



North Hills
Community Church

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www.nhconline.com

September 20, 2013

Welcome to Open Your Eyes!

We are so excited that you have set aside time in your busy schedule to focus your attention on the issue of childhood sexual abuse. We hope this begins a dialogue in your churches and in our region on this sensitive topic.

The idea for this conference grew out of two events that have impacted North Hills Community Church over the last couple of years. Both events prompted us to seek information about responding to and caring for those who have survived the trauma of childhood sexual abuse.

The first event was a meeting in town between one of our pastors and an adult survivor of abuse. Over a period of about six months, our pastor listened to this person's story and was deeply impacted by the severe hurt and extremely poor response of her church family. For this pastor the issue of childhood sexual abuse now had a real face and a detailed story.

At about the same time, several of our pastors were having lunch discussing the issue of childhood sexual abuse. It became apparent that while we desired to handle the issue both biblically and legally we did not have a way to ensure consistency and compliance with the law. We left that lunch convinced we needed to develop and implement a holistic plan that would wisely serve our church families. This plan would also enable us to be proactive by minimizing opportunities for on-campus abuse. To be effective, every mandated reporter on staff would need to be trained to follow the plan should the need arise.

The heart behind our desire for a plan was clear that day as well. We want to protect all children from harm: they are gifts from God from the time they are conceived until they reach adulthood. Christ-followers protect God's little ones. We spent time in research and reached out in two directions for help: the Julie Valentine Center (JVC) here in Greenville, and a national organization called *GRACE*. **

JVC cares for and serves survivors of abuse and actively supported our efforts to prepare and educate our staff. We have also come to value our relationship with them because of the specialized services they offer, including child forensic interviews, trauma-informed treatment, and training for legally mandated reporters. After touring their facility and meeting with members of JVC, we feel very comfortable calling on them for assistance to determine both legal and healthy responses to sexual abuse.

When we began to interact with JVC, *GRACE* was in the initial stages of establishing a relationship with a local organization in Greenville. As our paths converged, connections were made and our shared burden for churches in the upstate became clear. The idea for a conference began organically; all three organizations seemed to recognize that the time was right to move forward in a public way.


Glorifying God as a Caring Community of Christlike Disciple-makers

For our part (NHCC), we believe that God was on the move in our area to bring this issue to the minds of churches and their leadership and we wanted to be part of what God was doing. We recognized that we needed help becoming prepared and believed other churches may feel this way, too. We were clear with GRACE and JVC: we are students seeking to learn and we needed their help. In short, that is how we got here to Open Your Eyes.

Our goal is to prepare you, as a church leader to respond both legally and biblically to childhood sexual abuse. We are hopeful, as well that you will leave better prepared to compassionately serve survivors of childhood sexual abuse in your own churches and communities. To accomplish all of this, we've sought the expertise of national leaders in the field of child sexual abuse to teach and encourage us. We are so glad you are here.

The conversation has begun.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan C. Ferguson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

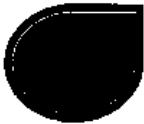
Ryan Ferguson
Pastor of Community Connection
On behalf of the elders
North Hills Community Church

****GRACE stands for Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment.**

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- Mandated Reporter Training Booklet
Courtesy of the Children’s Law Center, USC School of Law

Agenda

Friday, September 20, 2013

- 6:30pm Welcome, Announcements and Invocation -- Ryan Ferguson
- 6:45pm Session 1-- Diane Langberg, PhD.
Sexual Abuse in a Christian Environment
- 7:45pm Break
- 8:00pm Session 2 -- Justin Holcomb, MDiv., PhD.
A Pastoral Perspective on Addressing Sexual Abuse
- 9:00pm Adjourn

Saturday, September 21, 2013

- 9:00am Welcome and Announcements -- Ryan Ferguson
- 9:05am Session 3 -- Boz Tchividjian, J.D.
Sexual Offenders in the Christian Community
- 10:05am Break
- 10:15am Breakout #1 -- Shauna Galloway-Williams, MEd., LPC and Kim Ponce, B.S.
Dynamics of Child Sexual Abuse and Mandated Reporting
- 11:15am Break: Lunch pick-up in room 104 (see map) -- return to your seat to eat and listen to the panel discussion!
- 11:30am Lunch and Panel Discussion:

Boz Tchividjian, J.D., *Executive Director of GRACE, and Professor of Law, Liberty University*
Victor Vieth, J.D., *Director, National Child Protection Training Center*
Shauna Galloway-Williams, *Executive Director, Julie Valentine Center*
Peter Hubbard, *Pastor, North Hills Community Church*
Bob Perry, *Investigator, Greenville County Sheriff's Office -- Crimes Against Children Unit*
- 12:30pm Break
- 12:45pm Breakout #2 -- Boz Tchividjian, J.D.
Responding with Excellence: A Case Study
- 1:45pm Break
- 2:00pm Session 4 -- Victor Vieth, J.D.
A Call for Collaboration Between the Faith and Child Protective Communities
- 3:00pm Closing Remarks -- Boz Tchividjian

Open Your Eyes

A Conference on Childhood Sexual Abuse and the Faith-Based Community

Friday and Saturday, September 20-21, 2013

North Hills Community Church, Taylors, SC

Friday Evening: Session 1 -- Diane Langberg, Ph.D.

Sexual Abuse in Christian Organizations

It is heartbreaking that sexual abuse occurs in Christian organizations. The ensuing damage of that abuse is compounded when institutions deny or hide that abuse. This presentation will consider how our systems often protect themselves rather than vulnerable sheep, through deception and an abuse of power. We will also reflect on what true repentance looks like and some principles that should govern our responses to abuse.

Friday Evening: Session 2 -- Justin Holcomb, M.Div., J.D.

A Pastoral Perspective on Addressing Sexual Abuse

This session will explore what the Bible says about the darkness and grief experienced by victims of sexual assault. We will take a close look at how the Gospel applies to the experience of sexual assault including its effects in victim's lives. We will also consider several practical, informed and compassionate ways pastors and clergy should respond to victims of sexual trauma while avoiding platitudes and shallow theology.

Saturday Morning: Session 3 -- Boz Tchivijdian, J.D.

Sexual Offenders in the Christian Community: How do they operate and how do we respond?

Churches and Christian ministries are attractive environments for sexual offenders. This presentation is designed to educate the audience about the mind, motive, and behavior of high risk sexual offenders. Research and experience will be the basis for providing participants with basic insights into how sexual offenders with faith communities exploit and distort religious beliefs in order to access children and keep them silent. Building upon the information learned about the mind of sexual offenders, GRACE will present the need for Christian institutions to adopt comprehensive child safeguarding policies and reporting protocols that serve abuse survivors and follow the law.

Saturday Afternoon: Closing Keynote Session -- Victor Vieth, J.D.

A Call for Collaboration Between the Faith and Child Protective Communities

In this session, participants will learn the dynamics that cause friction between the faith and child protection communities, the cost of the friction, and concrete strategies for building bridges between these communities. At the core of this dilemma is that both groups know far too little about the work of the other. The sad consequence of the "unknown" is that children are more likely to fall through the cracks in our faith and child protective communities.

Breakout Sessions

#1- Dynamics of Child Sexual Abuse and Mandated Reporting

Presented by: Shauna Galloway-Williams and Kim Ponce

How are mandated reporters supposed to respond to suspected cases of childhood sexual abuse? What are some of the common misconceptions about the responsibilities of mandated reporters? This session will explore how children typically disclose abuse, and explain the laws regarding mandated reporting in South Carolina. The objective of this session is to equip participants to identify and respond to suspicions and disclosures of abuse in accordance with their legal and moral responsibilities.

#2- Responding with Excellence: A Case Study

Presented by: Boz Tchividjian

Thirteen year old Benjamin discloses to his father that he has been sexually abused by long time elder, Tom Watts. What would you do? This interactive presentation focuses on a hypothetical situation involving a sexual abuse disclosure in the fictional Battlecreek Christian Church. Together we will walk through the disclosure process from the perspective of the church and discuss its responsibility to each party involved. The objective of this session is to educate and equip the Christian community on how to respond to child sexual abuse disclosures in a manner that demonstrates love for the hurting and obedience to the law.

Saturday Lunch Discussion Panel

Boz Tchividjian, J.D., Executive Director of GRACE, and Professor of Law, Liberty University

Victor Vieth, J.D., Director, National Child Protection Training Center

Shauna Galloway-Williams, Executive Director, Julie Valentine Center

Peter Hubbard, Pastor, North Hills Community Church

Bob Perry, Investigator, Greenville County Sheriff's Office – Crimes Against Children Unit

This panel will discuss questions submitted in advance by conference participants. **Participants may submit questions for the panel ahead of time via text to text@nhcconline.com.** Index cards are available at the Resource Table in the lobby for those who don't text. All questions must be submitted by 10:30am Saturday morning.

Speaker Biographies

Justin Holcomb, M.Div., PhD.

Minister, Author

Justin Holcomb is an Episcopal priest and an adjunct professor of theology and philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary. He holds two masters degrees from Reformed Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from Emory University.

He and his wife, Lindsey, are authors of *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault*. Their new book, *Save Me from Violence: Hope and Healing for Domestic Victims* is released Feb 2014.

Mr. Holcomb serves on the boards of REST (Real Escape from the Sex Trade) and GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in Christian Environments). He also serves on the council board of the Biblical Counseling Coalition.

Diane Langberg, Ph.D.

Author, Psychologist, and Director of Diane Langberg, Ph.D., & Associates

Diane Langberg is a practicing psychologist whose clinical expertise includes 35 years of working with trauma survivors and clergy. She speaks internationally on topics related to women, trauma, ministry and the Christian life.

She is the director of Diane Langberg, Ph.D. & Associates, a group practice in suburban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, staffed by Christian psychologists, social workers and counselors. The staff has expertise in many areas, including sexual and domestic abuse, addictions, depression and eating disorders. They work with adults, children and adolescents, and couples.

Dr. Langberg is a faculty member of Westminster Theological Seminary. She is the author of *Counsel for Pastors' Wives* (Zondervan), *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (Xulon Press), and *On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (Tyndale House). Dr. Langberg is a columnist for *Christian Counseling Today* and contributes to many other publications.

Dr. Langberg is Chair of the Executive Board of the American Association of Christian Counselors, serves on the boards of GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in a Christian Environment), the Society of Christian Psychology, and World Reformed Fellowship. She is also founder of The Place of Refuge, an inner-city, non-profit trauma and training center. Dr. Langberg is the recipient of the Distinguished Alumna for Professional Achievement from Taylor University, the American Association of Christian Counselor's Caregiver Award, and the Philadelphia Council of Clergy's Christian Service Award. She is married and has two sons.

Basyle 'Boz' Tchividjian, J.D.

Founder and Executive Director of GRACE, Professor of Law at Liberty University School of Law

Boz Tchividjian is a former Assistant State Attorney, Seventh Judicial Circuit (1994-2001). While in that position, he was Chief Prosecutor for the Sexual Crimes Division, gaining much experience in cases involving sexual abuse and harassment. He has served as an Adjunct Professor at Stetson University, and during his time in central Florida, served as the attorney for the Child Advocacy Center in Daytona Beach, Florida, as well as serving as a member of the Advisory Board for the Center. He served as Lecturer for the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association Seminars and as a Speaker at the Florida Conference on Child Abuse.

In late 2003, Mr. Tchividjian helped found G.R.A.C.E. and has spent the past years developing GRACE and creating relationships with other Christian organizations who have a similar passion concerning this subject. He has spoken extensively on this subject at various events including the conferences sponsored by the American Association of Christian Counselors and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA). Mr. Tchividjian and his family live near Lynchburg, Virginia where he serves as a law professor at Liberty University School of Law.

Victor Vieth, J.D.

Executive Director, National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC)

Mr. Vieth has trained thousands of child-protection professionals from all 50 states, two U.S. Territories, and 17 countries on numerous topics pertaining to child abuse investigations, prosecutions and prevention. He gained national recognition for his work in addressing child abuse in small communities as a prosecutor in rural Minnesota. He has been named to the President's Honor Roll of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children. The Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association named him one of the "21 Young Lawyers Leading us Into the 21st Century." Mr. Vieth has been instrumental in implementing 22 state and international forensic interview training programs and dozens of undergraduate and graduate programs on child maltreatment.

Mr. Vieth has published countless articles related to the investigation, prosecution and prevention of child abuse and neglect. He is author of *Unto the Third Generation*, a bold initiative that outlines the necessary steps we must all take to eliminate child abuse in America in three generations.

Mr. Vieth graduated magna cum laude from WSU and earned his Juris Doctor from Hamline University School of Law (HUSL). While studying at HUSL, he received the American Jurisprudence award for achievement in the study of Constitutional law and served as editor-in chief of the Law Review.

Victor Vieth serves as the Executive Director of the National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC), a state of the art training complex located on the campus of Winona State University (WSU). NCPTC includes five moot court rooms, four forensic interview rooms and a "mock house" in which to conduct simulated child abuse investigations. NCPTC staff provides intensive instruction for undergraduate students and current professionals in the field on how to better recognize, react, and respond to children who are being abused. The Center trains approximately 15,000 child protection professionals each year.

Shauna Galloway-Williams, M.Ed., LPC

Executive Director, Julie Valentine Center

Ms. Galloway-Williams has more than 17 years of experience in the field of mental health, specializing in child abuse and sexual assault. As a licensed professional counselor, she conducts forensic interviews, provides expert witness testimony, conducts training in the field of child abuse and sexual assault, and facilitates groups for non-offending caregivers.

Ms. Galloway-Williams received her BA in Psychology at Winthrop University and her M.Ed. in Counseling at Clemson. She serves as board president of the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, as an adjunct faculty member of the USC Upstate CAST program, and a member of the Silent Tears task force. Ms. Galloway-Williams is passionately committed to helping children and families to navigate the storm of child abuse and sexual assault and to see an end to these crimes in our community.

Kim Ponce, B.S.

Director, Child Advocacy Center of the Julie Valentine Center

Ms. Ponce has been privileged to work with courageous children and families facing abuse since 2006. She also coordinates the multi-disciplinary team of child abuse professionals which meets weekly to discuss open cases of physical and sexual abuse. She is committed to educating others about child abuse and building a trauma-informed community in Greenville, South Carolina.

Ms. Ponce earned a BS in Experimental Psychology at the University of South Carolina, Upstate. She is currently pursuing a MS in Mental Health Counseling with a trauma and crisis focus at Walden University.

Conference Partners

GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment)

www.netgrace.org

The mission of GRACE is to empower the Christian community through education and training to recognize and respond to the sin of child abuse. GRACE is an organization whose sole purpose is to equip and assist the Church and those within the Christian community to fulfill Mark 9:36-37.

Julie Valentine Center

www.julievalentinecenter.org

The mission of Julie Valentine Center is to eliminate child abuse and sexual violence. JVC works to achieve this by stopping child abuse and sexual violence before it happens (prevention), reducing trauma and re-establishing safety for victims and their families (crisis intervention), and engaging survivors in the healing process through compassionate, comprehensive treatment.

We are grateful for financial contributions from these churches and ministries. Thank you for making this conference possible!

Augusta Heights Baptist Church: *"Our mission is to reach out to both the physical and spiritual needs of people...we seek to offer what we can through our gifts and resources."* www.augustaheights.com

North Hills Community Church: *"Our purpose is To Glorify God as a Caring Community of Christ like Disciple Makers."* www.nhcconline.com

Still Wind Ministries: *"We are a multifaceted Christian counseling ministry that meets the spiritual and emotional needs of hurting people in the upstate of South Carolina."* www.stillwindministries.org

Special thanks to the Open Your Eyes conference committee: Ryan Fergusson, Boz Tchividjian, Shauna Galloway-Williams, Laura Thien, and Lynn Adams.

“We must oppose every form of alienation,
liberate people from every kind of oppression,
and denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.”
from The Lausanne Covenant, The Lausanne Congress, 1974

I. Definition of Sexual Abuse in Christian Organizations

II. Three Brief Cases

A. Michael, Sara, Melissa

B. Questions to consider

1. What did the abuse teach about the self?
2. What did the abuse teach about the Christian faith or Scriptures?
3. What did the abuse teach about God?

III. Facts

A. Statistics

B. Types of sexual abuse

1. Visual
2. Verbal
3. Physical

IV. Impact of Sexual Abuse on Victims

A. Factors

B. Possible symptoms

V. Culture of Systems

VI. Components of Sexual Abuse

- A. Deception of self and others
- B. Coercion

VII. Power and Vulnerability

- A. Definition
- B. Kinds of Power

VIII. Offenders and Repentance

- A. Church naïve about sin
- B. What grace does not mean
- C. Repentance of habituated sin never immediate
- D. We assume we know people

IX. Governing Principles

- A. Child sexual abuse is illegal
- B. Treatment of offenders very complex
- C. Clergy sexual abuse
- D. Kingdom of the heart
- E. Primary call of the church

X. Conclusion

Conference Notes

Speaker: _____

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GRACE

GODLY RESPONSE TO ABUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

Case Study

John Evans has been the pastor of Battlecreek Christian Church for the past two years. As a young pastor of a struggling church of approximately 400 members, Pastor Evans has constantly had power struggles with certain elders. Though he believes God has called him to this church, Pastor Evans does not believe that he has developed the full support of his church leadership.

Late last night, Pastor Evans received a call from Mr. Long who was extremely emotional and shaken up. The Longs have been members of Battlecreek Christian Church for approximately one year. They have three sons, ages 3, 8, and 13. The 13 year olds name is Benjamin and he has a reputation within the church for being disrespectful and hanging out with the "wrong crowd." In fact, on a few occasions, Mr. & Mrs. Long have sought counsel from Pastor Evans regarding their son's seemingly unruly and rebellious behavior.

To the great shock of Pastor Evans, Mr. Long informs him that Benjamin had just disclosed that he has been repeatedly sexually abused by ruling elder, Tom Watts. This abuse began after Mr. Watts started to volunteer with the church youth group approximately 7 months earlier. The abuse has allegedly gone on without the knowledge of any other person.

Mr. Watts is a 52 year old partner in the City's oldest and most prestigious law firm. He has been a member of Battlecreek Christian Church for the past 25 years and has been a ruling elder for the past 10 years. Mr. Watts has an impeccable reputation amongst both the community and the congregation. He has been married to Nancy for the past 30 years and they have four grown children. Mr. Watts has always volunteered to assist with any part of the church ministry where there was a need. Seven months ago, he volunteered to assist with the youth group when the youth director was abruptly terminated for inappropriate behavior with one of the kids. Pastor Evans has heard nothing but praises from both the youth and their parents regarding the work of Mr. Watts. However, it is widely known that Benjamin Long was extremely close to the last youth director and was extremely upset when he was terminated. Benjamin has repeatedly told a number of people that "Mr. Watts just isn't like David (the previous director)" and that he wishes "David could come back."

Mr. Watts has provided Pastor Evans with much encouragement and support in his dealings with some of the more difficult session members. Pastor Evans considers Tom Watts a close personal friend and mentor.

As Mr. Long is telling Pastor Evans about this disclosure, Pastor Evans suddenly recalls a conversation he had with Tom Watts shortly after he had become the pastor at Battlecreek Christian Church. Mr. Watts had confided in Pastor Evans that when he was nineteen years old, he had been falsely accused of sexually molesting a 12 year old boy. He told Pastor Evans that the charges were eventually dropped after the families had reached an out of court settlement. At the time of the conversation, Tom Watts told Pastor Evans that the incident had scarred him emotionally for life. He also told Pastor Evans that nobody else at Battlecreek was aware of this incident.

Mr. Long has not told anyone else about Benjamin's disclosure, and does not believe that Mr. Watts had any knowledge that Benjamin has told anyone. He tells you that during his disclosure, Benjamin had numerous spiritual questions such as, *Why did God let this happen to me? Where was God when Mr. Watts was touching me? I didn't tell anyone because I was sinning with Mr. Watts? Am I still a virgin in God's eyes?* Mr. Long admits that he could not answer Benjamin's questions and is afraid that his son is going to hate God for the rest of his life. He asks you for suggestions as to what types of services and resources may be available for Benjamin and the family as they confront this difficult matter. Before hanging up, Mr. Long indicates that you are the only person outside of the family that Benjamin is willing to meet with concerning the abuse. He also tells Pastor Evans that the family wants to fully support Benjamin and has decided to seek pastoral counsel as to what steps they should take next as a result of this disclosure.

After some thought, Pastor Evans requests an emergency meeting with his church leadership for the purpose of discussing and deciding how Battlecreek Christian Church should respond to this crisis.

Some Questions to Consider:

- Who attends emergency leadership meeting?
- What issues need to be addressed at emergency meeting?
- How can the Church best serve Benjamin Long and his family during this crisis?
- How can the Church best serve Tom Watts and his family during this crisis?
- How can the Church best serve its congregation during this crisis?
- How can the Church best serve the watching community during this crisis?

Local and Web Resources

To report suspected child sexual abuse in the upstate of South Carolina: 864 467-7750

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

These hotlines are free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1	GRACE "Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment" www.netgrace.org	"...a non-profit organization made up of highly trained and experienced multi-disciplinary professionals who seek to educate and empower the Christian community to identify, confront and respond to the sin of child abuse."
2	Julie Valentine Center, Greenville, SC www.julievalentinecenter.org , 864 331-0560	"Providing trauma-focused therapy by licensed professionals for children and adult victims of sexual assault and abuse, forensic interviewing for child victims of sexual assault, and community education."
3	Grace Harbor Counseling Ministries, Greenville, SC Jon Hagen www.graceharborministries.org 864 915-7070	"...our ministry functions as a counseling support arm of the local church. We come alongside the counselee or the counseling Christian in an effort to assist the local church and develop degrees of giftedness within the community of Christ."
4	The Counseling Solutions Group, Inc., Greenville, SC Rick Thomas www.RickThomas.Net 864 905-3663	Local and web resource for biblical counseling, coaching, consultations and instructional materials.
5	Greenville Counseling Associates www.greenvillecounseling.com 864 877-7025	"...a group of trained professionals who offer outpatient therapy services for individuals, couples, or groups."
6	PRASSO Ministries, Taylors, SC Laura Baker www.prassoministries.com 864 244-2994	"PRASSO is a 12-week discipleship program that includes a teaching element, as well as, homework lessons that provide biblical tools for the student to carry throughout each day and throughout their lifetime."
7	Still Wind Ministries, Greenville, SC www.stillwindministries.org 864-234-1150	"...a multi-faceted Christian counseling ministry to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of hurting people in the upstate of South Carolina." Experienced in counseling child and adult victims of sexual and physical abuse.
8	New Day Counseling Ministries, Easley, SC Kym S. McManus 864 907-3984	Kym McManus is a Licensed Clinical Christian Counselor "dedicated to counseling others in a grace-centered and safe environment," and experienced in the area of counseling victims of sexual and physical abuse.
9	Compass of Carolina, Greenville, SC www.compassofcarolina.org Local: 864 467-3434 All other areas: 1 800 203-9692	A comprehensive community resource for clinical counseling services, including intervention and education, Family Violence Intervention Program, and the Second Chance Program for adolescents
10	Safe Harbor, Greenville, SC http://safeharborsc.org/ 24-Hour Crisis Line: 1.800.291.2139 Administrative Offices: 864.467.1177	"offer a continuum of services, providing safe emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, and transitional housing, as well as community outreach and teen dating violence education in Greenville, Pickens, Anderson, and Oconee counties."
11	SCCADVASA, SC Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault http://www.sccadvasa.org/	"...a statewide coalition made up of the 23 domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy programs in South Carolina." Excellent resource for local and national statistics, training opportunities, information on prevention, and how to help a victim in crisis.
12	Silent Tears www.silenttearssc.org	"Giving a Voice to Child Sexual Abuse" in South Carolina. Research findings in the state of South Carolina compiled from 600 Child Protection professionals. Resource for local and statewide news, statistics, and advocacy in the area of childhood abuse and sexual abuse.
13	SC Children's Law Center www.childlaw.sc.edu	Information on Mandatory Reporting laws in South Carolina, and printable training resources and professional training opportunities

GRACE

GODLY RESPONSE TO ABUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

Child Sexual Abuse – Startling Statistics

Predators, Pedophiles, Rapists, and other Sex Offenders, Anna C. Salter, PhD

Abel Study:

- 235 molesters -> 38,000 incidents -> 17,000 total victims
- Men who molested out of home female victims -> averaged 20 victims
- Men who molested out of home male victims -> averaged 150 victims
- 561 sexual offenders (adult rape, child molestation, exhibitionism, voyeurism) -> 291,000 incidents -> 195,000 total victims = 2 ½ Superdomes

3% = Chance of getting caught

Russell Study:

- 28% of women -> molested as children under the age of 14
- 38% of women -> molested as children under the age of 18
- 9%-16% of boys in the U.S. -> molested before the age of 18
- 5% = child sexual abuse that had been reported to law enforcement

Van Wyk Study (unpublished):

- 23 sexual offenders entered program admitted an average of 3 victims each
Faced with a polygraph and the necessity of passing it -> 174 victims each

Anna Salter Interviews:

- Sexual offenders -> admitted to roughly 10 - 1,250 victims
- 100% of interviewed offenders -> previously reported by children and the reports were ignored.



The Victims

According to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division:

In 2010:

There were **1,439** cases of **forcible rape** reported to law enforcement, in addition to:

- **327** cases of **forcible sodomy**
- **217** cases of **sexual assault with an object**
- **1,468** cases of **forcible fondling**

In 2009:

There were **1,649** cases of **forcible rape** reported to law enforcement

Age of the Victims:

- **8.1%** were **under 10** years of age
- **35.9%** were **10-17** years of age
- **38.1%** were **18-34** years of age
- **16.1%** were **35-54** years of age
- **1.8%** were **55** years of age **or older**

****From 1975 to 2009, the rape rate in South Carolina has increased 37.6%**

**** South Carolina's rape rate has exceeded the national rate since 1982 (29 years)**

According to the 16 Direct Service Rape Crisis Centers across SC:

In 2010:

5,104 primary victims of sexual assault received services from these programs

Gender of Victims Served:

- 4,188 Female
- 768 Male
- 148 Unidentified

Age of Victims Served:

- 1,455 11 years of age and younger
- 1,102 12-17 years of age
- 2,362 18-64 years of age
- 44 were 65 years of age and older
- 141 Age of Victim was unknown

Race of Victims Served:

- 1,549 African American
- 29 Asian
- 2,756 Caucasian
- 182 Hispanic
- 31 Native American
- 102 Other
- 455 Unknown

In 474 cases, substances were used (including marijuana, alcohol, narcotics, Rohypnol or other benzo diazpanes, etc.) **by the victim and/or perpetrator.**

2,460 secondary victims of sexual assault were served by these programs (including individuals other than the primary victims directly affected by the crime such as: significant others, children, friends, etc.)

7,207 emergency hotline calls were answered by these programs

WHAT TO SAY, AND NOT SAY, TO A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Justin and Lindsey Holcomb (</authors/justin-and-lindsey-holcomb>) » [Sexual Assault \(/categories/sexual-assault\)](/categories/sexual-assault)
[Counseling \(/categories/counseling\)](/categories/counseling)



Because sexual assault is a form of victimization that is particularly stigmatized in American society, many victims suffer in silence, which only intensifies their distress and disgrace. There is a societal impulse to blame traumatized individuals for their suffering. Research findings suggest blaming victims for post-traumatic symptoms is not only wrong but also contributes to the vicious cycle of traumatization. Victims experiencing negative social reactions have poorer adjustment. Research has proven that the only social reactions related to better adjustment by victims are being believed and being listened to by others.

WHAT TO SAY

Below is a list of things to say that would support and encourage a victim:

- I believe you.
- Thank you for telling me.
- How can I help?
- I'm glad you're talking with me.
- I'm glad you're safe now.
- It wasn't your fault.

Your reaction is not an uncommon response.

It's understandable you feel that way.

You're not going crazy; these are normal reactions following an assault.

Things may not ever be the same, but they can get better.

It's OK to cry.

I can't imagine how terrible your experience must have been.

I'm sorry this happened to you.

WHAT NOT TO SAY

Hurtful reactions toward victims may be intentional (victim blaming) or they may arise from ineffective attempts to show compassion by people who mean well (like asking invasive questions regarding the assault, which can cause revictimization and more suffering for the victim).

Below is a list of things **not** to say, because they shame, blame, or doubt the victim:

I know how you feel.

I understand.

You're lucky that _____.

It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.

Why don't you tell me more details about what happened.

I can imagine how you feel.

Don't worry, it's going to be all right.

Try to be strong.

Out of tragedies, good things happen.

Time heals all wounds.

It was God's will.

You need to forgive and move on.

Calm down and try to relax.

You should get on with your life.

Ways you can help a victim

Listen. Don't be judgmental.

Let them know the assault(s) was not their fault.

Let them know they did what was necessary to prevent further harm.

Reassure the survivor that he or she is cared for and loved.

Be patient. Remember, it will take him or her some time to deal with the crime.

Encourage the sexual assault victim to seek medical attention.

Empower the victim. Don't tell them what they should do or make decisions on their behalf, but

present the options and help them think through them.

Encourage the survivor to talk about the assault(s) with an advocate, pastor, mental health professional, law-enforcement officer, or someone they trust.

Let them know they do not have to manage this crisis alone.

Remember that sexual assault victims have different needs (what may have been beneficial for one person might not work for another).

Remember not to ask for probing questions about the assault. Probing questions can cause revictimization. Follow the victim's lead and listen.

Adapted from Justin and Lindsey Holcomb's book Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault (<http://www.amazon.com/RidofMyDisgraceHopeandHealingforVictimsofSexualAssaultReLilPaperback/dp/1433515989/?tag=theresurgence-20>).

~~Rid of My Disgrace~~

Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault

Justin S. Holcomb & Lindsey A. Holcomb

Foreword by Mark Driscoll

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Mandy's Story

By the time I was twenty-one it seemed like sexual abuse, sexual assault, and sexual addiction would always somehow be a part of my life. But by that age I had found comfort knowing that I was the one in control of sex; it wouldn't be used against me, but rather I would use it to manipulate and toy with men the way I had been "toyed" with for years. But that sense of control was exposed as a lie the week before my twenty-second birthday. I was out dancing at a night club and after the bar closed I was invited into the VIP room. It was in that room where four or five men raped me and left me in tears on the floor. I was never in control.

For the next three years I remained emotionally disconnected from the event, numbing the pain with various types of escape like drugs, alcohol, and extreme behaviors. I became cold toward men. I left my childhood faith in Jesus, allowing my heart to become hardened and bitter against life and against God. After all, it seemed as though I had been abandoned by God anyway, so I relied on myself for comfort, protection, and direction.

But God had not abandoned me. In fact, he pursued me in a number of different ways. Eventually I was brought to my knees, crying out for him to explain himself! If it was true that he loved me, how could he let such harm befall me? I don't remember waiting for him to actually answer me. It was in Christian counseling that I found some solace in this idea: God did not want me to be raped, but he will use it to bring about something good. At the time, I accepted that as truth, and as I grieved over the rape and all the pain I endured, God was softening my heart, changing my desires, and redeeming many areas of my life. I figured that I had "gotten over it" and was healed.

But if I was to be truly honest, something seemed forced. When I would tell my story, there was still a disconnect between my head and my heart in acknowledging God in the midst of that horrific crime.

the men who raped me and felt a surprising compassion towards them. I began to cry out for them, "God save them." Just as I was an enemy of God in need of reconciliation, so they need to be reconciled by the blood of Christ. I wept for them for quite a while and still often find myself tearing up on their behalf, wishing that I could see them face-to-face and tell them of a great God who is bigger than their harmful acts of violence, who loves them to the point of crushing his own Son to deliver them from death. This forgiveness was a miracle. I have found freedom in loving them with the love of Christ. My anger, bitterness, resentment, escape, numbness, denial, self-pity, or any other response is not capable of removing their sin. Nothing but the blood of Christ will pay their debt.

And so I can look back on that night, recognizing the fullness of the pain God counted me worthy to suffer, and also look on it with the joy of knowing my God in a more intimate and magnificent way. It has become a mark of God's help in my life, a place where he ordained healing for me . . . and possibly even for those men. I would be overjoyed to someday raise our hands together in worship of the God who brings life out of darkness.

Sin, Violence, and Sexual Assault

In this chapter, we will explore what God says in Scripture about sexual assault and its effects. But before doing that, we must investigate what the Bible says about sin, evil, and violence. This is important because sexual assault is a result of sin, evil, and violence. Evil and sin work to infuse disgrace and violate peace. Sexual assault is a powerful means of achieving such destructive effects.

In the Beginning

The Bible begins with God, the sovereign, good creator of all things: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”^a God’s creative handiwork, everything from light to land to living creatures, is called “good.”^b But humanity, being the very image of God, is the crown of God’s good creation (“behold, it was very good”^c). As the pinnacle of God’s creation, human beings reveal God more wonderfully than any other creature—as they were created to be like God,^d by God,^e for God,^f and to be with God.^g

In Genesis 1:26, God says “Let us make man in our image.”^h In the very beginning, our Creator gave us a remarkable title: he called us the image of God. This reveals the inherent dignity of all human beings.

To fully understand what “image of God” means, we need to look at the context of Old Testament history. Moses, the author of Genesis, and his Israelite readers understood these words because they lived in a world full of images. The most dominant images in the cultures of the

^aGen. 1:1.

^bSee the sevenfold use of “good”: Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

^cGen. 1:31.

^dGen. 1:26.

^eGen. 1:27.

^fGen. 2:35.

^gGen. 2:15.

ancient Near East were those of kings. Kings throughout the ancient world made images of themselves and placed them in various locations in their kingdoms. The pharaohs of Egypt, the emperors of Babylon, and the rulers of other empires used images of themselves as a way to display their authority and power. This custom of Moses' day helped him understand what was happening when God called Adam and Eve his image. Just as human kings had their images, the divine King ordained that the human race would be his royal image. Put simply, the expression "image of God" designated human beings as representatives of the supreme King of the universe.²

Immediately after making the man and woman, God granted them a special commission: "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"^h This verse contains five commands: "be fruitful," "multiply," "fill," "subdue," and "have dominion." These decrees reveal our most basic human responsibilities.

It was God's design that humanity should extend the reign of God throughout the world. This involves two basic responsibilities: multiplication and dominion. First, God gave Adam and Eve a commission to multiply: "Be fruitful . . . multiply . . . fill." Their job was to produce so many images of God that they would cover the earth. Second, God ordered them to have dominion over the earth: "fill . . . subdue . . . have dominion." Adam and Eve were to exercise authority over creation, managing its vast resources on God's behalf. Having dominion means being good stewards of creation and creators of culture—not dominating.³

Richard Pratt argues that multiplication and dominion are deeply connected to our being the image of God. To explain this, he describes the ancient Near Eastern context:

Many kingdoms in the ancient Near East stretched for hundreds of square miles. The kings of these empires were powerful leaders, but the sizes of their domains presented serious political problems. . . . Ancient kings simply could not have personal contact with all regions of their nations. They needed other ways to establish their authority. Many rulers solved this problem by erecting images of themselves at key sites throughout their kingdoms. They produced numerous

^hGen. 1:28.

statues of themselves and endowed their images with representative authority. . . . When citizens saw the images of their emperor, they understood to whom they owed their allegiance. They knew for certain who ruled the land.⁴

Moses described the twofold job of humanity against this historical background. To be sure, God had no problem filling the earth with his presence, but he chose to establish his authority on earth in ways that humans could understand. Similar to how ancient emperors filled their empires with images of themselves, God commanded his images to populate the landscape of his creation. In the command to “multiply,” God wanted his images to spread to the ends of the earth. Just as an emperor conferred authority on his images, God commanded his likeness to reign over the world. His command to “have dominion” is God giving humans authority to represent him in his world.⁵

***Shalom* and Violence**

In Genesis 1 and 2, we see that God’s plan for humanity was for the earth to be filled with his image bearers, who were to glorify him through worship and obedience. This beautiful state of being, enjoying the cosmic bliss of God’s intended blessing and his wise rule, is called *shalom*. One scholar writes, “In the Bible, *shalom* means *universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight*—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. *Shalom*, in other words, is the way things ought to be.”⁶

Shalom means fullness of peace. It is the vision of a society without violence or fear: “I will give peace (*shalom*) in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid.”⁷ *Shalom* is a profound and comprehensive sort of well-being—abundant welfare—with its connotations of peace, justice, and the common good. While it is “intertwined with justice,” says Nicholas Wolterstorff, it is more than justice. In *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, Wolterstorff argues that *shalom* means harmonious and responsible relationships with God, other human beings, and nature. In short, biblical writers use the word *shalom* to describe

⁴Lev. 26:6.

the world of universal peace, safety, justice, order, and wholeness God intended.^{j7}

Genesis 3 records the terrible day when humanity fell into sin and *shalom* was violated. Adam and Eve violated their relationship with God by rebelling against his command. This was a moment of cosmic treason. Instead of trusting in God's wise and good word,^k they trusted in the crafty and deceitful words of the Serpent.^l In response, the Creator placed a curse on our parents that cast the whole human race into futility and death. The royal image of God fell into the severe ignobility we all experience.⁸

This tragic fall from grace into disgrace plunged humankind into a relational abyss. Paul Tripp writes:

What seemed once unthinkable wrong and out of character for the world that God had made now became a daily experience. Words like falsehood, enemy, danger, sin, destruction, war, murder, sickness, fear, and hatred became regular parts of the fallen-world vocabulary. For the first time, the harmony between people was broken. Shame, fear, guilt, blame, greed, envy, conflict, and hurt made relationships a minefield they were never intended to be. People looked at other people as obstacles to getting what they wanted or as dangers to be avoided. Even families were unable to coexist in any kind of lasting and peaceful union. Violence became a common response to problems that had never before existed. Conflict existed in the human community as an experience more regular than peace. Marriage became a battle for control, and children's rebellion became a more natural response than willing submission. Things became more valuable than people, and they willingly competed with others in order to acquire more. The human community was more divided by love for self than united by love of neighbor. The words of people, meant to express truth and love, became weapons of anger and instruments of deceit. In an instant, the sweet music of human harmony had become the mournful dirge of human war.⁹

God's good creation is now cursed because of the entrance of sin.^{m10} The world is simply not the way it's supposed to be. The entrance of sin

^jIsa. 32:14-20.

^kGen. 2:16-17.

^lGen. 3:1-5.

^mGen. 3:14-24.

into God's good world leads to the shattering of *shalom*. Sin, in other words, is "culpable shalom-breaking."¹¹

Evil is an intrusion upon *shalom*. The first intrusion was Satan's intrusion into God's garden, which led to Adam and Eve's tragic disobedience—the second intrusion. When sin is understood as an intrusion upon God's original plan for peace, it helps us see the biblical description of redemption as an intrusion of grace into disgrace or light into the darkness of sin or peace into disorder and violence. Just as sin and evil are an intrusion on original peace, so redemption is an intrusion of reclaiming what was originally intended for humans: peace.

Sin wrecks the order and goodness of God's world. Sin is the "vandalism of shalom."¹² Plantinga writes: "God hates sin not just because it violates his law but, more substantively, because it violates shalom, because it breaks the peace, because it interferes with the way things are supposed to be. God is for shalom and *therefore* against sin. In fact, we may safely describe evil as any spoiling of shalom, whether physically, morally, spiritually, or otherwise."¹³

Regarding this dimension of sin, Plantinga writes: "All sin has first and finally a Godward force. Let us say that *a* sin is any act—any thought, desire, emotion, word, or deed—or its particular absence, that displeases God and deserves blame. Let us add that the disposition to commit sins also displeases God and deserves blame, and let us therefore use the word *sin* to refer to such instances of both act and disposition. Sin is a culpable and personal affront to a personal God."¹⁴

God's image-bearers were created to worship and obey him and to reflect his glory to his good creation. According to G. K. Beale, "God has made humans to reflect him, but if they do not commit themselves to him, they will not reflect him but something else in creation. At the core of our beings we are imaging creatures. It is not possible to be neutral on this issue: we either reflect the Creator or something in creation."¹⁵ After the fall, humankind was enslaved to idolatry (hatred for God) and violence (hatred for each other). Sin inverts love for God, which in turn becomes idolatry, and inverts love for neighbor, which becomes exploitation of others. Instead of worshiping God, our inclination is to worship anything else but God. Idolatry is not the ceasing of worship. Rather, it is misdirected worship, and at the core of idolatry is self-worship.

Instead of loving one another as God originally intended, fallen

humanity expresses hatred toward their neighbors. Sin perverts mutual love and harmony, resulting in domination and violence against others.¹⁶ Both the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with God's image-bearers are fractured by the fall. Evil is anti-creation, anti-life, and the force that seeks to oppose, deface, and destroy God, his good world, and his image-bearers. Simply put, when someone defaces a human being—God's image-bearer—ultimately an attack is being waged against God himself.

The foundational premise of the Bible after Genesis 3, therefore, is that this fallen world, particularly fallen humanity, is violent.¹⁷ The cosmic war begun by the Serpent in Eden, described in Genesis 3, produces collateral damage in the very next chapter. Immediately after the fall, there is a radical shift from *shalom* to violence, as the first murder takes place in Genesis 4. After God shows regard to Abel's worshipful offering, Cain responds by raging against God and murdering his brother.¹⁸ The downward spiral of humankind and the constant spread of sin continued as God's blessing is replaced by God's curse.¹⁹

Violence is sin against both God and his image-bearers. In our hatred for God, we hoard worship for self and strike against those who reflect God's glory. Cornelius Plantinga explains: "Godlessness is anti-*shalom*. Godlessness spoils the proper relation between human beings and their Maker and Savior. Sin offends God not only because it bereaves or assaults God directly, as in impiety or blasphemy, but also because it bereaves and assaults what God has made."²⁰

A portion of the Old Testament is a catalog of cruelty. Widespread violence and the appalling evil of fallen humanity are recorded in detail on nearly every page of the Hebrew Bible:

Acts of reprobate violence explode from the pages of the Old Testament as evil people perform unspeakable acts: Children are cannibalized (2 Kings 6:28–29; Ezek. 5:10; Lam. 2:20), boiled (Lam. 4:10), and dashed against a rock (Ps. 137:9). During the Babylonian invasion, Zedekiah is forced to watch his sons slaughtered, after which his own eyes are gouged out (Jer. 52:10–11). Pregnant women are ripped open (2 Kings 15:16; Amos 1:13). Other women are raped (Gen. 34:1–5; 1 Sam. 13:1–15; Ezek. 22:11); one of them is gang raped to the point of death

¹⁶Gcn. 4:4–5, 8.

¹⁹The word "curse" occurs five times in Genesis 3–11: 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25.

(Judg. 19:22–30). Military atrocities are equally shocking. We read about stabbings (Judg. 3:12–20; 2 Sam. 2:23; 20:10) and beheadings (1 Sam. 17:54; 2 Sam. 4:7–9). These are normal military atrocities. More extraordinary cases involve torture and mutilation: limbs are cut off (Judg. 1:6–7), bodies hewed in pieces (1 Sam. 15:33), eyes gouged out (Judg. 16:21; 2 Kings 25:7), skulls punctured (Judg. 4:12–23; 5:26–27) or crushed by a millstone pushed from a city wall (Judg. 9:53). Two hundred foreskins are collected (1 Sam. 18:27), seventy heads gathered (2 Kings 10:7–8), thirty men killed for their clothing (Judg. 14:19). Bodies are hanged (Josh. 8:29), mutilated and displayed as trophies (1 Sam. 31:9–10), trampled beyond recognition (2 Kings 9:30–37), destroyed by wild beasts (Josh. 13:8; 2 Kings 2:23–24) or flailed with briars (Judg. 8:16). Entire groups are massacred (1 Sam. 22:18–19; 1 Kings 16:8–14) or led into captivity strung together with hooks through their lips (Amos 4:2).¹⁹

Sin and Sexual Assault

We have seen how violence is a bitter fruit of the fall and is, without question, a “vandalism of *shalom*.” In biblical thinking, we can understand neither *shalom* nor sin apart from reference to God. David confesses to God, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.”²⁰ Despite committing adultery with Bathsheba and orchestrating the murder of her husband, Uriah, David can write that he has sinned against God “only.”²¹ David’s sins against other human beings were also, in the ultimate sense, transgressions committed against God himself. According to Plantinga, “*Shalom* is God’s design for creation and redemption; sin is blamable human vandalism of these great realities and therefore an affront to their architect and builder.”²²

Sexual assault is a vandalization of *shalom*. It can influence how victims feel about themselves, how they understand connections and boundaries with others, and ultimately, how they relate to God. Throughout the Bible, the conception of sexual assault is that it has devastating emotional and psychological consequences for the victim.²³

Sexual violence uses sex as a weapon of power and control against

¹⁹Ps. 51:4.

²⁰2 Sam. 2:11.

²¹Deut. 22:25–29; Judg. 19:22–25; 20:5; and 2 Sam. 13:12, 22, and 32 are a few places where sexual coercion is depicted in the Bible.

others. Sex is the means by which we fulfill our calling of multiplying and taking dominion. It is noteworthy that the very means of fulfilling God's plan for humanity is now a tool for violence toward other images of God. In *shalom*, sex was also a reflection of unity and peace between man and woman. It is a picture of two becoming one.

God meant for sexual feelings, thoughts, and activity to give pleasure and build intimacy in marriage. Satan understands the importance of what God has designed, and sexual assault is one of his chief means of destroying it. Sexual abuse creates in the victim's mind a tragic and perverse linkage between sex, intimacy, and shame. When someone is sexually violated, one of the most creative and intimate of human experiences—sexuality—is transgressed by violence and subjugation.

Sex, the very expression of human union, intimacy, and peace, becomes a tool for violence after the fall. Plantinga writes: "The story of the fall tells us that sin corrupts: it puts asunder what God had joined together and joins together what God had put asunder. Like some devastating twister, corruption both explodes and implodes creation, pushing it back toward the 'formless void' from which it came."²¹ Violence is also the outworking and fruit of idolatry as humans have inherent dignity as the image of God. One scholar notes:

The Old Testament records some horrific incidents of sexual violence: when people are alienated from God, depravity and violence are inevitable. Biblical stories of rape are infrequent but vivid, including the story of Dinah's rape and the resulting sexual retaliation by her brothers (Genesis 34), the abuse to death of the Levite's concubine (Judges 19) and Amnon's rape of his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–21). In a similar vein are pictures in the prophetic books of the ravishing of wives and virgins as the aftermath of a nation's being conquered (Isaiah 13:16; Lamentations 5:11; Zechariah 14:2).²²

Sexual violence distorts this beautiful act of union, pleasure, calling, and worship. God intended humankind to "be fruitful and multiply,"²³ spreading divine image-bearers throughout his good world. This multiplying of offspring and exercising of dominion was to happen through the God-ordained sexual union between man and woman, husband and wife, in the context of marriage: "Therefore a man shall

²³Gen. 1:28.

leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."²¹

This peaceful, loving relationship was shattered by the entrance of sin into the world. Instead of unashamed intimacy and trust, there is shame and mistrust. Instead of grace, there is disgrace. Hatred toward other divine image-bearers, not love, characterizes human life after the fall:

As soon as human rebellion and self-assertiveness reared their ugly heads, shame, guilt and self-consciousness took over. Pathetic attempts at self-concealment (Gen 3:7) are replaced by God's own provision of covering (Gen 3:21). Henceforth nakedness was unnatural. Clothing is God's covering, his divine gracious response to human rebellion. Being unclothed thus becomes a metaphor for being exposed to the judgment of God.²²

A foundational element of paradise—sexual innocence in community—has been spoiled by the treachery of sexual assault. Sexual assault is uniquely devastating precisely because it distorts the foundational realities of what it means to be human: embodied personhood is plundered, sexual expression is perverted and used for violence, intrapersonal trust is shattered, and disgrace and shame are heaped on the victim.

Sexual assault is one of the most frequent and disturbing symbols of sin in the Bible. It is a complete distortion of relationship, a mockery and devastation of the original intent of being made for relationships with God and others. References to sexual violence is a way that God, through the biblical authors, communicates that sin has progressed so far that sex, an expression of union, peace, and love, is now used as a tool for violence.

The betrayal of creation and the refusal of any sense of covenantal relationship, sexual assault physically, emotionally, culturally, and structurally wounds the victim. Sexual assault is not just a criminal, physical, and psychological act; it is also a spiritual act in which the connectedness of humans with one another and with God is violated and broken, and the reality of defilement, guilt, terror, shame, alienation, and separation can take years to be made whole again.

²¹Gen. 2:24-25.

Sin names the reality of sexual assault, and assault in turn symbolizes sin and its destructive effects. The Bible speaks about the reality and effects of sin in various ways: disease, burden, debt, and defilement. Sexual assault is another way to speak of sin, in both its reality and effects. Sexual assault both names and symbolizes that sin is not only something that is done to us but also carries the effects of defilement, woundedness, and terror.

Sin is broken relationships with God, self, and others, and sexual assault signifies, even as it causes, brokenness and disruption. Sexual assault reminds us of the double-sidedness of so much sin: it is both personal and cultural. Sexual assault is an individual act of violence, one person against another. But it's also cultural: it is used as a weapon in warfare,²⁴ and it's an epidemic in nearly all cultures.²⁵

There appears to be a societal impulse to blame traumatized individuals for their suffering. Alexander McFarlane and Bessel van der Kolk suggest that doing otherwise would threaten our cherished conceptions that the world is essentially just and that persons are free, self-determining, and basically good individuals responsible for their destinies:

Society becomes resentful about having its illusions of safety and predictability ruffled by people who remind them of how fragile security can be. Society's reactions [to traumatized people] seems to be . . . in the service of maintaining the beliefs that the world is fundamentally just, that people can be in charge of their lives, and that bad things only happen to people who deserve them.²⁶

In short, we sacrifice those who suffer so we can maintain our illusions of autonomy and safety.

The distress caused by sexual assault can be described well by Simone Weil's term "affliction." An event constitutes "affliction" if it has uprooted and attacked someone in all dimensions: physically, psychologically, and socially. Since affliction involves "social degradation or the fear of it in some form," it can be argued that one of the factors involved in affliction includes some form of interpersonal neglect or harm.²⁷ If victims were offered sufficient social support, they could be spared from the kind of suffering that constitutes affliction.

Marie Fortune describes sexual assault four different ways. First,

it is a bodily sin. Sexual assault is a violation of bodily boundaries of personal space and distorts one's sense of body image. Second, sexual assault is a sin against relationship, violating the command to love one's neighbors as oneself. Third, it is a sin betraying trust and destroying relationships between victims and those who should have cared for them but instead caused them harm. The consequence of this sin is that it creates barriers of trust for victims in their future relationships. Fourth, it is a sin against not only the victims but also the community surrounding those victims.²⁸

It is obvious that sexual assault is a sin against another human involving physical, psychological, and emotional violation through the commission of a nonconsensual sexual act imposed through coercion, intimidation, force, domination, and violence. Such an act entails not only a violation of the physical boundaries of the body, but also a denial of the victim's will or agency—one dimension of being the image of God.

Through sexual assault, the assailant aims to reduce the victim to a nonperson. Because the assault is bodily, it is sexed, and the scope of its harm includes the very personhood of the victim. The dominance inherent in an act of sexual assault, by which the assailant forces his/her incarnate will on the victim, is a hierarchical structure in which the victim's difference from the assailant is stamped out, erased, and annihilated.²⁹

This aspect of sexual assault involves the violation of the victim both bodily and mentally. By constraining the victim and disregarding, disbelieving, or deliberately acting contrary to her or his desires, the transgressor undermines the victim's sense of personhood.³⁰ Such acts of violence often result in emotional trauma for the victim, which is manifest in a sense of helplessness, loss, vulnerability, shame, humiliation, and degradation.³¹ A particularly evil effect of sexual assault is that some victims not only feel a sense of radical disgrace, but also participate in their own self-destruction.³² The self-hatred, defilement, and guilt they experience cause them to act out self-destructively.

Violence ensnares the psyche of the victim and propels its action in the form of defensive reaction. This is one of the most insidious aspects of violence. In addition to inflicting harm, the practice of evil keeps re-creating a world of violence, either against others or oneself.

Evil generates new evil as evildoers fashion victims in their own ugly image.

In addition to being a sin against others, sexual assault is also a sin against God because the blessing of sexuality is used to destroy instead of build intimacy. It is an attack against his image in his imager-bearers. The ability of sexual assault to obscure internal and external relationships makes it a cosmic affront to the Creator and the order of his creation.³³ Sexual assault is a sin against God because it violates his most sacred creation, human beings made in his image.

There are explicit passages calling sexual assault sin—a violation of God's law. Deuteronomy 22:25–29 addresses nonconsensual sexual acts and shows concern for the welfare of the violated woman. In Deuteronomy 22:25–27, the perpetrator is put to death by stoning, and it is stressed in the text that the woman is innocent of any wrongdoing and that no harm should come to her.³⁴

In addition to these and other biblical texts calling sexual assault sin, there are also depictions of sexual acts that the Bible characterizes as sexual assault resulting in emotional trauma. These passages are 2 Samuel 13, Hosea 2:1–13, Jeremiah 13:20–27, and Ezekiel 16 and 23. They demonstrate an understanding that such acts of sexual assault result not only in emotional trauma for the victim, but also in humiliation and a debilitating loss of sense of self. These passages depict sexual assault as deeply traumatizing and resulting in devastating emotional and psychological consequences for the victim.

The Bible says that sexual assault is wrong, should not be done, and is not something the victims should experience. It also claims that God sees, knows, and cares about this sin and its effects, and has acted to redeem people from its effects.

Transgression against God and Victim

Far from being a peripheral issue in the Bible, sexual assault is clearly depicted as sin against God and neighbor, mentioned frequently throughout the Bible, and referred to as a symbol of how badly sin has corrupted God's good creation.

The Bible confirms the effects of sexual assault we described in chapter 3. On what the Bible says about sexual assault, Hilary Lipka

³⁴Gen. 6:1–3.

writes: "A comprehensive study that includes all biblical texts reveals that there is evidence not only of a core conception of rape, but also an understanding that sexual violence is devastating for the victim, resulting in emotional trauma and a debilitating loss of sense of self."³⁵

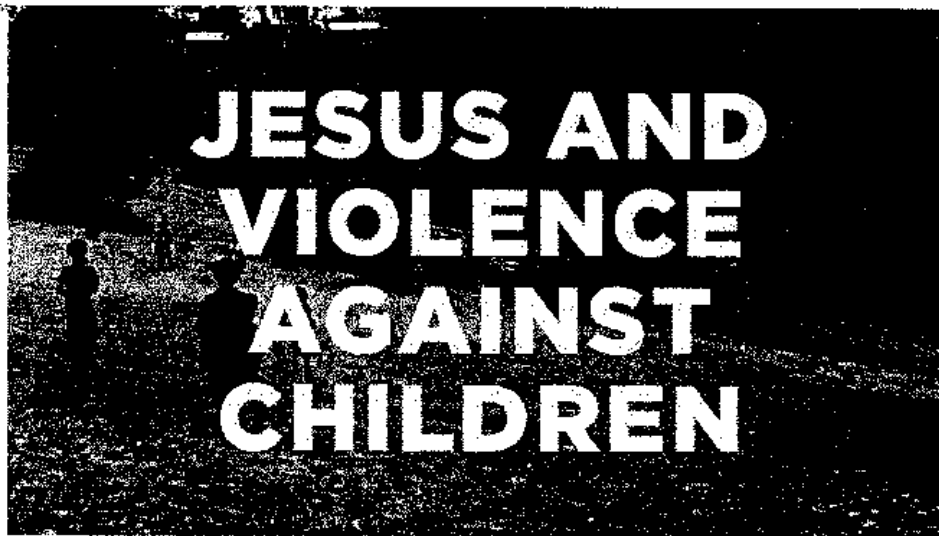
We have seen in this chapter that sexual assault is a sin against the victim and a sin against God. However, it is very difficult in the Bible to distinguish the difference between the transgression against the victim and the transgression against God. It is so difficult that some scholars assert that there is no distinction between these two aspects of transgression. Sexual assault is always a sin against the victim and God because all crimes are depicted as sins, that is, violations of God's will and the reflection of his glory in others.³⁶

The victim's experience of assault is not ignored by God, minimized by the Bible, or outside of the scope of healing and hope found in redemption. God's response to evil and violence is redemption, renewal, and re-creation. Evil and violence are not the final word. They are not capable of creating or defining reality. That is God's prerogative alone. However, evil and violence can pervert, distort, and destroy. They are parasitic on the original good of God's creation. In this way evil serves as the backdrop on the stage where God's redemption shines with even greater brilliance and pronounced drama. What evil uses to destroy, God uses to expose, excise, and then heal.³⁷

God's redemption imparts grace and brings peace. We turn to God's redemption in the next two chapters.

JESUS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

[Justin Holcomb \(/authors/justin-holcomb\)](#) » [God \(/categories/god\)](#) [Biblical Theology \(/categories/biblical-theology\)](#)
[Scripture \(/categories/scripture\)](#) [Children \(/categories/children\)](#) [Sin \(/categories/sin\)](#) [Culture \(/categories/culture\)](#)
[Suffering \(/categories/suffering\)](#) [Human Trafficking \(/categories/human-trafficking\)](#)



We are regularly faced with the horror and prevalence of violence (<http://theresurgence.com/2012/07/20/what-is-happening-in-colorado-where-is-god>) against children:

Yesterday, in what is yet another of the worst mass shootings in U.S. history, a gunman killed 26 people (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/14/us-connecticut-township-idUSBRE8BD0U120121214>) at a Connecticut elementary school, including 20 children aged 5 to 10 years old.

Also yesterday, a knife-wielding man injured 22 children (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2012/12/14/china-school-stabbings/1770395/>) aged 6 to 11 and one adult at a primary school in central China.

Almost half of all sexual abuse victims (<http://store.theresurgence.com/products/rid-of-my-disgrace>) are children: 15 percent of sexual assault victims are under age twelve, and 29 percent are ages twelve to seventeen.

Studies (<http://domesticviolencestatistics.org/domestic-violence-statistics/>) suggest (http://www.bvsdc.paho.org/bvsacd/cd67/AR_overlap.pdf) that up to 10 million children in the U.S. witness some form of domestic violence annually and approximately half of them are also victims of domestic violence.

Children are also the victims of sex trafficking (<http://theresurgence.com/2012/11/06/facing-up-to-sex-trafficking>) at horrific rates: In the U.S., the average age of entry into prostitution is between 12 and 14 years old. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/humantrafficking/litrev/#3.2>) that over 300,000 American children are at risk for sexual exploitation, and that an estimated 199,000 incidents of sexual exploitation of minors occur every year within the United States.

The global market of child trafficking (http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/labour/Forced_labour/HUMAN_TRAFFICKING_-_THE_FACTS_-_final.pdf) is over \$12 billion a year, with over 1.2 million child victims. Child trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes (<http://www.doj.state.wi.us/cvs/trafficking.asp>) in the world.

From 600,000–800,000 people are bought and sold (<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/>) across international borders each year; 50% are children, most are female. The majority of these victims are forced into the commercial sex trade.

Today, as many as 300,000 children (<http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/child-soldiers-around-world/p9331>), some as young as eight years old, serve in armed government or rebel forces around the world.

The only thing more staggering than the prevalence of this violence is the acute emotional, psychological, and spiritual damage done to the children who experience it.

In light of all this, it's important to look at Scripture and see how God feels about children and wants them to be treated.

JESUS AND CHILDREN

In his ministry, Jesus showed striking interest in and love for children. To the surprise of his disciples, he often including them in his teaching: "Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt 19:13–14 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2019.13%E2%80%9314>)). When the disciples came to Jesus asking him which one of them was going to be the greatest in Christ's kingdom, Jesus called a child to himself (Matt 18:2 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2018.2>)) and said, "whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:4 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2018.4>)). Jesus went on, telling his followers that part of their duty is to receive little children: "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" (Matt 18:5 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2018.5>)).

In Mark 10 (<http://www.esvbible.org/mark+10/>), Jesus upholds childlike faith as admirable: "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2010.15>); cf. Luke 18:17 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2018.17>)).

Jesus wants his followers to honor, protect, and care for those among them who are small and vulnerable, especially children. Part of Jesus' ministry on earth involved healing children. In Mark 5:39 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%205.39>), Jesus came into the house of a ruler of the synagogue, whose daughter had just died. Jesus said that she was not dead, but only sleeping. After they laughed at him, Jesus said to the child, "Little girl, I say to you, arise" (Mark 5:41 (<http://biblia.com/bible>)).

[/esv/Mark%205.42](#)). Similarly, in Mark 9 (<http://www.esvbible.org/mark+9/>), Jesus encounters a young boy who had been having demonic attacks. Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him (Mark 9:25 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%209.25>)) and the boy fell down as if he were dead. Jesus took him by the hand and he was healed (Mark 9:27 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%209.27>)). Jesus, who calls himself "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2011.25>)), brings life and healing to children.

Jesus wants his followers to honor, protect, and care for those among them who are small and vulnerable, especially children.

GOD'S CARE FOR CHILDREN

The tenderness and care Jesus showed for children is an expression of God's heart toward the small, the weak, and the vulnerable, as seen throughout the Old Testament.

Part of God's law, given at Mt. Sinai, was that no one should "mistreat any widow or fatherless child" (Ex. 22:22 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ex.%2022.22>)). Indeed, God is one who "executes justice for the fatherless" (Deut. 10:18 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.%2010.18>)) and curses anyone who perverts the justice due to orphans (Deut. 27:19 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.%2027.19>)). The Lord says that no one should do wrong or be violent towards innocent children and orphans (Jer. 22:3 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer.%2022.3>)). Not only does God want his people to love and care for children, but they are called to do everything in their power to stop those who try to hurt, abuse, or oppress them. "Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause" (Isaiah 1:17 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isaiah%201.17>)). Children are a gift from God (Ps. 127:3 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.%20127.3>)) and a blessing, and are to be loved, disciplined, and cared for.

RESPONSE

As we react to the shock and horror of violence against children, we should meditate on Jesus' love and care for children. But God's love should do more than just make us feel better—it should lead us to imitate his care for children, take action against evil like this, and pray for God's peace and salvation to cover the earth.

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah*

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.*

Psalm 46:1-4 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Psalm%2046.1-4>)

Almighty God, who created us in your image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against

*evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom,
help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations,
to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Book of Common Prayer (<http://www.bcponline.org/Collects/variousc.html>)

PROFILE OF A SHEPHERD-COUNSELOR

Lessons Learned from the Good Shepherd

DIANE LANGBERG

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.

—JOHN 10:11,14

Knowing Christ and caring for others have been inextricably woven together for me ever since I can remember. I came to Christ at the age of eleven through the teaching of my parents. It was not long afterward that I began to truly see the needs of others.

CALLED TO CARE

My father was a U.S. Air Force colonel. As I was growing up, I did not need a degree in psychology to see that most of my friends' mothers were alcoholics. They liked to come to my house after school because my mother was sober—and kind. I told my friends about Jesus and, at the age of twelve, began teaching a small group of girls from Scripture. I remember going home with one of those girls one day on the way to my house. We found her mother still in bed in a filthy nightgown. She was drunk and hanging tightly onto a bottle of something. It gave me a glimpse into the pain and horror of my friend's life, and I wanted to help.

Little did I know where the eyes to see people's hurts and the heartfelt desire to help them would take me, or how like God it is to use the broken lives I saw to bear fruit in the lives of others. Many years have passed since I was twelve, and I

still have eyes that see and a heartfelt desire to help. Those two traits, plus a few degrees and some training, have given me access to many people whose lives are not unlike those of my young friends and their parents. I have witnessed a great deal of pain and horror, and, I believe, I have been called by God to tend those whose lives have been so marked.

I have nurtured women who, as little girls, were repeatedly raped by a man called Daddy. I have come alongside men who, as little boys, were repeatedly molested by a woman called Mommy. I have sat with women whose shattered, black-and-blue faces testified to a twisted form of husbanding yet who were confused as to who was responsible. I have sat with parents who had tended dying children and who desperately needed tending themselves. I have walked with those whose lives were slowly being destroyed by cancer or other diseases. Missionaries who had been raped and robbed or kidnapped and tortured have come for help and healing. Pastors, weary and broken by divisive and persecuting churches, have needed pastoring themselves.

And there has been another kind of tending, one that I never anticipated when I first began counseling others. I tend not only the women whose faces are black and blue, but also those who batter them. I care for missionaries who leave the United States to proclaim the gospel, but who have to come home because they molested those they went to help. I walk with pastors who were called to shepherd, but who ended up feeding on their sheep. I care for those whose marriages are ravaged because they cannot get their faces out of pornography. And so I find myself tending those who are damaged by others as well as those who do the damaging. Sometimes, of course, these people are one and the same.

All of us who help others are shepherds. We shepherd in various arenas. Many of us do so as pastors and therapists, some as teachers, managers, writers, and parents. I did not think of myself as a shepherd so many years ago. Now, however, I realize that this is what I am. Also, having seen the damage done by some unfit shepherds, I have realized that competent Christian counseling—shepherding—is a serious and awesome task.

UNFIT SHEPHERDS

It is far too easy to be an unfit shepherd.

One of the things I do during the course of a week is supervise several other therapists. I hear myself again and again trying to impress upon them the significance they have in the lives of their clients and the power they have to help or to harm them. Whenever you as a therapist enter the broken life of another person,

you become extremely important. Many people's lives are so destroyed and broken that you are the only significant relationship they have, and so they live from one session to the next. They count the days until their next appointment with you. As you know, some people cannot even make it a week between appointments, so they call or page or write letters or request more frequent sessions.

People come wanting wisdom about their marriages or their parenting. They come confused and in need of truth. They come in bondage to sin and needling freedom. They come unable to discern right from wrong. To walk into a broken life, a life with needs of this magnitude, obviously gives the shepherd significant influence. And such potential for help also means great potential for harm.

Being an unfit shepherd begins when you abuse the power you have in the lives you've been called to care for, using that power for your own benefit instead of for the good of the client or parishioner. We find this negative model in Ezekiel 34, where the shepherds of Israel are described as feeding on their flocks. These commissioned by God to care for his people instead used his people for their own benefit. They drank the milk of the sheep, wore their wool, and ate their flesh. In other words, they took whatever the sheep had to offer and used it for themselves.

In counseling, the most obvious example of such abuse of power is the use of a client for the therapist's own sexual gratification. Unfortunately, it is also the most common example—and the most damaging to clients. I refer not only to suicide committed by 1% of sexually abused clients, but also to the inflated trauma, mistrust of others, destroyed marriages, and shattered lives experienced by nearly every client who has been sexually victimized by self-serving shepherds.

We can abuse our position in more subtle ways as well. For instance, it is easy to feed off others emotionally in order to help ourselves feel loved, important, or wise. We may ask questions in order to utilize our curiosity or to hear information about a third party. Anytime we orchestrate a session so as to feed some appetite or need in ourselves, we behave as unfit shepherds.

Another common abuse of power is encouraging clients to look only to us for help and healing. Certainly, the weak need our strength, the foolish need our wisdom, the despairing need our hope, the blind need our sight, and the doubters need our faith. These are good and right things to give. However, such work can also be reductive to the caregiver, for we may begin to think that we alone are able to give such things adequately. Somewhere the healthy nurturing that comes from other people—such as the client's spouse, circle of friends, or church community—begins to pale in comparison to our caregiving, and we wrongly help our clients buy into the lie that we alone are what they need. There is a fine line between believing we are important to others and believing we are necessary to

them. When we begin to think and teach—even by implication—that we are necessary, we take the place of the One we have been called to honor and follow.

We are never to steal the hearts of others for ourselves. Rather, as Christian counselors, we are commissioned to hand our charges over to God. Our clients come to us hungry for love, truth, hope, and faith. We cannot ultimately fulfill such needs. But we can, by our lives, give them tastes of the One who is using us to draw them to himself. We are servants of the Good Shepherd. We are unfit servants if we become so inflated with our own importance that we fail to utilize the gifting of the body of Christ or fail to point our clients away from us and ultimately to the satisfaction that resides in the Good Shepherd.

Perhaps overarching all abuses, we are unfit shepherds at any point that we misrepresent the Good Shepherd. If our compassion leads us to condone sin, if our abhorrence of evil leads to harshness, if we demand justice without mercy, if our appearance of obedience cloaks hidden disobedience—we are unfit. If we abandon or fail to seek after those who have wandered away, if we rule by power rather than by love, if we leave our clients vulnerable to attack because we fail to speak truth to them—we are unfit.

In John 10, Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd, contrasting himself with those perfect examples of unfit shepherding: the Pharisees. His clear message to those unfit shepherds was "Woe..." a word used primarily as an expression of grief. Anytime you and I hurt, damage, or mislead one of the least of God's sheep, we bring great grief to the heart of our Lord.

THE FIT SHEPHERD

If it is true that those who seek us out are broken, needy, and vulnerable, and if it is true that you and I are called by God to shepherd such people, then we must learn how to shepherd fitly. Furthermore, if it is true that such a task is so serious and awesome because of its potential impact for good or evil in the lives of others, and if it is also true that shepherding selfishly and unfitly grieves the God who has called us, then we had better learn to counsel according to the Master's own heart.

Oswald Chambers wasn't inaccurate when he wrote, "The sheep are many, and the shepherds few, for the fatigue is staggering, the heights are giddy, and the sights are awful" (p. 52). Some job description—but how true it is! Given the challenge, what does it mean to be a fit shepherd? I believe the answer to that question takes us on a journey into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings—and to the Cross.

It is no coincidence that the birth of the Good Shepherd was announced to shepherds. These men were rejected, and they led isolated lives outside the camp.

Unable to observe the ritual washings, they were considered unclean. So, on the outskirts of Bethlehem, they tended flocks of sheep that were set aside for temple sacrifices. These shepherds so identified with their sheep that they entered their lives and rook on their filth. They smelled like their sheep. They lived outside the camp with their sheep. They were set apart because they had stepped in the muck and mire of those they tended.

All the aspects of Jesus' good shepherding, and ours as well, are foreshadowed in this scene. Here we see the thread of sacrifice: The shepherds sacrificed in order to tend the sheep, and the sheep were intended for sacrifice. We also see the threads of tending, protecting, and being ever-watchful day and night, for that is what shepherds do. But we have another, unusual thread: the glory of God manifested in the heavens, brought down into the muck and mire.

Thirty years later the Son of God entered the scene again as John the Baptist announced, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NKJV). Our threads are all here. *Behold the Lamb*—the sacrifice, the unblemished One. He takes away the sin of the world. He stepped into the muck and mire of this world and was made so unclean by it that he had to go outside the camp to die.

If you and I are to learn from the Good Shepherd, we must begin here. We must first behold the Lamb. We need to seek him, to search him out. When John called his followers to behold the Lamb, he also called them to repentance. To truly behold the glory of God in the flesh is to see our own lives more clearly. So, before we can serve our clients, we must be fully aware of the fact that we are sheep ourselves, in need of the sacrificial Lamb of God and his death for our sins.

We dare not move into shepherding others if we fail to deal with our own lives. If we do not learn to behold the Lamb and repent of our sin, we will catch the soul diseases of those with whom we work. If we do not behold and repent, we will feed on the flock we have been called to feed. If we do not behold and repent, we will confuse ourselves with the Lamb and lead others to follow us rather than him. If we do not behold and repent, we will misrepresent the Good Shepherd, and others will believe lies about him, thinking we are representing him accurately.

You and I are fit to tend sheep only to the degree to which we ourselves have learned to follow the Good Shepherd. If Jesus tended us by first becoming a lamb, who are we to do otherwise? All good shepherds are, first and foremost, lambs. The shepherd who is not first a lamb will be arrogant and proud and will damage those he or she has been called to tend.

So we begin by beholding the Lamb of God, asking him to search us out and repenting of anything in our lives that displeases him. As a result, we are empowered to bring his life and influence into every relationship. If we fail to begin here,

then we, like the Pharisees, may have the appearance of obedience, but in actuality we will be unfit shepherds in feeding the flock of God.

We must also begin in the same way that the announcement to the shepherds and from John the Baptist began: *Behold the Lamb!* The Lamb of God, the supreme sacrifice, is the world's only hope. Yet we tend to proclaim, "Behold a new theory!" "Behold these new methods!" "Behold our training and credentials!" "Behold this new opportunity!" "Behold our human skills!" Such things may be good and helpful, but they do not bring life. Any time we forget to declare *Behold the Lamb of God*, we lift up that which cannot bring life and healing to those we serve. Any shepherd who subordinates the life, death, and resurrection of the Good Shepherd to his or her own credentials, tools, or skills will fail.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Over the years I have had the privilege of learning many lessons from our Good Shepherd, and as we conclude volume one of *Competent Christian Counseling*, I would like to share some of these lessons with you. These are not the lessons from graduate school or internship, though certainly the knowledge and training of those years are essential to our calling. Instead, the lessons of the Good Shepherd can actually infuse our knowledge, training, and experience with the life of Christ for the good of our clients and to the glory of God.

HUMILITY

The first lesson I want to share is underscored in Philippians 2:5-8: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.... He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

The Lamb of God identified with and served those who were cursed. I suspect that you are like me in that you prefer to be with attractive, like-minded people, those with whom you have a natural affinity. When you are in a group you want to be aligned with those who are clean, bright, healthy, and relationally adept. Jesus, on the other hand, identified with those whose personalities or abnormalities isolated them from others. He identified with the demon-possessed, the blind, the diseased, and even the dead. It is not our nature to do this. We see the afflicted and back away. We are repulsed by crime and disease and social ineptness. We have an aversion to the tormented, the odd, or the unacceptable.

I remember many years ago when I first began to see those who had been

chemically sexually abused as children. I have never been abused. I enjoy what I now know is the phenomenal privilege of having a mind completely free of any memories of any kind of abuse. I never have to worry that such memories might then to the surface or be triggered by certain circumstances, for they simply do not exist. But one of the women I saw in the early years of my counseling work had been repeatedly and sadistically abused by many others. As I began to ease myself down into those memories, I found myself experiencing nightmares and crying in my sleep. I did not like the nightmares and clearly remember wrestling with whether I could go forward in my counseling work. *I don't have memories like this. Why would I want this in my head? I don't want to picture these things. I don't want them disturbing my sleep. I don't have to do this.*

Only the reminder of the Good Shepherd's humble sacrifice could help me resolve that dilemma: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." A while ago another client asked me an astute question: "After all these years, does your head ever get mixed up about where your memories stop and others' memories begin?" Well, after twenty-five years in the counseling profession the answer is yes, sometimes my head gets mixed up. Sometimes I think or feel things that arise from my identification with survivors rather than from my own life experience.

It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that you and I can humble ourselves and identify with those whose nature or experience is contrary to our own. And it is only the Holy Spirit who saves us from being overwhelmed by the secondary or vicarious trauma that has become a significant issue for many therapists. But if we are to follow the example of the Good Shepherd, we must indeed humble ourselves and wade into the muck and mire of our clients' lives in order to help and nurture them, for that is the kind of shepherding Jesus did. He so identified with the objects of his redemptive work that he became the Lamb and bore the punishment for our sin.

CHOOSING LESSER THINGS

The second powerful lesson I have learned is similar to that of humility. It has to do with choosing lesser things.

The Good Shepherd emptied himself of those things that elevated him. He demanded no recognition. He did not complain that Nazareth was too limited a sphere for his great gifts. He did not seek to dominate those under him. When the disciples started to squabble over who would be greatest in God's kingdom, Jesus got down on his hands and knees and washed their dirty feet.

Unfortunately, in recent decades, the Christian community has been infatuated with the beliefs that bigger is better, that more means more important, and

that status, money, and power are worthy of worship. Now I am not foolish enough to say that bigger is always worse or that more is always bad or that status, money, and power are inherently evil. But what I do believe with all my heart is that such things are of this earth and are transient, not worthy of our devotion.

I remember an inner struggle I experienced during the years when my two sons were quite small. Our sons were born shortly after I finished my doctorate and got my license. I had been in private practice for a short while, and it was clear that the practice was about to take off. However, I distinctly sensed God directing me to devote myself to mothering my young children. (I realize that he does not lead every young mother to do this.) I loved my work, so setting it aside to be a mom was not an easy thing to do. Also, if God had gifted me for counseling work, why would he ask me to lay down that which he had given? Nevertheless I obeyed. I kept the practice open to a minimal degree and sent most of my referrals elsewhere while I played with LEGOs and Matchbox cars.

During those precious years I learned something of what it means to set aside a good thing—something rightfully mine—for the sake of others. God had indeed called me to do some exceptional things, but he had also called me to be exceptional in the ordinary—to be holy in small places, loving with little people, unrecognized, and unapplauded.

It is a lesson I have had to learn again and again, and not just with little people but also with slow, mean, difficult, and resistant people. To follow the Good Shepherd, we must learn that greatness resides not in what we have or what we do. Rather, greatness is the freedom to set aside what we have and what we do in order to love the sheep God has entrusted to us.

RESTRAINT

Restraint is a voluntary limitation of oneself for the benefit of someone else.

The grocery store where I usually shop has a policy of hiring several employees who are intellectually limited. One particular man has been there about ten years; his job is to help people put their groceries in their cars. He is hard of hearing and lacks social skills. The first time I had him put my groceries in my car, he was slow and he threw the bags (eggs and all) into the trunk in disarray. I decided that from then on I would load the groceries myself.

On future shopping trips this man would offer help, and I would politely say, "No, thank you." One day after I declined his help, he asked, "Are you sure, ma'am?" There was almost a pleading tone to his voice, and I realized that he was being rejected by one customer after another. I felt the tug of God's Spirit. I was, of course, in a hurry. It was raining—hard. But the tug came again, so I said yes.

I stood in the rain, carefully made a couple of suggestions, and together we put my bag in the car.

When we finished, the man asked, "Did I do a good job?"

"Yes, you did a good job," I assured him.

He seemed relieved. "Lots of ladies get mad at me because I don't do so good."

I drove home weeping, asking God to teach me what that lesson was about. This man suffers. He suffers in ways I have never experienced. He is treated with anger, disregard, annoyance, and frustration. God called me that day to restrain myself—to restrain my quickness, my skill, my independence, my powers—in order to bestow dignity, value, and esteem on one who was suffering. As I pulled into my garage, I sensed God saying to me, *Is that not a picture of my incarnation? Is that not a tiny taste of what I did for you?* God of the universe, a baby. Infinite wisdom, a little boy. Creator of the worlds, a carpenter. Master of the seas, in a boat. Eternal life, dead and buried. And I didn't want to restrain myself for a retarded man!

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, says to us, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). I say that I love Christ, that I am a Christian psychologist—but then I am impatient or intolerant or frustrated with a darkened, confused, or frightened person. I will not be able to wait for a trauma survivor to articulate the unspeakable unless I learn the lesson of restraint. I will be intolerant of the repeated failings of an addict unless I learn the lesson of restraint. I will throw in the towel with an Axis II personality disorder unless I learn the lesson of restraint. I will refuse to walk through the valley of the shadow of death with someone who is terminally ill unless I have learned the lesson of restraint.

The work of shepherding requires that we limit our words, because people who suffer cannot absorb a barrage of words or understand the language of high intellect. We will have to restrain the number of our syllables, the loudness of our voices, the suddenness of our movements, and the intensity of our emotions if we are to provide a safe place for the scared, the suffering, the traumatized, the silenced. Restraint allows us to connect with others, to be a blessing, and to be blessed ourselves. It also means willingly stepping down into the muck and mire of tragedy and suffering so that we may extend help and hope.

Often, when we are faced with the need to restrain some aspect of ourselves or to alter our agenda, we say, "That's just not me." I am not sure where we get the idea that we should do only that which comes naturally or easily. I have a quick mind and a quick mouth. I have a high energy level. They make jokes in the office about my going through the halls on Rollerblades. But my Shepherd is reminding me that I cannot shepherd his suffering sheep simply by doing what

comes naturally. That which is immeasurable came to us in a very tiny package. If we would follow him, we too must learn the lesson of restraint in order to bring light and life to his sheep.

LOVING SERVICE

Another key lesson the Shepherd has taught me is that of service. Certainly the things we are trained to do are avenues of service. We counsel, we teach, we supervise, we write, we consult, we pastor. However, I believe that the service to which the Good Shepherd calls us goes far deeper than the skills we have been trained to utilize.

In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of returning in all his glory and separating the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. When he speaks to the sheep, he describes why he recognizes them as belonging to him: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (verses 35-36). Jesus is talking about acts of merciful service to particular kinds of people. I fear we often read such passages and either romanticize them or fail to really consider what our Shepherd is saying to us. Think about it with me.

What is it like to serve someone who is really hungry and thirsty? I do not mean someone who has skipped lunch. I mean someone who is starving. Hungry, thirsty people are in great need. They may be demanding. They do not care about you. They do not think clearly. They want only to have their needs met. They are desperate, clamoring, grabbing.

What is it like to serve strangers? They may make no sense to you. Their ways are foreign. They seem odd. You do not know why they do what they do. You cannot serve strangers effectively until you take the time to understand them. If you do not, it is only too easy to serve them in a manner that is frightening, inappropriate, or offensive to them.

What is it like to serve naked people? Naked people want to hide from you. They feel exposed. They do not want to be seen. To not humiliate them requires great tact and care. They do not want you close. They want you to go away. Their ambivalence is overwhelming. But you cannot cover their nakedness unless you move in close.

What is it like to serve sick people? Sick people focus on their pain. It is all they can think about, and their interest in you extends only to what you can do to help them feel better. Sick people live in small worlds. Sick people talk about what

hurts. Sick people are needy and often messy. Sick people require constant care and oversight.

What is it like to serve prisoners? You cannot serve prisoners unless you go to prison. You must enter a place of locked doors and little light. You must enter a place of restricted movement. You must enter a place where you are watched and where trust is rare.

Clearly, Jesus' redemptive work demanded identification at the deepest level with the most shocking varieties of human suffering. After going through this list, Jesus makes the amazing statement that his sheep are those who do all these things for him: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (verse 40). You see, the lesson I have learned about service is not that I am simply called to serve people, but rather that in serving those who suffer, I am in some mysterious way directly serving the One I follow.

At the close of each year, I try to invest some time before God asking him to show me a Scripture to truly learn to live out in the coming year. One year I was led to Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." I believe this verse means we are called to be sensitive to the presence of the sufferings of Christ in all sufferers. Every time I encounter grief, I am encountering a grief he bore. Every time I encounter the sufferings of a stranger or a prisoner, I am encountering burdens he endured. The lesson of service means this: You and I live in solemn trust to the afflicted to mediate to them all that is to be obtained through the life and death of Christ. In so doing we serve the Lord Christ.

LEADERSHIP

When Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd, he says he "calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. . . . He goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:3-4). In order to be a fit shepherd, I must willingly go where I would take the sheep I tend.

One of my clients shared with me that a psychology professor had told her class that, if they ever decided to go into therapy, they should be very careful whom they chose as mentors. The reason? If they spent any significant amount of time in therapy, the professor explained, they would leave looking to some degree like their therapists. As the shepherd goes, so the sheep go. Only those who are faithful disciples of Jesus will be fit shepherds for the sheep.

Remember, the Good Shepherd himself became a lamb. To lead effectively we must perpetually "behold the Lamb" in our own lives. Take time to consider these questions:

- Do I really think I can lead someone out of a life of deceit if I live with ongoing, hidden sin in my own life?
- Do I really think I can lead someone away from bitterness and revenge toward his or her spouse if I harbor such feelings in my own heart?
- Do I really think I can lead someone out of captivity to an addiction if I continue to be live enslaved to something in my own life?
- Do I really think I can lead someone with grace and love when I do not deal graciously and lovingly with the people in my world?

Recently, I was working with a woman who had made the commitment to learn how to love what we might call a difficult man. Her husband is fearful, selfish, and controlling. The promise of reward in this marriage is not at all great, but the wife has chosen to learn to love rather than leave. One day while we were talking about what that love might look like, she stopped me in my tracks with a question: "I just want to know one thing before we go on: Do you work to love your husband like this?"

It was a heart-searching question, one I knew was not just from her but also from God. My husband is an easy man to love; the rewards in our nearly three decades of marriage have been great. My circumstances were a piece of cake next to hers. But the challenge still stands: If I am going to teach this woman to be Christlike, to love her husband as Christ loves us, then I must be the kind of shepherd who goes before her sheep. I need to love my husband in the same way that I am calling her to learn to love her husband.

The lesson of leadership is that shepherding is not about imparting knowledge or information. Rather, shepherding is about going before someone in order to impart life. And isn't that exactly what the Good Shepherd has done for us? There is absolutely nothing Jesus asks of us that he himself has not exemplified. He who calls us to truth is Truth. He who calls us to love one another loved us unto death. He who calls us to carry the burdens of others was broken by our burdens. He who calls us to enter the attack and mire of others' lives endured our fight. He who calls us to weep with those who weep, wept over us. The Good Shepherd goes before. Those who would lead sheep are called to go before the sheep. That is true leadership.

AS THE MASTER GOES, SO GOES THE SERVANT

I have heard that a shepherd uses his pet lambs to gather lost sheep. Those lambs are so fond of being near the shepherd that, when he calls out to them, they instantly follow him, bringing the lost sheep with them. Likewise, our Shepherd asks us to be so attached to him that, no matter where he places us, others will be

induced to follow him because we have gone before them and have followed him ourselves. As we draw nearer to our Shepherd, we bring those lost sheep with us.

The redemptive work of Christ demanded that he identify at the deepest level with all the most shocking varieties of human suffering. As the Master was, so must his servants be. He who dealt with the enemy's occupation of the human heart has called us to do the same. As we follow him, we will learn lessons similar to those I have mentioned—and many more. Each of those lessons calls us to behold the Lamb and repent. As we are taught the lesson of restraint, we see the Lamb who is God in the flesh. As we are taught the lesson of humility, we see Eternal Glory setting aside rank and honor. As we are taught the lesson of service, we see the Sovereign Over All washing feet and touching the untouchable. As we are taught the lesson of leadership, we see Jesus going before, being and doing what he calls us to be and do.

To follow the Lamb is to enter into the fellowship of his sufferings. It means that, like him, we will get down in the filth of life in this world. The more we are willing to follow him into the dual mysteries of iniquity and suffering, the more of his beauty we will see. The threads of sacrifice that we discovered at the entrance of God into time will lead us directly to the throne of God where we will see his glory, not just in the heavens or in the flesh this time, but in its fullness.

Revelation 5:2-14 tells us that we will hear a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" And the answer will be, "See, the Lion.... He is able." Then we will see a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne. And we will hear the voices of many angels, numbering ten thousand times ten thousand. They will encircle the throne and sing: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then you and I who have followed this Lamb will join with them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Amen.

NOTES

CHAPTER 5

1. A great resource to begin in is Richard Foster's *Renovare materials*, especially *Devotional Classics* (by Foster and Smith, published by HarperSanFrancisco, 1993). Other classic works are as follows:

- Tertullian (b. 160), *Regula Fidei* (Rule of Faith)
- John Chrysostom (b. 345), "Dead to Sin" (a sermon)
- Benedict of Nursia (b. 480), *The Rule*
- John Climacus (b. 579), *The Ladder of Paradise*
- Bernard of Clairvaux (b. 1090), *On the Love of God*
- Francis of Assisi (b. 1182), *The Little Flowers*
- Dante Alighieri (b. 1265), *The Divine Comedy*
- Geoffrey Chaucer (b. 1343), *The Canterbury Tales*
- Julian of Norwich (b. 1343), *Revelations of Divine Love*
- Catherine of Siena (b. 1347), *The Dialogue*
- Thomas à Kempis (b. 1380), *The Imitation of Christ*
- Catherine of Genoa (b. 1447), *Life and Teachings*
- Ignatius of Loyola (b. 1491), *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*
- John Calvin (b. 1509), *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*
- Teresa of Avila (b. 1515), *The Interior Castle*
- John of the Cross (b. 1542), *The Dark Night of the Soul*
- Francis de Sales (b. 1567), *Introduction to the Devout Life*
- George Herbert (b. 1593), *The Temple*
- John Milton (b. 1608), *Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained*
- Brother Lawrence (b. 1611), *The Practice of the Presence of God*
- Jeremy Taylor (b. 1613), *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Living*
- Isaac Pennington (b. 1617), *Letters on Spiritual Virtues*
- George Fox (b. 1624), *The Letters of George Fox*
- John Bunyan (b. 1628), *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*
- François Fénelon (b. 1651), *Christian Perfection*
- Jonathan Swift (b. 1667), *Gulliver's Travels*
- William Law (b. 1686), *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*
- John Wesley (b. 1703), *Christian Perfection*
- Jonathan Edwards (b. 1703), *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affirmation*
- John Woolman (b. 1720), *The Journal of John Woolman*

- Jean-Nicholas Grou (b. 1730), *How to Prey*
- John Henry, Cardinal Newman (b. 1801), *Apologia*
- Hannah Whitall Smith (b. 1832), *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*
- Charles Spurgeon (b. 1834), *Spiritual Revival: The Want of the Church*
- E. Stanley Jones (b. 1884), *With the Christ on the Indian Road*
- Sadhu Sundar Singh (b. 1889), *At the Feet of the Master*
- C. S. Lewis (b. 1900), *The Screwtape Letters*
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer (b. 1906), *Life Together*
- Simone Weil (b. 1909), *Waiting for God*
- Thomas Merton (b. 1915), *Contemplative Prayer*
- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (b. 1918), *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
- Elizabeth O'Connor (b. 1921), *Letters to Scattered Pilgrims*
- Henri Nouwen (b. 1932), *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life*

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 In T. Clinton and G. Ohlschlager (Eds.),
Competent Christian Counseling, Vol. 1. (pp712-726).
 Colorado: WaterBook Press.



GODLY RESPONSE TO ABUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

The Spiritual Impact of Abuse

By Diane Langberg, PhD., Board Member GRACE

We know from both the literature and from experience that trauma and abuse violate every aspect of the child – their world, their self, their future and their faith. A child is by definition, in process. Children are vulnerable, dependent and easily influenced. They do not know very much and are learning how relationships work, what is good, what is bad, what it means to be male or female. They are developing in every way and anything growing can be shaped. We believe good nutrition is important for our children because what they consume will affect their bodies not only now but also when they are adults. Raising children in an environment of love, truth, wisdom and patience shapes their characters. Raising children in an environment of fear, evil, deceit and pain shapes their characters as well. The effects of ongoing sexual abuse on the life of a child and on their adult future are, needless to say, profound.

Those of us who have worked with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse know that one of the areas that are profoundly impacted by that abuse is the survivor's relationship to God. We have also had the experience of teaching a much-needed truth to someone and recognizing that it would not "go in". The truth may be assented to intellectually but it does not seem to enter the life and heart in a transforming way. I would like to suggest three reasons why that might be so and then offer some thoughts about how we might help those we are working with to experience the truths they can often so easily recite.

The first block in this obstacle seems to be that a survivor's thinking often appears to be "frozen" in time. A woman who was chronically abused by her father for fifteen years thinks about herself, her life and her relationships through the grid of abuse. Trauma stops growth because it shuts everything down. It brings death. The input of other experiences often does not alter the thinking that originated within the context of the abuse. So a woman may have encountered many trustworthy people since her childhood abuse, but she still does not trust. She may have heard thousands of words about how God loves her, but she believes she is trash and somehow an exception to that truth.

The second block is that the abuse was processed by a child mind and children think concretely, not abstractly. Children learn about abstract concepts like trust, truth and love, from the concrete experiences they have with significant others in their lives. Mommy and daddy label love and trust and truth for them and those labels are rooted in concrete experiences with their parents.

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Third, children (like adults) learn about the unseen, or the spiritual, by way of the seen. God often teaches us eternal truths through the natural world. We grasp a bit of eternity through looking at the same. We learn about the shortness of life by the quick disappearance of a vapor. Jesus taught this way as well. He said He was bread, light, water and a vine. Jesus, in His very essence, is an example of this of He is God in the flesh. God continually brings eternal truths to us in ways we can understand.

If we consider the impact of these factors we will see that many survivors exhibit this quality of thinking "frozen" in time by grasping the abstract through the concrete lessons of abuse and expecting the unseen to mimic what they were taught in the seen. God is viewed through the lens of abuse. The knowledge they have appears rooted in the Word of God. Knowledge personally applied or experienced is rooted in the lessons of abuse.

Consider the following examples. Sarah is five. Her parents drop her off at Sunday school every week. She learned to sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong." Sarah's daddy rapes her several times a week. Sometimes she gets a break because he rapes her sister instead. The song says Jesus loves her. It says He is strong. So Sarah asks Jesus to stop her daddy from hurting her and her sister. Nothing happens. Maybe Jesus is not so strong after all. Or at least, He is not as strong as her daddy. Nothing, not even Jesus can stop her daddy. The people who wrote the Bible must not have known about her Daddy.

A child is told to get down on her knees nightly by her bed and pray with her father. As he tucks her in he molests her, saying, "Why are you such a whore that you make me do this after we have prayed?" It is not difficult to see from these two examples what kind of spiritual lessons are being learned. It is also not hard to see what deep roots such lessons would have. You do not have to know very much about learning theory to grasp the profound impact of such experiences on a life. The abuse provides the control beliefs by which all other information is processed.

What response can a counselor or pastor give that will be powerful enough to overcome such obstacles? If simply speaking or teaching the truth is not sufficient, then what else is required? I believe that those members of the Body of Christ who have been called to walk with survivors become the representative of God to them. The reputation of God is at stake in our lives. We are called to live out in the seen, in flesh and blood, what is true about who God is. Early on in my work with survivors I worked with a woman who had been chronically abused and who seemed unable to really grasp God's great love for her. She could recite the Scriptures about that love but it seemed to apply to others and not to her. I clearly remember getting down on my knees and begging God to help her see that He loved her. His response to me was basically this: "You want her to understand how much I love her? Then you go love her in a way that demonstrates my love that makes it real to her." In other words, we are to demonstrate in the flesh the character of God over time so that who we are reveals the truth about God to the survivor. This is not in any way to deny or underestimate the power of the Word of God. However, often that Word needs to be fleshed out and not just spoken for us to truly grasp what it means.

The second thing I do with survivors is to help them put down deep roots in the story of the crucifixion. I find it effective to do this work much later in the counseling process in part because through the relationship they have developed with me (though far from perfect) they are much

better able to grasp the truths of the Word of God. If I have entered into their suffering they can better understand God's entrance into their suffering. If I have been safe then they can better grasp God as their refuge. Out of their experience in the seen world they can better comprehend what is true in the unseen. Grappling with the truths of the cross is critical because the cross is the only place one can go to reconcile the truth of abuse and a loving God who hates evil. The evil that has been done to them, the love of God for them and the holiness of God, all come together in the cross. We usually begin at a place where they are struggling to understand why God has allowed a particular thing to happen. I then suggest a small portion of Scripture (often just one or two verses) and send them home to read it daily, asking God what He would teach them. For example, I gave the John 19:23 to a woman who had been repeatedly gang-raped as a teen. In that verse it says, "...and the soldiers took his clothes". She returned the next week saying over and over, "They took his clothes, they took his clothes. I never saw that before." She saw for the first time that Christ knew what she felt for He had entered into her suffering and humiliation. It was a real turning point. The cross demonstrates the extent of the evil done to them. The cross demonstrates the infinite love of God for them. The cross deals with the sins of the survivor. It covers sinning, being sinned against and suffering. This is not work I do for my clients. It is work that arises naturally out of our discussions together and it is work I direct them to do. It has far more power in it when they wrestle with the Scriptures before God and wait to see what He will teach them. When He speaks it goes in.

This work is both difficult and a great privilege. The task of serving as a representative of God so that His character can be grasped and believed is far beyond any capability of yours or mine. It is a work that will take us to our knees if we will let it, with hearts hungry for more of God so that we might bring His presence in very concrete ways into places where He has not yet been known.

What Would Walther Do? Applying Law and Gospel to Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse

Victor L. Vieth

National Child Protection Training Center

Counselors and theologians failing to understand the dynamics of child sexual abuse cases often apply the concept of *law* and *gospel* incorrectly. When this happens, perpetrators are emboldened to offend again and many victims leave the church. To assist spiritual counselors in avoiding this pitfall, I provide an overview of the dynamics present in many cases of sexual abuse and the impact this has on children physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I also discuss the characteristics of many sex offenders and the efforts offenders make to manipulate both the victim and the church. In determining the proper application of law and gospel to victims and offenders, I discuss the law and gospel treatise of C.F.W. Walther. In doing so, I include examples of Walther's application of law and gospel in cases of domestic violence and sexual exploitation. Finally, I include practical suggestions for psychotherapists and theologians in applying law and gospel to victims and to perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

"You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach the Law to those who are already in terror on account of their sins or the Gospel to those who are living securely in their sins."

—C.F.W. Walther

Members of the clergy, church elders, and lay Christians often struggle with the application of Biblical *law*¹ and *gospel*² to victims and perpetrators of child

sexual abuse. Partly as a result of ignorance of the dynamics involved in these cases, Christians often apply a heavy dosage of law to victims and gospel to offenders. This misguided, sometimes cruel application of theological principles often drives victims away from the church and emboldens offenders to remain in their sin, if not to offend again.

To assist the church in better responding to instances of child sexual abuse, I present an overview of the typical dynamics present in cases of child sexual abuse from the standpoint of the victim. I also highlight the impact of abuse on children physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In addition, I review cognitive features of child molesters, and the extraordinary steps taken by many offenders to manipulate not only their victims, but also the church as a whole.

In applying law and gospel to victims and offenders, I also present a brief biography of the legendary theologian C.F.W. Walther, whose seminary lectures on law and gospel delivered in 1884–1885 have influenced protestant pastors and church leaders for over a century. More importantly, I analyze one of Walther's central thesis—that the gospel should be pronounced to "crushed" sinners and the law pronounced to "secure

ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have been abolished (Colossians 2:16–17), the moral law (the Ten Commandments) is in force until the end of time (Matthew 5:18)." (Walther 2010, p. 481).

²The Gospel "in its proper and narrow sense, is the glad tidings of forgiveness, peace, life, and joy; the eternal divine counsel of redemption, of which Christ Himself ever was, is, and will be the living center, the very heart and soul. The Gospel (a) imparts the forgiveness of sin; (b) produces true joy and the zeal to do good works; and (c) destroys sin both outwardly and inwardly." (Walther 2010, p. 480).

¹The law is "God's will, which shows people how they should live in order to please God (e.g. the Ten Commandments), condemns their failure to fulfill His will (sin), and threatens God's wrath because of sin. The preaching of the Law is the cause of contrition. Although the

sinners." I examine Walther's use of this thesis in a case of domestic violence and in another case of sexual exploitation by a clergy. Finally, I also provide practical suggestions for pastors, church leaders, and laity in applying law and gospel to victims of sexual abuse and to perpetrators of sexual abuse. Although I focus on instances of sexual abuse, much of the principles discussed are also pertinent to cases of interpersonal violence and other forms of child maltreatment.

Overview of the Dynamics of Child Sexual Abuse

In order to spiritually counsel or assist sexually abused children in any way, both clergy and laity need to understand the dynamics inherent in cases of familial sexual abuse, as well as many other forms of abuse. Unfortunately, many in the clergy and laity have accepted decades worth of myths about child sexual abuse victims. These myths include the belief that children fantasize about incest and that children's allegations of abuse are inherently suspect.

Sigmund Freud and the Historic Skepticism of the Mental Health Field Toward Victims of Child Sexual Abuse

In 1896, about a decade after Walther's law and gospel lectures, Sigmund Freud gave an equally monumental lecture entitled "The Aetiology of Hysteria" in which he discussed 18 male and female patients victimized by sexual abuse as children and the profound impact this had on their mental health. By the close of 1897, however, Freud abandoned his theory partly on the basis that widespread sexual abuse was not probable (Masson 2003). Instead, Freud postulated the theory of infantile sexuality, which evolved into the Oedipus complex theory—the concept that children may fantasize about incestuous relationships and violence (Masson 2003).

Freud's abandonment of the reality of numerous instances of child sexual abuse, and his subsequent assertion that such abuse is rare at best, was instrumental in fueling a dark chapter in the history of psychology. Dr. Anna Salter describes this history with this sober assessment of the field:

The history of psychology in the past one hundred years has been filled with theories that deny sexual abuse occurs, that discounts the responsibility of the offender, that blame the mother and/or child when it does occur, and that minimize the impact. It constitutes a sorry chapter in the history of psychology, but it is not only shameful, it is also puzzling. Hostility toward child victims and adult women leaks through the literature like poison. (p. 57)

This biased view of allegations of sexual abuse, coupled with high profile day care cases from the 1980's in which many believed children were coached into false allegations (see, for a review, Hechler, 1988), spilled over into our mainstream culture, including religion. For example, one Christian publishing house printed a book whose author claimed there was an "industry" of child protection professionals working to manufacture allegations of abuse and to "snatch" children away from parents (Pride, 1986).

Clergy and laity with such a skeptical view of sexual abuse claims are more likely to view claims of abuse as suspicious, to conclude that the child was equally responsible for any victimization, and to apply a heavy dosage of law to problematic behaviors exhibited by the child—behaviors that, ironically, may be attributable to the abuse (for a review, see Anda & Felitti, 2012).

There is no excuse for modern era clergy applying such a distorted view of law and gospel to child abuse victims. Although all child protection professionals need to be mindful of the possibility of false allegations, a number of studies conclude that false claims of sexual abuse are rare (Oates et al., 2000) and that when children do lie, it is usually done to protect the perpetrator, not to get anyone in trouble (Lawson & Chaffin, 1992). Law enforcement officers and other child protection professionals have made great strides in the past 25 years, improving their skills in interviewing abused children and in collecting evidence—thus further reducing the risk of false allegations (Johnson & Vieth, 2012). Accordingly, it is unreasonable for any pastor to automatically assume that an allegation of abuse, even against a respected member of the church, is untrue.

There is also no excuse for clergy to fail to understand the dynamics inherent in cases of sexual abuse. There is a large and growing body of literature to assist spiritual leaders in understanding these dynamics—including many resources for the faith community (see, for example, Langberg, 1999; 2003; Tracy, 2005).

The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome (CSAAS)

In 1983, Dr. Roland Summit from UCLA published a pioneering paper which not only challenged decades of myths partly fueled by Freud's theories, but that helped professionals and laypersons understand the dynamics present in child sexual abuse cases that make it difficult for children to disclose abuse timely, if at all. Although not universally accepted, Summit's work has been widely heralded in the mental health field (Lyon, 2002) and accepted by many courts as

helpful in assisting laity understand sexual abuse dynamics (Myers, 1997). Despite its imperfections, CSAAS is a helpful model for theologians or other laypersons to use in understanding the psychological dynamics present in many cases of sexual abuse.

According to Summit (1983), sexual abuse cases are engulfed in secrecy, helplessness, entrapment and accommodation, delayed, conflicting and unconvincing disclosure, and retraction. Clergy and laity who take the time to understand these and other dynamics will increase the chance of responding sensitively to the spiritual needs of maltreated children.

Secrecy

According to Summit (1983), at least three dynamics convey to the victim that the abuse is to remain a secret. First, the circumstances of the abuse suggest the need for secrecy. The abuse may only happen when the victim and perpetrator are alone, it may only happen late at night when the door is locked and the perpetrator is whispering. Second, the secrecy is often a source of fear in which the perpetrator conveys to the child that bad things will happen if there is a disclosure. Bad things may include the abuse of the child's sibling, non-offending parent, or pet. Disclosure may result in the victim's placement in a foster home. Disclosure may result in the child's embarrassment in front of fellow classmates who learn details of the sexual abuse through media or other sources. The child may fear that disclosure will result in his or her condemnation in their church community. Third, secrecy may result in a "promise of safety" and the hope of good things to come. The child may expect that secrecy will keep the family unit intact and may result in special privileges such as staying up later at night, a trip to a favorite vacation destination, or a new toy or other coveted item.

Helplessness

In Summit's (1983) view, child sexual abuse victims typically feel helpless to stop the abuse. First, their size and immaturity create this feeling. A young boy or girl may be less than half the perpetrator's height and weight and is likely less knowledgeable and mature. Second, in our society children are taught to obey those in positions of authority. In church, for example, children are taught to obey their teachers, pastors, and parents and that this obedience is commanded by God (Ex. 20:12). Perpetrators use this dynamic to their advantage as they admonish children to honor requests to submit to sexual conduct with the offender. Third, it is important to keep in mind that most sexual abuse is committed by a trusted, even loved, adult. Accord-

ingly, Summit (1983) contends that many parents or other offenders simply need to suggest that they will no longer love the child if abuse is revealed. In one instance, a child lamented that his grandfather was in prison for sexual abuse and asked the prosecutor "is it OK if I keep grandpa in my heart?"

Entrapment and Accommodation

Since the child has a secret that he or she is helpless to do anything about, Summit (1983) said the child must "accept the situation and survive." Summit claimed that a child may cope with abuse in at least three ways. First, and most commonly, a child will develop what Summit called a "coping mechanism." It may be as simple as a child telling him or herself that the sexual abuse prevents a father from abusing siblings or that the victim is deriving benefits from the abuse in the form of money, gifts, or other privileges. For example, a grand jury investigation of former Penn State University football coach Jerry Sandusky concluded he had given golf clubs, trips, and other expensive gifts to boys he was sexually abusing (Thirty-Third Grand Jury Investigation Report, 2012).

Second, Summit (1983) also suggested that an abused child might dissociate during abusive episodes. To assist theologians in understanding dissociation, think of a time when driving a significant distance and you suddenly realize you have no memory of the drive because your mind was thinking about the sermon that needs writing or any number of other church or family obligations. This is, at some level, a form of dissociation.

When sexually abused, a child may dissociate by sub-consciously sending his or her mind to another place or room during abuse. In one case that the author is personally familiar with, for example, a child victim told the investigator she was with Winnie the Pooh in the hundred acre woods during the time her father was anally raping her. Dissociation of this type offers "a kind of temporary emotional escape from the horror, the fear, and that pain" of child abuse (Walker 2008 p. 16).

Third, in extreme cases of trauma, some children may develop what in Summit's day was called a multiple personality disorder but is today referred to as dissociative identity disorder. According to the DSM-IV (APA, 1994), "Dissociative Identity Disorder is the presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states" that "recurrently take control of behavior." Each personality state "may be experienced as if it has a distinct personal history, self-image, and identity, including a separate name." In lay terms, a child abuse victim may sub-consciously develop a second

personality or alter who "suffered the abuse . . . that alter is the one present during the abusive episodes, but is not the one seated at the breakfast table the morning after the attack, chatting away as if nothing happened" (Walker 2008, p. 16).

In movies such as *Sybil* and *Primal Fear*, Hollywood has given the general public a sense of dissociative identity disorder that is not always accurate. For example, football legend Herschel Walker endured bullying and cruel racism as a child, which led him to develop a second "Sentry" personality that would protect him whenever he felt threatened. Walker (2008) tells of going to a dentist to have teeth removed when this second, tougher persona took over and led him to refuse novocain or another anesthetic drug to numb the pain. However, Walker says he never changed his name when his "Sentry" personality exhibited itself—he simply developed a different, seemingly invincible persona. Clergy and laity alike should not assume that Christian victims of abuse are immune from dissociative identity disorder. Indeed, Herschel Walker describes himself as a devout Christian "baptized and washed with the blood of Jesus" (Walker, 2008, p. 43).

Theologians should be aware that although there is little doubt that dissociation exists, the medical and mental health fields are not in complete agreement as to the prevalence or even existence of dissociative identity disorder (Raison, 2010). Theologians may not need to understand the many nuances of this debate but should, as a general rule, understand that anyone diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder has likely suffered severe trauma and is in need of continuing, professional mental health support.

If a child cannot figure out a way to cope emotionally, what Summit (1983) calls a *psychic economy*, feelings of rage may cause a child to commit suicide, engage in self-mutilation, become promiscuous, or develop other harmful patterns of behavior. Clergy and laity unaware of these and other dynamics may be quick to dismiss a child's allegations of abuse, concluding the child is exhibiting mental illnesses or is not credible given the closeness with a perpetrator and the many "kindnesses" a child has received from an offender. Similarly, the Christian pastor or lay member may unwittingly focus on delinquent or other behaviors without realizing these behaviors reflect deep-seated childhood trauma.

Delayed and Unconvincing Disclosure

As a result of the dynamics described above, many children never disclose sexual abuse. When children do disclose abuse, Summit (1983) contends the disclosure is often delayed and comes out in an unconvincing

manner. Consider, for example, a girl molested for years by her father. Not surprisingly, the child develops an array of mental health problems, truancy and delinquency behaviors, and is sexually promiscuous. At a family reunion, the child asks her father to borrow the keys to a car because she wishes to go on a date. Her father reprimands her, reminding her that the family reunion was planned for more than a year and she needs to stay put. Years of rage fueled by repeated molestations bubble over as the child yells at her dad that when she grows up she will not rape children. A guest overhears this outburst and reports the incident to the church pastor. When confronted, the father tells the pastor the outburst is true but the allegation is not. The father calmly explains the child is out of control and he is simply, as a Christian parent, trying to reign in his troubled daughter. Unless the pastor is aware of child sexual abuse dynamics, he may dismiss the underlying allegations without reporting the case to the authorities or taking any other appropriate action.

Retraction

According to Summit (2003, p. 188), "in the chaotic aftermath of disclosure, the child discovers that the bedrock fears and threats underlying the secrecy are true." In other words, the perpetrator's claim the child would be isolated, not believed, be removed from the home, bullied at school or any number of other horrors do in fact occur. As a result, the child concludes that living with the lie is easier than telling the truth and chooses to recant his or her allegation of sexual abuse. A number of studies of sexual abuse victims have found that recantation is not unusual (Sorenson & Snow, 1991). Again, clergy and laity unfamiliar with these dynamics are not only at risk to accept a recantation at face value, they are often used by perpetrators to apply pressure on children in the hope of securing a recantation. In more than one instance, for example, a non-offending caretaker has taken a child to a pastor to "confess" the lie. Many clergy have testified as character witnesses for an accused perpetrator with little thought as to the impact on the child alleging abuse. In one case that the author prosecuted, a child victim saw both of her ministers and numerous church leaders in the courtroom as a sign of support for the father she accused of molesting her. Upon witnessing this spectacle, the victim asked the prosecutor "Does this mean that God is against me too?"

The ACE Studies: the Medical and Mental Health Risks of Child Abuse

The Adverse Childhood Experience Study is an ongoing collaborative research project between the Cen-

ters for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, and Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, California. Over 17,000 patients participating in routine health screening volunteered to participate in the study. According to the ACE researchers, "data resulting from their participation . . . reveals staggering proof of the health, social, and economic risks that result from childhood trauma." (Anda & Felitti, 2012). Specifically, the researchers queried adult patients on ten types of adverse childhood experiences including child sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and witnessing domestic violence. Researchers concluded that patients suffering from one or more adverse childhood experience were statistically more likely to suffer from a variety of medical and mental health problems with the risk of these conditions increasing markedly based on the number and severity of adverse experiences.

Clergy and laity not familiar with the ACE study are at risk to conclude an allegation of sexual abuse is not credible and to focus primarily on the victim's behaviors, including delinquent and criminal behaviors, without fully appreciating the role childhood abuse played in their life. In spiritual terms, the danger is that a pastor will be quick to apply the law, without an appreciation of the need to provide a victim already burdened with enormous guilt the comfort of the gospel.

Spiritual Injuries Resulting from Sexual Abuse

There are a number of studies documenting the impact of abuse on spirituality. For example, in a study of 527 victims of child abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) it was found that there were significant "spiritual injury" such as feelings of guilt, anger, grief, despair, doubt, fear of death, and belief that God is unfair (Lawson, Drebing, Berg, Vincelle, & Penk, 1998). However, the same study found that survivors of childhood abuse report praying more frequently and having a "spiritual experience."

When the perpetrator is a member of the clergy, the impact on the victim's spirituality may be even more pronounced. Clergy abusers often use their religion to justify or excuse their sexual abuse of children. According to one study, clergy in treatment for sexually abusing children believed that God would particularly look after the children they had victimized and otherwise keep them from harm (Saradjian & Nobus, 2003). Through their religious role, these offenders also engaged in "compensatory behavior" and believed that their good works in the community would result in God excusing their moral lapses with children. The religious cover used by clergy abusers is often communicated to the victims in a manner that irreparably dam-

ages their spirituality. Specifically, church attendance of these survivors decreases, they are less likely to trust God, and their relationship with God often ceases to grow (McLaughlin, 1994).

The Importance of Spirituality for Many Abused Children

Spirituality is of critical importance to most children. Indeed, a "growing body of theoretical and research literature suggests that spiritual development is an intrinsic part of being human" (McLaughlin, 1994, p. 14). Research from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that 77% of college freshman believed "we are all spiritual beings" (p.14). Eighty percent of these freshmen said they had an "interest" in spirituality (McLaughlin, 1994). Some studies suggest spirituality may be particularly important to vulnerable children. In a study of 149 youth in an institutional care setting, 86% of these children considered themselves spiritual or somewhat spiritual (McLaughlin, 1994). As an example of the importance spirituality plays for some vulnerable youth, a teenage survivor of the sex industry told a journalist, "I admit that I'm still struggling, even after six months away from the business . . . Because I dropped out of school I have few career options . . . Yet I know what God wants for me. I need to be healed" (Yancey, 2010, p. 73-74).

Gall (2006) found that a victim's "spiritual coping behavior" might play either a positive or negative role in the survivor's ability to cope with the abuse and with life in general. Victims of severe abuse may remain "stuck" in their spiritual development such as remaining angry with God. Children abused at younger ages are "less likely to turn to God and others for spiritual support" (Gall, 2006, p. 838). Nonetheless, even victims describing a difficult relationship with God "still rely on their spirituality for healing." Victims who experience "greater resolution" of their childhood abuse are able to "actively turn to their spirituality to cope . . . rather than attempt to cope on their own" (Gall, 2006, p. 839). When Christian clergy and laity mis-apply law and gospel to victims of abuse, they risk destroying the very coping mechanism many children need to survive physically and emotionally—their sense of spirituality.

Overview of Dynamics of Child Molesters

Child Molesters Vary in Their Typology

It is beyond the expertise of theologians to diagnose or even understand the myriad types of sex offenders or the mindset of those who sexually abuse children (Schlank, 2010). This is important to understand because many pastors and laity assume that

everyone who sexually violates a child does so for the same reason or requires the same degree of supervision, consequences or treatment. For example, there is a difference in the risks posed by a 19-year-old man impregnating his 15-year-old girlfriend and a man accused of molesting multiple boys or girls at a church summer camp. There is also a difference between adult and juvenile sex offenders—with the latter generally more amenable to treatment (Carpenter, Silovsky, & Chaffin, 2006).

In dealing with any particular sex offender, it is important for church leaders to consult with a mental health professional well versed in the literature on sex offenders and who is experienced in dealing with this population. If a parishioner sought spiritual guidance on treating their cancer, diabetes or other ailments, a wise pastor would inquire about the physician's diagnosis and treatment options. A wise pastor would do this because he or she is not a physician. In the same vein, a pastor should not be deciding the risks posed by a given sex offender without consulting a mental health professional who is skilled in the treatment of sex offenders and who, ideally, has assessed and/or treated the offender in question.

Having said this, there are some general characteristics of child molesters that every pastor should know—in part because sex offenders often count on clergy and laity to be ignorant about these characteristics. For starters, clergy and laity should have a working definition of a pedophile. A child molester meeting the DSM-IV criteria of pedophilia (1) is at least 16-years-old, (2) is at least five years older than the child victim, and (3) over a period of at least 6 months has "recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger)" (APA, 1994).

Although this working definition is helpful, clergy and laity should be cautious in applying the definition without professional guidance. In one instance that the author is personally familiar with, a church assumed the allegations of sexual abuse made by two separate children could not be true because, if they were, the pedophile in question would have had dozens of additional victims in his life. There were two glaring errors made by the church. First, the church leaders failed to recognize that many pedophiles molest hundreds, even thousands, of children without ever getting caught (Abel et al., 1987). Accordingly, it is possible that the alleged offender may have had other victims. Second, and equally important, the offender may not have been a pedophile but could have fit into any number of cate-

gories of sex offenders. In commenting on the various reasons offenders molest children, one sex offender treatment provider notes the following:

There is a subgroup of child molesters who molest children simply because they are sexually attracted to them. There are others who molest because they are antisocial or even psychopathic and simply feel entitled. There are still others who use children for the intimacy they are too timid or impaired to obtain from adults. And there are others who molest children for reasons we don't understand at all. (Salter, 2003, p. 75)

Many child molesters are religious. Although clergy and laity may never be able to master the myriad nuances of sex offenders, they can and should be cognizant of a number of pertinent characteristics of those who offend against children. For starters, the faith community needs to be cognizant that sex offenders are often religious and many of them attend church. In a study of 3,952 male sex offenders, 93% of these perpetrators described themselves as "religious" (Abel & Harlow, 2001).

Religious sex offenders may be the most dangerous group of child molesters. There is some evidence that "religious" sex offenders may be the most dangerous category of offenders. One study found that sex offenders maintaining significant involvement with religious institutions "had more sexual offense convictions, more victims, and younger victims" (Eshuys & Smallbone, 2006; Firestone & Moulden, 2009). According to another study, clergy sex offenders share the same characteristics of non-clergy sex offenders with the exception that clergy are *more likely* to use force (Langevin et al., 2000).

Child molesters manipulate both children and the church. Child molesters, particularly those meeting the diagnostic criteria of pedophilia, are extremely manipulative of not only their victims but also the church as a whole. According to Salter (2003, p. 28) "If children can be silenced and the average person is easy to fool, many offenders report that religious people are even easier to fool than most people." In the words of one convicted child molester:

I consider church people easy to fool . . . they have a trust that comes from being Christians . . . They tend to be better folks all around. And they seem to want to believe in the good that exists in all people . . . I think they want to believe in people. And because of that, you can easily con-

vince, with or without convincing words. (Salter, 2003, p. 29)

Child molesters are skilled at deception because, in part, they have considerable practice at lying to their families, their victims, their friends, and to themselves. Sex offender treatment provider Anna Salter describes the abilities of molesters to lie convincingly in this way:

Very few of us have ever been suspected of a crime, and fewer still have been interviewed by the police about one. Under such circumstances, detection apprehension would be very high for most of us . . . But that would change had we practiced lying over serious matters every day, had we lived a double life, had we been questioned by upset parents or by police numerous times in the past. You are never going to run into a child molester who is not a practiced liar, even if he is not a natural one. (Salter, 2003, p. 203)

Not only are child molesters skilled at lying to pastors and parishioners alike, they are often proud of their abilities to fool the leaders and members of their congregations. In the words of one convicted child molester:

(T)here was a great amount of pride. Well, I pulled this one off again. You're a good one . . . There were times when little old ladies would pat me on the back and say, 'You're one of the best young men that I have ever known.' I would think back and think 'If you really knew me, you wouldn't think that.' (Salter, 2003, p. 199)

Many child molesters offend with others present. In many instances, a child molester offends with other children or even another adult present. According to one study, 54.9% of child molesters offended when another child was present and 23.9% offended when another was adult present (Underwood, Patch, Cappelletty, & Wolfe, 1999). The abuse, of course, may be subtle and not easily detected. For example, a child molester in a Christian school may call a pupil up to his desk ostensibly to review an examination while, at the same time, touches the child's genitals which are covered from the other students by the desk. As another example, a father may touch a child beneath the bed covers while his wife is asleep in the same bed. Offenders report that molesting a child with others present may be more arousing and may also give them more power over the child—conveying to the victim that he or she can be abused at any time, in any place, with anyone present. The fact that many sex offenders molest

victims with others present is critical for clergy and laity to understand. Without this recognition, offenders often argue that a child's allegations are absurd—after all, who would sexually touch a child with others in the room? A pastor acquainted with studies such as those cited in this article will tell a suspect that, as it turns out, many sex offenders engage in precisely this conduct.

Many child molesters carefully select their victims. Many child molesters put a great deal of time and thought into selecting the children they will violate. There are two reasons for this. First, sex offenders often look for the easiest target. Second, sex offenders often look for the child or children least likely to be believed should he or she disclose the abuse. A Christian convicted of sexually abusing children at church was asked how he selected his victims. The offender icily responded:

First of all you start the grooming process from day one . . . the children that you're interested in . . . You find a child you might be attracted to . . . For me, it might be nobody fat. It had to be a you know, a nice looking child . . . You maybe look at a kid that doesn't have a father image at home, or a father that cares about them . . . if you've got a group of 25 kids, you might find 9 that are appealing . . . then you start looking at their family backgrounds. You find out all you can . . . which ones are the most accessible . . . you get it down to one that is the easiest target, and that's the one you do. (Salter, 2003, p. 57)

This is a critical dynamic for clergy and laity to be aware of (Vieth, 2011). When sex offenders are suspected of abuse, they often point to the accuser and remind the congregation of the child's history of problems—ignoring the fact that it was precisely these problems that made the child such an easy target. Simply stated, child molesters often select damaged children or, in the alternative, they damage the children in their homes and then cite the damage as proof the victim cannot be believed. It is a wicked game in which the church and the children often lose.

Child molesters often abuse children in the name of God. Child molesters often use religious or spiritual themes in the abuse of children. Child molesters may cite a child's biological reaction to abuse and contend the victim equally enjoyed the abuse and is equally sinful. It is not uncommon for a molester to pray with his victim and ask God's forgiveness for both. A molester may tell a victim that if he or she disclosed the abuse,

the church will condemn the victim for his or her sin. In one case that the author is personally familiar with from his experience as a prosecuting attorney, a child eventually learned to initiate sexual activity with her father simply as a means of getting the abuse over with. The perpetrator, however, reminded the victim of the initiation and convinced her she was the offender. The victim developed a series of medical and mental health conditions including attempted suicide.

In a highly publicized case, Father Lawrence Murphy sexually abused as many as 200 deaf or hard of hearing boys and often used spiritual language or religious concepts in the abuse. For example, he told one victim that, "God wanted him to teach the boy about sex but that he had to keep it quiet because it was under the sacrament of confession" (for a review, see Goodstein, 2010).

According to one sex offender treatment provider, sexual abuse in the name of God creates a "triple trauma" involving the abuse itself, the betrayal of trust, and spiritual harm that often includes "threats regarding God and damnation" (Pendergast, 2004). According to Pendergast:

Fear of retribution from God, whom the abusers related 'gave me permission to do this to you,' and 'if you tell anyone, God will punish you in hell for eternity,' produces an intense fear as well as feeling of confusion. The confusion results from the fact their religion teaches them that what they are doing is wrong and sinful, but the religious abusers teach them that the God of their religion gave them permission to sexually abuse them. (p. 285)

In one case that I handled as a prosecutor, a teenage victim of a neighborhood child molester told me, when I was preparing her for court case, that she had not disclosed the abuse for years because she was certain her church would reprimand her for the sin and not the offender. The child had internalized many of the messages provided by the perpetrator and saw no difference between sinning and being the victim of sin.

What would Walther Do?

C.F.W. Walther: A Brief History

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was born in Germany on October 25, 1811. His great grandfather, grandfather, and father were pastors and Walther continued this family tradition. Although little is known of Walther's mother, there is some indication his father was physically abusive. In reference to his father, Walther said "A young man must endure much pain, ere he

becomes a gentleman" (Walther, 2010, p. 100). As one example of this strictness, there was a special sofa in the family parlor reserved only for guests. When the boy Walther forgot this rule and sat on the sofa he was physically punished (Suelflow, 2000). This harshness may have particularly impacted the sensitive Walther who, according to one scholar, lacked self-confidence and saw himself as a "miserable boy" (Barnbrock, Espinosa, Holtan, Schaum, & Egger, 2011). Although there is little, if any, indication that Walther ever considered himself a victim of child abuse—the harsh discipline of children was more commonly accepted in his era than in ours³—it is possible that, under current law, Walther's childhood would be deemed abusive (Vieth, 1994).

Although it is difficult, probably impossible, to accurately assess how physical blows received as a boy may have impacted Walther, it is interesting to note that he developed some of the characteristics of children enduring maltreatment—including bouts of depression. Indeed, Walther suffered at least three nervous breakdowns at different points in his life and, at the height of his career, wished that he were dead (Harrison, 2011).⁴ Although there may have been a biological component to Walther's mental illness and any or all of the myriad heartaches in his life may have contributed to his depression, the impact of violence during his childhood should not be excluded as a possible contributing factor (Barnbrock et al., 2011). Whether or not the violence he experienced influenced his empathy toward victims, there is evidence that, on more than one occasion, Walther displayed a remarkable sensitivity to the victims of physical and sexual exploitation.

³Even among conservative Christians, corporal punishment is viewed much more skeptically in the modern era with a number of theologians challenging the belief that the Bible requires physical discipline (Webb 2011).

⁴In 1860, at the height of his productivity, Walther wrote: "I may and must now reveal to you that the last half of the previous year has been one of the most difficult times of my life. I was physically incapable of attending to even half the office that I am dignified to carry out among you in unworthy fashion. Even more, the prospect that I would again be capable of the same became gloomier and darker month by month. I owe it to you to be transparent . . . My own relationship with my God and Lord filled me with deep aversion and vexation. God placed before me, as never before, my entire past. He let me see my misery as I had never seen it before. I was filled with misery and distress . . . My only hope was a blessed death." (Harrison 2011, p. 24)

Walther was part of a group of Saxons who migrated to Missouri in search of religious freedom. The group was led by Martin Stephan, a charismatic leader who became increasingly isolated from his followers. Stephan assumed dictatorial powers and insisted the Saxons build roads and bridges prior to planting crops or homes. There were also allegations of financial mismanagement and, most seriously, the sexual exploitation of a number of women. Additional details of these events, and Walther's response, are discussed below.

Walther eventually became the leader of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, serving as its first president. Under Walther's leadership, the synod grew from 30 congregations to 678, and from less than 5,000 baptized members to nearly 450,000. He oversaw the development of schools, seminaries, and publications (for a review, see Walther, 2011). His most noteworthy achievement, however, was a series of Friday evening seminary lectures on the application of law and gospel—lectures that have profoundly influenced Christianity for more than a century.

Walther's Treatise on Law and Gospel

In distinguishing between law and gospel, Martin Luther described the terms this way:

(T)he gospel is the message about the incarnate Son of God, who was given us without our merits for salvation and peace. It is the word of salvation, the Word of grace, the Word of comfort, the Word of joy . . . But the Law is the Word of perdition, the Word of wrath, the Word of sadness, the Word of pain, the voice of the Judge and the accused, the Word of unrest, the Word of malediction. (Plass, 1959, p. 732)

Although Luther's description of law and gospel are clear, the great reformer acknowledged the complexity of applying these concepts as a theologian to individual cases. Indeed, Luther said that anyone who could accurately and consistently apply these concepts was worthy of the title "Doctor of Holy Scripture" (Kinnaman & Lane, 2010, p. 129).

Perhaps more than any other theologian, C.F.W. Walther applied himself to understanding the application of law and gospel. According to a noted historian of American religion:

Walther's influence was especially significant in that he stood almost alone in the nineteenth-century American theological scene as one fully aware of the crucial importance of the problems of Law and Gospel. (Suellflow, 2000, p.11)

Walther's lectures on the law and gospel extend several hundred pages and continue to be utilized by Christian theologians of diverse denominations (Pless, 2005). Walther found at least twenty-one ways in which Christians confuse and otherwise fail to properly apply law and gospel (Kinnaman, 2010). Walther's law and gospel thesis most applicable to instances of child sexual abuse is thesis VIII. According to this thesis, "(y)ou are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach the Law to those who are already in terror on account of their sins or the Gospel to those who are living securely in their sins" (Walther, 2010, p. 113).

Walther's Application of Law and Gospel in Cases of Sexual or Domestic Abuse

The case of a woman fleeing an abusive husband. According to Suellflow (2000), while still serving as a pastor in Germany, Walther provided spiritual counseling to a woman whose husband physically abused her. On one occasion, the woman was beaten so severely that she was unconscious. Walther intervened on behalf of the woman's safety, going so far as to draft a petition for separation. Although Walther was reprimanded and fined for his intervention, he wrote a letter defending his conduct and his theology. It may even be that Walther lied to the authorities as a means of protecting the woman—claiming she was not interested in emigration to America when in fact both the woman and her son appeared on the immigrant list.

Perhaps the blows Walther received from his father made him particularly empathetic to others "disciplined" with violence. Whether or not this is true, Walther understood that a husband pledged to love his wife as Christ loved the church would not beat her (Eph. 5:34). In a wedding sermon on the obligations of a husband to love his wife, Walther said:

(T)he Christian husband should love his wife in deed, care for her body and soul, pray for her and with her, not let her lack any good thing, *be her protector*, comfort her in moments of sadness, and as his other self, daily seek to provide her joy. (Walther, 1978, p. 176, emphasis added)

Obviously, a man who is physically striking his wife is failing his Christian obligation to protect her and to fill her life with joy. Long before a societal recognition of domestic violence, Walther understood this fundamental principle of a Christian marriage.

The case of Martin Stephan. Suellflow (2000) also details that, upon their arrival in Missouri, the Saxon

immigrants divided themselves into two groups with Walther among the pastors and parishioners remaining in St. Louis and the rest going to Perry County under the leadership of Martin Stephan. On the voyage to America, Stephan became increasingly isolated from his flock and prepared documents declaring himself Bishop and assuming significant powers over his flock. In Perry County, Stephan ordered the Saxons to build roads and bridges instead of planting crops or constructing dwellings. He ordered the pastors and parishioners in St. Louis not to visit Perry County without his explicit permission.

On May 5, 1839, one of the pastors remaining in St. Louis, Friedeman Loeber, delivered a "soul-searching" sermon. Although the contents of the sermon no longer exist, Loeber's words contributed to two women visiting him separately and confessing to sexual relations with Martin Stephan. In the days that followed, two additional women also made detailed confessions.

Loeber confided in his fellow St. Louis clergy who selected Walther to travel to Perry County to address the situation. One factor in selecting Walther appears to be that he was the pastor who had "expressed greater opposition to Stephan" (Suefflow, 2000, p. 50-52).

Walther arrived unannounced and in direct contradiction to Stephan's edicts. When Walther arrived, Stephan and others were gathered around a campfire and there was an immediate confrontation with Stephan who, according to one scholar, expressed "total disapproval" of Walther's presence (Suefflow 2000, p. 50-52). The next day, Walther met alone with Stephan. Although he did not apparently discuss the allegations of sexual exploitation, there is no doubt that Walther was openly defying Stephan and otherwise making it clear his belief that Stephan's conduct was sinful. Walther then proceeded to undermine Stephan's authority by preaching publicly, by encouraging parishioners to plant crops and build houses as opposed to roads and bridges, and to otherwise deliberately "give the impression . . . that something was very wrong" (Suefflow, 2000, p. 51). Within a few weeks, most of the St. Louis Saxons also arrived, formed a church council and invited Stephan to meet with them. When Stephan refused, calling the council a "rebellious faction," the council excommunicated Stephan on the basis of teaching false doctrine, financial mismanagement, and sexual immorality. Stephan was given the option of a church trial, returning to Saxony, or exile across the river to Illinois. Stephan chose the latter and never returned to his parishioners.

Some modern day theologians and scholars challenge Walther's handling of the Stephan matter, alleg-

ing Walther violated the principle in the gospel of Matthew to first privately confront a sinner (Manteufel, 2011). One theologian calls Walther's application of the principles in Matthew "dubious" and fraught with "serious errors" (Manteufel, 2011). I contend that this analysis is flawed on at least three grounds. First, Stephan's misconduct involved more than just sexual relations with multiple women, it involved dictatorial demands on *all* of the Saxon pastors and parishioners including a prohibition from setting foot in the colony without permission. Accordingly, Walther fulfilled his obligations in Matthew simply by showing up—his mere presence informed Stephan that Walther regarded his edicts and conduct as sinful.

Second, Walther did meet privately with Stephan before advising the immigrants in Perry County to violate Stephan's commands. Although Walther did not apparently speak about the allegations of sexual exploitation, it is a fair inference that Walther received a clear indication of Stephan's unrepentant state. Indeed, shortly after his meeting with Stephan, Walther delivered a sermon based on the text of John 3:20: "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed" (Concordia Seminary, 2011). This text and accompanying sermon suggest Walther had concluded that Stephan had hardened his heart and was far from the broken sinner for which the gospel is intended.

Third, an explicit confrontation with Stephan about the sexual exploitation allegations may have endangered the lives of others. Given that Stephan had left his wife in Germany, that multiple women had accused him of sexual offenses, and that he had created a situation in Perry County where he was seemingly immune from oversight raised a strong possibility of additional victims. Too strong of a confrontation with Stephan may have caused him to pressure other women *not* to disclose additional offenses. Moreover, Stephan's control of the treasury and the sway he had over the immigrants, a sway that was endangering their lives because crops were not planted, required extreme caution.

If a member of a congregation were observed by a fellow believer to be holding up a convenience store with a gun, it would be ludicrous to suggest our Christian obligation is to speak with the man before calling the police or taking other meaningful action to protect the victim of this crime (Schuetze, personal communication). Applying Matthew 18 in such a rigid, thoughtless manner would endanger lives should the criminal choose to fire the weapon to avoid capture. In cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, there is also a grave dan-

ger in rigidly adhering to Mathew 18 in that doing so may result in an offender destroying evidence, pressuring victims to remain silent or recant, or even the possibility an offender may harm himself.

The seriousness of Stephan's conduct cannot be overstated. Given his absolute power over the flock, and the vulnerability of the Saxons in a new country and culture, the potential for continued abuse was extremely high. In many states today, it is a felony crime for a pastor to have sex with a parishioner that he or she is providing spiritual counseling to, even if the parishioner consents (Minnesota Statutory Section, 609.344, subd. 1(k)(1)(ii) 2012). As noted by one historian, the women Stephan sexually exploited were both "impressionable and vulnerable." (Concordia Seminary, 2011). Although Walther may not have had our modern era appreciation of the significant differences in power between a pastor and the parishioner he is counseling, Stephan's conduct was so extreme it is difficult to believe Walther did not understand the egregiousness of the conduct.

Walther's handling of the Stephan situation is akin to the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians in which he urged that a man involved in an incestuous relationship be expelled from the congregation (1 Cor. 5: 1–13, ESV). Paul did not ask the congregation to meet privately with the man before excommunication or wait until Paul could visit and examine the man. Instead, Paul wrote "For though absent in body . . . I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing . . . You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved" (1 Cor. 5:3–5).

It is interesting to note that Paul does not urge the excommunication of the woman involved in this incest—perhaps an implicit understanding of her vulnerability. Similarly, Walther and the other Saxon pastors appear to have recognized the particular vulnerability of the women Stephan exploited and simply pronounced forgiveness and the full force of the gospel. The law was reserved for the unrepentant perpetrator.

Applying Law and Gospel to Victims of Child Sexual Abuse

In a great many of his published prayers and addresses, C.F.W. Walther recognized that Christians are charged with grave responsibilities for the care of children and that God will hold us accountable for our unfaithfulness in discharging this duty (Walther, 2011). Walther called children "far more precious than gold or silver, than house and home" and said that God would one day ask us "Where are the children I have given

you? Have any of them been lost?" (Walther, 2011, p. 136).

Reflecting his belief that God was especially concerned with the welfare of children, Walther prayed "Lord Jesus, by Your holy Word You have again warned us against despising any one of these little ones, for their angels always behold the face of Your Father in heaven." In the care of children, Walther admonished his parishioners to "leave no stone unturned to keep them safe from the evil foe and the world . . ." (Walther, 2011, p. 133).

Given his childhood history and his pastoral history in applying the law and gospel in cases of violence and sexual exploitation, it is more than conjecture to suggest that if Walther were alive today he would take heed of the many studies documenting the devastation that abuse has on a child's spirituality. Accordingly, pastors wishing to follow the spirit of Walther in applying law and gospel to victims of child abuse may begin by reviewing the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Studies and remind themselves of the shattered lives left from child abuse. With these studies in mind, a pastor contemplating the words of our Savior will likely find a clear course of action—the liberal use of the gospel, and the sparing use of the law. To this end, the following guidelines may be of assistance.

Avoid the Temptation to Focus on the Victim's Sins

If the ACE studies are accurate, a pastor or other Christian meeting with a boy or girl, man or woman, abused as a child may very well see the aftermath of this exploitation—a child or adult who has turned to alcohol, drugs, smoking, sex, food, etc. in search of solace. The victim may have anger problems, multiple divorces, a criminal history, drug or alcohol problems, or mental illness. Consequently, the victim may be the subject of church gossip as elders and other modern day Pharisees whisper her shame and promote their own righteousness. When confronted with such a pilgrim, a pastor may be tempted to focus his or her gaze on the specks in the victim's eye, and avert attention away from the gaping hole in the victim's heart—a hole that can only be filled by the gospel. A pastor who judges quickly and harshly may lose the child forever—and will one day be a subject to the gaze of a Savior who asks us to care for the suffering.

Instead, the pastor should recognize the brokenness before him—a brokenness that may have displayed itself for years. Jesus came to bind the wounds of the broken hearted and the gospel may be the only tonic the abused child has *never* experienced. The pastor must pour out this oil liberally.

Assure the Victim of Christ's Empathy

A victim may question the goodness of God, in part, because of the theological statements made by the offender. The victim may also question whether or not God can truly understand his or her pain or experiences. When this is the case, a Christian pastor can assist by showing the child a very different image of God. Tell the victim that those who abused him or her violated the clear commandments of God and that any twisted theology they employed in justification came not from God, but from Satan himself. Tell them that Jesus understands such toxic theology—after all, the devil employed that trickery on Christ as well (see, for example, Mt. 4: 1–11). More importantly, speak of Christ's love of children and the grave warnings he gave to anyone who harms them—telling his disciples that the angels of children have direct access to his Father and that being tossed into a sea with a millstone around their neck would be a better choice than to hurt a child (Mt. 18:6). Tell them that Christ, the very Son of God, was a descendant of a sexually exploited woman (Joshua 2, 6:22–25; Heb 11:31; Mt 1:5), and was frequently seen in the company of other sexually exploited women as he promised not only his help, but the very kingdom of God (Mt. 21:31).

Tell the suffering soul that Jesus understands maltreatment. As one who was called names and mocked with purple robes and twisted thorns, Christ understands emotional abuse. As the recipient of blows to his face and whips to his back, Christ understands physical abuse. As one nailed naked to a tree, publicly exposed to the jeers of soldiers, Christ even understands the pain of children forced to disrobe before the eyes of men with only evil thoughts. Surely he has borne our sorrows.

Apply the Gospel Compassionately

The victim may have extreme guilt over the usage of drugs or alcohol, may have suffered from myriad failed relationships or a host of other problems. The pastor should recognize the enormity of this pain and assure the survivor of God's forgiveness and love. Simply stated, the pastor must display the compassion of our Savior.

Tony Campolo tells of being at a diner early one morning and overhearing Agnes, a prostitute, lament that she was about to turn 39 years old and had never had a birthday party. Campolo worked with the manager of the diner to arrange for a splendid party for Agnes, complete with a birthday cake. Upon seeing the cake, Agnes was overcome with this strange love. She asked if she could take the cake to show her mother. As

Agnes left momentarily with the cake, Campolo led all the prostitutes gathered for the party in prayer for Agnes (see Campolo, 2009, for a complete account). In other words, Campolo preached the gospel by demonstrating the compassion of Christ.

Assist the Victim in Accessing Appropriate Medical and Mental Health Care

Pastors should not ignore the needs of those struggling with drugs, alcohol, sexual impulses, anger, or any number of other conditions often found among those ripped from childhood. In helping the child access mental health services, pastors should seek a mental health provider current on the literature addressing childhood trauma and who is skilled at providing counseling or other services. Many well-educated professionals have had very little training at the undergraduate and graduate level on child sexual abuse (Champion, Shipman, Bonner, Hensley, & Howe, 2003), and thus it is critical to ask some questions before making a referral. In some cases, an incompetent counselor may be worse than no counselor at all.

Refrain from Platitudes

Many well-meaning theologians are quick to offer a biblical platitude to complex spiritual struggles. When this happens, a victim often feels frustrated and looks elsewhere for guidance (Brown, 2009). Consider, for example, the complex theological questions contained in this survivor's account of trauma, shared with the author:

When I was a little girl, my dad would come into my bedroom to tuck me in. He would read me a story and then he would have me utter my bedtime prayers. 'Now I lay me down to sleep...' After the prayers, Dad would sexually abuse me. When the abuse was done he would tell me things like 'God doesn't hear your prayers. If he did, he wouldn't allow me to touch you sexually right after your prayers. Either there is no God or, if God exists, he is unable to protect you.' I have never forgotten what my dad said. I'm a grown woman now and, every time I pray, I remember all the times I asked God to watch over me during the night, and how the prayers went unanswered. I want to pray, I want to be close to God, but I don't know how. I'm thinking maybe my dad was right—either there is no God or else he is unable to protect me. Please tell me what to do.

A pastor engaged with this parishioner will need to explore the toxic theology presented by her father as well as the difficult questions posed about prayer. Simply

stated, a platitude won't due. What is likely needed is a series of theological discussions on these myriad issues. The pastor may wish to recommend helpful books or materials on one or more of these issues and discuss the assignments with the parishioner (see, for example, Yancey, 2010 for a helpful book that includes myriad references to the unanswered prayers of child abuse victims). The pastor must be invested for the long haul.

Don't Make Forgiveness Into a Law, But a Change of Heart Rooted in the Gospel

Many victims of abuse struggle with the issue of forgiveness and, when forgiveness does occur, it often takes time (Worthington et al., 2000). Consider, for example, the pain of this victim, shared with the author:

I am a police officer and a Christian. I've been baptized, confirmed, and have faithfully attended church all my life. I am, though, deeply troubled. When I was a boy, my father cruelly abused me. One of his favorite things to do was to take me into the barn (we lived on a farm), strip me naked, bind my hands together with a rope and then toss the other end of the same rope over the rafters in the barn so that I would hang naked in the barn as he beat me with a stick. The sound of that stick, the smell of that barn, and the sight of my blood are never far from my memory. I am a good person, and I believe Jesus is my savior. At the same time, though, I know I'm going to hell. I recall the Sunday School lesson of Jesus scolding Peter that our obligation is not to forgive seven times but seventy times seven—meaning an infinite number of times. I recall Jesus saying that if we can't forgive others, we won't be forgiven. Try as I might, I cannot forgive my father. Why should I have to go to hell because I can't forgive the man who tortured me?

Although some of the answers to this question may differ depending on the particular denomination of the survivor, it is clear that the survivor has multiple theological questions, which need careful consideration and compassionate responses (Tracy, 2005). As a starting point, though, three concepts may be helpful. First, assure the survivor that forgiveness is not a toleration of sin. The child abuse victim has every right to have a perpetrator prosecuted and otherwise held accountable for crimes committed. If forgiveness was the toleration of sin, no government could enforce the law, no parent could correct a child, and no church could exercise discipline.

Second, recognize that forgiveness cannot be forced. Requiring the victim to forgive a perpetrator as

a condition of redemption is simply to place the victim under the law. Instead, suggest to the victim that forgiveness is a gift of God that allows the survivor to let go overwhelming feelings of anxiety, hatred, and anger. Many victims have told me over the years that until they forgave an offender, the perpetrator continued to have power over them. Martin Moran, a survivor of child sexual abuse at the hands of "Bob," a man at a church summer camp, described the process of forgiveness with these words (Moran, 2005, p. 279):

And a thought came to me. Something Sister Christine said all those years ago. That with the really tough things it would always come down to grace. *A gift from the beyond that moves us toward our own salvation.* And as I crawled out into the thick Los Angeles traffic, what I kept hearing in my head was this prayer, a plea repeating: *OK, grace, please, let it go, let him be, for heaven's sake. Let him rest.* I mean Bob, of course. But then, I realize I'm really talking about someone else. The twelve-year-old. The sweet kid caught in a photo, still talking his way out. And I'm not sure how in the world to let him rest. Not yet, anyway.

Third, point the victim to the cross and trust the Holy Spirit to do His work. Diane Langberg, a Christian psychologist specializing in counseling sexually abused children, puts it this way:

It has been my experience in my work with survivors that rather than simply telling them they need to forgive—a statement that often overwhelms them with despair—it is much more helpful to teach them, as they are ready, about the work of God in Christ on the cross . . . Over time, clients see evidence of that work in their own lives . . . The recognition of that wonderful redemption almost always results in a hunger to be like the one who has loved them so faithfully. (Langberg, 2003, p. 185)

Cautiously Respond When a Victim Asks to Confront the Perpetrator

Martin Moran chose to confront the man who molested him at a church camp only to find that the offender continued to engage in cognitive distortions that minimized his conduct. Specifically, the perpetrator told Moran:

I wanted to help you. You were such a gentle soul . . . Mentally, you were way ahead of the other boys. You were special . . . There were others, I admit. But not like you. You were so curious about things . . . you were shy and I wanted to teach you about the land and animals and help you gain confidence. And you did. (Moran, 2005, p. 274).

Rather than genuine repentance, the offender continued to minimize his own conduct and suggest to Moran that somehow the sexual abuse was *good* for him. This is not an isolated or unusual occurrence and pastors need to help survivors understand that a confrontation with the offender is unlikely to go as they envision. If they nonetheless choose to confront the offender, the survivor should be fully prepared by a mental health professional to process the event before and after the confrontation. It may also be wise for a pastor, counselor, or other support person to be with the victim during any confrontation so that the support person can immediately challenge the cognitive distortions the offender may direct at the survivor (Langberg, 2003).

Seek the Lost

Preaching the gospel to abused children involves more than waiting for one to appear in our office or even our churches—it means an active search for the lost. Given how many of these children are driven from the church by Christians who violated their bodies in the name of God and by other Christians who, at best, responded passively, there is an urgent need for Christendom to adorn itself in sackcloth and ashes and then change course. Pastors should be proactive in preaching about the sin of child abuse, Christian publishing houses should produce books and other materials directed at abused children or those who seek to help them, and every Christian should promote and enforce rigorous child protection policies as a public witness that the church cares for children in deed and not just in word (Vieth, 2011). This is not an easy course to take and many will bristle at a bold ministry to abused children, particularly if this means bringing such damaged souls into our midst. If, though, the church cannot heed Christ's command to care for children, those closest to God in faith (Mt. 18: 3, Lk 10:21) and yet the most vulnerable, it is doubtful a church can consider itself truly Christian. In addressing the needs of abused children, the church has done too little for too long and, when it has acted, has often done so for the wrong reason—such as avoiding a lawsuit (Lytton, 2008). Instead, the church needs to act out of genuine repentance and an overflowing of Christian love. Let that reformation begin with each of us.

Applying Law and Gospel to Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse

Throughout his lectures on law and gospel, as well as his addresses and prayers, Walther was deeply concerned about applying the gospel to "secure sinners."

Walther claimed that a Christian church does not "tolerate obvious servants of sin" (Walther, 2011, p. 155). In his lectures on law and gospel, Walther told his seminary students: "Do not proclaim forgiveness of sins to impenitent and secure sinners. That would be a horrible mingling of Law and Gospel. It would be like stuffing food into the mouth of a person who is already filled to the point of vomiting ..." (Walther, 2011, p. 45).

Avoid Cheap Grace

Walther's words reflect the concept of "cheap Grace"—a term coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran minister executed by the Nazis because of his opposition to the government (for a review, see Metaxas, 2010). Bonhoeffer defined cheap grace as "grace sold on the market like cheapjack's wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices" (Bonhoeffer, 1959, p. 43). Many sex offenders have found the value of "cheap grace" in faith communities. Simply put, these sex offenders have come to realize that if they cry readily and mouth the words of repentance they won't have to take any action to remedy the damage they have inflicted. Numerous clergy have been confronted with offenders who confess to sexually abusing children, emotionally express remorse, and pledge that abuse will never happen again. Many offenders beg for God's forgiveness and some clergy members are quick to absolve sinners while simultaneously ignoring the needs of victims. When this happens, many offenders return home, realize how easy it is to be forgiven and will molest children again.

Ask Tough Questions

Given the manipulative nature of many offenders, members of the clergy may wish to ask a series of questions to determine the seriousness of the offender's repentance. Pastors faced with offenders may wish to ask the following:

- Have you informed your spouse that you have sexually abused your child? If your wife wants you to move out of the house, are you willing to do it? If the child victim wants you to leave the house are you willing to do it?
- Have you informed your child's medical provider that you have violated his or her body?
- Have you referred your child to a counselor to assist in coping with the abuse you have inflicted on him or her?
- Do you hold yourself fully responsible for your

conduct—or do you believe your victim in some way contributed to the abuse?

- Have you turned yourself in to the police? Are you willing to confess your crimes to the police or will you make them “prove it”? If the government files charges for crimes you have committed, will you be pleading guilty or will you force your child victim to testify publicly and be grilled by any attorney you hire?
- Are you willing to enroll in a sex offender treatment program?

An offender who is confessing sexual misconduct but is unwilling to address the physical or emotional needs of his victim, to disclose the abuse to his spouse, or to seek sex offender treatment, may be seeking forgiveness but is giving no indication of an intention to repair the damage inflicted or to reform his behavior. Given the serious criminal nature of the conduct, an offender unwilling to turn him or herself into the police should be subjected to church discipline—not the recipient of sacraments (Metaxas, 2010).

Apply the Law as an Act of Genuine Love

Some members of the clergy have suggested to me that such harsh treatment of an offender removes the gospel from their work. Pastors with this concern should contemplate how they would handle a situation in which a parishioner confesses to having committed numerous thefts, asks God’s forgiveness for his crimes, but freely admits he has no intention of returning any of the stolen property to his victims, much less turning himself into the police. When confronted with this hypothetical, many pastors acknowledge they would not pronounce forgiveness since it is clear the offender is not truly penitent. This is the universal response that I have received when presenting this hypothetical scenario to clergy attending lectures. The very same principle must be applied to sex offenders unwilling to hold themselves accountable to the authorities or to do everything within their means to assist the children they have harmed.

Such a harsh application of the law is not cruel, but a genuine act of love. A sex offender unwilling to accept full responsibility for his conduct, who continues to minimize his offense or to blame others for his conduct is not yet the “crushed” sinner Walther believed to be ready for the gospel. Specifically, Walther said:

Woe to everyone who pampers secure sinners with soft pillows and cushions! These preachers lull to sleep with the Gospel those who ought to be awakened from their

sleep with the law. It is a wrong application of the Gospel to preach it to people who are not afraid of sinning. (Walther, 2010, p. 39)

Just as Walther believed God will hold us accountable for failing to care for children, it is also true God will hold us accountable for failing to properly apply the law to those sex offenders secure in their sins. Pastors offering cheap grace provide a false solace and serve only to endanger the soul.

Seek True Confession

Like Walther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer recognized the need for true confession, fearing that many parishioners avoid discussing their sins with a fellow Christian in the secret hope of continuing their conduct. Bonhoeffer believed these Christians recognize that a brother in the faith may hold them accountable for their sins and demand a change in their behavior (Bonhoeffer, 1954). Fearing the necessary dosage of the law, these sinners unwittingly also deprive themselves of the gospel.

Recognize the Value of Earthly Consequences

When a pastor provides a healthy dose of the law, the child molester is forced to realize how much damage he has done and the consequences of his actions. The sex offender may lose his freedom and his family, may have significant restrictions on where he can work and live, and may forever be ostracized by society. It is only in this brokenness, though, that an offender will find the true power of the gospel. For many sex offenders, the only way to the cross is to lose everything.

Consider, for example, the two thieves crucified with Jesus. Although both thieves recognized their crimes, one of the men was not repentant, choosing instead to mock Christ and demanding that Jesus take this criminal from the cross (Lk 23:39). The other thief, though, did not ask to be excused from earthly consequences for his sins, acknowledging, “(w)e are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve” (Lk. 23:41). This repentant sinner simply threw himself upon the mercy of his Lord. In response, he received the gospel: “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23: 42–43).

When confronted by sex offenders complaining of prison sentences and registration requirements, clergy and laity may wish to remind them of the thief who accepted governmental punishments for his crimes and asked only for the mercy of God. It was this genuine repentance, a repentance that did not seek relief from

earthly consequences to sin, that Jesus responded to with unmerited grace.

Conclusion

Jesus called on us to display the humility and faith of "little children" if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 18: 2-3). Jesus also warned us not to cause these children to sin and said that, "whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me" (Mt. 18: 5-6). Unfortunately, many who sexually abuse children do so in the name of Christ and purposely twist theology in such a way as to convince the child he or she is responsible for the abuse. As a result, many of these children suffer significant medical, mental health, and spiritual damage. Abused children are at greater risk to develop problems with drugs, alcohol, smoking, anger, and a host of other ills.

Clergy and laity unfamiliar with these dynamics often apply the law to victims and the gospel to perpetrators of abuse. When this happens, perpetrators are emboldened to strike again, and many children are lost to the church. With a large and growing body of research documenting these facts, the church can no longer hide behind ignorance. Simply stated, the church must properly apply law and gospel to victims and offenders and to otherwise fully prepare for the day of judgment when our Lord will ask each of us, "Where are the children?"

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GRACE

GODLY RESPONSE TO ABUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

Suffer the Children: Developing Effective Church Policies on Child Maltreatment

Victor L. Vieth¹

*"This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong.
Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because
they must while the eyes of the great are elsewhere."*

--J.R.R. Tolkien²

Although churches, synagogues, temples and other places of worship are increasingly implementing policies to protect children from abuse, the policies adopted are often inadequate and of limited value. This article includes ten concrete suggestions for faith institutions that will aid in developing and implementing policies more likely to keep children safe.

1. Consult with at least one child abuse expert in developing policies

A church elder recently contacted the National Child Protection Training Center to express his frustration that their insurance provider told them to implement a child safety policy as a means of lowering their insurance rate. The insurance provider even gave the church several sample child safety policies. Unfortunately, the policies were vastly different and inconsistent with one another. When the church elder asked for an explanation, the insurance provider explained, "It doesn't matter to us what policy you adopt, you simply need to have one."

Church elders and other faith leaders must understand that very few, if any insurance company employees have investigated, prosecuted, treated or otherwise have significant experience in working with sex offenders. The insurance company is primarily interested in limiting liability and thus they will advocate for some policy, but they are in a poor position to develop or implement effective policies.

Although faith leaders should certainly consult with their insurance provider, they need to make a concerted effort to consult genuine experts on child abuse. Contact local law enforcement agencies, prosecutor offices and sex offender treatment providers and ask these true experts to assist in developing policies on child abuse.³ Making these contacts in advance will also assist the church or other faith institution in working with these very departments if and when a case of child abuse arises within a congregation.

2. Understand that insurance providers and some law firms have a vested interest in preventing future abuse—and keeping quiet about past abuse

Not only are insurance companies and some law firms poorly equipped to advise on developing church child abuse policies, they also have a vested interest in primarily thinking about the future. The reason for this is that preventing future abuse will limit liability for the church and the insurance provider. By the same token, insurance companies and their lawyers have a vested interest in not developing policies that may assist in uncovering abuse that has taken place in the past—because they believe doing so will increase the exposure of their client to liability. This is also why, when issues of past abuse arise, insurance companies as well as some law firms encourage churches to keep quiet and to limit any internal investigation.

The danger of keeping quiet

When the leaders of Vienna Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Virginia decided to publicly acknowledge their failures in responding to reports of sexual abuse by a youth minister and to apologize to the survivors, they were admonished by their insurance provider to keep quiet.⁴ Specifically, they received a letter from their insurance provider's lawyer advising them as follows:

"Do not make any statements, orally, in writing or in any manner, to acknowledge, admit to or apologize for anything that may be evidence of or interpreted as (a suggestion that) the actions of Vienna Presbyterian Church...caused or contributed to any damages arising from the intentional acts/abuse/misconduct" by the youth director.⁵

Ironically, this sort of advice actually *increases* the chance a church or other faith institution will be sued by victims. This is because most victims are not interested in large monetary settlements—they are interested in public, unequivocal apologies, genuine church reform and compassionate assistance in addressing the medical, mental health and spiritual damage inflicted by the perpetrator.⁶ Contrary to the fears of the attorneys, the church in Vienna has not yet been sued despite a public and unequivocal apology to those who suffered from abuse by a church leader.⁷

A plaintiff's attorney who has frequently sued churches for negligent handling of child abuse cases advises, "Doing the smart thing and doing the right thing *is the same thing*."⁸ This same attorney notes that if churches or other faith institutions focus primarily on taking care of the needs of the victim, "they will find it goes better for them after that" because "it just takes all the venom out of the situation."⁹

The danger of limiting the investigation

In addition to avoiding an apology or at least limiting public statements, some law firms recommend that churches conducting an internal investigation speak *only* to those who have revealed abuse, as opposed to speaking with all of those who may have been abused or may have knowledge of abuse.¹⁰ This advice is contrary to best practices for child abuse investigators recommended by the National District Attorneys Association's National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse.¹¹ Since most victims will delay disclosure and many will not disclose until asked,¹²

failure to speak with all the children in the care of a sexual offender, or at least those children who share characteristics similar to known victims, will impede the ability of some children to share their experiences and access needed services. This failure will also impede the ability of the church to fully assess the conduct of a child abuser. Some law firms recommending a limited investigation suggest it may "re-injure" potential victims to ask them about their "sexual past."¹³ In reality, the parents of victims, and the victims themselves, are often outraged when they discover a church knew a perpetrator offended against one or more children and failed to fully assess the possibility there were other victims.¹⁴ If a church purposely limits an investigation, and this abridged investigation results in a child abuser continuing to have access to children, this decision will almost certainly increase the church's exposure to liability.¹⁵ More importantly, it will send a disturbing message to the entire church body, particularly any survivors, that the church is primarily interested in maintaining a positive public image and has no interest in finding, much less helping all the children who may have been harmed by a particular church worker.

3. Limit the opportunity for sex offenders to access children

Dr. Anna Salter, a sexual offender treatment provider, states it is important for parents and child-serving organizations such as churches to avoid "high risk situations." This is because "we cannot detect child molesters or rapists with any consistency" and thus "must pay attention to ways of *deflecting* any potential offenders from getting access to our children."¹⁶

Many youth organizations have prevented the abuse of children in their care simply by limiting the access of potential offenders to boys and girls. Child abusers count on privacy to avoid detection of their criminal behavior. When churches or other faith institutions remove this privacy it becomes more difficult for the offender to succeed. At a minimum, then, faith institutions should have the following policies in place:

- *Two-deep leadership.* If at all possible, children should always be in the care of at least two church workers. Even if a worker or volunteer has to remove a child from the group for a legitimate reason, the child and the worker should always be in the eyesight of at least one additional worker or volunteer. When developing two-deep leadership teams, it may be wise to avoid placing close family members or friends as teams. This is because a spouse or other close family member is more likely to protect a loved one who violates church rules or engages in concerning behavior with a youth.
- *Respect for the child's privacy.* Sex offenders like to see children undressing or otherwise seek an opportunity to initiate conversation about sexual topics. Accordingly, workers and volunteers should avoid watching children undress in locker rooms, showers or bathrooms.
- *Separate sleeping accommodations.* At boarding schools, camps or other overnight settings, there should be separate sleeping accommodations for children and the adults. If there is a reason for an adult to enter the sleeping accommodations of children at night (i.e., a child has become ill), the exception should be well documented and, if at all possible, two adults should be entering the sleeping area. When requiring separate sleeping accommodations, make it clear this means truly separate. In one case, an offender arranged an overnight with youth during which he had an adjoining room door he could easily open and otherwise gain access to the children he molested.

- *Limit, if not prohibit, events at a worker's home.* In one case, a youth minister had the children he was working with over to his house for a party in which all the children joined him in a hot tub where he instructed some of the children how to masturbate with the jets. Again, sex offenders seek private access to children and allowing a worker to be alone with children at his or her house increases the risk. If there is a legitimate reason for hosting an event at the worker's home, have some rules around such activities—such as an additional worker present. In the same vein, there should be regulations on church workers visiting the homes of children. In more than one case, church workers have visited children at their homes and have molested them.¹⁷
- *Appropriate attire.* Adult workers and volunteers should wear appropriate clothing at all times. Activities such as skinny dipping should always be prohibited. Again, offenders look for opportunities to initiate inappropriate sexual conversations with their potential victims. Accordingly, sexually suggestive or otherwise inappropriate apparel or behaviors should be prohibited.
- *Sexual jokes, comments or behaviors around children should be strictly prohibited.* In one case, a "Christian" teacher told the boys in his care about the frequency he had sex with his wife on his honeymoon. The same teacher would slam on the brakes when driving the school van and comment to the boys this was merely a "ball busting exercise." A protestant worker at a church boarding school hosted a pizza party in which the invited adolescent girls were "accidentally exposed" to his pornography collection. In another case, a Lutheran school teacher made frequent jokes and impersonations of homosexuals. Apart from the fact that all of the behaviors described run contrary to the teachings of any legitimate theological practice, there are two practical, compelling reasons that behaviors such as these should be strictly prohibited and result in immediate discipline. First, these behaviors may be used by offenders to invite sexual conversations with children in the hope of engaging in sexual activity. Second, these behaviors create a climate making it much more difficult for abused children to disclose their victimization. For example, a boy being sexually abused by his father, or who may wonder about his own sexual identity, may be particularly reluctant to expose this victimization when he is in the company of a teacher and attends a school that allows jokes about same-sex conduct.
- *Windows and open doors.* There may be times when a teacher or other adult will need to be alone with a child, such as a teacher giving a child a music lesson. In such a scenario, it is important to have an open-door policy where fellow teachers or others can enter unexpectedly and to have windows on doors so others can see what is happening in a particular room. Again, sex offenders look for opportunities to abuse children and it is the responsibility of a youth-serving organization to limit these opportunities.¹⁸
- *Prohibiting corporal punishment.* Corporal punishment of children is prohibited in most schools, day cares and other settings.¹⁹ There is a large body of medical and mental health research documenting that corporal punishment does very little good and is often harmful to children.²⁰ As an additional concern, sex offenders may view corporal punishment as a socially permissible means to touch a child's buttocks or other intimate parts of the body.²¹

4. Conduct a background check and oral screening of workers and volunteers

Many seminaries do not conduct background checks or any other child protection related screening of their students prior to their graduation. In some instances, seminaries have been sued for negligently graduating a sex offender and sending them on to an unsuspecting flock.²² Despite their exposure to liability, many seminaries and other faith schools graduate students into congregations without having done a comprehensive assessment of possible risk factors. Even if a seminary has conducted some sort of screening, it is still wise for a local congregation to conduct both a background check and an oral screening of workers and volunteers. This is because the seminary may have conducted an incompetent screening or it may have conducted a screening upon the student's admission to the seminary but did not examine behaviors that may have arisen during seminary training.

Although a background check is important, it will only reveal those who have been convicted of a crime against a child.²³ This is problematic because most sex offenders, even some who have abused hundreds of children, have never been charged much less convicted of a crime.²⁴ Accordingly, an oral screening of faith workers and volunteers should also be conducted. This screening may include:

- *Asking the candidate if he has reviewed the church child protection policy and what his thoughts are about the policy.* Candidates who don't believe such policies are necessary or express any hesitancy in abiding by the policies may not be child abusers, but they are also less likely to be vigilant in keeping children safe.
- *Asking a candidate interested in working with children the basis for that interest.* In recommending this question, some experts suggest it may help locate workers and volunteers who understand their role is to help children and not the other way around.²⁵ Offenders are often ego-centric and seek children who meet their needs (i.e., "Children are non-judgmental and make me feel good about myself.") as opposed to what they can do for children (i.e., "I think I'm a very good teacher and I can help children read and otherwise grow intellectually.")
- *Asking a candidate whether they have any adult friendships.* Some sex offender treatment providers have noted it is risky to place children in the care of an adult who appears to have no adult friendships or activities—and yet is frequenting settings and putting himself in situations where he has regular access to children. According to sex offender treatment provider Dr. Anna Salter, church groups should "be careful with men who involve themselves in youth activities and who do not have children of their own or children of that age. From church youth leaders to coaches to anyone who befriends your child, notice if they have grown-up friends and partners. If they do not, be very cautious about leaving them alone with your child."²⁶
- *Give the candidate a hypothetical case of potential child abuse and ask how she would handle the situation.*²⁷ If the candidate expresses any reservation in following the church child protection policy in response to a hypothetical case, it is a fair assumption that he or she will also hesitate when confronted with an actual case.

An oral screening is not a panacea and, similar to a background check, will *not* catch most sex offenders. This is because many sex offenders understand the "right" answer to many questions and

are more than happy to say whatever it takes to get near children. Nonetheless, an oral screening will assist in at least three ways. First, it sends the message that the church is serious about its child protection policies.²⁸ This may deflect some sex offenders to the extent they realize that a church serious about child protection will be more difficult to operate in than a church which only gives lip service to the protection of children. Second, it may take away an offender's excuses when a church seeks to discipline or remove him for violating policies. For example, if the screener makes it clear that making sexual jokes around children is prohibited, the offender can no longer say "I didn't realize that" when confronted for violating the rule. Third, an oral screening may help screen out those applicants who may not be child abusers but who will not be vigilant in enforcing the child protection policies.

5. Teach personal safety to children in faith-based schools

A personal safety program for children sends a powerful message that the faith community is aware of the need for personal safety and is willing to help if a child is harmed.²⁹ A personal safety program is not the same as sex education. The teacher or other instructor is simply telling children that the parts of their body covered by bathing suits are not supposed to be touched by others and, when they are, they should tell someone. If the person they tell doesn't believe them, they should keep on telling until they are believed. There are a number of personal safety programs that can be easily modified for a faith-based school.³⁰ In addition to teaching the children personal safety, it is important to provide instruction to the parents so that they can reinforce these lessons at home and will know how to respond if a child makes a disclosure.

Many faith-based schools teach fire safety, school crossing safety or even swimming safety and yet bristle at the thought of personal safety designed to empower children to protect themselves against offenders. Some professionals are opposed to personal safety classes because they believe the classes put the burden on the child to protect themselves.³¹ However, these children have already been led by their perpetrators to believe there is nothing they can do to stop the abuse. A personal safety program may give them a way out. In one case, a three-year-old victim, who had received personal safety instructions from her church day care, subsequently reported to her mother being molested by a twelve-year-old boy. The boy confessed to the offense and was prosecuted in juvenile court.³² This is not an isolated anecdote.³³

It is important to remember that, although some children may disclose as a result of a personal safety program, many children will *never* voluntarily disclose abuse. This is because child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, is engulfed in secrecy and the victim may fear repercussions for disclosing abuse.³⁴ It is also important to remember that many victims *love* their offender and count on their parent or other perpetrator for food, clothing, shelter and other basic needs. As bad as things may be at home, a child may fear that another environment will be worse.

6. Don't investigate—report

When a child makes an outcry of abuse, many faith organizations decide they need to conduct a preliminary assessment or investigation to determine if the allegation is plausible before reporting the matter to the police. This is problematic for four reasons.

First, it is unlikely that any church or other faith institution has forensic interviewers specifically trained to speak with a child about sexual abuse, police officers skilled at interrogating child sexual abuse suspects or mental and medical health professionals who can document physical and psychological injuries resulting from abuse. Simply stated, the church is not specifically trained to assess an allegation of child abuse and thus should refer the matter to the local authorities who are specifically trained.

Second, any delay in reporting may result in the loss of critical evidence.³⁵ Evidence on the child's body, for example, will absorb, transfer or be washed away. Lubricants, pornography, sexual toys or other objects used in the abuse of the child may be destroyed. The perpetrator may use any delay to pressure the child or others to minimize or recant an allegation.³⁶

Third, any delay in reporting is likely a violation of the law. In most states, churches and other organizations or professionals serving youth are mandated to report to the authorities any reasonable suspicion of abuse.³⁷

Fourth, a church conducting an incompetent investigation that taints the memories of witnesses, results in the loss of evidence, or that provides the perpetrator with an opportunity to threaten or pressure one or more victims into silence may, on that basis alone, expose itself to liability. This is because an incompetent investigation may fail to detect an actual abuser. If the abuser continues to offend, which is likely, the church conducting the original investigation may be held responsible.

There may be instances in which the government declines to investigate a report of abuse even though there is compelling evidence or even an admission of wrongdoing. If, for example, the sexual offense took place in another country while a pastor was a missionary, the local law enforcement agency may be unable or unwilling to take any action. In such a case, the church may need to conduct an internal, competent investigation. Failure to do so may result in future victims and will expose the church to liability.³⁸ If a church does not have as a member of the congregation a child abuse detective or other genuine expert, it may wish to retain such an expert to conduct the investigation or at least to serve the church as a consultant.

7. Develop church policies for sex offenders seeking to attend services or to join a congregation

Most offenders describe themselves as religious³⁹ and some studies suggest the most egregious sex offenders tend to be actively involved with their faith community.⁴⁰ According to a national survey of 2,864 church leaders, 20% of these leaders knew of at least one convicted sex offender who was attending or was a member of their church.⁴¹ Accordingly, churches need to think in advance what their policies will be when a sex offender seeks membership in their congregation.

At a minimum, these policies should include:

- *Compliance with the law.* The church should speak with the offender's probation officer and with the local prosecutor's office to determine if the offender can lawfully attend services or other functions at which children are present. If the offender is prohibited from attending public gatherings at which children are present, the church should

inform the offender that under no circumstances will the church aid in a violation of the law. Once these boundary lines are clearly drawn, church leaders can then determine how to meet the offender's spiritual needs.

- *Consultation with the sex offender's treatment provider.* If the offender is or has been in sex offender treatment, the church should require him or her to sign a release so the appropriate church leaders can speak with the treatment provider. This will assist the church in determining the potential dangers the offender poses to children and will also help the church leaders in meeting the needs of the offender.
- *Review of court and investigative records of the offender's conduct.* The appropriate parties from the church should review the original complaint filed against the offender as well as any records generated as a result. In many cases, an offender may have pled guilty to sexually abusing one child in exchange for dismissing allegations of abuse against other children. Indeed, the offender may even have confessed to abusing many more children but the other cases were dismissed as a result of the plea bargain. A complete review of these records will be more telling than simply examining the offender's conviction record. In many states, accessing these records is as simple as visiting the court administrator's office in the county where the perpetrator was convicted and asking to see any public files regarding the case.
- *Determine the level of supervision necessary to protect children.* If the offender is considered a low risk by the government and his or her treatment provider, it may be possible for the offender to attend services but only under supervision of at least one and preferably two mature members of the congregation who will be with the offender at all times to ensure no children are harmed, and also to protect the offender from taunting or other misconduct that may be directed at him or her. If the offender is at a higher risk, or if there is any question as to risk, the church should establish separate services for the offender at his home or another location in which he can be ministered to. It may be appropriate to select a group of mature men who will also attend these services so that the offender can have some sense of fellowship. This scenario would allow the congregation to meet the offender's spiritual needs without placing any child at risk. If the offender is a woman, the supervision should be provided by mature women from the congregation.
- *Even if the offender is at low risk, he should not be allowed to join a congregation where the victim attends services.* If the offender abused a member of the congregation, he should be prohibited from joining the church. The congregation may work to find the offender another spiritual home but the emotional needs of the victim should always take precedent. If it is necessary to find the offender a different church, it is critical to inform the new church of the basis for the offender's removal. Otherwise, the offender may be given a "fresh start"—and access to a whole new set of potential victims.
- *The church leaders should inform the congregation of the offender's request to attend worship or to join the congregation and take into account the needs of the entire church body.* Offenders thrive on secrecy and they, and the community as a whole, are best protected when there is an open discussion of their conduct and their presence in the pew. Church leaders who believe they can keep secret the presence of a convicted sex

offender are engaging in wishful, even dangerous thinking. In an age in which sex offender registries and conviction records are easily accessible online, members of the congregation will eventually discover an offender is present and may feel betrayed that the church hierarchy kept this from the members, particularly those members with children. Accordingly, the entire congregation should be informed of the situation and there should be a public discussion. The congregation should be particularly sensitive to the concerns of parents who worry that even if an offender is shadowed and otherwise monitored in such a way as to make additional abuse difficult, the offender may nonetheless have sexual thoughts when he or she is watching the children's choir sing. Even more importantly, church leaders should be sensitive to the fears of survivors of abuse who may be emotionally harmed by knowing there is an offender in their midst. Close proximity to a sex offender may be a weekly, painful reminder to survivors of their own suffering. Simply put, the church must minister to the offender in such a way that survivors are not re-victimized, emotionally or otherwise.

It is advisable to have a standing committee selected by the church body to oversee and enforce these policies. If the church or other faith entity has members with knowledge or experience in responding to or working with cases of sexual abuse it is wise to ask them to be part of this committee. If the church permits outside members to serve on such a committee, it may be helpful to have someone from the local law enforcement agency, social service department or prosecutor's office to at least serve in an advisory capacity to the committee. The members of the committee themselves should be subjected to a background check. Needless to say, it will be difficult to regulate a sex offender in the church if the committee charged with his oversight also includes a sex offender.

8. Be cognizant that many offenders are seeking "Cheap Grace"

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran minister executed by the Nazis because of his opposition to the government.⁴² Perhaps Bonhoeffer's greatest contribution to theology was his recognition of the dangers of "cheap grace," which Bonhoeffer defined as "grace sold on the market like cheapjacks' wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices."⁴³

Many sex offenders have found the value of "cheap grace" in faith communities. Simply put, these sex offenders have come to realize that if they cry readily and mouth the words of repentance they won't have to take any action to remedy the damage they have inflicted. According to sex offender treatment provider Anna Salter, "If children can be silenced and the average person is easy to fool, many offenders report that religious people are even easier to fool than most people."⁴⁴

Numerous clergy have been confronted with an offender who confesses to sexually abusing a child, emotionally expresses remorse and pledges abuse will never happen again. The offender begs for God's forgiveness and some members of the clergy are quick to absolve the sinner and the sin. When this happens, many offenders return home, realize how easy it is to be forgiven and will molest their child again.

Given the manipulative nature of many offenders, members of the clergy may wish to ask a series of questions to determine the seriousness of the offender's repentance. The pastor may wish to ask the following questions:

- Have you informed your spouse that you have sexually abused your child? If your wife wants you to move out of the house, are you willing to do it? If the child victim wants you to leave the house are you willing to do it?
- Have you informed your child's medical provider that you have violated her body?
- Have you referred your child to a counselor to assist in coping with the abuse you have inflicted on him or her?
- Do you hold yourself fully responsible for your conduct—or do you believe your victim in some way contributed to the abuse?
- Have you turned yourself in to the police? Are you willing to confess your crimes to the police or will you make them "prove it"? If the government files charges for crimes you have committed, will you be pleading guilty or will you force your child victim to testify publicly and be grilled by any attorney you hire?
- Are you willing to enroll in a sex offender treatment program?

An offender who is confessing sexual misconduct but is unwilling to address the physical or emotional needs of his victim, to disclose the abuse to his spouse or to seek sex offender treatment may be seeking forgiveness but is giving no indication of an intention to repair the damage inflicted or to reform his behavior. Given the serious criminal nature of the conduct, an offender unwilling to turn him or herself into the police should be subjected to church discipline—not the recipient of sacraments.⁴⁵

Some members of the clergy have told me that such harsh treatment of an offender removes the gospel from the pastor's work.⁴⁶ When this happens, I often ask the objecting pastor how he would handle a situation in which a parishioner confesses to having committed numerous thefts, asks God's forgiveness for his crimes but freely admits he has no intention of returning any of the stolen property to his victims, much less turning himself into the police. When confronted with this hypothetical, pastors have always told me they would not pronounce forgiveness since it is clear the offender is not truly penitent. The very same principle must be applied to the sex offender unwilling to hold himself accountable to the authorities or to do everything within his means to assist the children he has harmed.

9. Develop policies for responding to an allegation within the faith community

In addition to reporting an allegation to the police, the church should determine in advance how it will handle an allegation of sexual or other misconduct made by a child in the congregation against another member of the congregation. At a minimum, the accused offender should be suspended from activities involving children until the case is fully considered by the authorities. Even if the authorities decline to prosecute, this may not resolve the matter. For example, there may be credible evidence of child abuse but the government has determined it cannot prove the abuse beyond a reasonable doubt, or there may be a legal barrier to admitting a suspect's confession or other evidence. It is also possible the government declines to prosecute because no crime was

committed and yet the offender's conduct is deeply concerning. In one case, for example, a Christian school teacher was discovered to be chatting online with a student in which he admitted having sexual thoughts about the child. Although the church reported the incident to the police, law enforcement concluded a crime had not yet been committed. Although the government may have been unable to take action, the church certainly can. Simply put, the admission of sexual thoughts about a child, much less the communication of these thoughts to a girl, warrants immediate removal from teaching or other duties that places this man in the company of children. Accordingly, even when the government declines to prosecute, the church should fully assess the allegation and take appropriate action.

10. Policies must be accompanied with training

Employees or volunteers in a faith setting must receive annual training not only on church policies pertaining to child abuse but also on recognizing and otherwise responding to cases of child maltreatment. There are a number of training materials that can assist the faith community in carrying out this function.⁴⁷

Conclusion

According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."⁴⁸ Faith communities must recognize the attraction of child abusers to their institutions and must be proactive in keeping children safe. Failure to do so will result in additional cases of abuse, and in lifetimes of agonizing physical, emotional and spiritual damage.

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² Edmund Fuller, *The Lord of the Hobbits: J.R.R. Tolkien*, in NEIL D. ISAACS & ROSE A. ZIMBARDO (Eds.), *TOLKIEN AND THE CRITICS* 31 (1968).

³ The Boy Scouts of America should be commended for consulting with a number of child abuse experts in developing their child protection policies and for hiring a former child abuse detective, Michael Johnson, as its Youth Protection Director. <http://www.scouting.org/sitescore/content/BSAYouthProtection.aspx> (last visited June 27, 2011).

⁴ Peter Eisler, *When God and Law Collide*, USA TODAY, May 10, 2011 at 1A.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ See generally, Kelly Clark, *Institutional Child Sexual Abuse—Not Just a Catholic Thing*, 36(1) WILLIAM MITCHELL LAW REVIEW 220, 235-239 (2009).

⁷ Eisler, *supra* note 4, at 2A.

⁸ Clark, *supra* note 5 at 233.

⁹ *Id.* at 233, 234.

¹⁰ A law firm representing churches and other faith institutions accused of negligence in the handling of cases of child abuse has published an article on their website critical of an investigation of child sexual and physical abuse in which the investigators contacted everyone who may have been abused (all the child abuse victims were adults at the time of the investigation) or may have had knowledge of the abuse. See L. Martin Nusbaum & Theresa Lynn Sidebotham, *Are Protestant Ministries a New Market? Lessons Learned from the Catholic Scandal*, (6/14/11) available online at: <http://www.rothgerber.com/showarticle.aspx?Show=1451> (last visited June 27, 2011). According to these defense attorneys, this is improper because it "risked re-injuring persons who, for a variety of reasons, wished not to participate in questions about their "sexual past." *Id.* at 18.

¹¹ AMERICAN PROSECUTORS RESEARCH INSTITUTE, INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF CHILD ABUSE 86 (2004) (noting that in "nonfamilial cases, it is extremely rare for a person to commit a single act of abuse against a single child...If the suspect has access to other children through family, work, or recreational or volunteer activities, the investigator should find out who these children are and whether they have been approached or abused by the suspect.")

¹² See e.g., Roland Summit, *The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome*, 7 CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT 177 (1983); Thomas Lyon, *Scientific Support for Expert Testimony on Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation*, in J.R. CONTE (ED.), CRITICAL ISSUES IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (2002).

¹³ Nusbbaum & Sidebotham, note 10 at 18.

¹⁴ See e.g., Sarah Burge, *No Law on Church Worker Checks*, THE PRESS ENTERPRISE (May 31, 2011) (available online at: http://www.pe.com/localnews/sbcounty/stories/PE_News_Local_D_choir28.3ce2363.html) (last visited June 27, 2011). (The article quotes a parent expressing her "outrage" that a church failed to disclose to her and others that a pastor had a previous conviction for sexually abusing a child. Specifically, the parent said she believed the church should have informed her and other parents "so that we can make the decision whether to put our babies around this person.")

¹⁵ See e.g., Amy Person, *Court Clears Way for Diocese to be Sued*, WINONA DAILY NEWS A1 (June 28, 2011) (alleging that a priest who admitted sexually abusing boys was allowed to continue to serve as a priest and, as a result, abused at least one boy 16-18 years after his first admission).

¹⁶ DR. ANNA C. SALTER, PREDATORS 223 (2003).

¹⁷ See e.g., Britt Johnsen, *Sunday School Teacher Pleads Guilty to Criminal Sex Charge*, WINONA DAILY NEWS, February 17, 2007, available online at http://www.winonadailynews.com/news/article_7492e940-986d-55ce-8c8d-9513de50e9fd.html (last visited June 2, 2011).

¹⁸ According to a report issued by the United States Department of Education, certain types of educators, such as coaches or music instructors, are more likely to sexually abuse children simply because these educators will have an easier time being alone with a boy or girl. CAROL SHAKESHAF, EDUCATOR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: A SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING LITERATURE 22 (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2004).

¹⁹ For a listing of state and national laws prohibiting corporal punishment, visit the website of the Center for Effective Discipline at www.stophitting.com.

²⁰ See Elizabeth T. Gershoff, *Report on Physical Punishment in the United States: What Research Tells Us About its Effects on Children* (Phoenix Children's Hospital 2008) available online at www.phoenixchildrens.com. There is also very little theological support for the practice of corporal punishment. See generally, MEIR MUNK, SPARING THE ROD: A TORAH PERSPECTIVE ON REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN EDUCATION (1989); Benjamin Shmueli, *Corporal Punishment in Jewish Law*, 18 THE JEWISH LAW ANNUAL, 137, 209 (2004) (concluding "it is generally agreed that corporal punishment is not required, but merely permitted in principle"); WILLIAM J. WEBB, CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE BIBLE (2011); SAMUEL MARTIN, THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME: CHRISTIANS AND THE SPANKING CONTROVERSY (2006); CONCORDIA SELF STUDY BIBLE 965 (NIV 1984) (noting the handful of references to "rod" in the book of proverbs are best read as simply a "figure of speech for discipline of any kind"). Another Bible commentary similarly notes the term "rod" is referencing the type of governmental punishment used at the time the proverbs were written and should not be taken literally. Specifically, the commentators conclude: "Flogging was a common form of punishment. The ceremonial scepter held by rulers symbolized their authority to judge and discipline. Children are best trained with kindness and delight. For children who must be forced with rods and blows will not develop into a good generation." THE LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE 1010 (2009 Concordia Publishing House) (citing Martin Luther's Large Catechism).

²¹ As one example, Terence Michael Lynch was a school headmaster convicted of sexually abusing 12 boys. Among his atrocities, Lynch lined boys up naked after their showers and would inflict corporal punishment on their bare buttocks for a variety of infractions. Lynch also checked the boys' genitals to assess their "sexual maturity" and encouraged some boys to watch TV with him in his bedroom. Peggy Wright, *Spanking Horrors Detailed: Ex-Headmaster's Arrest Opens Old Wounds, Say Former Morris Students*, DAILY RECORD, February 16, 2006, available online at:

<http://www.nospank.net/lynch.htm> (last visited June 2, 2011). Sexual sadism "involves acts (real, not simulated) in which the individual derives sexual excitement from the psychological or physical suffering (including humiliation) of the victim" and may include acts of "spanking" or "paddling." AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION, DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS FOURTH EDITION TEXT REVISION, Section 302.84 (2000).

²² For example, Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio was sued for failing to disclose inappropriate behavior of a seminary student including providing alcohol to minors and exposing them to pornographic material. The seminary student went on to molest children and was sentenced to 397 years in prison. This seminary reached an out-of-court settlement with the victims. Associated Press, *Both Sides Rest in Lutheran Abuse Case*, April 21, 2004.

²³ Although a background check won't detect most sex offenders, it will detect some. See e.g., Sarah Burge, *No Law on Church Worker Checks*, THE PRESS ENTERPRISE (May 31, 2011) (available online at: http://www.pe.com/localnews/sbcounty/stories/PE_News_Local_D_choir28.3ce2363.html) (last visited June 27, 2011). (The article details the arrest of an assistant pastor for sexually abusing a teenager. The article notes the pastor had a previous conviction for sexually assaulting a teenager).

²⁴ Gene Abel, et al., *Self-Reported Sex Crimes on Nonincarcerated Paraphiliacs*, 2(1) JOURNAL OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE 3-25 (1987).

²⁵ See STEPHEN R. TRACY, MENDING THE SOUL 210 (2005).

²⁶ Salter, *supra* note 16, at 227.

²⁷ In a survey of survey of 197 school teachers, the educators were given two hypothetical cases of abuse. In the first hypothetical, the teachers were asked if they would make a report when a student tells them a stepfather had been touching their genitals. In the second hypothetical, the teachers were asked if they would make a report when a student tells them another teacher was touching their genitals. Only 26% of the teachers said they would report the first instance and only 11% said they would report the second incident to the authorities. Maureen C. Kenny, *Child Abuse Reporting: Teachers' Perceived Deterrents*, 25 CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT 81, 88 (2001).

²⁸ For example, the United States Department of Education notes "(w)hile screening will not identify the majority of educators who have or will sexually abuse, it signals seriousness on the part of the district." CAROL SHAKESHAFT, EDUCATOR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: A SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING LITERATURE 48 (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2004).

²⁹ The United States Department of Education has recommended student education as part of an overall program to prevent the sexual abuse of children by educators or other school personnel. CAROL SHAKESHAFT, EDUCATOR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: A SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING LITERATURE 49 (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2004). [Illinois legislators recognized the importance of educating youth with the passage of "Erin's Law." See IL Senate Bill 2643 - 96th General Assembly. A similar bill was also introduced in Minnesota - SF 1469/ HF 1758.]

³⁰ See, JILL STARISHEVSKY, MY BODY BELONGS TO ME (2007). For ideas and suggestions, contact the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center at 651-714-4673 or visit www.jwrc.org.

³¹ See Sharon Portwood, *What We Know---And Don't Know---About Preventing Child Maltreatment*, in VICTOR VIETH, BETTE BOTTOMS & ALISON PERONA (EDS.) 55, 64-65 (2006).

³² This is a case on which NCPTC provided consultation.

³³ Teena Sorenson & Barbara Snow, *How Children Tell: The Process of Disclosure in Child Sexual Abuse*, 70(1) CHILD WELFARE 3 (1991) (noting that "education awareness" resulted in some children making purposeful disclosures of sexual abuse).

³⁴ See e.g., Roland Summit, *The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome*, 7 CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT 177 (1983); Thomas Lyon, *Scientific Support for Expert Testimony on Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation*, in J.R. CONTE (ED.), CRITICAL ISSUES IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (2002).

³⁵ See generally, Mike Johnson, *The Investigative Windows of Opportunity: The Vital Link to Corroboration in Child Sexual Abuse Cases*, 1(9) CENTERPIECE (2009), available online at www.ncptc.org.

³⁶ See generally, Tamara E. Hurst, *Prevention of Recantations of Child Sexual Abuse Cases*, 2(11) CENTERPIECE (2010), available online at www.ncptc.org.

³⁷ See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Clergy as Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect: Summary of State Laws*, available online at: http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/clergymandated.cfm (last visited June 2, 2011).

³⁸ See e.g., Marie Rhode, *Assault Victim Sues School, Synod*, MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL (May 8, 2008) (alleging church should have been aware of a previous police investigation of a teacher and should have properly assessed the risk to other children and taken appropriate action. The teacher was eventually convicted of sexually abusing a child on and off school grounds).

³⁹ GENE ABEL & NORA HARLOW, THE CHILD MOLESTATION BOOK (2001).

⁴⁰ Donna Eshuys & Stephen Smallbone, *Religious Affiliations Among Adult Sexual Offenders*, 18 SEX ABUSE 279 (2006); Phillip Firestone, et al., *Clerics Who Commit Sexual Offenses: Offender, Offense, and Victim Characteristics*, 18 JOURNAL OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE 442 (2009).

⁴¹ Marian V. Llautaud, *Sex Offenders Coming to a Church Near You*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY (posted online 10/25/10).

⁴² See generally, ERIC METAKAS, BONHOEFFER (2010).

⁴³ DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP 43 (1959).

⁴⁴ ANNA SALTER, PREDATORS 28 (2003).

⁴⁵ For many faith traditions, this is not a foreign concept. In the late 1800's, seminary professor C.F.W. Walther delivered a series of famous lectures on law and gospel in which he stated "Do not proclaim forgiveness of sins to impenitent and secure sinners. That would be a horrible mingling of Law and Gospel. It would be like stuffing food into the mouth of a person who is already filled to the point of vomiting." C.F.W. WALTHER, LAW & GOSPEL 45 (2010) (citations omitted).

⁴⁶ As an authoritative treatise on the Christian pastor's application of law and gospel to a penitent, see generally, C.F.W. WALTHER, LAW & GOSPEL (2010).

⁴⁷ Organizations and resources include: Faith Trust Institute (www.faithtrustinstitute.org); GRACE (www.netgrace.org); the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center (www.jwrc.org); the National Child Protection Training Center (www.ncptc.org); and Darkness2Light (www.darkness2light.org).

⁴⁸ Metakas, *supra* note 41, jacket cover.



Worship and Children – The Eternal Connection

Boz Tchividjian, Executive Director of GRACE

In the past weeks, I have been struck with the myriad of issues that are related to child abuse within the Christian community. However, in preparation for this article, I was faced with a very fundamental question: "What is it about this subject that drives me and the other members of GRACE to spend untold hours listening, teaching, counseling, consulting, investigating, encouraging, and praying about children who have been so hurt by the sin (and crime) of child abuse?" Ultimately, what propels each of us to spend our lives equipping the Christian community to confront this destructive sin is our love and adoration of our Heavenly Father. Let me try and explain what I mean.....

In Mark 9:37, Jesus says, *Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me.* These are striking and powerful words from the Son of God. The plain reading of this passage simply means that our embrace of God is demonstrated and exhibited by how we love His little ones. Wow, think about that truth spoken from the lips of God Himself. We love Him through the loving of children. Or put another way, we reject God by and through the pushing away of His children.

The tragic truth is that abuse pushes children away from God, and this is one of Satan's most successful secrets. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says that *Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.* In other words, the purpose for the life God has breathed into each one of us is to be His worshippers. Satan whose chief objective is to rob God of all worship hates this purpose. Since man's chief end is worship, Satan robs God of this worship through the destruction of man. It doesn't take long before we realize that Satan starts by destroying the most venerable of worshippers...those who are weakest...children! A not so old study found that 2/3 of all people who embrace Christ do so before their 18th birthday. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that Satan is tirelessly working to destroy children in order to prevent them from spending a lifetime worshipping God. Don't you see this satanic agenda of robbing God of worship by preventing children from experiencing the love of Christ? This is the ultimate of spiritual warfare!

It is the worship of our great God, and the realization that Satan's purposes are to rob God of His worship through the destruction of His worshippers...beginning with precious children...that drives the heart and soul of GRACE. This tragic truth would be too overwhelming but for the glorious fact that it is by the work and power of God that we press forward. John 1:4-5 says, *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shine in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* God is telling us that worship is preserved

and restored through His Son's work on the cross, which has conquered darkness. What an incredible promise from our incredible God! We are merely God's imperfect agents used by Him to restore His worship by and through confronting, addressing, and responding, to the sin of child abuse. Please pray that God will bring forth His people to be His agents of light in this very very dark place.

A Public Statement Concerning Sexual Abuse in the Church of Jesus Christ

Recent allegations of sexual abuse and cover-up within a well known international ministry and subsequent public statements by several evangelical leaders have angered and distressed many, both inside and outside of the Church. These events expose the troubling reality that, far too often, the Church's instincts are no different than from those of many other institutions, responding to such allegations by moving to protect her structures rather than her children. This is a longstanding problem in the Christian world, and we are deeply grieved by the failures of the American and global Church in responding to the issue of sexual abuse. We do not just believe we should do better; as those who claim the name of Jesus and the cause of the Gospel, we are convinced we must do better. In the hope that a time is coming when Christian leaders respond to all sexual abuse with outrage and courage, we offer this confession and declare the Good News of Jesus on behalf of the abused, ignored and forgotten.

Through the media we have been confronted with perpetual reports of grievous sexual abuse and its cover-up. Institutions ranging from the Catholic Church, various Protestant churches and missionary organizations, Penn State, Yeshiva University High School, the Boy Scouts, and all branches of our military have been rocked by allegations of abuse and of complicity in silencing the victims. And while many evangelical leaders have eagerly responded with outrage to those public scandals, we must now acknowledge long-silenced victims who are speaking out about sexual abuse in evangelical Christian institutions: schools, mission fields and churches, large and small. And we must confess we have done far too little to hear and help them.

Holocaust survivor and author, Elie Weisel, once said, "Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim...silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." When we choose willful ignorance, inaction or neutrality in the face of evil, we participate in the survival of that evil. When clergy, school administrations, boards of directors, or military commanders have been silent or have covered up abuse, they have joined with those who perpetrate crimes against the "little ones" -- often children, but also others who are on the underside of power because of size, age, position or authority.

It goes without saying that sexual abuse is criminal, but within the Church we also believe that it is the work of the enemy of our souls -- evil, horrific sin perpetrated in dark and hidden places, forever altering lives and destroying the faith of the abused. How could such evil be present and overlooked in the body of Christ? Surely as his followers, we would do everything in our power to expose the deeds of darkness, opening the mouths of the mute, the afflicted and the needy. The Church must never hinder those who so desperately need to run to God and his people for safety, hope and truth, while also providing them protection from the great deceiver.

But we have hindered the victims. By our silence and our efforts to protect our names and institutions and "missions," we, the body of Christ, have often sided with an enemy whose sole purpose is and has always been to destroy the Lamb of God and his presence in this world. Our busyness and inattention have often resulted in complicity in allowing dark places that shelter abuse to fester and survive.

We must face the truths of our own teachings: To be a shepherd in the body of Christ and blind to the knowledge that your sheep are being abused by wolves in your midst is to be an inattentive shepherd. To judge merely by outward appearances is a failure of righteousness. To

fail to obey the laws of the land as Scripture commands by declining to report and expose abuse is to be a disobedient shepherd. To be told that wolves are devouring our lambs and fail to protect those lambs is to be a shepherd who sides with the wolves who hinder those same little ones from coming to Jesus. To fail to grasp the massive web of deception entangling an abuser and set him or her loose among the sheep is to be naïve about the very nature and power of sin. To be told a child is being or has been abused and to make excuses for failing to act is a diabolical misrepresentation of God. To know a woman is being raped or battered in hidden places and silence her or send her back is to align with those who live as enemies of our God. Protecting an institution or organization rather than a living, breathing lamb is to love ministry more than God and to value a human name or institution more than the peerless name of Jesus.

Dear church of Jesus Christ, we must set aside every agenda but one: to gently lead every man, woman and child into the arms of our Good Shepherd, who gave his very life to rescue us from the clutches of our enemy and from sin and death — who rose from the dead and called us to the safety of his side. As we follow this Good Shepherd, we will “eliminate harmful beasts from the land, make places of blessing for the sheep, deliver them from their enslavers and make them secure in places where no one will make them afraid” (Ezekiel 34:25-28). Surely it is for such a time as this that the Church has been empowered to boldly and bravely embody the Good News to accusers and accused alike, and to forsake our own comfort and position to love the hurting with an illogical extravagance.

To all who have been abused, broken, deceived and ignored, we have failed you and our God. We repent for looking nothing like our Lord when we have silenced you, ignored you or moved away from you and then acted as if you were the problem. You are not the problem; you are the voice of our God calling his church to repentance and humility. Thank you for having the

courage to speak truth. May God have mercy on us all and oh may the day come when his church reflects the indescribable love and compassion of Jesus, even to the point of laying down our lives for his precious sheep.

Dated this 17th day of July, 2013.

[Click here to add your voice and sign this statement along with those listed below.](#)

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This information packet is intended for clergy members who are required by South Carolina law to report suspected child abuse and neglect. It includes legal requirements, guidelines for making reports, an overview of how reports are processed, indicators of child maltreatment, and applicable definitions.

For more information, or to schedule a training session, contact the Children's Law Center at (803) 777-1646 or <http://childlaw.sc.edu>

The Children's Law Center is funded in part by the SC Bar Foundation



School of Law
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Information for Clergy As Mandated Reporters

In 1977, South Carolina enacted the Child Protection Act which established a system for reporting and investigating child abuse and neglect. This law has since been amended, but the primary purpose has remained the same: to safeguard the welfare and safety of children. Mandated reporters play a key role in this effort to protect children by identifying possible maltreatment and reporting it to the agencies responsible for investigation and intervention. All fifty states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have mandatory reporting laws in some form.

Legal Requirements for Reporting

Mandated Reporters

South Carolina law requires certain persons to report suspected child abuse or neglect, when, in the person's professional capacity, the person has received information which leads to the reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected. The following professionals are mandated reporters under South Carolina law: physicians, nurses, dentists, optometrists, medical examiners, coroners, employees of county medical examiner's or coroner's offices, or any other medical, emergency medical services, mental health, or allied health professionals, **members of the clergy including Christian Science Practitioners or religious healers**, school teachers, counselors, principals, assistant principals, social or public assistance workers, substance abuse treatment staff, childcare workers in childcare centers or foster care facilities, police or law enforcement officers, undertakers, funeral home directors, funeral home employees, persons responsible for processing film, computer technicians, and judges.

Clergy Generally

The term *clergy* is a generic term used to describe the religious leaders of the various faiths around the world. Each religion, faith group, denomination, or church may identify who, within its ranks, is clergy. To determine if a person is considered a clergy member, and thus subject to the mandatory reporting laws, we must look to the particular religion, denomination, or faith group and its definition of clergy or formal leader. In addition to those considered clergy by their religion, South Carolina law specifically identifies regular or duly ordained ministers, Christian Science practitioners, religious healers, rabbis and priests as clergy.

Reporting by Clergy Members

South Carolina law requires clergy members to report suspected child abuse or neglect when the information concerning the abuse or neglect is received from any person other than the person who committed the abuse or neglect. If the clergy member receives the information from the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect, the communication may be protected by a legal exception, known as the priest-penitent privilege.

Not every communication made to a clergy member by a person who committed abuse or neglect is privileged. Four elements must be met for the privilege to apply¹: **1) there must be a communication.** The communication may be in person, in writing, by telephone or in some instances, it may even be a non-verbal communication such as a gesture; **2) it must be made to a member of the clergy, including a Christian Science Practitioner or religious healer;** **3) the communication must be made in confidence.** A communication is privileged if the person informs the clergy member that there is the expectation that the priest-penitent privilege will apply and the information divulged will be held in confidence. When a clergy member engages in a pastoral communication and is unsure whether there is the expectation of privilege, the clergy member should ask whether the person wishes the communication to be protected by the privilege. The privilege will likely apply if the person who committed the abuse or neglect responds to the question affirmatively.

There are situations where it may be less clear whether the priest-penitent privilege applies. The specific facts of those situations must be analyzed to determine if the communication is protected by the privilege. Generally, if the communication occurs in the presence of other

people (for example, members of the congregation) or during a religious service, the priest-penitent privilege will likely not apply, because there is no expectation of confidentiality. On the other hand, a communication may take place at a location where the rules require other people to be present (for example, a prison where a guard must be present or mental health facility, where a nurse or other staff person must be present). In such situations, the privilege will likely apply.

4) The clergy member must be acting in his or her professional capacity according to the usual course of practice or discipline of his or her church or religious body. Members of the clergy are not always presiding in their houses of worship when they are sought for or provide spiritual advising or counseling, or when they are discharging other functions of their office. Many times conversations with clergy members occur in private homes, hospitals, funeral homes, courthouses, prisons, grocery stores, at social events, and other locations. Depending on the circumstances, the information divulged may or may not fall within the priest-penitent privilege. In such situations, the clergy member should stop the conversation and ask the person divulging sensitive information if the information is being divulged because the person is seeking spiritual advice or counseling and if the person expects that the information will be held in confidence.

The priest-penitent privilege does not apply when a person who committed abuse or neglect divulges information at a time when the clergy member is not acting in his or her professional capacity.

A conversation between two friends, one of whom just happens to be a minister, is likely not privileged. An impromptu exchange at the grocery store may not be privileged. An exchange at a social gathering, when the clergy member is clearly not acting in his or her professional capacity, is not privileged. However, a conversation may begin as casual and evolve into one during which the person seeks spiritual advice or counsel.

¹ South Carolina Attorney General Opinion No. 04-30, February 9, 2004. *Rivers v. Rivers*, 292 S.C. 21 (Cl. App. 1987). Hammar, Richard. What is the Clergy-Penitent Privilege? Churchlawtoday.com, 2005.

When a clergy member receives information from an alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect, the following questions will be helpful in determining the duty to report. 1) Did the person indicate that he or she intended for the clergy-penitent privilege to apply? 2) Was the clergy member specifically sought for spiritual advice or counsel? 3) Where did the conversation take place? 4) Were other people present at the time of the conversation? 5) Was the information divulged during a scheduled counseling session? 6) What is the relationship between the person and the clergy member?

It is important to note that it is not a requirement for the person who committed abuse or neglect to be a member of the clergy's congregation or faith for the privilege to apply.

It is also important to understand that the mandate to report child abuse or neglect does not require the reporter to know for certain that a child has been abused or neglected. The duty to report is triggered when the mandatory reporter has the reasonable belief that a child has been or will be abused or neglected.

Lastly, as a mandated reporter, a clergy member has the legal obligation to report abuse or neglect even if the clergy member knows or has reason to believe that the abuse or neglect was disclosed to another person, whether or not that other person is also a mandated reporter.

Where to Report

Whether a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is made to the Department of Social Services (DSS) or to the local law enforcement agency depends upon the relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the child victim. When the alleged perpetrator is the child's parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the report should be made to DSS in the county where the child resides or can be found.

When the alleged perpetrator is not the child's parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the report should be made to the local law enforcement office.

If the relationship or identity of the alleged perpetrator is unclear or unknown, the report should be made to DSS.

If there is reason to believe that a child has died as a result of child abuse or neglect, a report should be made to the county medical examiner or coroner's office. If there are other children remaining in the home, a report should also be made to law enforcement or DSS, whichever agency is appropriate.

Failure to Report

A mandated reporter, including a clergy member, who knowingly fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than \$500.00, or imprisoned not more than six months, or both.

Confidentiality

South Carolina law requires DSS and law enforcement to keep the identity of the reporter confidential. The law provides only limited instances when the identity of the reporter may be revealed. If the report is received by DSS and is later referred to law enforcement, DSS will reveal the name of the reporter to law enforcement to allow for a criminal investigation. Likewise, if the report is received by law enforcement and is later referred to DSS, law enforcement will reveal the name of the reporter to DSS to allow DSS to investigate the allegations.

The only other circumstance under which DSS may release the identity of the reporter is by court order. If a report is made maliciously or in bad faith, the alleged perpetrator in an unsubstantiated case may file an action in family court requesting the release of the reporter's name. If, after reviewing the case, the court finds probable cause to believe the report was made maliciously or in bad faith, the

court may order DSS to release the name of the reporter. The alleged perpetrator who was the subject of the false report may then file suit against the person who made the false report and may be entitled to recover the appropriate relief.

The foregoing confidentiality provisions do not prohibit a mandated reporter from being subpoenaed to provide testimony at a court hearing regarding the alleged abuse or neglect if it is determined that the reporter's testimony is necessary to protect the child. Even then, the fact that the person testifying made the report of the suspected abuse or neglect cannot be disclosed to anyone.

Immunity from Liability

The law creates a rebuttable presumption that mandatory reporters have acted in good faith in reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. Persons required or permitted to report suspected abuse or neglect, or who participate in an investigation or court proceeding as a result of a report, are immune from civil and criminal liability, provided that such persons acted in good faith. Immunity covers full disclosure of all facts that led the person to believe or suspect that a child has been or may be abused or neglected.

False or Malicious Reports

It is unlawful to knowingly make a false or malicious report of abuse or neglect. False or malicious reporting is a misdemeanor and upon conviction, is punishable by a fine up to \$5000 or imprisonment up to ninety days, or both.

Photographs

Mandatory reporters may take color photographs of injuries that are visible on a child who is the subject of a report of abuse or neglect. Clothing should not be removed in order to take photographs. Copies of all photographs and negatives must be provided to

DSS or law enforcement at the time of the report, or as soon as possible after the report.

Harm to Viable Fetus or Newborn

A situation may arise where a clergy member has been provided information regarding a pregnant woman that leads the cleric to reasonably believe that an unborn child has been harmed or is in substantial risk of harm. A report should be made to DSS when there is reason to believe that a pregnant woman is abusing alcohol or an illegal substance, or is involved in behavior that may place the fetus or newborn at risk of physical or mental harm.

The SC Supreme Court has ruled that a viable unborn fetus is a "child" for purposes of child abuse and neglect laws. A viable fetus is one that has "...reached that period of prenatal maturity where it is capable of independent life apart from its mother."²

It is unlikely that the clergy member will know the exact gestational age of the fetus or whether the fetus is viable; therefore, it is recommended that a report be made any time there is reason to believe a pregnant woman's actions may be detrimental to the health of the fetus.

Safe Haven for Abandoned Babies Act ("Daniel's Law")

Daniel's Law is named for an infant whose mother abandoned him in a landfill shortly after birth. Fortunately, he survived and nurses at the hospital named him Daniel. Daniel's Law is designed to provide a safe option for babies, no more than thirty days old, whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them.

Daniel's Law designates certain facilities, called safe havens, where a parent of an infant or a person acting at the direction of a parent can voluntarily leave the infant without the fear of

² *Whitner v. South Carolina*, 492 S.E.2d 777 (S.C. 1997).

criminal prosecution. South Carolina law defines a safe haven as a hospital, hospital outpatient facility, a law enforcement agency, a fire station, an emergency medical services station, or any **house of worship** during the hours when the facility is staffed.

Under Daniels Law, a safe haven must take temporary physical custody of an infant who is voluntarily left by a person who does not express the intent to return for the child and the circumstances give rise to a reasonable belief that the person does not intend to return for the infant.

The person leaving the infant is entitled to anonymity and is not required to disclose his or her identity; however, the staff member of the safe haven must ask the person leaving the child to provide information concerning the child's background, including the identity of any parent (other than the person leaving the infant) and a medical history. With the information provided, the safe haven must fill out the "Abandoned Infants Form for Safe Havens" (DSS Form 3082), which is available on the DSS website at <http://dss.sc.gov> or at the local DSS office. If the person leaving the infant does not wish to provide any information to the safe haven, the person must be given the DSS form and a stamped envelope to mail the form directly to DSS in case the person later decides to provide the information. The safe haven must also offer the person leaving the infant information concerning the legal effect of leaving the infant with the safe haven.

Within six hours of receiving an infant, the safe haven must transport the child to a hospital or hospital outpatient facility. By the end of the next working day, the hospital or hospital outpatient facility will notify DSS, and DSS will immediately assume legal custody of the child.

Court hearings regarding an infant abandoned under Daniel's Law are expedited so that the infant, if not placed with family members, will be free to be adopted in a very short time frame.

Safe havens and their staffs are immune from civil and criminal liability for any action authorized by Daniel's Law as long as they comply with the provisions of the law.

Investigating Reports: DSS

Within 24 hours of accepting a report of suspected abuse or neglect, DSS will begin an investigation and physically observe the child. Based on the information provided by the reporter, DSS will assess the risk of harm to the child and decide an appropriate response time that is within the 24 hours. The more serious the situation, the faster DSS will respond. For instance, if it is determined that the child is in imminent and substantial danger, DSS will begin the investigation within two hours of accepting the report. In addition to an investigation by DSS, any reports involving sexual abuse or other violations of criminal law will be referred by DSS to law enforcement for investigation.

DSS's initial goal is to keep families together. If it is determined during the investigation that the risk of harm to the child does not rise to a level that warrants removal of the child from the home, but the circumstances in the home do warrant some type of intervention, DSS and the family may enter into agreements called "safety plans" and "treatment plans", designed to keep the family together, assist the family with their needs, and remove any risks of harm. DSS will identify and offer appropriate services to aid the family and will monitor the family's progress. If the family cooperates and benefits from the services such that the risk of harm to the child is removed, DSS will close its case. If the family does not make the changes needed to keep the child safe, DSS may seek court intervention or removal of the child from the home.

If DSS seeks court intervention, the parents may be placed under a court order to comply with treatment services. If they fail to do so, the court can hold them in contempt and apply an appropriate sanction. If DSS seeks non-

emergency removal, DSS has likely offered the parents services in order to keep the family together, but the parents are noncompliant. Their noncompliance places the child in unreasonable risk of harm and the child cannot be protected without being removed from the home. The court may remove the child from the parents and grant custody to DSS, or grant custody or guardianship to a relative or other familiar person.

If, during the investigation, or at any time during DSS's services to a family, it is determined that the situation in the home is such that the child's life, health or physical safety is in substantial and imminent danger and cannot be protected in the home, the child will be placed into emergency protective custody either by law enforcement or by a family court judge. (See discussion below.) When this occurs, the child will be placed in a foster home, with relatives, or with a family friend while the parents participate in court ordered treatment services. The services are family specific and designed to assist the family in remedying the causes of abuse or neglect and to timely reunify the family.

DSS will complete its investigation into the allegations within 45 days of accepting the report and will either "indicate" or "unfound" the report. If evidence proves more likely than not (also known as preponderance of the evidence) that abuse or neglect occurred the report will be "indicated". If the evidence fails to prove more likely than not that abuse or neglect occurred, DSS will "unfound" the report.

If requested at the time the report is made, DSS will notify the reporter of the outcome of its investigation.

Family Court Hearings

The following is a brief explanation of the various types of family court hearings held in child abuse and neglect cases.

Intervention. DSS files a complaint asking the court to oversee the treatment services that have been offered to the family. Court oversight is usually sought when the family is not using the services that have been offered. An intervention hearing will be held within 35 days of filing the complaint. If the court determines that the child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed, the court will order the parents to complete treatment services. The child remains in the home during this process.

Probable Cause Hearing/Emergency Protective Custody Hearing. Most children in the custody of DSS entered foster care by being placed into emergency protective custody ("EPC") by law enforcement or by the family court. A child may be placed into emergency protective custody when a law enforcement officer or family court judge has reason to believe the child's life, health or physical safety is in substantial and imminent danger.

Within 72 hours of a child being placed into emergency protective custody, there will be a hearing to determine whether the decision to place the child into emergency protective custody was proper and whether there is reason for DSS to retain custody of the child or whether it is safe to return the child home.

Removal/Merits Hearing. Within 35 days of filing a complaint for removal of a child from the child's home, there will be a removal/merits hearing. Evidence is presented by the parties and, based on the evidence, the court will determine whether the child has been abused or neglected. The court will also determine whether the child must remain in the custody of DSS while the parents complete treatment; or whether it is safe to retain the child in the home (if the child has not been removed prior to hearing); or to return the child home. The determination by the court is referred to as a "finding". The treatment services offered to the family by DSS will likely be ordered by the court at the removal/merits hearing.

Permanency Planning. Permanency Planning hearings are required for every child who remains out of the home following the merits/removal hearing. A permanency planning hearing must be held no later than one year from the date the child was first placed in foster care, and at least once every 12 months thereafter until a permanent plan is finalized and the case is closed by the court. The purpose of this hearing is to determine a permanent plan that is in the child's best interest and to timely gain permanency for the child. At the permanency planning hearing, the court, with evidence and input from DSS, the parents, the foster Care Review Board, the guardian ad litem, the foster parents, and any other interested parties, will determine: whether it is safe to return the child to the parents; place the child in the custody or guardianship of a relative or non-relative; retain the child in foster care; or terminate the parents' parental rights and place the child for adoption.

Termination of Parental Rights. As previously stated, DSS's initial goal is almost always to reunify children with their biological parents. However, reunification is not always in the child's best interest. Children deserve loving permanent families and, when the home of the biological parents cannot be made safe for them to return, an alternative is to terminate parental rights so that the child can gain permanency through adoption.

South Carolina law recognizes eleven grounds for termination of parental rights. In order for the family court to terminate parental rights, the court must find, by clear and convincing evidence, that at least one of the eleven grounds exists and that termination of parental rights is in the child's best interest.

Termination of parental rights forever severs the legal relationship between the parent and the child. The decision to terminate parental rights is one of the most difficult decisions a family court judge has to make. The evidence

presented to the court must convince the judge that there is at least one legal ground to terminate the parental rights and that termination is in the child's best interest.

Processing Reports: Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is the agency that will investigate allegations of abuse and neglect when the alleged perpetrator is someone other than a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare. However, regardless of the alleged perpetrator's relationship to the child, law enforcement will conduct a criminal investigation into the allegations when there is reason to believe that a criminal statute has been violated. In many cases law enforcement and DSS will conduct simultaneous investigations and will coordinate their efforts when possible; however, the two investigations are separate and distinct. The purpose of DSS's investigation is to ensure the safety and welfare of children. The purpose of law enforcement's investigation is to determine whether a crime has been committed and if so, to aid in prosecuting the perpetrator. When law enforcement has probable cause to believe that an individual has committed a crime, the alleged perpetrator will be arrested. A bond hearing will be held and the alleged perpetrator may be detained or released pending final disposition of the charge.

After the bond hearing, a preliminary hearing will be held to determine whether law enforcement had probable cause to arrest the alleged perpetrator. The grand jury will then review the case to decide whether the evidence is sufficient to formally charge (indict) the alleged perpetrator. If the alleged perpetrator is indicted, the next step is usually a hearing to determine if the alleged perpetrator is innocent or guilty of committing a crime. The alleged perpetrator can choose to plead guilty or have a jury trial. If the alleged perpetrator pleads guilty or is found guilty by a jury, he or she may be sentenced to incarceration or placed on

probation. For certain sex offenses, the judge can order the perpetrator to register as a sex offender. The judge may also order DSS to place the perpetrator's name on the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Testifying

A mandated reporter may be subpoenaed to testify in the family court and/or the criminal hearing regarding the alleged abuse or neglect. South Carolina Code Annotated Section 19-11-90 provides that:

"[I]n any legal or quasi-legal trial, hearing or proceeding before any court, commission or committee no regular or duly ordained minister, priest or rabbi shall be required, in giving testimony, to disclose any confidential communication properly entrusted to him in his professional capacity and necessary and proper to enable him to discharge the functions of his office according to the usual course of practice or discipline of his church or religious body. This prohibition shall not apply to cases where the party in whose favor it is made waives the rights conferred".

If subpoenaed, the clergy member must testify unless he or she successfully asserts the priest-penitent privilege, already discussed. Likewise, if the alleged perpetrator waives the privilege, the clergy member must testify.

Recognizing Child Abuse or Neglect

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize possible signs of maltreatment. The law does not specify injuries or circumstances that require a report. Rather, mandated reporters must be familiar with indicators and exercise judgment in deciding whether a report is appropriate. Indicators of child maltreatment can be obvious, but are sometimes subtle and difficult to recognize. The presence of indicators does not necessarily mean abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring;

however, when indicators appear repeatedly or in combination, professionals should take a closer look at the situation and consider the need to report. Although child maltreatment can be divided into various types (physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental injury/abuse, neglect), these various types often occur in combination. The following material is based on a fact sheet published by the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect, *Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms* (2003).

General Indicators of Maltreatment

Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, or does not want to go home

Parent:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Treats one child differently from siblings
- Denies the existence of – or blames the child for – the child's problems
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if child misbehaves
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs

Signs of Physical Abuse

Child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes

- Has injuries that mirror the shape of an object
- Has bruises in various stages of healing, or on different body planes
- Has bruises on the fleshy parts of the body
- Has fading injuries after an absence from school
- Attempts to hide injuries
- Seems frightened of the parents and does not want to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or guardian

Parent:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injuries
- Does not seek medical care when needed for the child's injuries
- Describes the child in a very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

Signs of Neglect

Child:

- Is frequently absent from or late to school
- Is always hungry; begs or steals food or money
- Is consistently tired
- Has slow physical development or is underweight
- Lacks needed routine or urgent medical or dental care
- Has poor hygiene; is consistently dirty and has a body odor
- Lacks appropriate clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care or supervision

Parent:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or drugs

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Child:

- Child reports sexual abuse
- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Refuses to change for P.E. or participate in activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite or weight
- Has a sudden change in grades
- Appears withdrawn or depressed
- Demonstrates unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away from home

Parent:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex

Child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (e.g. parenting other children) or inappropriately infantile (e.g. rocking or head-banging)
- Has attempted suicide or harm self
- Exhibits a lack of attachment to parents

Parent:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

Guidelines for Mandated Reporters

When confronted with the possibility that a child has been or may be abused or neglected, there are several steps that should be taken to protect the child. The following are suggested guidelines to further assist mandated reporters in recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.

Responding to a Child

- Listen attentively while the child is talking to you.
- Do not probe for details, particularly when it concerns sexual abuse. (Proving sexual abuse in court often depends heavily on the child's statement. Discussing details of the abuse with the child is essentially handling evidence, and should only be done by trained investigators).
- Do not remove clothing to examine the child's body.
- Do not indicate doubt or disbelief.
- Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator. Children often love the person who mistreats them.
- Tell the child what you will do, for example that you are going to contact DSS and a caseworker will come to talk with the child.
- Do not give the child false assurances, or promise that you will keep the information confidential.

Documentation

- Document the basis of your concerns, including physical and behavioral signs.
- Document the child's statements to you. Try to use the child's exact words.
- Document the child's demeanor while talking with you. Note any signs of fear or distress.
- If you make the report orally, record the date, time, and the person and agency you contacted. If you make the report in writing, keep a copy of the correspondence.

- Be aware that your records concerning the report may be subject to subpoena.

Making a Report

- Make the report as soon as possible after receiving the information which causes you to suspect abuse or neglect. Mandatory reporters cannot "cause" a report to be made by delegating this responsibility to someone else. You must personally make the report.
- You do not need to have conclusive proof. The law requires you to report when you have "reason to believe" a child is being or may be abused or neglected.
- Do not attempt to investigate or excessively question the child. Specially trained DSS caseworkers and law enforcement officers will investigate the allegations.
- Collect as much of the following information as possible to convey to the investigating agency: child's name, age, date of birth, and address; child's present location; names and ages of siblings, parents' names and addresses.
- Explain why you are concerned about the child.
- At the time of the report, or as soon as possible thereafter, provide copies of all photographs, negatives, and medical reports to the appropriate investigating agency.
- Although reports can be made anonymously, it is often helpful to provide your name and address in the event that further information is needed.
- At the time the report is made, you can request to be notified of the outcome of the investigation.
- After you have made a report, if you learn new information or if you learn additional information, report it to DSS or law enforcement.

Contact with Parents

- In general, it is best not to contact the child's parents about your suspicions before making the report. Informing parents before the appropriate intervention can be made may lead to retribution against the child or destruction of evidence.

- Never accuse a parent of abuse or neglect.

Follow-Up

- Your continued help may be necessary. Be willing to meet with multidisciplinary teams and/or testify in court if requested.

Definitions

Abandonment

A parent or guardian willfully deserts a child or willfully surrenders physical possession of a child without making adequate arrangements for the child's needs or the continuing care of the child.

Bad Faith

Generally implying or involving actual or constructive fraud, or a design to mislead or deceive another, or a neglect or refusal to fulfill some duty or some contractual obligation, not prompted by an honest mistake as to one's rights or duties, but by some interested or sinister motive.

Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect

A statewide data system that identifies perpetrators of child abuse and neglect. The Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect is not a public record. Information concerning an individual in the Central Registry can be disclosed only when screening of an individual's background is required by statute or regulations for employment, licensing, or other purposes.

Child

A person under the age of eighteen:

Child Abuse or Neglect or Harm

Child abuse or neglect or harm occurs when the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare:

- (a) inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child **physical or mental injury** or engages in acts or omissions which present a substantial risk of physical or mental injury to the child, including injuries sustained as a result of excessive corporal punishment, but excluding corporal punishment and physical discipline which:
 - (i) is administered by a parent or person in loco parentis;
 - (ii) is perpetrated for the sole purpose of restraining or correcting the child;
 - (iii) is reasonable in manner and moderate in degree
 - (iv) has not brought about permanent or lasting damage to the child; and
 - (v) is not reckless or grossly negligent behavior by the parents.

- (b) commits or allows to be committed against the child a sexual offense as defined by the laws of this State or engages in acts or omissions that present a substantial risk that a sexual offense as defined in the laws of this State would be committed against the child;

Note: Under South Carolina law, such sexual offenses may involve fondling, intercourse, cunnilingus, fellatio, anal intercourse, or any intrusion, however slight, of any part of a person's body or of any object into the genital or anal openings of another person's body, and child exploitation (child pornography).

- (c) fails to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or education. . . supervision appropriate to the child's age and development, or health care though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so and the failure to do so has caused or presents a substantial risk of causing physical or mental injury. However, a child's absence from school may not be considered abuse or neglect unless the school has made efforts to bring about the child's attendance, and those efforts were unsuccessful because of the parents' refusal to cooperate.
- (d) abandons the child;
- (e) encourages, condones, or approves the commission of delinquent acts by the child and the commission of the acts are shown to be the result of the encouragement, condonation, or approval; or
- (f) has committed abuse or neglect as described in subsections (a) through (e) such that a child who subsequently becomes a part of the person's household is at substantial risk of one of those forms of abuse or neglect.

Clear and Convincing Evidence

Proof that leaves a firm belief or conviction as to the allegations sought to be established. It is proof that should leave no reasonable doubt in the mind of the judge concerning the matters in issue.

Good Faith

Honesty of purpose, freedom from intention to defraud, and, generally speaking, means being faithful to one's duty or obligation.

Indicated Report

Report of child abuse or neglect supported by facts which warrant a "finding" by a preponderance of evidence that abuse or neglect has occurred.

Mental Injury

Injury to the intellectual, emotional, or psychological capacity or functioning of a child as evidenced by a discernible and substantial impairment of the child's ability to function when the existence of that impairment is supported by the opinion of mental health professional or medical professional.

Person Responsible for a Child's Welfare

The child's parent, guardian, foster parent, an operator, employee, or caregiver of a public or private residential home, institution, agency or childcare facility or an adult who has assumed the role or responsibility of a parent or guardian for the child, but who does not necessarily have legal custody of the child. A person whose only role is as a caregiver and whose contact is only incidental with a child, such as a babysitter or a person who has only incidental contact but may not be a caretaker, has not assumed the role or responsibility of a parent or guardian.

Physical Injury

Death or permanent or temporary disfigurement or impairment of any bodily organ or function.

Preponderance of Evidence

Evidence which, when fairly considered, is more convincing as to its truth than the evidence in opposition. Also means "more likely than not".

Unfounded Report

A report for which there is not a preponderance of evidence to believe that the child is abused or neglect.

References

South Carolina Codes

§ 19-11-90	Priest-Penitent Privilege
§ 16-3-651	Criminal sexual Conduct: definitions
§ 23-3-430	Sex offender registry
§ 63-7-10	Purpose
§ 63-7-20	Definitions
§ 63-7-40	Safe Haven for abandoned babies ("Daniel's Law")
§ 63-7-310	Persons required to report (Mandated reporters)
§ 63-7-330	Confidentiality of information
§ 63-7-380	Photos and x-rays without parental consent
§ 63-7-390	reporter immunity from liability
§ 63-7-410	Failure to report; penalties
§ 63-7-420	Abrogation of privileged communication; exceptions
§ 63-7-430	Civil action for bad faith reporting
§ 63-7-440	Knowingly making false report
§ 63-7-610	Authority of officers in all counties ad municipalities
§ 63-7-620	Emergency protective custody
§ 63-7-710	Probable cause hearing
§ 63-7-920	Investigation and case determination
§ 63-7-980	Cooperation between DSS and law enforcement
§ 63-7-1650	Services without removal
§ 63-7-1660	Services with removal
§ 63-7-1670	Treatment plans
§ 63-7-1700	Permanency planning
§ 63-7-1710	Standards for terminating parental rights
§ 63-7-1940	Court order for placement in Central Registry

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Conference Notes

Speaker: _____

Session No. _____

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