, sexual abuse
is a **crime!**

1. Any sexual contact between a child and an adult is sexual abuse.
2. The adult is **ALWAYS** responsible.
3. Offenders learn well how to protect their deviant behavior.
4. They know when to plead, when to cry, when to pray.

**FEW IF ANY, EVER CHANGE
WITHOUT INTERVENTION.**





"I don't think parents teach their kids right. Why don't they tell them to stay away from strangers?"

If children could avoid all strangers, it would prevent only five percent of the problem. In 95 percent of the cases, the offenders are known to the child.

More than 50 percent of offenders are family members.



"I don't think it's such a big deal. Don't a lot of kids enjoy it?"

The human body, even a child's, was made to experience pleasure. When these feelings are exploited by a person the child needs to trust, there can be more damaging psychological trauma than from violent rape by a stranger.



"I don't think you
can believe children.
I'm sure they lie to get
adults in trouble."

Children cannot describe what
they have not experienced.

When a child discloses, BELIEVE.
You will be right 98 percent of
the time.

Offenders lie!



"I don't think
our church should
get involved with
a problem that only
happens in the world."



Our church MUST get involved.

Child sexual abuse does happen
in church communities - we need

to protect our children,

not the
offender!



I Don't Think . . .

I Don't Think . . .

I Don't Think . . .

STOP!!

It's Time



to wake up and
Think

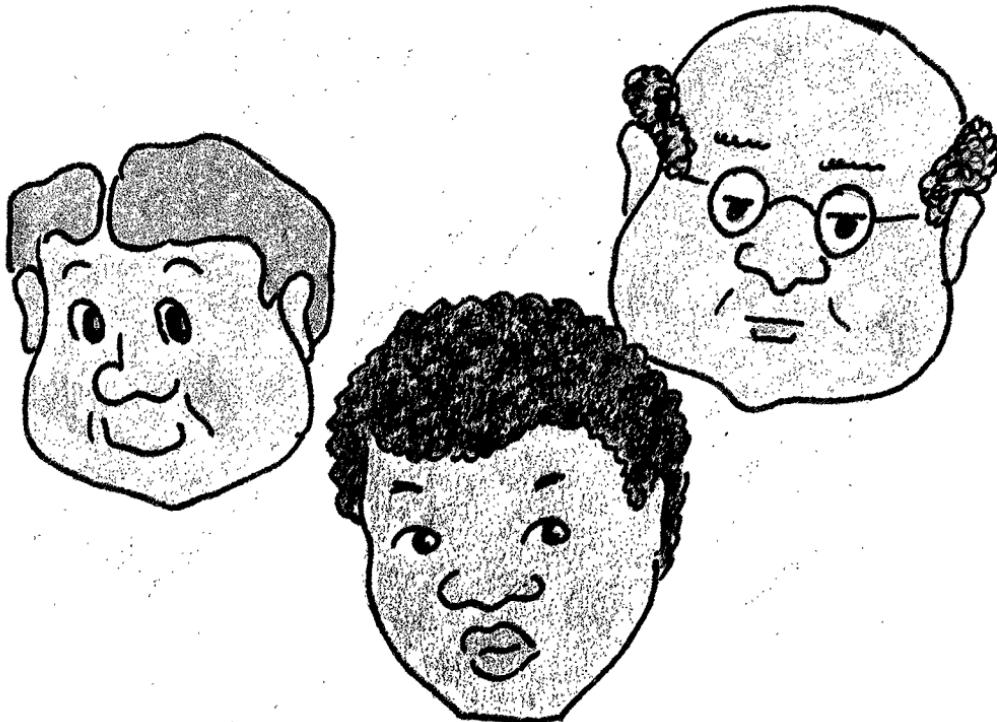
To understand child sexual abuse,

there are some things that

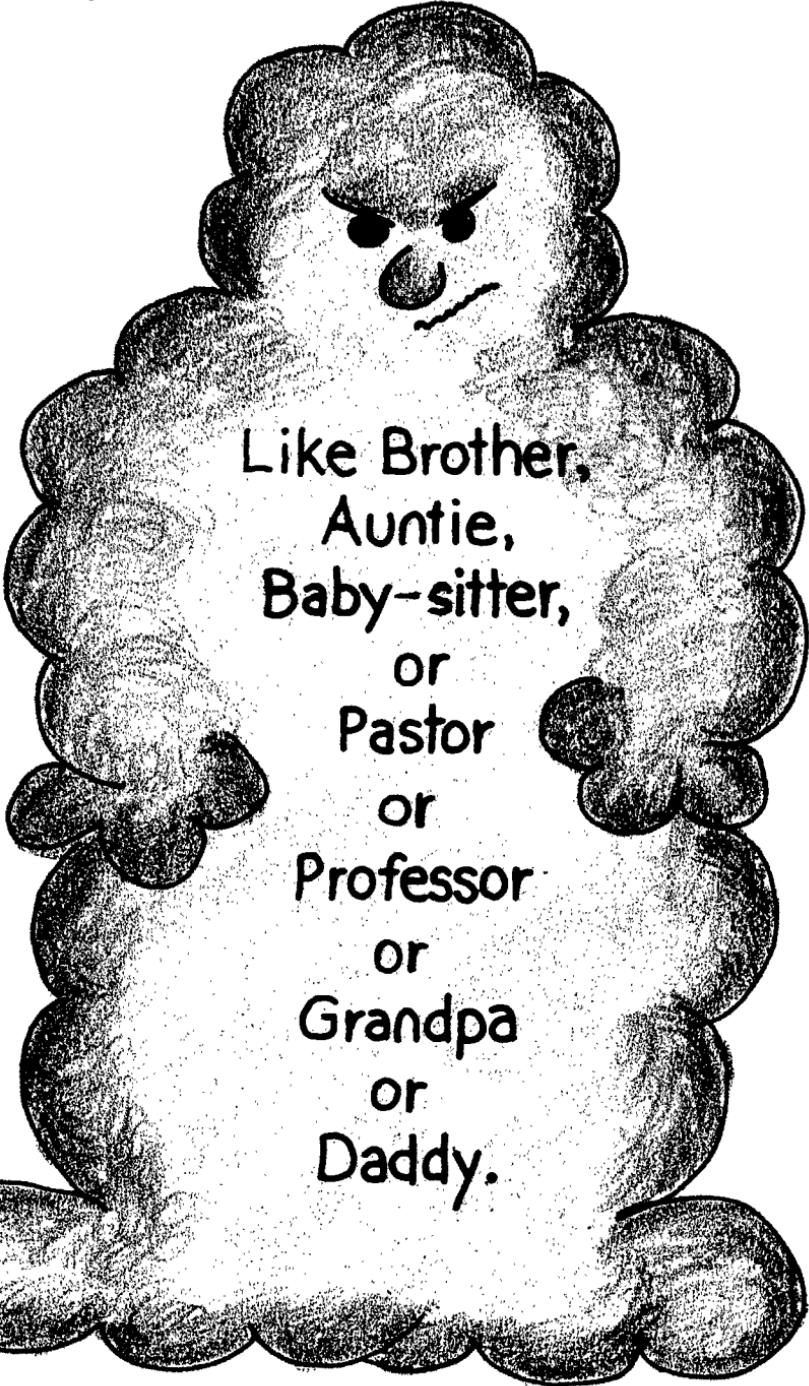
we need to know about abusers:

They are real people...

They have ordinary faces...



They have real names



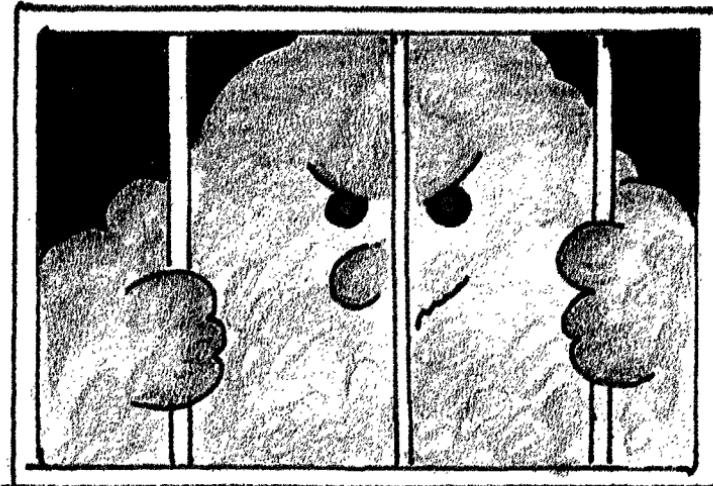
Like Brother,
Auntie,
Baby-sitter,
or
Pastor
or
Professor
or
Grandpa
or
Daddy.

Child molesters think differently.

NOTICE:

1. They believe their desires and needs are more important.
2. They need to have power and control over others.
3. Molesters always blame the victim.
4. Molesters consciously choose to molest.

We must insist that child molesters accept responsibility for their actions.



WHATEVER IT TAKES!

But our primary concern
must be for the
child victims----

Every child deserves:

1. Loving, protecting, nurturing families.
2. Privacy of his or her body.
3. The right to say "NO."

We cannot always be present
to protect our children
So we must help them protect
themselves



Teach them about good, bad, and secret touching. Good touching includes hugs from people who love you. Bad touching is the kind that hurts like slaps and pinches. Secret touching is when an adult touches private places and says, "don't tell."

1. Listen.
2. Talk to your child . . .
Keep communication lines open.
3. Be comfortable with your own sexuality.
Our bodies are not "dirty."
4. Give lots of "good" hugs.
5. Teach that God made our bodies wonderful,
so we must take care of them.
6. Some parts of our bodies are very special.
We must keep them private.
7. If a child discloses abuse to you . . . BELIEVE!
8. Report the abuse to the proper authorities!
(This is not optional)
9. Reassure the child that it was not his or her fault.
10. See that the child gets appropriate counseling.



Facing up to an incident of child sexual abuse is difficult . . .

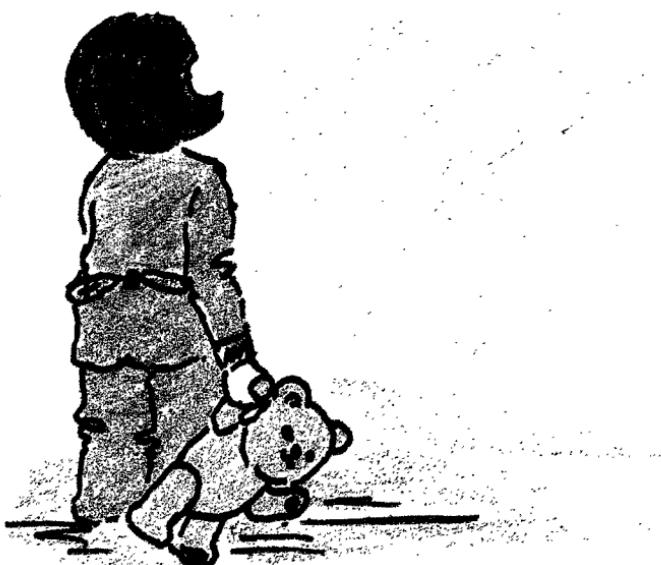
It can disrupt lives for months -- or years.

There can be serious financial, social, and emotional problems.

But

Ignoring or hiding such a crime creates greater difficulties --

1. The child is further victimized.
2. The offender continues to find new victims -- and more lives are forever damaged.



Child abuse is not
unthinkable

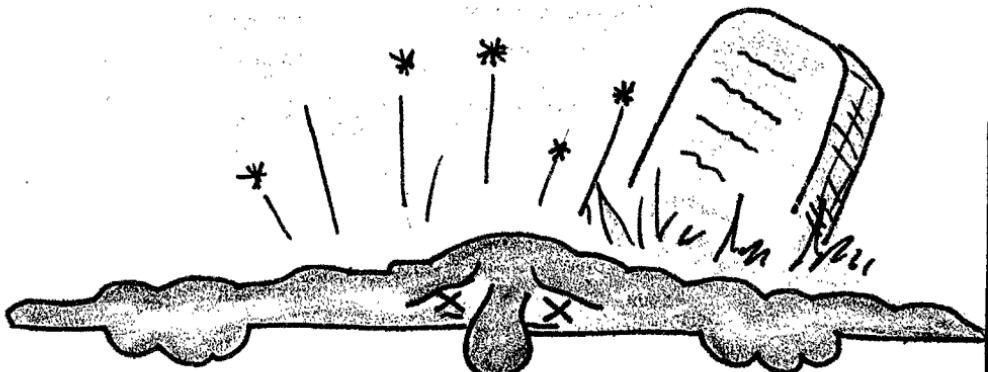
We can think about it --

We can talk about it --

We can help heal the hurts --

We can prevent further
victimization!

Think about it.



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Relationship lusts

The second level of the pyramid focuses on the desires of *relationship*. Remember, the Bible never intended sex to exist as something to pursue in and of itself. It's always meant to occur in the context of relationship. So when I talk to a counselee, I want to know what his relationship desires are. What are the relationship lusts? What does this person want out of relationships? For example, does he want to be close? Does he want to be distant? Does he want to be safe, or does he want to be risky? Does he want to get involved in the lives of others? Does he want nothing to do with people? In short, what are his relationship desires?

Life-meaning lusts

Finally, the base of the pyramid looks at what the person wants out of life—not just pleasure and gratification, not just relationship, but life. What does he believe makes life work? What's important? What isn't? What does he believe he must have in order for his life to work, to function, to be successful? What we mean by that, of course, are the issues and idols of the heart. What are the person's idolatrous desires? What are the heart desires that he thinks make his life work?

As foundational as this life level is, it's important to note that if all you do is focus on this when a person has a problem with sex, you're trying to invert the pyramid and leave it resting on a point. That doesn't work. You must begin where the counselee is and find out what the object of his desire is. Then you want to know what *relationship desires* color his desires for those objects. And finally you want to know what his *life desires* or *life lusts* are. Those are either going to be desires of the flesh or of the Spirit.

A case study

Let me show you how I applied this model to one young man's situation. This was a young, well-educated, professional Christian man, very active in his church. He was unmarried but had had a couple dating relationships, none

very serious. He came to talk to me about a problem with pornography and masturbation.

This man wouldn't fit the profile of someone with an "addictive" sexual problem (or what the Bible would term an enslaved sexual problem). He frankly didn't put a lot of energy into his sexual sin. He would buy an occasional *Playboy* or *Penthouse*, but it wasn't hard-core pornography. He didn't go to adult bookstores; he just went to the local drugstore for his magazines. He wouldn't even rent X-rated movies; he'd just find R-rated movies that the newspaper said had "a lot of nudity."

He'd bring that movie home and read his *Playboys* and masturbate. A young man is sometimes enslaved with masturbation and masturbates several times a day. This fellow did it only once or twice a week. However, this man was a Christian. He was under conviction, and he wanted his behavior to change.

A counseling strategy

As a counselor, how do you help him? First, you gather the information. You ask yourself, "What's the pattern? What's going on? When does he do it? When doesn't he do it?" Get him to keep a journal of when he is tempted and what's going on around those temptations. That gives you what you need to deal with the top of the pyramid, the object of the lust.

Next, what about relationship lusts, relationship desires? What does this guy want out of relationships? Just as he didn't put a lot of energy into his sin, this fellow didn't put a lot of energy into relationships, either. He didn't have any close friends. He had a lot of people he knew, but not a lot of people with whom he was really intimate. One family in the church was trying to take him under their wing and spend some time with him, but he was having a hard time opening up to them. He didn't let anybody get very close to him.

So what do I find here? What I find at the level of relationship lusts is: don't get close. Keep your distance. What this man desired from relationships was safety. He desired cordial relationships

but not intimate ones. He wanted it safe. Who's he thinking about? He's not thinking about the other person; he's always thinking of himself.

Then we come to the bottom of the pyramid, the life desires, the life lusts. What makes this man's life work? What is his idol? What is in his heart? You're probably already figuring it out: be safe. Don't take risks. Don't do anything with a lot of energy. This was a man who just got by. He kept his job, but he was never promoted, because he never put much energy into anything. He just wanted to be safe and alone. Then his life would be OK. There are lots of things in his life experiences that led him to that point, and in counseling you would explore them. But you want him to see that this is what's going on in his life.

"Get release whenever you can." That's of the flesh. "Don't get close to people." That's of the flesh. "Be safe. Don't take risks." That's of the flesh. I submit to you that the latter lusts are a lot more foundational than the first one. As serious as masturbation is, if you concentrate only on this and tell this guy to take cold showers so that he won't yield to his temptation, you're not going to help him. You have to deal with his relationship lusts and his life lusts as well. How do we do that?

A three-pronged solution

I take a three-pronged approach. For the top part of the pyramid, my counsel is 2 Timothy 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts." The strategy at this level is simply to get out of the way of temptation; flee. It's the Joseph strategy. To help him do this, we found someone in church to whom he would be accountable. This man was willing to call my counselee every day and say "How did it go today?" He was also going to pray with him. It's important to structure things so that it's much more difficult to yield to the desired object.

For the second stage the operative text was Philippians 2:3, 4: "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interest of others" (NKJV). When this fellow

was trying to play it safe and not get close, the only person he was thinking about was himself, his self-protection. To get out of that, he needed to find out how to get involved in the lives of others. We began to explore that, especially in terms of the family that was trying to "adopt" him. How could he begin to minister to them? How could he open up to them? What risks could he take to reveal some things about himself so that this family could help bear his burdens, pray with him, encourage him, confront him, and admonish him? He had to take the risks of getting close, and in his case that meant getting a little more honest about some of the things that were going on.

When we come to the level of life lusts and desires, the verse to turn to is 1 Timothy 4:7, where Paul says we have to "discipline [ourselves] for the purpose of godliness" (NASB).^{*} We have to work at it. This fellow didn't work at anything. He took it easy for the purpose of protection. He didn't discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. He didn't trust God enough to know that God could protect him and care for him and sustain him in the midst of all of life's difficulties. So here the assignment was "Take risks" and all that implied for work, relationships, and everything else.

With that brief summary, my point

is that if you're going to counsel in relation to what we call lusts, sexual problems like pornography and masturbation, you need a robust approach that deals with all of them. If you deal only with outward behavior, you'll have little success. Find out what the relationship lusts are, find out what the life lusts are, and develop a biblical strategy to deal with them all. ■

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Ministry Reports

Enthusiastic response in Samarkand

Despite determined opposition and difficult circumstances in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, the gospel was enthusiastically received in the city of Samarkand, where Johann Niedermaier, president of the Swiss Union, held a series of evangelistic meetings. The city is 70 percent Muslim. More than 1,000 people attended the meetings each day. Scores of them accepted Jesus, requested baptism, and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church family. Follow-up outreach and nurture is taking place in home Bible fellowship groups.—Martin Weber



New believers and their families await the baptism.



New members and visitors crowd the Adventist sanctuary in Samarkand.



This former palace of the Communist Party hosted the evangelistic crusade.

Who will heal the little ones?

Carol Carrell

Helping child victims of sexual abuse

First they tell me that there is no tooth fairy, no Easter bunny, and no Santa Claus. When are they going to tell me there is no Jesus?" A little blond, blue-eyed girl sits in front of the therapist with her chin held high, lips tight, and a look in her eyes that goes way beyond her 6 years. Why should she trust this person? She trusted before and was betrayed by a person that was called by God.

Working with children who are victims of sexual abuse by counselors and clergy involves some special skills, because of the dynamic of betrayed trust by a highly placed person. There is an added burden in helping children who suffer abuse from clergy, because the whole question of God's involvement becomes critical. There are countless wounded, bleeding children (many in adult bodies) in congregations and communities. Not only do we need to be aware of the warning signs of sexual abuse and exploitation; we need to learn to heal and prevent this ever-expanding epidemic from destroying our future.

Child sexual abuse seduction

The dynamics of child sexual abuse are illustrated by five interrelated stages of abusive interaction: grooming, sexual activity, secrets, disclosure, and suppression.¹

Grooming. Grooming means to prepare another, to desensitize a child to participate in sexual activity with an adult. The grooming behavior begins with the offender treating the child as special. Often the intended victim is the first child in a group of children to be acknowledged and the recipient of the last word of contact. Special gifts, trips,

and one-on-one time help to single out the intended victim from family or friends. There may be exaggerated promises of gifts, presents, or special times together. Unfortunately, parents and guardians tend blindly to trust professional caregivers, who may also be abusive—clergy, psychotherapists, health providers, and teachers.

In addition to the special bonding, the offender will start occasionally to add pleasant physical sensations. These may include tickling, brushing hair, back or body rubs, or hugs that last longer than hugs from others. The child begins to associate the pleasant physical sensations with the offender in addition to the feeling of being a special person in the offender's life.

Sexual activity. The process of engaging a child in sexual activity gradually expands with the addition of pleasant physical sensations. Up to this point, it is unlikely that any sexual abuse has occurred. Nudity is often introduced by providing opportunities for the child to observe the offender nude—after a bath or shower, or while changing clothes.

Pornography, whether video, audio, or printed, may be shared in a way that emphasizes the special bond and further promotes the secret aspect of the abuse process. The physical aspect of the abuse progresses from longer and longer hugs to kissing, fondling, masturbation, and eventually sexual intercourse. The perversely skilled molester will take the time to desensitize and make the child feel comfortable at each progressive stage.

Keeping secrets. The offender will attempt to isolate the child by bribery, threats, blame, intimidation, and, in the

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extreme, torture and violence. Bribery may include promises to buy treasured items if the child does not talk. Threats may include such statements as, "They'll send me to jail if you tell" or "You'll never see me again if anyone finds out." Statements of blame include "You didn't say no" and "You wanted to do it." Intimidation may come from saying something like "I'm an adult, and no one believes kids anyway. After all, I am a Sunday school teacher!"

Torture may include injuring the child physically during the sexual act or separate from the sexual act, and imprisoning the child for a short time. It can also include killing or harming a pet or animal while the child observes and/or threatening to harm the child's siblings or parents.

Disclosure. Sexual abuse is usually not reported. Because of the special relationship with the offender or the fear of reprisals to family members, the victim will often seek to protect the offender. Also, children frequently do not have the verbal or cognitive skills to understand and clearly report what has happened to them. When abuse has occurred over a period of time, children become confused and think the abuse was their fault; they feel partially responsible because they did not disclose at the start.

When the child does disclose the abuse, it is important to validate the disclosure: "Thank you for telling me." Children usually do not lie regarding sexual abuse issues.² It is important to let the child know that you believe the disclosure, not only to build therapeutic trust but to validate the child's struggle.

It is not necessary to have all the details and exact chronological order of events. (However, you may need to put them into chronological order later if you are going to testify in court.) Children remember by reference to holidays, school being in or out of session, and by their birthdays, rather than by months, days, or weeks.

It is important not to put words into the child's mouth about the abuse. This

is not the time to correct misconceptions or discuss proper names for body parts. This type of digression often confuses the child and reaffirms that adults do not believe children.

Suppression. Often, after disclosure, the child may attempt to return to the precrime state by suppressing, denying, and/or rationalizing the abuse. The child may even articulate the desire of wishing that he or she had not disclosed. "I wish I never had told. My life has been a constant up and down ever since! Nothing would have happened if I hadn't told."

It is important to acknowledge the need for times of respite and to provide physical and emotional safety for the child. The therapeutic environment should foster these things, and the therapist should become one to whom the child retreats for affirmation, support, and encouragement. Understanding the ambivalence and emotional distress of the disclosure/suppression process is crucial for the therapist working with child victims.

The impact on the child

When the offender is a person associated with God, the child is robbed of one place of safety and healing. God may become identified as a coconspirator with the offender to bring harm instead of hope to the child. Listen to the following as children tell their stories.

I grew up knowing that God loved me. I just thought it was because He had to, not because I was worthy, deserved love, or was valuable. I was just another obligation.

Jesus loves me when I am a good girl. Larry hurt me, and I didn't like it. He said I was a bad girl. Jesus doesn't love me anymore.

All you have to do is call on Jesus to save you and He will. Well, He didn't! And you want me to come to church and hear a bunch of false promises again? No thanks!

I can't get close to my heavenly Father. My biological father was a preacher who would preach hellfire and brimstone on Sundays and touch us girls in ways no father should. God

is my father's God—not mine! I would rather have nothing than endure the hypocrisy of the church. Every time I look at a preacher I want to scream "Liar, thief! If there is indeed a God, I hope He will condemn you to the hellfire and brimstone my father was so fond of."

These abuse experiences become the building blocks of pain, despair, and depression that can last a lifetime. As stewards of these children, we need to heed the warning signs, listen to the children, and feel and acknowledge the pain that has left them with long-lasting scars. Our children look to us for truth in words and actions that is consistent with God's Word.

Treating the children

The treatment process must respect the five seduction elements outlined above. In addition, healing includes equipping children to challenge inappropriate uses of authority in their lives effectively.

Numerous models exist for child sexual abuse treatment, with the processes divided into two phases: (1) crisis intervention and (2) treatment. Crisis intervention often requires complete life-support help for the victim and family. Central tasks involve reporting, providing protection, investigating, and planning and coordinating the range of social, legal, medical, and mental health services needed. The treatment process should be handled by trained, licensed, and competent therapists, experienced in child abuse cases.

Options therapists employ

Group therapy for children. One of the benefits of working in a group is that a child realizes that he or she is not the only one who has been abused. Each child can relate to other children who have endured abuse and have been told "not to tell or else." As children spend time together in therapy they learn to trust themselves, their peers, and the adult leader(s). The leaders carefully monitor the group process so that a child is not pressured to admit to something that did not

happen, nor repress something that did occur.

As group trust develops, the children learn appropriate social skills and sexual boundaries. They learn how to handle differences within the group structure and how to resolve conflict without threats, intimidation, or violence. Self-esteem that has been damaged and changed by the abuse can be healed, encouraged, and strengthened in an atmosphere in which the child is respected, valued, and cared for.

Group therapy for adolescents. Group therapy is a good choice for adolescents because of the power of peer influence, if that peer pressure is harnessed by the counselor for therapeutic benefit. Peers who have experienced similar trauma can be highly effective sources of support, care, challenge, and persuasion for teens who are dealing with the fear, rage, and confusion of abuse and family upheaval. They can also model inappropriate rage, avoidance, and annoying distractions.

The most effective groups are open: experienced members help new members; members are free to discuss and explore any issue; and members can ask questions and know they will receive clear answers. The most effective counselors are those who model godly values and appropriate behavior, who guide the discussion without controlling it, and who facilitate peer influence for the best interest of victims.

Family therapy. The goal of family therapy is to restore families to an open and nurturing system with the understanding that protecting the child from further abuse must be a priority before family reunification.

Families in therapy for sexual abuse are usually in disarray, are divided, and frequently are battling the criminal justice and social service systems. They are angry, frightened, resentful, and often in treatment involuntarily. The family therapist must firmly and compassionately maintain an abuse focus or the family will deny and defocus this central issue.

Individual therapy. Child sexual abuse treatment for younger children centers around expressive therapies: art, music, dolls, puppets, dance, and play therapy. These are also helpful for older, even adolescent children who are withdrawn into depression or hostility. Traumatized children who are unable to

child differentiate between genuine love and physical touch.

Struggles with the image of God. The child often has feelings of uncertainty toward God and may raise difficult questions. The counselor needs to distinguish the evil behavior and the offender's refusal to do God's will from God's grace. The child needs to understand that Christ suffered and can help heal. Gently affirm God's care, but give the child lots of room to work through the pain of felt abandonment and betrayal.

Fear and anxiety. Children will need assurance of protection from reprisal by offender, parents, siblings, church members, and others. They will need help to express fears and to sort out realistic fears from unrealistic ones.

Guilt and low self-esteem. Help the child vent feelings of guilt and encourage the child to receive God's unconditional love. Frequently reinforce the message that the child did not cause the abuse, nor is the child responsible for the chaos that follows disclosure. Identify and affirm the child's good qualities.

Trust and role confusion. Acknowledge the real harm that occurs when an important person betrays a child. Give the child lots of room to learn to trust you as another person in authority—but do not push the child to rely on your good qualities. Be careful to respect boundaries such as touch. Respect the child's wishes.

Anger and depression. Often children are outwardly depressed and inwardly hostile. They feel powerless because of the type of harm and may tend toward self-destructive or suicidal behavior. Gently lead the child to release pent-up feelings of anger and aim to support them unconditionally. Group therapy may be a good place to model constructive anger release.

Difficulty in talking about the abuse. If the child lacks language skills to talk clearly about the abuse,

Gently lead the child to release pent-up feelings of anger and aim to support them unconditionally.

verbalize their abuse experience respond well to the arts. These active, expressive therapies provide an effective forum for the communication and resolution of the abuse.

Art therapy includes several mediums, such as drawing, painting, paste and paper, finger painting, and collage. The visual image enables victims to express and communicate what they are not able to express verbally. With art therapy, children can change and alter the circumstances of the abuse, learn safety measures, and practice those measures. For example, by using a puppet they can learn to say "No, I don't want to. I am going to tell my mom now."

Treating children abused by ministers

When a child is abused by a clergyperson or Christian counselor, the significance of that person's role in the life of the child contributes a great deal to his or her harm. As a result, the following treatment issues become critical in the healing process.

Feelings of ambivalence toward the offender. Help the child resolve these feelings by accepting the necessary experience of a range of feelings and encouraging the child to express the full range. It is also important to help the

the counselor can show alternative ways to express feelings and thoughts. Encourage the child to talk openly and to break the pattern of keeping secrets enforced by the offender.

Preoccupation with sexual issues. Because of evil violations, the sexual innocence of children is lost. They are prematurely conditioned by sexual feelings and often become preoccupied with sex in inappropriate ways. Educate the child regarding sexual feelings and inappropriate sexual behavior and relating. This is done by modeling, discussing, and allowing for open sharing about sexual matters without ever crossing inappropriate boundaries.

Conclusion

One of the harshest judgments against sin is Jesus' declaration against those who harm children: "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:5, 6, NIV). One can scarcely imagine the horrific end of those who will face God one day with lives blackened with this unrepentant evil.

Naturally, the best thing would be for men and women to heed the warning and avoid harming children. When this does not happen, counselors must be prepared to help the little ones afflicted with harm. The wise counselor will be at least adequately prepared to treat children who are victims of sexual abuse and will continue to learn the most efficacious ways to provide that treatment. ■

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¹ See Roland Summit, "The Child Abuse Accommodation Syndrome," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 7 (1983): 177-193.

² But, as Grant Martin so cogently states, "children do lie." See his *Critical Problems in Children and Youth* (Dallas: Word, 1992), p. 107.

Child sexual abuse in society and the church

**Peter Mosgofian and
George Ohlschlager**

**The church needs
to set a moral
example in dealing
with child abuse.**

Sexual abuse against children is epidemic in the world and in the church. Child sexual abuse cases are flooding our courts, state agencies, media channels, and, because of abuse by ministers and members, church leadership councils. Because the church has largely failed to find effective ways to control this epidemic, the state is beginning to subject the church to its law, its prejudice, and its severe punishment.

Though epidemic in our time, sexual abuse is not new. Child sexual abuse, along with homosexuality, was common in ancient Sodom (see Gen. 19:5-8). Child sacrifice and sexual abuse through incestuous relations, common among the pagan religions of ancient Palestine, were strictly forbidden by God (Lev. 18:6-16; 20:1-5). Leviticus 19:29 instructs a father: "Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute."* The gravity of sexual abuse against children is also implied in Christ's sober warning: "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:6).

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is the use of a child as a sexual object by an adult or older minor child. David Finkelhor's seminal research¹ on this problem shows the difficulty of shaping agreed standards that define and evaluate child abuse—an increasing problem in social science analysis that reflects our post-Christian culture adrift from biblical anchors. We have synthesized biblical revelation, cur-

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rent law, and Finkelhor's clinical research to offer a simple cross-cultural standard of child sexual abuse behavior. This standard outlines a four-level gradation of abuse based on abuse behavior by the perpetrator, the age of the victim, the relationship of the victim to the abuser, and the severity of the abuse and consequent criminal penalties.

Class A: the worst abuse. This is the most harm-causing abuse by adults against children. It involves oral, vaginal, or anal penetration of the child by any body part (especially the penis) or instrument used by the abuser. This behavior includes physical assault, ritualistic abuse, and the use of terror and threats/acts of murder against children.

Class B: very serious abuse. This abuse typically involves direct genital fondling, kissing/fondling bare breasts, or simulated intercourse by an adult against a child. It can also be Class A behavior by a minor teen against a younger teen or preteens or by an adult with an older consenting teenage victim. (Legally a minor cannot consent to illicit sex, though it may mitigate criminal consequences.)

Class C: serious abuse. This involves kissing or fondling a child's buttocks, thighs, or other body parts, or fondling breasts or genitals through clothing. As above, it can also involve more serious Class B behavior with less serious relationships (other than adult to young child).

Class D: less serious abuse. This is noncontact (no physical contact), exhibitionistic abuse—exposure of genitals by an adult to a child, or Class C contact in a less serious relationship.

Sexual abuse is pervasive and harmful

Controversy abounds regarding the prevalence of child sexual abuse: Is abuse and the number of victims increasing? Or is child abuse being reported more? The short answer to both questions is yes: there is a persistent increase in abuse victims and in abuse reporting in the United States.² Recent studies of sexual abuse in Canada and England have also shown high and increasing rates of sexual abuse.³

In 1985 the Los Angeles *Times* randomly surveyed more than 2,600 men and women from all 50 states.⁴ This poll indicated that 27 percent of American women and 16 percent of men were sexual abuse victims—a staggering 38 million people nationwide. The Canadian study revealed that 28 percent of Canadian women and 10 percent of men experienced some form of sexual abuse as children. Sexual abuse was prevalent across all societal boundaries—rich, poor, and middle class; white and minority; educated or uneducated; and religious or nonreligious.

Studies of special populations show the terrible linkage of child sexual abuse to numerous human and social problems.⁵ A study of prostitutes showed that 60 percent were sexually abused as children, with two-thirds by their fathers or father figures. A Canadian study of juvenile runaways revealed that 73 percent of females and 38 percent of males had been sexually abused or exposed to pornographic materials.

Numerous studies have catalogued and evaluated the impact of sexual abuse on children.⁶ The physical harm shows vaginal infections, difficulty walking or sitting, unusual and offensive body odors, and loss of sphincter control with anal abuse. Harmful behavioral effects include refusal to be left with offenders, fear or repulsion when touched by adults, regression to infantile behavior (bed-wetting, thumb-sucking, etc.), suicidal thoughts and actions, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, self-mutilation, problems in school, running away, abrupt personality changes, nightmares and sleep disturbances, and delinquency.

The emotional harm involves guilt, anger, depression, anxiety and phobias, panic disorders, preoccupation with death and dying, and grief/loss experiences. Sexual harm involves increased sex with adults and/or other children, increased peer homosexual play, precocious or provocative sexual behavior, and excessive masturbation. Harm to interpersonal relations show isolation and withdrawal, difficulty relating to and trusting others, and tragically—in a per-

petuating cycle of evil—sexual abuse and violence against younger children.

The dynamics of child sexual abuse

Most child sexual abuse is incestuous—perpetrated primarily by fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, and father figures against their daughters and sons, nephews and nieces, and grandchildren. Incest is the least reported and least discussed form of abuse. Its pervasive secrecy, wrapped within the sacred boundary of family—a boundary too often defended by the church to the harm of victims—helps maintain the abuse. In fact, many churches in which higher abuse rates exist also reveal the dynamics of incestuous families. Experienced counselors and ministers will recognize here the patterns that foster other kinds of abuse: legalism, spousal abuse, emotional and verbal abuse, and the abuse and manipulation of power seen in toxic faith communities.

The sexually incestuous family is a closed, pathological, legalistic, and secret system. Tremendous energy is invested in hiding evil while maintaining a righteous and religious appearance. The outside world—the world beyond the rigid and narrow bounds of the immediate family—is portrayed as threatening, hostile, anti-Christian, and completely untrustworthy. Attempts by family or church members to leave the system and establish their own life are challenged with predictions of chaotic consequences and punished by hostile rejection.

The unholy triad. The three unholy rules of dysfunctional families—don't think, don't feel, don't talk—govern the incestuous abuse. Proper role and moral boundaries in the sexually incestuous family are confused, even nonexistent. Parents may talk more openly about sex, may walk around in their underwear, walk into children's bedrooms without knocking, and show little respect for the privacy of others. In the worst cases, parents and children alike may roam the house nude, walk in on anyone in the bathroom, in any state of undress, and inquire about, even coach, the sexual behavior of their children.

Denial and lying are normative in the abusive family. Abuse is usually justified as a form of discipline, or sex education, or family love. Abusers reward their victims for having sex with them and lying to keep it secret by giving them money, attention, affection, and avoiding physical abuse. Child victims sometimes have no sense of the harm done to them; they simply know nothing but a life of abuse and will report they were "learning about life" or "helping Dad relax."

Similarly, under the guise of godly authority, abusive clergy will presume to control the marital, sexual, financial, vocational, and other decisions of church members. Churches may deny or justify abuse by clergy as right discipline or just consequences. Church, male, and parental authority and child (and usually adult female) submissiveness are defended at all cost. Anyone who challenges these abusive dynamics is considered deceived, reprobate, or under Satan's spell, and is rebuked and shunned.

Even in a healthier church atmosphere children can be at some risk in relationships of trust with teachers and helpers who are in unique positions to molest children. Christian children, especially, are taught to "obey your parents" [and any Christian adult in authority], "that it may go well with you" (Eph. 6:1-3). This correct teaching, when corrupted by a sex offender, can make a child an easy target for sexual abuse.⁷

Sexual abuse for profit. Child sex-for-profit is a worldwide multibillion-dollar human slave trade that routinely brutalizes children through prostitution, beatings, torture, drug abuse, and murder. Children enter this deadly system by abduction, following abandonment by families, by sale from parents, and through international child slavery rings posing as adoption and relief agencies.

Divorce and family instability are key contributors to sexual abuse vulnerability. In one study, stepfathers were six times more likely to abuse stepdaughters than biological fathers were their daughters.⁸ A pedophile who had abused some 130 boys revealed, "For me, the magic words are 'My folks are

divorced.' [Most] of the boys I've had sex with came from single-parent families. The others had family troubles."⁹

The church and child abuse

The question is legitimately raised: Should the minister or counselor who sexually violates children ever continue in professional ministry? Legal trends—the growing liability for abuse, canceled insurance when pedophile restoration is attempted, and the crushing costs of legal defense and damages for some churches¹⁰—make it nearly impossible to restore abusers to ministry.

The wages of sexual sin and abuse against children in Christian counseling, in the church, and in society is terrible—it is corrupting millions of lives and costing hundreds of millions of dollars in legal damages and treatment costs.

The church should not only invest in remedial recovery but move beyond to emphasize prevention in every way possible. This includes training and education for sexual understanding and control, early assessment and intervention with at-risk counselors and ministers, development and maintenance of professional support systems, and genuine accountability. This work should become an integral core to ministry training in colleges, Bible schools, and seminaries and must be carried on at various organizational levels and in local churches. We must also, as the body of Christ, be prepared to deal with the moral and legal ramifications and the lengthy time it may take to quell this epidemic. ■

*All Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.

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¹ See David Finkelhor, *Sexually Victimized Children* (New York: Free Press, 1979); *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research* (New York: Free Press, 1984).

² See Finkelhor; Douglas Besharov, "Doing Something About Child Abuse," *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 8 (1985): 539-589; Diana Russell, "The Incidence and Prevalence of Intra-familial and Extra-familial Sexual Abuse

of Female Children," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 7 (1983): 133-139.

³ Canadian National Population Survey, *Sexual Offenses Against Children: Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children and Youth* (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1984); Anthony Baker and Sylvia Duncan, "Child Sexual Abuse: A Study of Prevalence in Great Britain," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 9 (1985): 457-467.

⁴ See Los Angeles Times, Aug. 25, 1985.

⁵ M. Silbert and A. Pines, "Sexual Abuse as an Antecedent to Prostitution," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 5 (1981): 407-411; A. MacCormack, M. Janus, and A. Burgess, "Runaway Youths and Sexual Victimization: Gender Differences in an Adolescent Runaway Population," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 10 (1986): 387-395; B. Bess and Y. Janssen, "Incest: A Pilot Study," *Hillside Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 4 (1982): 39-52; J. Goodwin, T. McCarthy, and P. DiVasto, "Prior Incest in Mothers of Abused Children," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 5 (1981): 87-96.

⁶ Jeffrey J. Haugaard and N. Dickon Reppucci, *The Sexual Abuse of Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988); Grant L. Martin, *Critical Problems in Children and Youth* (Dallas: Word, 1992); and William Friedrich, "Sexual Victimization and Sexual Behavior in Children: A Review of Recent Literature," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 17 (1993): 59-66.

⁷ See Roland C. Summit, "The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome," *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect* 7 (1983): 177-193.

⁸ See Haugaard and Reppucci.

⁹ See Sonenschein.

¹⁰ The Catholic Archdiocese of New Mexico is currently facing \$50 million in legal costs and damage awards, a sum widely considered capable of bankrupting the archdiocese. Report in *National Catholic Reporter* 30, No. 14 (February 1994): 5.

Three affirmations

Continued from page 4

sense of stewardship and integrity must permeate personal and organizational life.

Conceived thus, our task is heavy; our agenda is unfinished. But our ministry is neither unrealistic nor hopeless. The One who calls is the One who enables. He that has begun a good work among us will also complete that work. Only let us continue to plow, sow, plant, care, reap, and hope in order that when the day of triumph comes, we will be part of it. ■

Healing for the divorced pastor

David Wesley Reid

How can a pastor recover from the impact of divorce?



David Wesley Reid,
D.Min., is the pastor
of the First Baptist
Church, Reading,
Massachusetts.

Divorce is epidemic in America, scuttling nearly 50 percent of first marriages and 67 percent of second. As a pastor concerned about the general well-being of the marriage institution, I grieved when divorce visited my home. How could I not? Having been a minister for more than 20 years, I had seen firsthand the trail of tears divorce leaves behind. There are no winners, only victims. But I never imagined that one day my marriage would be numbered among its casualties. "Divorce may rear its ugly head everywhere else, but not in my home. My relationship with my wife is too strong." That was my assumption. How foolish! And how unwittingly arrogant! I learned the hard way that no marriage is in a fail-safe position, not even mine. All indicators suggest that the divorce rate for pastors is higher than it has ever been before. Why? There is no singular answer. Citing the book *What's Happening to Clergy Marriages*, a recent article in *The Christian Ministry* points to four common pressures on clergy families: lack of privacy, high expectations, constant availability, and financial stress.¹ No doubt these pressures may prove harmful at times, but it seems quite likely that the causes go beyond the particular stress points of the profession.

In the foreword of the book *Clergy Families, Is Normal Life Possible?* Robert L. Wilson suggests that the increased divorce rate among clergy may be a result of the changing trends of the broader American culture. He writes: "The minister and family are caught between what an American Christian was expected to be in the late nineteenth century and the sometimes grim famil-

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General Conference Ministerial Association

ial and economic realities that encompass most marriages in the late twentieth century.”²

The road to recovery

Recovery from divorce is difficult even under the best of circumstances, but it is especially treacherous for a pastor. Pastoral work is so morally sensitive that one false move can discredit a wonderful ministry in the blink of an eye. And yet the emotional, physical, and spiritual apple cart is so thoroughly upset during the recovery period that false moves of any kind, can occur with frightening ease.

Pastor and writer Jim Talley offers an interesting observation on why this is the case. He depicts a pie divided into four sections, labeled emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual. He presents each section as laying claim to 25 percent of a normal individual’s energy capacity; however, he notes that during divorce recovery that balance is radically altered. In the first six months the distribution shifts to 85 percent emotional, and 5 percent physical, mental, and spiritual.

Elaborating on this overwhelming domination of the emotional, Talley writes: “After about one or two years you sense that you really are recovering, but the downside is that you also realize how unbalanced you really were during the depths of your alienation. After three to four years you may pass the 50 percent mark, so that less than half of your energy is used for emotions, freeing up the other half for mental (17 percent), physical (16 percent), and spiritual (17 percent), purposes. . . . The better you get, the clearer it becomes how far down you really were.”³

How long does recovery take? At least three to five years, according to most specialists, including Talley. Sound intimidating? It is! In my early months of recovery I can remember being shocked by some of the thoughts and fantasies I entertained. Not only that, but I can remember my mind working overtime in an attempt to convince itself that the scenarios I was parading across the screen of my consciousness were really no big deal. No

big deal? Had I acted any one of them out, I would have destroyed my ministry, and worse still, deeply injured the Lord I love.

God is a rescuing God

The most important thing pastors can carry with them through the stormy seas of divorce recovery is the deep personal assurance that God is a rescuing God. Clearly this is the umbrella message of the Bible. As such, the Lord is driving home a point. He wants to save us, no matter the painful circumstance or its causes. This truth provides enormous comfort and confidence during the dark days, when instability reigns supreme, when the demands of pastoral life outweigh personal resources, and when hope for recovery, stability, and health seem dim.

During the divorce experience a pastor faces enormous pressures. In the first year after my divorce I spent hours walking alone at night, trying to hush the thunderous noise within my being that these pressures created. Sometimes I walked to the point of exhaustion before the cacophony of sound quieted sufficiently for me to hear the still, reassuring voice of God that whispered confidence and strength into my soul. But hear that voice I did! Every night, without fail. God never abandoned me. He never shouted into my soul’s ear what I often found myself shouting: “You blew it, David! You’ve failed in a big way.” No, instead I heard the message of His forgiving love, His unyielding encouragement, and His matchless power. In short, I heard the message that so many broken servants of the Lord have heard before me: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).* In this way, and in many others as well, the Lord rescued me.

With this knowledge firmly established in the heart and mind, I believe the stage is set for pastors to do their part to take control of the healing process. As I see it, there are four crucial steps that can and should be taken.

Four crucial steps

Seek counseling. The pastor needs to

search out and submit to the assistance of a competent Christian counselor. How I wish that someone had pressed this point with me in the early stages of my divorce recovery! Sadly, it didn’t happen that way.

As a part of my graduate education I had received several years of formal training in psychology, developing a good understanding of my own intrapersonal dynamics along the way. That fact, combined with the learning that comes from more than two decades of pastoral ministry, and a disposition that is inclined to careful introspection, led me to conclude that I could “make it” without the assistance of formal counseling. Not that I was trying to be foolishly independent. Not at all. I simply underestimated the depth of my need.

No support system, as splendid as it may be, is a suitable substitute for the kind of “freeing up” that emerges in a structured counseling setting. I learned this the hard way. Several years after my divorce I awakened one morning to a level of anxiety and sadness that I never dreamed was lurking ominously in the inner recesses of my brain, waiting for the right moment to pounce on my conscious mind. “Where did this come from?” I asked myself as I sought to restrain the panic that accompanied these unexpected and undesirable guests. What I soon learned is that despite my having been surrounded by loving and caring persons who were wonderfully supportive all through my divorce process, there were feelings of grief that went far deeper than any of these supporters could reach.

Enter the counselor. Over the next several weeks tears flowed—in abundance. I asked for, and was lovingly granted, a two-month leave of absence from my work. For the first time in my ministry I needed to step back from my pastoral tasks to resolve disturbing emotions that for too long I had unwittingly put on the back burner.

I now have committed myself to a proper season of Christian counseling, something I should have done when my former wife uttered the words “I want

a divorce." The outcome? Freedom! With each passing day a new lightness comes to my mental step. Gone, or at least going, is the hidden burden of unresolved pain. In its place is a real and lasting sense of peace.

Find friends. Another crucial step is the cultivation of same-sex, mature Christian friendships. Gordon MacDonald, pastor, and author of numerous books and articles on the experience and expression of Christian faith, cites six kinds of friends that are necessary to ensure a believer's spiritual vitality during crisis situations. They include: the sponsor, the affirming, the rebuker, the intercessor, the partner, and the pastor.⁴

In my experience I found that each of these different kinds of friendships was important, but my need for an affirming friend was the greatest of all. Divorce hurt me deeply. Failure hung like a heavy fog around my whole being. I desperately needed an ally whose affirming love would help lift it away. One man in particular accomplished this for me. He came alongside me from the very beginning, speaking, sometimes shouting, encouragement into my ears. "You can do it!" was his constant message, not always expressed in words, but always communicated in spirit.

Join a recovery support group. A third crucial step in the divorce recovery process is for pastors to search out and participate in a divorce recovery support group.

Each experienced participant in a support community for separated and divorced persons has been there, and is often in a position to guide them by sharing knowledge that is informational in content and inspirational in effect.

Such information includes one's intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics. In addition, listening carefully to the thoughts and feelings of the opposite sex also provides significant learning. Sound ludicrous? It's not. Very often marriages, including pastors' marriages, break down because one or both parties has never learned how the other person thinks, feels, and problem solves. Divorce recovery groups allow

for a "safe" give and take between men and women, a process that teaches much about some less-than-obvious *real* differences between the sexes.

The inspiration that the support group provides is simple—*hope!* Being with and learning from other men and women who have been where you are, and who are now feeling better, is a wonderful hope-infusing experience. On the evening after my first meeting with my recovery community, I received a telephone call. "Hello, David? This is Bruce." After a brief moment of trying to identify the caller, I discovered I was speaking with one of the group's coleaders. "David, I listened carefully to what you had to say last night, and I would like to get together with you to hear more about your situation."

Pastors are often unaccustomed to being cared for like this. I agreed to meet him the following evening. I poured out my soul to him, and with each comment, each tear, I could feel a measure of hope slowly pressing itself into my being. Bruce had traveled through the dark tunnel of divorce a few years before, and now he was beginning to see the light at the other end. I needed to see that.

Three suggestions. One, meet with a recovery group in a place outside your pastoral district. "Opening up" is a lot easier when there is confidence that the personal details presented is not likely to wend its way back to the flock. Two, if possible, select a support community that is Christ-centered. Christians look at things like the sanctity of marriage, the importance of confidentiality, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a very different light than most nonbelievers. Three, make a pact with yourself and the Lord that you will not date another group member, and *stick to it*. This is critical! Most people (and pastors are no exception) who are still at the support group stage of divorce recovery are far too vulnerable to begin dating. What may seem like love will likely be nothing more than unmet need, feeling the sudden rush of much-needed affection.

Put your experience to constructive use. The fourth step in taking control

of the recovery process is to put one's own experience to constructive use in ministry. Says Paul: "Comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Cor. 1:4). The apostle affirms that one of the best ways to cope with suffering is to use it as an instrument to convey God's love to others. When that happens, a most amazing thing takes place: both the recipient and the giver experience healing.

How does this happen? How does a person recover fully? I don't have the faintest notion, but I know it happens. It has happened to me. The dynamics of the kingdom of God make that possible. ■

*All Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.

¹ "On the Home Front," *The Christian Ministry*, March-April 1993, p. 7.

² In Paul Mickey and Ginny W. Asmore, *Clergy Families: Is Normal Life Possible?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervon, 1991) p. 9.

³ Jim Talley with Leslie H. Stobbe, *Life After Divorce: A Single Mother's Guide* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Navpress, 1991), pp. 30, 31.

⁴ Gordon MacDonald, *Restoring Your Spiritual Passion* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1986), pp. 179-204.

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Family violence: a Christian response

Karen and Ron Flowers

How to combine courage and compassion in dealing with family violence



Karen and Ron Flowers are directors of family ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

You've met her. She's visited your office, with bruises carefully camouflaged beneath makeup and a turtleneck.

You've seen her lower her eyes and study the floor when abuse and family violence were addressed openly, unable to disclose her pain.

She is among the one in four murder victims in England and Wales, killed by their husbands. She is one of the three to four million women battered every year in the United States by their husbands or partners. She is part of the staggering statistic in Papua New Guinea where 67 percent of wives suffer marital violence. Her injuries are charted in emergency rooms and police records from Scotland to Poland to Vanuatu to Columbia. Her story is transcribed in divorce court proceedings in Egypt, Jamaica, or Greece, where as many as one in five divorces is granted on the grounds of cruelty. As a child, she had a one-in-three chance of being sexually abused. In old age she will again be highly vulnerable to assault.¹

Abuse and family violence represent a significant threat to the well-being of individuals and societies worldwide. Abuse is blind to age, social status, color, culture, and creed. There is no typical victim of abuse and no typical perpetrator, except insofar as the victim is, overwhelmingly, female (95 percent) and the perpetrator male.

Abuse in the Adventist community

The Seventh-day Adventist faith community is not immune. Significant levels of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse were reported by the nearly 8,000 randomly selected respondents to the Adventist Family Study initiated in

1994 by the General Conference Department of Family Ministries, now completed in parts of seven world divisions. In the division reporting the highest incidence, 18 percent of female respondents reported sexual abuse. As many as 43 percent of women responding in one division reported physical abuse. Among the divisions participating, a high of 69 percent of women reporting said they have experienced emotional abuse. Incidence of abuse perpetrated against males among divisions participating were 12 percent, 37 percent, and 55 percent for sexual, emotional, and physical abuse respectively.²

Last year the Southeastern California Conference family ministry committee conducted a study on family abuse among Adventists. The study elicited a response rate of 35 percent from a randomly selected population of Adventist members in the conference, covering all ethnic groups. Forty percent of the respondents said yes to the question, "Were you ever the victim of physical abuse in your home up to age 18?" Forty-three percent "reported verbal abuse in the homes in which they were reared up to the age of 18." Other findings include: "Females were three times more likely to suffer abuse than males. And children were more likely to be victimized than adults. Fifty-six percent of the respondents said that physical abuse had been directed toward them or their siblings in the home in which they were reared."³

Certainly these wounded individuals and families deserve a compassionate response from the church. To respond with acceptance, understanding, comfort, and practical help is the moral responsibility of Christians and tangible evidence of the presence of Christ in our midst.

A practical approach

There is often, however, a gulf between belief and practice, between conscience and duty. So what constitutes a practical and appropriate church response to abuse and family violence? How can pastors prepare themselves and their congregations in facing abuse and family violence in their midst?

We believe the gospel calls the church to:

■ *Affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and family violence.* In too many circles a woman's value is still based upon her marriageability and fertility. Christians affirm that the Creator and the Redeemer has placed inestimable worth on every individual not on the basis of who we are or anything we have or have not done, but on the basis of who Jesus is and what He has done. Seventh-day Adventists, fulfilling their call to herald the message of the three angels of Revelation, cannot call the world to worship Jesus as Creator and Redeemer without striking this higher note for women and children, who count for little in the societies around them, but are precious in His sight.

■ *Identify abuse and violent behaviors for what they are.* The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, an interfaith organization, identifies four basic types of abuse and family violence: physical, sexual, and psychological, assault and attacks against pets and property.⁴ Pastors will need to educate many members regarding the kinds of specific behaviors and attitudes that constitute abuse, particularly when these behaviors and attitudes are commonly accepted or culturally prevalent.

■ *Recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved.* The pain experienced by persons who are deceived, exploited, and betrayed by someone they should have been able to trust for love and nurturance defies expression.

Without doubt, surviving family abuse is a costly phenomena. It consumes a significant amount of energy on the part of individuals in Adventist pews and in the communities around as

they attempt to deal with the issue. This energy is needed to enjoy fully relationships among family members and friends. It is energy no longer available for service in the name of Christ.

■ *Break the silence and create an atmosphere in which secrets can be told and help can be found.* The first step in both prevention and intervention is for your local church to acknowledge the hard facts. Churches in which abuse and family violence are addressed openly—in sermons, seminars, in the newsletter, on the bulletin board, through cooperative community efforts to protect survivors and strengthen families in a preventive mode, etc.—are churches in which abusive families can find the courage to tell someone about their situations and find help.

■ *Identify the full range of resources available and assist victims, abusers, and their families in accessing these resources.* To deal effectively with abuse and domestic violence requires the utilization of the full range of services available through preventive education, the professional services provided by mental health specialists and social agencies, and support networks. While the pastor and the church play an important support role in assisting abuse victims and their families, unless pastors are licensed as mental health professionals he or she is ill-equipped to deal with the treatment needs. Referral is the only responsible course of action.

Pastors should acquaint themselves with the network of services available within the congregation and the surrounding community. Professionals in your congregation may be able to help locate such resources. Talk to pastors of other churches in your community to find out to whom they refer and the services they have found helpful to their members.

Making your parishioners aware of these services helps abusive families with information as to where to seek help. Many will also need your help to access these services. Some need courage to face what for them is an intimidating situation. Others will need your help to verbalize

their situation to a stranger. Still others will need very practical help, such as child care, transportation, etc.

■ *Hold abusers accountable for their actions.* A pastor's first responsibility is to protect the victim and her children from further abuse and violence. Making a report to law enforcement is, in many places, the legal responsibility of the pastor.

Professionals who treat abuse and family violence, even abusers who have been successfully rehabilitated, strongly advise that pastors and church communities resist the temptation to move too quickly in urging forgiveness and reconciliation in abusive families. Abusers must be led to take full responsibility for what they have done, to make restitution in every way possible for the damage they have created, and to seek treatment that can result in changed attitudes and behavior. Only after this step has been taken, is it safe to open the possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings.

■ *Address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons.* It is common for victims of abuse and family violence to feel that God has abandoned them, to blame themselves for creating the situation in which they find themselves, and to wonder if God can ever forgive them for the disruption in their families. Pastors can do much to change the perception that victims are to blame for their circumstances. Caring church members can provide reassurance, encouragement, and practical help at this time of deep distress.

■ *Strengthen families.* Pastors can do much to slow the forces of abuse and family violence by becoming intentional about strengthening families through marriage enrichment, parent education, and the development of a broad spectrum of relational skills.

¹ See *Violence Against Women in the Family* (United Nations, 1989).

² From a preliminary report of the Adventist Family Study made to the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, April 1995.

³ See Fred Kasischke and Audray Johnson, "Adventists and Family Crises: Getting the Facts," *Adventist Review*, August 18, 1994, pp. 15-17.

⁴ Excellent resources are available for pastors from the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, Washington 98103.

Parsonage allowance alert

Thomas E. Wetmore, Associate General Counsel, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Your help is needed to contact your U.S. senator or representative to urge their support for a legislative solution to counteract a change in position that the Internal Revenue Service has taken with respect to self-employment (SECA) tax and the amount of the pension benefit excluded as a housing allowance by a retired minister.

Churches and ministers have generally interpreted the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code so as to allow an amount received by a retired minister from his or her church retirement plan to be excluded from his or her gross income as a housing allowance. It has also been understood that it was not subject to self-employment (SECA) tax, which active ministers must pay on their housing allowance exclusion. These interpretations had been supported by the IRS in its rulings and its own Publication 517.

However, in the past several years, the IRS has taken a contrary position by determining in audits of ministers that the amount of the pension benefit excluded as a housing allowance by a retired minister is subject to self-employment (SECA) tax. The IRS has recently issued examination guidelines to be used by its auditors when auditing a minister that instruct IRS auditors to take this position. The IRS did not, however, change its Publication 517 which instructs ministers not to include "in gross income for figuring net earnings from self-employment . . . pension payments or retirement allowances you receive for your past qualified services."

Representatives Clay Shaw and Ben Cardin have introduced legislation (H.R. 528) in the U.S. House of Representatives that contains a provision that clarifies that the amount of retirement benefits taken as a parsonage allowance is not subject to the self-employment tax. Senators David Pryor and Charles

Grassley have introduced similar legislation (S. 881) in the Senate. These bills, entitled "The Church Retirement Simplification Act of 1995," contain provisions that are supported by Church Alliance, a coalition of approximately 30 denominational benefit boards, and that will greatly simplify the rules to

which church benefit plans are subject. *Ministry* magazine encourages active and retired ministers to write to their members in Congress and urge them to support and cosponsor the efforts of Representatives Shaw and Cardin and Senators Pryor and Grassley. The sample letter below is for your reference. ■

Sample Letter

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20519

or
The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: The Church Retirement Benefits Simplification Act

Dear Representative [or Senator] _____:

I am writing to ask you to cosponsor the Church Retirement Benefits Simplification Act of 1995 (H.R. 528) introduced by Representatives Ben Cardin and Clay Shaw [or (S. 881) introduced by Senators Charles Grassley and David Pryor]. Hearings have been held by both the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee on similar bills that were introduced during the past three congresses.

A provision of this bill clearly represents the need for this comprehensive piece of legislation. For almost 40 years the various denominations and the IRS have interpreted the Internal Revenue Code so as to allow an amount received by a retired minister from his or her church retirement plan to be excluded from his or her gross income under IRC Section 107 and also not subject to the self-employment (SECA) tax that active ministers must pay on their housing allowance exclusion. However, the IRS has recently issued examination guidelines to be used by its auditors when auditing a minister that state that the housing allowances of retired ministers' church pension benefits "are includable in net earnings from self-employment and are subject to self-employment tax." This position is contrary to IRS's own Publication 517. These examination guidelines, if allowed to stand, effectively increase a retired minister's tax burden without congressional approval. This is the type of bureaucratic interference that H.R. 528 [or S. 881] would prevent.

The legislation would also bring uniformity and consistency to the rules that apply to church retirement plans by locating them in one place in the Internal Revenue Code, would avoid inadvertent change to those rules, would clarify that chaplains can participate in their denomination's retirement program when they are serving the denomination outside the local church (for example, in a prison or secular hospital), and would clarify that SECA tax is not payable upon the portion of a retired minister's pension that is claimed as parsonage allowance.

I am aware that the revenue impact of legislation is very important to you. The staff of the Joint Tax Committee has previously estimated the revenue effect of similar legislation that was introduced in the last Congress. The staff determined that there would be only negligible effect upon revenue.

Again, we urge you to cosponsor H.R. 528 and support Representatives Cardin and Shaw [or S. 881 and support Senators Pryor and Grassley] in their efforts to simplify and make consistent the rules that apply to church retirement programs.

Sincerely yours,



Abuse: what must pastors do

James A. Cress

Abuse. The word is so ugly that we want to believe it could never happen in our church. But it does—in every denomination, including ours.

Adults are the victims of some abuse. More often, however, children are the targets. Child abuse refers to any act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust that is not accidental and that harms or threatens to harm a child's physical health, mental health, or welfare.

What can pastors do to reduce the potential for abuse in their congregations? While the following list is not exhaustive, it lays down some concrete objectives and identifies some potential danger signals. Your input is invited and will be shared in the future.

■ Recognize that abuse has many forms. Sexual abuse by clergy is the most obvious, as its horror has captured recent media attention. Other types of abuse also infect the church. Verbal abuse harms its victims at the time of occurrence and later leads them to cope by withdrawing from reality or seeking various escapes. Physical abuse scars more than the body; it places at risk the healthy development of self-esteem. Long after physical bruises disappear, the ability to form nonviolent healthy relationships remains damaged.

Manipulative and controlling behavior reduces an individual's capacity to choose for himself/herself or to function adequately without dictatorial directives. Neglect, whether physical, emotional, or educational, deprives a child of the basic components for development. Remember, any type of emotional abuse

traumatizes just as surely as if the body were beaten rather than the psyche.

■ Believe victims who report abuse to the church. Children's reports of abuse are rarely fictional. Child victims are incapable of describing what they have not experienced. Treat any reports of abuse as valid and seek instant and competent treatment.

■ Avoid abuse-friendly environments. Abusers depend upon secrecy. They must be held responsible for their criminal actions. Do not bargain to conceal their violence because they promise to reform. Do not confuse forgiveness with tolerance. Do not participate in a cover-up. Demand instant protection for the abused and accountability for perpetrators.

■ Use community resources. Network with those who manage community agencies. Keep a list of counselors to whom you can refer. Meet law-enforcement officials before tragedy strikes. Consider asking a judge or supervisor from the family services judiciary to present a preventive workshop for your church and school boards. Affirm and support those who legally protect victims.

■ Know your volunteers. Provide the best leaders for youth and children. Establish references for volunteers. Long-term members will have developed a reputation in your community. Newcomers should readily provide references from other churches. Check their references. Use only in pairs supervisors for campouts, day care, VBS, and field trips.

■ Preach justice. Always uphold

God's ideal for believers to hate evil, love good, establish justice (see Amos 5:15). Lift up Jesus in your preaching as the model for how to treat others. Preach the gospel to the poor. Heal the brokenhearted. Preach deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and set at liberty those who are oppressed (see Luke 4:18).

■ Teach children simple survival tactics. Three safety rules for every child are: Say no! Get away fast! Tell someone! Instruct children never to keep secrets from their parents or teachers and that being asked to do so is wrong. Children are not responsible for helping strangers look for a lost pet or an address, etc.

■ Provide educational resources. Be proactive by sharing educational material such as the insert in this magazine. Other types of educational brochures, films, discussion papers, and study guides can increase awareness of the problem and reduce tolerance for abusers.

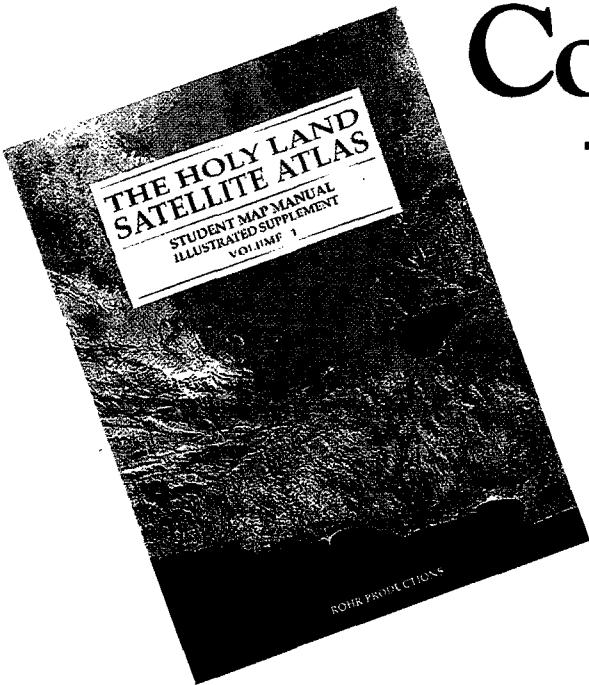
■ Lead by example. Does your walk match your talk? Do your actions carry the same message as your sermons? If you verbally or emotionally abuse your spouse or children, seek professional help and the power of the Holy Spirit to gain victory. If you use your power to manipulate people, rethink your leadership style and seek to change. If you, tragically, are involved in sexual misconduct of any kind, remove yourself from ministry and seek rehabilitation.

In summary, always reflect the pastoral care Jesus would provide to His people. ■

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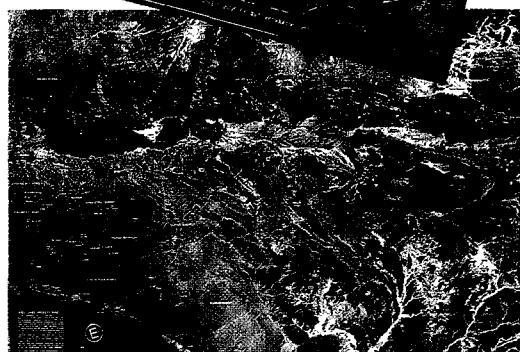
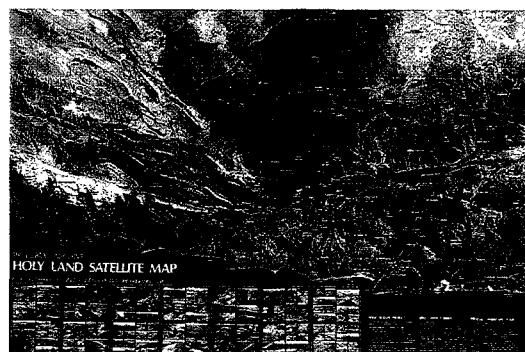


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