

# **VIOLENCE AND ABUSE COUNSELING**

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## **Violence and Abuse Counseling**

- 1) Violence and Abuse
- 2) Verbal Abusers
- 3) Physical Abusers
- 4) Sexual Abusers
- 5) Counseling Those Who Are Abused.
- 6) Personal Issues of Abuse Counseling
- 7) Counseling Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse
- 8) Calling for Accountability: Responding to Abusers

### Reference Books:

*Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life*, Dr. Susan Forward. Bantam Books, 1989.

*Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling (vol. 2)*, Edited by Robert J. Wicks and Richard D. Parsons. Paulist Press, 1993.

# LESSON ONE

## Violence and Abuse

### Abuse—A Serious Societal Problem

- 1) Violence and abuse, especially in the home, appear to be increasing.
  - a) Media attention and public outcries have riveted attention on child neglect and abuse, sexual violence, psychological maltreatment of children, rape, mate beating, and mistreatment of the elderly.
  - b) Abuse's incidence difficult to measure.
    - i) Many victims are reluctant to report abuse, especially when the abuser is a family member.
    - ii) Many rape victims are embarrassed to report their experiences; fear of reprisal.
- 2) Statistics for one year.
  - a) 1.7 million Americans faced a spouse wielding a knife or gun.
  - b) Between 50,000 and 200,000 rapes occur every year.
  - c) Spouse abuse is estimated to occur in 3 to 6 million families in the U. S.
  - d) Perhaps 12 to 15 million women were victims of incest.
  - e) Between 2,000 and 4,000 child deaths occur annually because of child abuse or neglect.
  - f) An estimated 1.5 million children are victims of neglect.
  - g) Between 100,000 and 200,000 children are sexually abused.
  - h) One national estimate suggests that 4 percent of the elderly (1 million) are victims of abuse; yet the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aging estimates that only one in five or six cases of elder abuse is ever reported.
- 3) Becoming more of a problem in Christian circles.

### Introduction on Abuse

1. Abusers are persons who use aggressive and/or manipulative behaviors to enhance their position of dominance in order to coerce or control another person for the abuser's own purposes.
2. Abusers may use physical force, emotional assaults, psychological pressure, threats, and/or social privilege and position to exploit the vulnerability of another in order to control (as is the case with batterers and most rapists) or to seek sexual gratification.
3. Abuse can occur between any two persons, but most likely abusers are those with the resources—the power—to exploit the vulnerabilities of others.
4. Male violence against women and children is in many ways socially sanctioned in our society (patriarchal society).

## What Is Abuse?

1. Physical Violence.
  - a. Most overt form.
  - b. Includes slapping, punching, kicking, pushing, throwing objects at a person, using a weapon, etc.
  - c. Has highest probability of causing serious injury or death.
2. Sexual Violence.
  - a. Rape (marital, acquaintance, or stranger).
  - b. Child sexual abuse (incest or molestation)
  - c. Sexual harassment and exploitation (in the work place or in a professional relationship).
3. Psychological Abuse.
  - a. Persistent pattern of psychological pressure or brainwashing with the intent of instilling fear in the victim in order to control his or her behavior.
  - b. Includes verbal humiliation, threats, manipulation, and coercion, usually over a period of time.
4. Destruction of Property and Pets.
  - a. Common in the family setting.
  - b. Carries a psychological dimension.
    - i. Always an explicit or implicit threat toward the victim in the damage to property or pets.
    - ii. "This time it is the china; next time it will be you."
  - c. Most likely to occur between men and women.
  - d. Most likely intraracial but can be interracial.

## Types of Abusers

1. **Child abuse** involves the "physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen, by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare and under circumstances which indicate the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby.
2. **Child Molesters.**
  - a. Child molesters sexually exploit children.
  - b. Estimated that 35-38% of girls under eighteen were molested by someone at least five years older than themselves; 5-10% of boys under eighteen were molested.
  - c. Usually includes attempted or actual sexual contact, but can include exhibitionism, pornography, inappropriate sexual references, and other behaviors that are clearly destructive of children at various stages of development.
  - d. The defining characteristic of child sexual abuse is the use of an adult's superior power over a child to obtain the adult's sexual gratification.
    - i. Some molesters abuse girls and boys within the family and within other situations of trust.
    - ii. Adolescent molesters are usually abused children who act out sexually in relation to younger boys and girls with whom they have contact.

- iii. Pedophiles, men who target boys and girls of specific ages for sexual abuse, sometimes develop sophisticated plans of manipulation and coercion to entrap children.
  - 1. Pedophiles are especially dangerous when they hide in trusted leadership roles such as pastors, teachers, and leaders of children's organizations.
  - 2. Also dangerous because they have multiple victims.
  - 3. Pedophiles are often known and respected persons whose social position protects them from suspicion.
  - 4. Often protected because boys are less likely than girls to report sexual abuse; men who have been abused as children are slow to report their childhood trauma due to homophobia.
- iv. A small number of men brutally rape and sometimes murder children they do not know.
  - 1. Receive notorious attention from the press and public.
  - 2. Public hysteria about child rapists and murderers actually may serve to protect the majority of molesters, who are known and trusted members of families and churches.

### 3. Rapists.

- a. Rapists engage in coercive and exploitative sexual behaviors.
- b. Defined as "all nonconsenting sexual encounters, whether the victim is pressured or forced."
- c. Social pressure and physical assault two primary methods rapists use to coerce sexual activity.
- d. Three types of rapes.
  - i. *Anger rape*. Becomes means of expressing and discharging feelings of pent-up anger and rage.
  - ii. *Power rape*.
    - 1. Sexuality becomes a means of compensating for underlying feelings of inadequacy and serves to express issues of mastery, strength, control, authority, identity, and capability.
    - 2. Goal is sexual conquest.
  - iii. *Sadism*. The pain and torture of the victim is used for sexual gratification.

### 4. Batterers.

- a. Inflict harm upon women and children in their families.
- b. Estimated that 25% of married women will be abused sometime in their marriage.
- c. One agency for treatment of batterers estimates that 50% of all men are violent or threaten violence with intimates at one time or another.
- d. Types of batterers.
  - i. Wife battering—physically, psychologically, and sexually.
    - 1. Feeling entitled to dominate wives or girlfriends.
    - 2. Highly dependent, often emotionally isolated from others, they try to control and possess their spouses.
    - 3. Partner must be available to him, when, where, and how he wishes her to be.
  - v. Child batterer.

1. Estimated that over 1 million children are “seriously abused” and 2000-5000 deaths occur in the U.S. each year.
2. Females responsible for abuse 51% of time (since most time with females, females less likely to be violent).

**5. Abusers in the professions.**

- a. Betray client’s trust.
- b. Though not always illegal, certainly unethical.

6. **Elder abuse** is the maltreatment, and ignoring the person’s needs for comfort and human contact.

## The Causes of Abuse

- 1) It is not correct to assume that victims of abuse usually ask for it by giving subtle hints to indicate that they would like to be mistreated.
  - a) Rape is a violent attack on a woman in which sex is used as a weapon.
  - b) For most victims it is a humiliating and often life-threatening experience.
  - c) Rape victims do not encourage it to happen and neither do they secretly enjoy the experience.
- 2) What causes abuse to occur?
  - a) *Environmental stress.*
    - i) Frustration-aggression.
    - ii) Financial or work pressures.
    - iii) Sometimes even trivial stresses can trigger abuse.
    - iv) Stress is never an excuse for violence, even if the victim creates the stress.

Stress-induced violence often occurs in three stages.

- In the first stage, the tension-building stage where stress increases and coping techniques become less and less effective.
  - In the second stage, violence erupts. Often outburst is irrational, and the abuser must be stopped physically.
  - Third is the stage of remorse that follows the attack.
    - Batterer apologizes profusely, expresses great feelings of remorse, promises never to let this happen again, and sometimes floods gifts and affection.
    - This gives the victim hope that the violence will never be repeated; led to stay with the relationship, but when stresses build the cycle tends to be repeated.
- b) *Learned abuse.*
    - i) Children who are abused or who observe violence in their parents, often become abusers in later life.
    - ii) Abusive behavior—and criminal behavior as well—clearly can be learned and passed from one generation to the next.
  - c) *Personal insecurity.*
    - i) Studies show that abusers are people who feel insecure, impulsive, and threatened.
      - (1) They generally hold low self-concepts.
      - (2) Sometimes wife beaters feel jealous, possessive, or intimidated by their wives, so the husband tries to boost his own feelings of inadequacy by being tough.

- (3) Some batterers feel inadequate as parents, so they attempt to manage their offspring with violence.
  - (4) Other parents have a low tolerance for the normal hyperactive behavior of their children, so violence becomes a way to gain control.
  - (5) Studies of convicted rapists show that these often are angry men who release pent-up feelings of rage and bolster their feelings of sexual inadequacy by attacking women and using sex as a weapon.
  - (6) Incest often seen in men who look to their daughters for tenderness and understanding. Other men simply take selfish sexual advantage of children who are available but too naïve or powerless to protest.
- d) *Other causes of abuse.*
- i) Ongoing power struggles between the abuser and the victim.
  - ii) Sexually violent movies, pornography, and television programs can and do promote violence, especially violence against women.
  - iii) Can be overwhelmed by family responsibilities.

### **The Effects of Abuse**

- 1) Abuse tends to affect victims deeply and often has a lifelong influence. In a *Los Angeles Times* nationwide poll of 2,627 randomly selected adults:
  - b) 98% of those who had been sexually molested as children felt that the harm done by the abuse was permanent.
  - c) 83% said the greatest damage was emotional.
- 2) Depending on the age, personality, sex, type of abuse, and past experiences of the victim, the effects of abuse can influence people in a variety of ways.
  - b) Incest victims are more inclined to show inability to trust others, low self-esteem, conflicts over sexual identity, feelings of guilt or shame, and isolation from others.
  - c) Post-sexual-abuse syndrome characterized by anxiety, sleep disturbances, anger, sexual dysfunction, substance addiction, and self-destructive tendencies.
  - d) A study at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine found that adult victims of child abuse tended to be overweight, depressed, and chronically anxious.
    - i) Many had nightmare, almost all had problems with sex, and most had difficulties forming stable relationships.
    - ii) Some appeared to be intent on making themselves appear unattractive to others.
  - e) Teenagers who had been abused or neglected as children are more likely than the nonabused to be involved in delinquent behavior and to commit violent crimes.
  - f) Abused wives feel afraid, angry, depressed, lacking in self-esteem, and often helpless.
  - g) Rape victims are more likely than other women to suffer from anxiety, depression, sexual difficulties, family tensions, impaired work and social adjustment, withdrawal from others, self-condemnation, apathy, and inertia.
  - h) Victims of elder abuse often feel confused and helpless; most don't complain or report the abuse even if they are able to do so.
    - i) Fear of being abandoned, placed in an institution, socially isolated, or punished leads many to suffer in silence and sometimes even to find reasons to excuse the abusive actions of their adult children.
- 3) Diverse effects of abuse could be grouped into three general categories.

- a) Feelings.
  - i) Victims often feel angry, afraid, ashamed, guilty, embarrassed, confused, and worthless.
  - ii) Many victims report feeling violated, dirty, vulnerable, and afraid to trust others.
  - iii) Depression is common.
  - iv) Sometimes there is self-pity and self-blame.
- b) Thinking.
  - i) Often have low self-concepts and think of themselves as being unattractive, incompetent, inadequate, dependent, and unwanted by others.
  - ii) Often have low morale and impaired concentration.
  - iii) Sometimes blame themselves for the treatment they receive and think that they must deserve to be abused.
- c) Actions.
  - i) Abuse sometimes leads victims to develop antisocial behavior, learning disabilities, interpersonal tensions, inefficiency at work, and a tendency to become violent and abusive themselves.
  - ii) Many withdraw from people when they most need social support.
- 4) In considering abuse, victims not the only one who suffers.
  - a) Family members, boyfriends, mates of rape victims, and close friends may all react with anger, confusion, prejudice, and feelings of helplessness, revulsion, and embarrassment.
  - b) Can lead to marital tension, depression, and further stress on the victim.
- 5) The abuser.
  - a) Often these people feel deep and lasting remorse, especially after their abusive behavior becomes public knowledge.
  - b) Many are frightened, guilt-ridden, and confused, but find little support or sympathy from others.
  - c) Often abuser needs as much help as the abused.



# LESSON TWO

## Verbal Abusers

Old Adage: *“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.”*

1. Insulting names, degrading comments, and belittling criticism can give children extremely negative messages about themselves.
2. Discipline of children a private matter.
  - a. But even the most concerned authorities can do nothing for the verbally abused child.
  - b. He is all alone.

### The Power of Cruel Words

1. Every parent occasionally will say something derogatory to their children.
  - a. Not necessarily verbal abuse.
  - b. Abusive to launch frequent verbal attacks on a child’s appearance, intelligence, competence, or value as a human being.
2. Verbal abusers have two distinct styles.
  - a. Those who attack directly, openly, viciously degrading their children.
    - i. May call their children stupid, worthless, or ugly.
    - ii. May say that they wish their child had never been born.
    - iii. Oblivious to their child’s feelings and to the long-term effects of their constant assaults on their child’s developing self-image.
  - b. Those who are more indirect, assailing the child with a constant barrage of teasing, sarcasm, insulting nicknames, and subtle put-downs.
    - i. Often hide their abuse behind the façade of humor.
      1. “The last time I saw a nose that big was on Mount Rushmore.”
      2. “That’s a good-looking jacket—for a clown.”
      3. “You must have been home sick when they passed out brains.”
    - ii. If confronted, “She knows I’m only kidding.”
3. Children often have a difficult time distinguishing between the truth and a joke; a threat from a tease.
  - a. Children take sarcasm and humorous exaggeration at face value.
  - b. May not understand a statement such as, “We’re going to have to send you to preschool in China.” May have nightmares of being isolated in some distant place.
4. Sometimes jokes can be relatively harmless.
  - a. It is the frequency, the cruelty, and the source of these jokes that make them abusive.
  - b. Children believe and internalize what their parents say about them.
5. Child can be accused of being inadequate because he “couldn’t take a joke.”
6. Child can transfer fears and negative expectations to other people.
  - a. Go through life expecting to be hurt, humiliated.

- b. Hypersensitivity, shyness, and distrust of others an inevitable but ineffective way of attempting to protect himself against further hurt.
- 7. Many parents dish out their verbal abuse under the guise of guidance.
  - a. Justify cruel and denigrating remarks; rationalize “I’m trying to help you become a better person,” or, “It’s a tough world and we’re teaching you to take it.” (Johnny Cash’s *A Boy Named Sue*).

### **Double Messages**

1. “Be a Success—But I Know You’ll Fail.”
2. Urge child to excel while telling them how terrible they are.
3. Can knock child down in the name of making him a better person.
4. Parents can deny feelings of inadequacy by establishing superiority over child.

### **The Competitive Parent**

1. Need to make someone feel inadequate in order to feel adequate oneself.
2. Healthy parents experience their children’s growing competence with excitement and joy.
  - a. Competitive parents often feel deprived, anxious, even scared.
  - b. Adolescence especially threatening time for the insecure parent.
    - i. Mothers may see their daughters as competitors and feel the need to belittle them, especially in front of their husbands.
    - ii. Fathers may feel threatened by son—room for only one man in the house; so use ridicule and humiliation to keep sons feeling little and helpless.
3. Competitive parents have often been victims of deprivation in their own childhoods. No matter how much they have, they still live in fear of not having enough.
4. Hidden agenda of parents is to ensure that their children can’t outdo them.
  - a. Unconscious message:
    - i. “You cannot be more successful than I am.”
    - ii. “You cannot be happier than I am.”
    - iii. “We all have our limits, and I am yours.”
  - b. If adult children of competitive parents do manage to excel in something, they often experience tremendous guilt.”
    - i. May even sabotage their success.
    - ii. Underachievement is the price of peace of mind.
    - iii. Control their guilt by unconsciously limiting themselves so they don’t outperform their parents; they fulfill their parents’ negative prophecies.

### **Branded by Insults**

1. Some verbally abusive parents don’t bother to hide behind rationalizations.
  - a. They bombard their children with cruel insults, harangues, denunciations, and derogatory names.
  - b. Insensitive to both the pain they are inflicting and the lasting damage they are doing.
  - c. Can destroy self-worth and leave deep psychological scars.

2. Can be common for fathers to react to their daughters' blossoming sexuality with discomfort and often hostility.
  - a. To a toxic father, a daughter's sexual development can trigger extreme feelings of anxiety.
  - b. Can seek to distance himself from sexual attractions he finds unacceptable.
  - c. By projecting his guilt and discomfort on to her, he could deny any responsibility for his feelings.
  - d. As if he were saying, "You are a bad and wicked person because you make me feel bad and wicked things for you."
  - e. Daughters desperately need a loving and supportive father to give her confidence.
  - f. Such abused daughters may choose cruel, abusive, or distant men—like her father—and try to get them to love her the way her father never had.

### **Perfectionistic Parents**

1. The impossible expectation that children be perfect is another common trigger for severe verbal attacks.
  - a. Many verbally abusive parents are themselves high achievers.
  - b. Alcoholic parents may make impossible demands on their children, then use their children's failure to justify drinking.
2. Perfectionist parents seem to operate under the illusion that if they can just get their children to be perfect, they will be a perfect family.
3. Children need to make mistakes and discover that it's not the end of the world.
  - a. That's how they gain the confidence to try new things in life.
  - b. Toxic parents impose unobtainable goals, impossible expectations, and ever changing rules.
4. A child can become a symbol of a parent's own painful childhood.
5. "I can't be perfect so I might as well give up."

### **The Three P's**

1. Perfectionism. Expecting everything to be perfect.
2. Procrastination. Fear of failing to do things perfectly leads to postponing doing things.
3. Paralysis. The more one puts things off, the more they become overwhelming. Snowballing fears eventually prevent one from doing anything at all.

### **The "S" Word**

1. Adult children of perfectionist parents have usually taken one of two paths.
  - a. Driven themselves relentlessly to win parental love and approval.
  - b. Rebelled to the point where they develop a fear of success.
2. Those who behave as if someone is always keeping score.
  - a. House can never be clean enough.
  - b. Can never experience pleasure in an accomplishment because they're convinced that they could have done it better.
  - c. Feel genuine panic if they make the slightest mistake.

3. Some who live a life of failure because they cannot deal with the “S” word—Success.

### **When “You Are” Becomes “I Am”**

1. Parents are the center of a young child’s universe. If your all-knowing parents think bad things about you, they must be true.
  - a. If Mother is always saying, “You’re stupid,” then you’re stupid.
  - b. If Father is always saying, “You’re worthless,” then you are.
2. When you take these negative opinions out of other people’s mouths and put them into your unconscious, you are “internalizing” them.
  - a. Become a part of you.
  - b. Internalization of negative opinions (changing “you are” to “I am.”) forms the foundation of low self-esteem.
3. Job is to help people to defeat those crippling expectations by making the internal external again.

### **A Pastoral Approach for Ministering to Children Who Have Suffered from Psychological/Emotional Abuse**

1. All human beings, as loved by God, are intrinsically valuable, just as they are unique.
  - a. Children who have experienced psychological/emotional abuse often view themselves as not counting for much.
  - b. Some psychologically abused children may feel a need to try, more than do other children, to get someone to realize that they exist or that they matter.
  - c. They may make their point through behavior disorders, distractibility, etc.
2. Seek to identify activities that student does well; make efforts to compliment him whenever appropriate actions taken.

# LESSON THREE

## Physical Abusers

### Introduction

1. A great deal of controversy and confusion over the definition of physical abuse.
  - a. Crosses all social, economic, and educational lines.
  - b. Corporal punishment.
  - c. Rights of children.
2. Problem of physical child abuse has become so widespread that public recognition has forced our legal system to set limits on physical discipline.
3. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 defines physical abuse as:

“..the infliction of physical injuries such as bruises, burns, welts, cuts, bone and skull fractures; these are caused by kicking, punching, biting, beating, knifing, strapping, paddling, etc.”
4. Every state has its own child-abuse laws, and most embody definitions similar to the federal one.

### Why Do Parents Beat Their Kids?

1. They have an appalling lack of impulse control.
  - a. Assault children whenever they have strong negative feelings that they need to discharge.
  - b. Almost an automatic response to stress.
  - c. Impulse and action are one and the same.
2. Abusers themselves often come from families to which abuse was the norm.
  - a. Their role model was an abuser.
  - b. Violence was the only tool they learned to use in dealing with problems and feelings—especially feelings of anger.
3. Many abusive parents enter adulthood with tremendous emotional deficits and unmet needs.
  - a. Look at children as surrogate parents, to fulfill the emotional needs that their real parents never fulfilled.
  - b. If child does not meet needs, abuser becomes enraged.
4. Trouble with alcohol and drugs. Substance abuse is a frequent contributor to the breakdown of impulse control.

### The Private Holocaust

1. Parents can be very respected members of the community and church.
2. Even in quiet moments, these children live in fear that the volcano of rage will erupt at any moment.
  - b. Attempts to fend off the blows only outrages the abuser more.
  - c. No escape from the abuser.

3. Can generate powerful, lifelong fears of being hurt and betrayed.
4. It is tremendously difficult to regain feelings of trust and safety once they have been trampled by parents.
  - a. We develop our expectations about how people will treat us based on our relationships with our own parents.
  - b. An abused child will grow up expecting the worst of others; he expects to be hurt and mistreated as he was in his childhood.

### **Some Reasons for Abusive Behavior**

1. *Blaming others.*
  - a. Abusive parents often reveal inappropriate, intimate information to a child too young to understand.
    - i. Parent expects the child to nurture him emotionally.
    - ii. Abusive parents batter children and blame their behavior on someone else.
      1. Father can displace fury and sexual frustration onto his daughters, then rationalize his violence by blaming his wife.
      2. Physical violence against children is often a reaction to stress at work.
  - b. Children are easy targets—they can't fight back; they can be intimidated into silence.
2. *"I'm doing this for your own good."*
  - a. Abusers try to justify their violence by doing it for the child's best interest.
  - b. Believe is the only effective way to drive home a moral or behavioral point.
  - c. Believe that a harsh beating will keep a child from going bad.
    - i. "I was raised with the hickory switch; a licking now and then didn't do me any harm."
    - ii. "I need to put the fear of God in him."
    - iii. "She's got to know who's boss."
  - d. Beatings as rites of passage. To make child tougher, braver, or stronger.

### **The Passive Abuser**

1. This is the parent who permits the abuse to happen out of his or her own fears, dependency, or need to maintain the family's status quo.
  - a. If parent doesn't protect child from abusive parent, she becomes a partner in their abuse.
  - b. Can become a frightened child herself, helpless and passive in the face of her husband's violence.
  - c. In effect, has abandoned child.
2. Classic abused-child role reversal.
  - a. Child assumes responsibility for protecting his mother as if he were the parent and she were the child.
  - b. By becoming protective, or by rationalizing the silent parent's inactivity, the abused child can more easily deny the fact that both parents have failed him.
  - c. Mother should stand up to father; if fearful, call the police. There is no excuse for a parent to stand by and allow his or her children to be brutalized.
  - d. Many adult children excuse the passive parent because they see that parent as a co-victim.

- e. Can protect passive parent because they want to protect the only good childhood memories—those of an otherwise loving passive parent.

### **It's All My Fault**

1. Battered children accept the blame for the crimes perpetrated against them.
  - a. Seeds of self-blame planted early in a child.
  - b. Abused children believe two lies:
    - i. I am a bad child.
    - ii. I am getting beaten only because I was bad.
2. Pervasive feelings of low self-esteem evolve into self-loathing which can create life patterns of damaged relationships, loss of confidence, feelings of inadequacy, paralyzing fears, and unfocused rage.
3. Even though child grows up, physical abuse ceases, emotional abuse continues through self-loathing.

### **Abuse and Love**

1. Adds to child's confusion when mixed messages of love and abuse are sent.
2. A child's world is very narrow, and no matter how abusive, the parents still represent the only available source of love and comfort.
3. The battered child spends his entire childhood searching for the Holy Grail of parental love.

### **The Keeper of the Family Secret**

1. A parent's sporadic benevolence can keep a child yearning for love, hoping for a turnaround.
  - a. This hope keeps the child bonded to abusive parent long after child reaches adulthood.
  - b. As part of that bonding, a child believes that she has to keep secret the truth of her father's behavior.
    - i. A "good girl" would never betray her family.
    - ii. The "family secret" is a further burden for the abused child.
    - iii. By not talking about the abuse, the battered child cuts off any hope of emotional help.
    - iv. How do you get over the pain of something if you can't talk about it?
2. What could happen if parents are confronted?
  - a. Father may fall apart.
  - b. Mother would probably get hysterical.
  - c. Sibling could be furious for dredging up the past.
3. Allegiance to the "family secret" can be the glue that holds the family together. If broken, family could fall apart.
4. The adult in a battered child cries out to confront her parents with the truth, while the battered, frightened child is too terrified of the consequences.
5. As a result, relationship with parents only a charade.
6. Keeping the Myth Alive
  - a. The secret is the abuse.
  - b. The family myth is that everything is wonderful and great.

- c. Family lives a life of pretense.

### **Emotional Fallout**

1. A child cannot be battered, humiliated, terrified, denigrated, and blamed for your own pain without getting angry.
  - a. Anger has to find outlet.
  - b. Can result in history of acting out—translating strong emotional impulses into aggressive action.
  - c. Repressed anger can express itself as violent criminal behavior, ranging from wife beating to rape to murder.
  - d. Jails are filled with adults who were physically abused as children and never learned to express their anger appropriately.
  - e. If fearful of expressing anger directly, your body and moods can express it for you in the form of headaches, a knotted-up stomach, and depression.
2. In some cases, the abused child unconsciously identifies with his abusive parent.
  - a. The abuser looks powerful and invulnerable.
  - b. Victimized children fantasize that if they possessed these qualities, they would be able to protect themselves.
  - c. May develop the very personality traits they hate in their parents.
  - d. Under stress, they may behave just like their abusers.
3. A number of abused children grow up to be non-abusers.
  - a. May have difficulty with even modest, nonphysical methods of disciplining their children.
  - b. In rebellion against the pain of their own childhoods, these parents shy away both from setting limits and from enforcing them.
    - i. Children need the security of boundaries.
    - ii. Harm done by permissiveness is usually far less significant than the damage done by a batterer.
4. Adult victims of abusive parents can overcome their self-loathing, fusion to their parents, unresolved anger, overwhelming fears, and inability to trust or to feel safe.



# LESSON FOUR

## Sexual Abusers

### Introduction

#### Definitions

##### 1) Child Sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse refers to an activity between a child under the age of eighteen and an adult in which the child is passively or actively used to gratify an adult's sexual needs.

Some authors also include in their definitions of child sexual abuse any abuse that occurs to one under eighteen by someone five years older even if that person is another child or adolescent.

Child sexual abuse is defined as any sexual activity involving a child and another person who is at least five years older than the child and in which there is an unequal distribution of power so that the abused child cannot protect himself or herself from the abuse.

##### 2) Sexual abuse involves a myriad of overt and covert activities.

- a) Being touched in sexual areas.
- b) Being shown sexual movies.
- c) Being forced to listen to sexual talk.
- d) Being made to pose for sexual photos.
- e) Being subjected to unnecessary medical treatments that involve sexual areas.
- f) Being forced to perform oral sex on an adult or other child.
- g) Being raped or penetrated with objects.
- h) Being fondled, kissed, or held in such a way as to make a child feel uncomfortable.
- i) Being physically punished in a sexual manner, such as being forced to disrobe to receive a beating.
- j) Being ritualistically tortured in a sexual manner.
- k) Being made to watch sexual acts or look at sexual parts.
- l) Being bathed in a intrusive way.
- m) Being ridiculed about the body.
- n) Being encouraged into sexual activities.
- o) Being told that his or her worth as a person is only for sex.
- p) Being forced into child prostitution or pornography.

##### 3) **Incest** is one type of child sexual abuse where the perpetrator is in a protective or parental role to the child.

## **Covert Sexual Abuse**

- 1) Covert sexual abuse is sexual abuse ensconced in teasing, joking, punishment, bathing, teaching personal hygiene activity, or imparting sexual information.
- 2) In covert sexual abuse the child is aware of the sexual innuendo and feels uncomfortable or even abused but cannot prove it because the abuser can claim that he was only teasing, bathing (and his hand slipped), and so on.
- 3) Covert sexual abuse includes behavior such as
  - a) Leering.
  - b) Physically punishing in a sexually confusing manner.
  - c) Performing personal hygiene tasks on children where the child feels uncomfortable.
  - d) Treating a child as if she is more sexually mature than she is.
  - e) Tickling, goosing, or touching that makes the child feel uncomfortable.
  - f) Talking frequently about genitals.
  - g) Asking the child to undress under the pretense of giving medical help.
  - h) Massaging the child in a sexual way.
  - i) Walking around naked and calling attention to bodily parts.
  - j) Interrogating the child about sexual exploits.
  - k) Using derogatory sexual words to describe the child.

## **Incest**

1. Incest is perhaps the cruelest, most baffling of human experiences.
  - a. Betrayal of the most basic trust between child and parent.
  - b. Emotionally devastating.
2. Since young victims are totally dependent on their aggressors, they have nowhere to run, no one to run to.
3. Protectors become persecutors, and reality becomes a prison of dirty secrets.
4. Incest betrays the very heart of childhood—its innocence.
5. This is a realm of behavior so perverse that it defies rationalization.
6. Sexual violation of children is a genuinely evil act.

## **Definition of Incest**

1. Legal definition. Incest is sexual intercourse between blood relations.
2. Psychological definition. Incest may include physical contact with a child's mouth, breasts, genitals, anus, or any other body part, that is done for the purpose of sexually arousing the aggressor. The aggressor can be anyone whom the child perceives as a family member, such as a stepparent or an in-law.
3. Other incestuous behaviors.
  - a. An aggressor exposes himself or masturbates in front of the child.
  - b. Persuades the child to pose for sexually suggestive photographs.
4. A part of the definition is that the behavior has to be kept secret.
  - a. A father who affectionately hugs and kisses his child is doing nothing that needs to be kept secret.

- b. Such touching is essential to a child's emotional well-being.
  - c. If father strokes the child's genitals—or makes the child stroke his—that is an act that must be kept secret.
5. Psychological incest.
    - a. May not have been touched or assaulted sexually, but they have experienced an invasion of their sense of privacy or safety.
    - b. Invasive acts like spying on a child who is dressing or bathing, or repeatedly making seductive or sexually explicit comments to a child.

## **Incest Myths**

1. Incest is a rare occurrence.
  - a. One survey: 1 out of 10 children is molested by a trusted family member before the age of 18.
  - b. Prior to 1980, believed that incest occurred in no more than one out of a hundred thousand families.
2. Incest happens only in poor or uneducated families or in isolated, backward communities.
  - a. Cuts across all socioeconomic levels.
3. Incest aggressors are social and sexual deviants.
  - a. Typical incest aggressor can be anybody.
  - b. Often hardworking, respectable, churchgoing, average men and women.
4. Incest is a reaction to sexual deprivation.
  - a. Most aggressors have active sex lives within marriage.
  - b. Turn to children either for feelings of power and control or for the unconditional, nonthreatening love that only children can provide.
5. Children—especially teenage girls—are seductive and at least partially responsible for being molested.
  - a. Most children try out their sexual feelings and impulses in innocent and exploratory ways with people to whom they are bonded.
  - b. It is always 100 percent the adult's responsibility to exercise appropriate control in these situations and not to act out their own impulses.
6. Most incest stories are not true. They are actually fantasies derived from the child's own sexual yearnings.
  - a. Originated with Sigmund Freud who sought to explain frequency of reports of middle-class Viennese families concerning incest.
  - b. Concluded that the events occurred primarily in his patients' imaginations.
7. Children are molested more often by strangers than by someone they know.
  - a. The majority of sexual crimes committed against children are perpetrated by trusted members of the family.

## **The Family Climate**

1. Most incest families look normal to the rest of the world.
2. Incest ordinarily does not happen in open, loving, communicative families.
  - a. Incest occurs in families where there is a great deal of emotional isolation, secrecy, neediness, stress, and lack of respect.

- i. Lack of affection between mother and father.
    - ii. No real closeness in family.
  - b. Can be viewed as part of a total family breakdown, but it is the aggressor alone who commits the sexual violence.
- 3. Distorted use of a child to take care of an adult's emotional needs can easily become sexualized if that adult cannot control his impulses.
  - a. Children are by nature loving and trusting, easy marks for a needy, irresponsible adult.
  - b. A child's emotional vulnerability is usually the only leverage some incest aggressors need.
- 4. Other aggressors reinforce their psychological advantage with threats of bodily harm, public humiliation, or abandonment.
  - a. If you tell, I'll kill you.
  - b. If you tell, I'll beat you up.
  - c. If you tell, Mommy will get sick.
  - d. If you tell, people will think you're crazy.
  - e. If you tell, nobody's going to believe you.
  - f. If you tell, Mommy will get mad at both of us.
  - g. If you tell, I'll hate you for as long as you live.
  - h. If you tell, they'll send me to jail and there won't be anyone to support the family.
- 5. Why children don't tell.
  - a. Ninety percent of all incest victims never tell anyone what has happened, or what is happening, to them.
    - i. Fearful of being harmed.
    - ii. Fearful of breaking up family.
    - iii. Many families cannot survive the exposure of incest.
    - iv. Even though removing child from home would be in child's best interest, child invariably feels responsible.
- 6. Parents, no matter how toxic, have a monopoly on power and credibility.
  - a. Who's going to believe a child over a seemingly responsible adult?
  - b. Father-son incest more common than most people realize.
    - i. Such fathers appear to be heterosexual, though driven by homosexual feelings.
    - ii. With no outlet for their true sexual preference, their repressed impulses continue to grow until, eventually, they outweigh their defenses.

### **Dynamics of Incest**

1. "I feel so dirty."
  - a. Even very young victims know that incest must be kept secret.
  - b. They sense the forbiddenness and shame in the behavior of the aggressor.
  - c. Just as verbally and physically abused children internalize blame, so do incest victims.
  - d. In incest, the blame is compounded by the shame.
    - i. "It's all my fault."
    - ii. Fosters strong feelings of self-loathing and shame.
  - e. Must guard against being caught and exposed as a "dirty, disgusting" person.
2. Why does the child feel guilty?

- a. The child's unwillingness to see the trusted parent as bad.
  - b. The feelings of being dirty, bad, and responsible create tremendous psychological isolation for incest victims.
    - i. Feel totally alone, both within the family and in the outside world.
    - ii. Think no one will believe their horrible secret; secret so overshadows their lives that it often prevents them from making friends.
    - iii. Isolation can force them back to the aggressor, who is often their only source of attention, though perverse.
  - c. Guilt over feeling like the "other woman;" feel like they have betrayed their mother.
3. Jealousy on part of incestuous father.
- a. "You belong to me."
  - b. Father becomes obsessed with daughter and is insanely jealous of her boyfriends.
  - c. Instead of being able to become progressively more independent from parental control, the incest victim is increasingly bonded to the aggressor.
  - d. Incestuous father experiences the daughter's breaking away to form other male relationships as betrayal, rejection, disloyalty, and even abandonment.
  - e. Other aggressors bond their victims with tenderness, making it even harder for the child to resolve the conflicting emotions of guilt and love.
4. Some incestuous parents convince victim that he/she is their whole life.
5. The only way many victims can survive their early incest traumas is to mount a psychological cover-up.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse in Children**

- 1) Young children (less than seven years old) who are being sexually abused tend to
  - a) Regress.
  - b) Have nightmares.
  - c) Act as if they are being terrorized.
  - d) Express uncontrollable rage.
  - e) Withdraw from people of the same sex as the abuser.
  - f) Have atypical knowledge about sex for their age group.
- 2) Older children who have not yet reached puberty may exhibit
  - a) Signs of acting out.
  - b) Withdrawal.
  - c) Running away.
  - d) Substance abuse.
  - e) Poor peer relationships.
  - f) Poor academic achievement.
  - g) Hypervigilance.
- 3) The adolescent who is being sexually abused is more likely to
  - a) Attempt suicide.
  - b) Runaway.
  - c) Withdraw.
  - d) Develop an eating disorder.
  - e) Develop antisocial traits.

- f) Cease attending church.
- g) Resist the treatment system.
- 4) Adults who were victims of childhood sexual abuse:
  - a) Have the feeling that there is something wrong with them.
  - b) Lack trust in self, others, God, and the world.
  - c) Fear intimacy.
  - d) May feel cheated out of a childhood and now feel cheated out of life.
  - e) Tend to be needy in relationships or establish a series of intense but volatile interpersonal relationships.

## **LESSON FIVE**

### **Counseling the Abused**

#### **Helping the Children of Abuse**

- 1) The advocate for the sexually abused child runs the risk of being smothered by indifference and a conspiracy of silence.
- 2) Pressure from peer group to ignore, minimize, or cover up the situation may be extreme.
- 3) Children rarely report sexual or physical abuse.
  - b) Don't know whom to tell.
  - c) They may have been threatened with further harm if they talk to anyone about the abuse.
- 4) Signs to suspect abuse or neglect.
  - b) The child seems unduly fearful, especially of parents.
  - c) The child is poorly groomed or inappropriately dressed for the weather.
  - d) The child appears undernourished or inappropriately fed.
  - e) The child's injuries or sicknesses are inappropriately treated in terms of bandages or medication.
  - f) The child is withdrawn and depressed or overactive and aggressive.
  - g) The child seems disinterested, unable to concentrate, inclined to cling to adults other than the parents or unable to get along with other children.
  - h) The parents are rigid, highly demanding of their children and inclined to punish harshly.
  - i) The parents have experienced multiple stresses such as marital discord, divorce, debt, frequent moves, job loss, or other pressures.

#### **Helping the Adult Victims of Incest and Abuse**

- 1) Some victims carry the pain of childhood abuse into adulthood and never share the secret with anyone.
- 2) Perhaps 20-30% of college-age females have been sexually victimized as children; sobering to recognize how many silent victims of abuse may be in your church.
- 3) If you suspect abuse in a counselee, do not hesitate to raise the issue gently.
  - b) Mention that the problem is common.
  - c) Victims do not deserve the abuse.
  - d) That people can get over their feelings of shame and hurt.
  - e) Often the gentle, caring, nonjudgmental encouragement of a sensitive counselor is all the counselee needs to break a long-guarded secret and to deal with the bottled-up feelings and questions about abuse.

#### **Helping the Victims of Rape**

- 1) Rape victims have been classified in three ways, depending on how they respond to the rape.
  - a) Majority shows the rape trauma syndrome.
    - i) Begins with acute stress immediately following the rape.

- (1) May be fear, anger, anxiety, shock, self-blame, and disbelief, often expressed by crying, sobbing, tenseness, nausea, or restlessness; sometimes hidden behind a calm, composed exterior.
- (2) Victim may be flooded with feelings of terror, concern for her safety, and guilt because she did not struggle more.
- (3) Some women wonder if the myth really is true which says that women secretly attract rapists.
- ii) Two or three weeks after the rape, many women begin to experience nightmares, irrational fears, and restless activity.
- iii) Often there is a decision to move, change a phone number, stay indoors at night, or spend more time with close friends.
- iv) Women need support, freedom to express feelings, acceptance, an opportunity to talk with someone who considers them normal, and guidance as they make decisions.
- b) Second general response to rape has been termed the “compound reaction.”
  - i) Victims with previous physical, psychiatric, or social difficulties sometimes develop more intense symptoms such as depression, psychotic or suicidal behavior, psychosomatic disorders, drug use, excessive drinking, or sexual acting out behavior.
  - ii) Such women need referral for help that is more in-depth than crisis counseling.
- c) A third response to rape is the “silent rape reaction.”
  - i) These women have not told anyone about the rape, have never talked about their feelings or reactions, and have carried a tremendous psychological burden.
  - ii) Later in life these women may develop anxiety, fear of men, avoidance of sexual behavior, unexplained fears of being alone or going outside, nightmares, and a loss of self-esteem.

### **Helping the Victims of Mate Abuse**

- 1) Most often women are victims.
  - a) Increasing husband abuse.
  - b) When women abuse, they may do more damage because they use more than their hands.
- 2) In both cases, the victim often has low self-esteem.
  - a) In case of women, distorted belief that the husband’s role as head of the home gives him the right to tyrannize his family.
  - b) Sometimes the victim is even made to feel that she, rather than the abuser, is the real cause of the problem.
  - c) In some cases, the abuser may usually be loving and willing to provide for the family, except for periodic and often unpredictable explosions of rage and violence.
  - d) Most victims are reluctant to report the abuse.
    - i) Realistic fear that abusing mate could explode in more violence if he (or she) discovers that the family aggression has been reported.
    - ii) A woman whose livelihood depends on her abusive husband is reluctant to risk being cut off from food and shelter, especially if this would make her solely responsible for the care of her children.
    - iii) Some Christian women believe that wives should be submissive to their husbands, even if the husband’s behavior is intensely violent and life threatening.
- 3) Nonverbal signs of spouse abuse.



- a) A history of miscarriages.
  - b) Frequent visits to the emergency room for treatment of illnesses or injuries.
  - c) Signs of ongoing stress, such as headaches, gastrointestinal ailments, vague “not feeling well” complaints, or excessive use of tranquilizers or alcohol.
  - d) Withdrawal and isolation from friends, church, and family.
  - e) Moody, discouraged, unpredictable, or depressive behavior, sometimes accompanied by periodic suicide attempts.
  - f) Frequent absence from work.
  - g) Reports from others, including neighbors or children, about conflict or disruption in the home.
  - h) References to previous abuse or violence in the home.
- 4) Counselor should not be reluctant to raise the issue
- a) Christian counselor wants to help the couple maintain and heal the marriage, but when the risk of further violence seems high, it may be wise to help the abused mate and children get away from the danger and withdraw to a place of security and safety.
  - b) Once the immediate danger is lessened, counseling is likely to focus on issues of guilt, low self-esteem, the biblical position on husband-wife relationships, the difficulty of learning to forgive, and the battered mate’s feelings of guilt, anger, discouragement, hopelessness, and worries about coping in the future.
  - c) Later the counselor may be involved in helping the husband and wife deal with issues of communication, conflict resolution, sexual adjustment, husband-wife roles, trust, and other issues of marriage counseling.

### **Helping the Victims of Elder Abuse**

- 1) Abuse not only comes from younger family members, but from hospital personnel, employees of nursing homes, neighborhood vandals, their own mates, or impatient workers in stores or government offices.
- 2) Pastor may be first to suspect elder abuse.
- 3) Whenever an older person talks about mistreatment, the counselor can listen with sympathy and sensitivity.
  - a) Report of mistreatment may be more imagined than real.
  - b) Wise to talk with caregivers, including the older person’s relatives.
  - c) Abuse greater when older people have needs that are great, but the care givers have limited resources or abilities to meet these needs.

### **Helping the Abusers**

- 1) Abusers tend to be condemned, ignored, and incarcerated without treatment.
- 2) Return to abuse is much less likely among those who have been treated.
- 3) When confronted with their violent actions, many abusers deny what they have done, excuse their actions, or try to shift the blame onto the victim or somebody else.
- 4) Counseling abusers is often a long-term process dealing with the counselee’s anger, low self-esteem, and lack of self-control.
  - a) Many lack communication, problem-solving, conflict-resolution, and stress-management skills.

- b) Since many victimizers were earlier victims of abuse, it often is important to deal with attitudes and insecurities that have built up over a lifetime.
  - c) Many have never learned how to express their feelings in nonviolent, socially appropriate ways.
  - d) Some have rigid and domineering attitudes about leadership or the role of the husband or parent.
  - e) Others are entrenched in erroneous beliefs.
    - i) Victims enjoy the battering.
    - ii) Victims encourage it.
    - iii) Violence is the macho way to assert authority.
    - iv) All of these attitudes must be challenged and changed if abuse is to cease.
- 5) Abusers also need to understand forgiveness, including the ability to forgive themselves.
- a) They need to see that abuse is not an unpardonable sin.
  - b) The God who forgives can and will give help and guidance to those who sincerely want to rebuild their lives and live in ways that do not hurt others.

# LESSON SIX

## Personal Issues of Abuse Counseling

### Issues:

1. Esteem.
2. Guilt.
3. Depression.

### Self-Esteem

#### Definition of the Problem

1. People who seek out pastoral counseling often struggle with a dysfunctional or dissatisfying relationship.
  - a. Underneath, a chronic problem with low self-esteem.
  - b. These same people articulate faith in a loving God; belief in Jesus Christ; presence of the Holy Spirit.
  - c. One possible explanation for this paradox might be the conflicting images of God, which cancel out the God of love.
  - d. Some even believe self-esteem is incompatible with Christianity—sin is something to be punished, not something to be healed.
  - e. A God who does not want human beings to enjoy profound self-acceptance and self-esteem is incompatible with a God of love.
2. People who profess faith in God often do not realize they themselves can be empowered to respond to their own problems.
  - a. Faith in the goodness of life expressed in terms of a loving Deity is only complete when it builds on personal faith in the intrinsic value and beauty of the believer (faith in self).
  - b. Beneath low self-esteem is a lack of faith in one's value and possibilities—a lack of faith in self.
  - c. Religious faith does not contribute to self-esteem unless it grows out of and along with faith in one's abilities, in one's innate worth, in one's capacity for intimacy.
3. Self-esteem is a concept used to measure a person's thoughts and feelings about himself or herself.
  - a. Esteem comes from estimate.
  - b. One forms opinions about their bodies, intellects, talents, behaviors, performances, and capacity to develop and sustain intimate relationships.
4. Dimensions of Self-Esteem. Related to six major experiences.
  - a. Parental acceptance.
    - i. Unconditional acceptance demonstrated through physical and emotional availability and the respect parent shows for the child's full range of feelings.

- ii. The primitive capacity to feel one's needs and communicate them is the earliest sense of self, one's "experience of aliveness."
      - 1. When the expressed need is accepted, the true self begins to unfold.
      - 2. When the expressed need is rejected, the true self is violated.
- b. An ideology (an understanding of human life and one's place in it) which fosters self-esteem.
  - i. Of central importance to faith in self and self-esteem is the place that theology and God language play in the ideology out of which persons value or disvalue themselves.
  - ii. Many memories and experiences go into early God images.
    - 1. Characteristics of the parents, siblings, and other relatives.
    - 2. The good experienced in ourselves and others.
    - 3. The religious and intellectual culture of the home.
    - 4. The circumstances present in the child's life.
  - iii. Early images or representations of parent and self are invariably distorted.
    - 1. When negative images predominate, they can reduce people's ability to believe in themselves.
    - 2. Faulty representations can be reshaped consciously in adult life through relationships in which a person is realistically perceived and treated with respect.
- c. Satisfying relationships.
  - i. Sense of significance essential to self-esteem comes only through relationships that are based on mutual respect and acceptance.
  - ii. Egalitarian roles.
- d. Competence.
  - i. Competence is understood as an individual's experience of achievement and success in meeting personal and social goals and expectations.
  - ii. The sense of competence begins as soon as the child tries to work with the things and ideas that fill its world.
  - iii. Children and adults need confidence in their ability to learn what needs to be learned in order to function competently in their world.
- e. Passion for life.
  - i. Passion for life is often related to a sense of vocation or purpose.
  - ii. Passion for life comes with discovering something worth knowing, worth doing, worth working toward.
  - iii. Passion is something that mobilizes energy and enthusiasm and becomes a positive structure in one's life.
- f. Self-acceptance.
  - i. Self-acceptance refers to the acknowledgment of one's physical and psychological givens as well as one's heritage—one's body, mind, emotion, spirit, and all that comes with being this particular person.
  - ii. The self-accepting person develops a trust in her or his inner experience, which requires a realistic understanding of the true self.

## **Guilt**

1. We need to provide unconditional love and present ourselves as nonjudgmental.
2. Simply need to impart that actions have consequences.

### **Healthy Guilt versus Toxic Guilt**

1. Healthy Guilt.
  - a. Healthy guilt may be considered an aspect of our response to our own and our community's values.
  - b. Healthy guilt is experienced when the intensity of the emotion or self-critical thoughts is coordinated with the depth of evil as evaluated by a rational consensus of wise members of the community.
  - c. Conscience.
    - i. Conscience is dynamic; it is an awareness of and sensitivity to value which develops and grows, a mind-set that can function accurately in new situations.
    - ii. Conscience is value-oriented.
  - d. Healthy guilt culminates in forgiveness sought and received and results in new depths of trust in oneself and security in the restored relationship with the offended beloved. Toxic guilt fosters avoidance of even the desire for forgiveness.
  - e. Healthy guilt functions as a "mid-course correction" throughout life and invites us back to the path to genuine selfhood from the tangential sidetracks of selfishness, self-indulgence, and self-centeredness.
2. Toxic Guilt.
  - a. Certain thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can be self-imposed expectations or expectations of others.
    - i. Such expectations can push us to act contrary to our goals and our perceived best interests.
    - ii. Expectations can descend into manipulation when family members or others appeal to our guilt and to our natural instinct to avoid it.
    - iii. The spoken or implied criticism and judgment of our actions get conveyed through the frowning condemnation, the silent treatment, the cold shoulder, the walking away in a huff, the glare that kills.
      1. All these are intended to generate guilt for the purpose of altering our behavior.
      2. Such manipulation implies a threatened withdrawal of affection or approval.
      3. These kinds of threats provide quite powerful leverage over others.
      4. We should assent only when such expectations coincide with our own life's direction.
  - b. Some practical ways to deal with toxic guilt.
    - i. Bring irrationalities such as "shoulds," "oughts," and "musts" into our consciousness.
    - ii. When guilty thoughts or feelings become too powerful to be handled by ourselves, we may discuss them with someone we trust.

- iii. Since guilt feelings are basically self-centered, another remedy is to turn our attention outward.

## **Depression**

### **Prevalence**

1. During any given year, 15 percent of all people in the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 74 will have significant depressive disturbances.
2. In addition, 75 percent of all those hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital will report depression as part of the total cause of their treatment.
3. Strikes early in adult years when vocations and children are important; affects individual, marriage, the family, the church, the work place; even society. Called the “common cold” of mental, emotional, and spiritual disorders.

### **Traits of Depression**

1. Affect.
  - a. The depressed often feel dysphoria, a pervasive state of feeling sad, “blue,” or “down” most of the time.
  - b. Depressed may suffer guilt and anger; usually aimed at themselves.
  - c. Sense of failure.
    - i. Can’t do anything about their situation.
    - ii. Sense of hopelessness.
2. Behavior.
  - a. Depressed individuals lose satisfaction in doing things and experience a generally lowered activity level.
  - b. Engage in fewer spontaneous moves.
  - c. Lose of interest in previously enjoyed hobbies.
  - d. Lose motivation for undertaking mundane tasks of living.
  - e. Tendency to avoid or escape usual pattern or routine of life.
  - f. May experienced increased dependency.
  - g. Often have impaired abilities to cope with practical everyday problems.
3. Physiology.
  - a. Slowing of movements can accompany depression.
  - b. Retardation of speech patterns is a common sign.
    - i. May speak slower and at a lower pitch.
    - ii. Severely depressed may speak in a flat, lifeless monotone.
  - c. General feeling of exhaustion or fatigue.
    - i. Tend to feel tired all the time.
    - ii. Lack the energy to do those things that would help them combat their melancholia.
  - d. Some have difficulties with headaches, constipation, or diarrhea.
  - e. Can be loss of appetite.
  - f. Can experienced sleep disorders.

4. Cognitions.
  - a. Depression affects individuals' thinking; they tend to distort and misinterpret reality.
  - b. The depressed perpetually interpret events in a negative way, conceiving of their interactions with the world—and with God—as defeat, disparagement, abandonment, and deprivation.
  - c. They commonly indulge in blame and self-criticism, followed by feelings of guilt.
  - d. Tend to be indecisive.
  - e. They view the future negatively.

## **Counseling the Depressed**

Questions to ascertain its severity and to discover what strengths and coping abilities are available.

1. *What immediate difficulties are impeding functioning?*
  - a. Marriage.
  - b. Suicidal ideations.
  - c. Passed over for promotion.
2. *What are the person's strengths?*
  - a. Help person to remember good or successful experiences from the past and to review how he or she functioned differently in those positive situations.
3. *Are the symptoms primarily behavioral, physiological, cognitive, or affective?*
4. *What practical first steps can be taken to help turn this depression around?*
  - a. Realistic first steps.
  - b. Long range goals.

## **Risk of Suicide**

Should be familiar with following guidelines. Do not use as a checklist, but internal them.

1. Age and sex.
  - a. More men than women.
  - b. Threat of suicide increases with age.
2. Suicide plan.
  - a. Need to determine how specific the plan.
  - b. How available means to put into action.
  - c. How likely will happen.
3. Stress.
  - a. Most possible after significant loss.
  - b. If stress is extreme and the individual has a specific suicide plan, then a very active response is required.
4. Symptoms.
  - a. Most serious when depressed but has the energy and determination to complete the act.

- b. Depressed person who is also an alcoholic, drug abuser, homosexual, or sexual deviate has considerably higher than average suicide lethality.
- 5. Meaning and Religious Involvement.
- 6. Resources
  - a. Essential to identify relatives, friends, church members, co-workers, and others who are available to assist the suicidal individual.
- 7. Lifestyle.
  - a. A stable lifestyle is indicated by such things as consistent work history, long marriage and family relations, and absence of past suicide activity.
  - b. Unstable individuals may exhibit chronic alcoholism, job-hopping or marriage-hopping, character disorder or psychosis, frequent unresolved crises.
- 8. Communication.
  - a. Depressed individuals may have stopped communicating with others.
  - b. Indirect non-verbal communication may be more difficult to discern (making a new will, giving up prized possessions or favorite activities).
- 9. Health



# LESSON SEVEN

## Counseling Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

### Introduction

- 1) The typical adult client who was sexually abused as a child is a female, in her thirties to forties.
  - a) She appears depressed except when she is anxious and presents a multiplicity of problem areas.
  - b) She might have flashes of memory that she has always kept at abeyance and is highly resistant to your questions about these flashes.
- 2) Adults who were sexually molested as children present myriad symptoms such as
  - a) Recurrent recollections.
  - b) Generalized anxiety.
  - c) Sexual dysfunction.
  - d) Depression.
  - e) Self-blame.
  - f) Poor self-esteem.
  - g) Dissociation.
  - h) Somatization.
  - i) Phobic avoidance.
  - j) Repeated victimization.
  - k) Sense of shame.
  - l) Contempt for either men or women, whichever was the non-abusive adult.
  - m) Fear of either men or women, whichever was the abusive adult.
  - n) Overvaluing of the abusive sex.
  - o) Adolescent acting out.
  - p) Extreme responsibility as professional caretaker.
  - q) Passivity.
  - r) Promiscuity.
  - s) Impulsiveness.
  - t) Self-injuriousness.
  - u) Post-traumatic stress.
  - v) Inappropriate guilt.
  - w) Religious defection.

### Coping Styles of Those Who Were Sexually Abused

- 1) Dissociation (leaving her body so that the abuse happens to the body but not to the mind.
  - a) Characteristics.
    - i) Reported by many survivors of automobile accidents, the Holocaust, and war.

- ii) Coping mechanism akin to the use of anesthesia during an operation, where the body experiences pain during surgery with the mind not remembering anything of the procedure.
- iii) Can take a number of forms from numbing (experiencing a not-real feeling), to out of body experience, to creating another personality that flees the pain.
- b) Forms of dissociation.
  - i) Numbing (experiencing a not-real feeling).
  - ii) Out of body experience.
    - (1) Person feels as if she has left her body and floated to another place, thus avoiding experiencing the trauma.
    - (2) Some retreat to a corner of the same room to watch the abuse.
    - (3) Others fly out windows to visit other places and do not know what is going on back at the body.
  - iii) Multiple personalities.
    - (1) The child escapes her body by creating another person who experiences the abuse while the child retreats into her mind with whatever part of her is left.
    - (2) A child learns to split off another personality to take the abuse; form new personalities easily and can use this coping mechanism in other situations.
      - (a) One personality suffers the abuse.
      - (b) Another holds the rage.
      - (c) Another becomes the innocent child.
      - (d) Another becomes seductive.
- 2) Minimization.
  - a) Allows victim to diminish either the effects of the abuse, the amount of abuse, or the reason behind the abuse.
  - b) Give the victim a chance at not having to face the power of the entire situation.
    - i) “It only happened once...”
    - ii) “He just fondled me.”
    - iii) “He couldn’t help it. He was drunk.”
  - c) Breaking through minimization takes time, trust, and courage for the client willingly to experience the pain.
- 3) Repression.
  - a) The ultimate coping mechanism to deny the abuse that occurred.
  - b) If successful, have no memory of the traumatic incidents.
  - c) Effects of the abuse linger in symptomology.
  - d) While the mind has the ability to repress successfully information that it chooses not to accept, the body does not have the same ability.
- 4) Denial of feelings.
  - a) Similar to minimization.
  - b) Does not minimize the abuse but denies that there is any emotion or pain surrounding the situation.
  - c) No connection in the client’s mind between the abuse and the succession of patterns over her life where the client has had problems.
- 5) Conclusion.
  - a) When sexual abuse occurs the normal developmental tasks are interrupted or distorted for the victim.

- b) Some become fixated at a certain developmental stage.
  - i) Become fixated at a point of regression slightly before the abuse started.
  - ii) Purpose of the fixation is to stay developmentally at a point before the abuse so that she does not have to emotionally live through the abuse.
  - iii) These clients react to situations in an immature, sometimes frightened manner that seems inconsistent with their age and status.
- c) Some skip stages and become overly adult for their years.
  - i) Appear and act too mature for their years, but there is a gap in their development.
  - ii) Try to skip over the developmental stages where the abuse occurred; do not acquire the necessary skills with which to approach life.
  - iii) One purpose for maturing rapidly is so that the child can become more self-sufficient and not have to rely on the abusive or other non-supportive adults.
- d) Most children who are sexually abused turn to some form of self-defeating behavior.
- e) Sublimation.
  - i) Sublimate their pain into socially acceptable, creative avenues.
  - ii) Can still leave victim empty, hurt, or angry.
  - iii) Some of the more popular sublimation activities are humor, art, music, religiosity, work, and helping others.

## **Stages of Healing**

- 1) *Stage 1: The Decision to Heal.*
  - a) Can only be made in an atmosphere of trust.
    - i) When a child's personal, physical boundary is violated by a trusted adult, that child develops a lack of trust in others.
    - ii) Abuse occurred in presence of one person, in secrecy, behind closed doors, and with unequal power—the same situation with therapist.
  - b) The decision to heal also involves the decision to face a great deal of pain.
    - i) Remembering previously repressed incidents.
    - ii) Facing intolerable facts about significant others.
    - iii) Feeling rage.
    - iv) Losing control.
    - v) Understanding patterns of behavior.
  - c) Need to hear that they can have hope, that they can be better, that it is never too late to take the risk; the road to health is difficult but worth it.
- 2) *Stage 2: Acknowledging the Reality of the Abuse.*
  - a) Taking this step is a terrifying look at reality.
  - b) May send client reeling back to question their decision to work on their childhood sexual abuse.
  - c) Three categories.
    - i) Total recall of the horrific events.
      - (1) Having memory may mean that client has developed sophisticated defense mechanisms, which can be difficult to break through.
      - (2) Why has she chosen to work on her issues now?
    - ii) Some pieces of memory, impressions, or suspicions.

- (1) Has probably utilized repression. When this is broken down, can be flood of memories which client is not prepared for.
- iii) No memory of the abuse.
- d) In this stage, need to piece together the abusive circumstances.
  - i) Counselor must listen carefully.
  - ii) Client should be only concerned about time frames, incidence, persons involved, and the effects.
  - iii) Deal with reality, not necessarily the pain at this point in the process.
- e) Stage 2 is not only the fact-finding phase but also the denial-reducing stage.
- f) Therapist gently confronts the denial, confirms the sexual abuse, affirms the victim, and asks her to join the therapist in the process.
- 3) *Stage 3: Facing the Pain.*
  - a) Stage 2 is more the intellectual understanding of the abuse, while Stage 3 can be spontaneous, knowing emotionally, and facing the pain of grieving.
  - b) Some techniques of the therapist.
    - i) Listening.
    - ii) Silence.
    - iii) Prayer.
- 4) *Stage 4: Understanding the Self and Experience.*
  - a) Dynamic stage in which the client is helped toward wholeness.
  - b) Stage of integration of abused child, adult, and social relationships..
  - c) Misconceptions of child based on the abusive experiences.
    - i) It is the child's fault that she was abused.
    - ii) She should be punished for noncompliance, yet she feels punished for cooperating.
    - iii) She feels sinful, unclean, damned to hell, and is therefore unlovable to God.
    - iv) She believes that she is evil or a "bad seed."
    - v) She feels ashamed because there was an element of closeness which she enjoyed or because she felt pleasure, sexually arousal, or had an orgasm.
    - vi) She may have loved the abuser and feels that she has betrayed him by talking about the abuse and feeling all the emotions of the past.
  - d) Client must determine whether the feeling that she was at fault for the abuse has validity.
    - i) State who was responsible for the abuse.
    - ii) "None of this was your fault. You were just a child. It is an adult's absolute responsibility to refrain from abusing children."
    - iii) Must be repeated over and over.
  - e) In this stage, the child state must learn that she is accepted by her adult ego state.
- 5) *Stage 5: dealing with Anger and Other Negative Feelings.*
  - a) Not necessarily the first stage that negative feelings are felt, but the first stage where harder feelings are dealt with.
  - b) Deals with intense rage and bitterness that the client feels towards those who abused her or have not supported her.
  - c) Unless a client has explored Stages 1 to 4, she has little chance of resolving anger and moving toward some resolution and reconciliation.
  - d) Never accept a client's word that she has no anger.
    - i) Anger, fury, and rage are felt when one is abused. Some clients reject these emotions as not applying to them.

- ii) The more they reject them the more they play a part in the unconscious motivation of behavior.
  - e) Help client to distinguish between experiencing an emotion and acting on that emotion.
  - f) Many clients are uncomfortable with feeling angry and therefore attempt to deny, stifle, and swallow their feelings.
  - g) After a client has experienced several episodes of rage in a safe manner, she will begin to feel less fearful of feeling rage and will be ready to learn how to express rage with others present.
  - h) The key to expressing feelings to others is to express emotion in such a way as to feel positive about oneself and to avoid degrading another.
  - i) Role play, rehearsal, letter writing, and empty chair techniques help to teach appropriate ways of expressing emotions.
- 6) *Stage 6: resolution and Reconciliation.*
- a) Not just forgiveness, but acceptance.
  - b) In this stage is when a client must decide whether to confront the abuser.
  - c) In this stage, begin to let go. Letting go of abuse and addressing current needs.
  - d) Topics of discussion revolve more around the here and now.
    - i) Current relationships.
    - ii) Career development.
    - iii) Parenting issues.
  - e) First reconciliation must begin within the client herself.
    - i) Needs to understand and forgive herself for anything she perceives that she did, felt, or thought at the time she was actively a victim and then later after the abuse ended.
    - ii) Learn that she can be human, vulnerable, and honest with herself will relieve much of the guilt.
    - iii) Can then learn to love herself (should not be rushed as in earlier stages).
    - iv) Unless the client has faced the abuse in some form, grieved over the loss associated with child abuse, and experienced all feelings including rage, the client cannot accept herself.

## **The Pastoral Dimension of Treating a Victim of Sexual Abuse**

- 1) *Forgiveness.*
  - a) The forgive and forget principle has been misused and misinterpreted.
    - i) Forgiveness means to give up resentment against or the desire to punish.
    - ii) Forgiveness is not pity, exoneration, or absolution.
    - iii) Forgiveness is not letting the abuser off the hook or accepting or minimizing the abusive behavior.
    - iv) It is letting go of the rage so that the pain does not continue to determine the future.
  - b) Forgiveness of self implies guilt or responsibility.
  - c) More idea of exoneration than forgiveness.
- 2) *Grace.*
  - a) Victims of sex abuse have trouble seeing grace in their lives.
  - b) Can lead to depression, drugs, repetitive self-abuse, or any number of other symptoms.
  - c) Need to learn how to look at and count the graces which are predominant in their lives.

- 3) *Reconciliation.*
  - a) During therapy client needs to address each alienated piece of herself.
  - b) Each step becomes one of identifying the lost part or person, affirming the importance of the lost piece, accepting the part or person back into the self, and setting appropriate boundaries for how much importance the part of self or person will have in the victim's future.
- 4) *Shame and Guilt.*
  - a) Guilt is a feeling that is experienced when someone has done something that she judges to be wrong.
  - b) Shame is a feeling of unworthiness about oneself just because of existing.
  - c) Victims of sexual abuse typically experience both inappropriate guilt and unjustified shame.
  - d) Encourage clients to pray for the love, grace, and forgiveness that God has given to others.
  - e) At this point, client can express anger toward God for not being there for them during the abuse.
    - i) May feel they'll be struck dead.
    - ii) Response of counselor important.

# LESSON EIGHT

## Calling for Accountability: Responding to Abusers

### Introduction

- 1) For every victim there is a perpetrator who has taken advantage of the victim during a period of vulnerability.
  - a) Pastors are discovering that perpetrators are members of their congregations and respectable members of society.
  - b) Forces the church to have to deal with issue of abuse.
- 2) The church can minister to victims by being willing to deal with abusers.
- 3) The church's mistaken understanding of God's love for all people has sometimes led Christian leaders to tolerate rather than to stop abusers.
- 4) Providing nurturing concern and healing resources is an appropriate response for victims of violence.
- 5) The most loving response may be the development of systems of accountability and consequences that stop their destructive behaviors.

### Temptations of Church to Overlook Abuse

- 1) The temptation of disbelief.
  - a) Abusers often respected members of the church and community.
  - b) To believe that such a person is responsible for the abuse of another brings us face-to-face with our own failure of judgment.
  - c) Has made the church slow to respond to the victims and survivors in its midst.
- 2) *The temptation to protect the church's image.*
  - a) Even if there has been some private acknowledgment, there is often public denial or minimization.
  - b) Can be excruciating for victims who have come forward.
  - c) Allows the abuser to continue to minimize or deny responsibility.
- 3) *The temptation to blame the victim.*
  - a) Churches are notorious for thinking that victims brought the destruction on by their own behaviors.
  - b) As long as the church persists in blaming the victims, it can avoid holding the abuser accountable.
- 4) *The temptation to sympathize with the abuser.*
  - a) Focuses on the pain which the accusation causes the abuser, the possible damage which will be done to the abuser's career, and so on.
  - b) Ignores the real issue: this person is responsible for harm done to another.
- 5) *The temptation to protect the abuser from the consequences of his or her behavior.*
  - a) Leads to the avoidance and secret-keeping which so often accompany any disclosure of abuse in a church setting.
  - b) Underlies a pastor's avoidance of reporting abuse to law enforcement.

- c) Protection from consequences only further supports the abuser's minimization and denial of responsibility.
- 6) *The temptation of cheap grace.*
  - a) Immediate move to forgive and forget.
  - b) The purpose of judgment is always to bring someone to confession and from confession to repentance.
    - i) Repentance always begins with acknowledgment to oneself, to one's victim or victims, and to one's community or responsibility for harm done.
    - ii) Cheap grace allows perpetrator to continue to deny responsibility for their abuse of others.
  - c) Church leaders need to join social workers, police, lawyers, psychologists, and judges in educating the public and developing systems of accountability.

When the church and its leadership are willing to hear a victim's disclosure of abuse, they are then called upon to intervene on behalf of the victim.

- 1) Both Hebrew and Christian traditions place heavy emphasis on justice as the proper response to injustice and harm done to others.
- 2) Goals of our efforts to help abused.
  - a) Protect the vulnerable from further abuse.
  - b) Call the abuser to accountability (confrontation, confession, repentance).
  - c) Restoration of the relationship (between victim and abuser) if possible.
    - i) Often restoration not possible.
    - ii) If not possible, then mourn the loss of that relationship and work to restore the individuals.

## **Principles for Intervention with Abusers**

- 1) The church's first priority must be the safety of and pastoral care for victims of abuse.
  - a) Sympathy often goes first to the perpetrator, especially if he is a respected leader.
  - b) Those terrorized by physical or sexual violence are in danger and least able to protect themselves.
    - i) Unless there is intervention, disclosure alone almost never ends the abuse; the victim continues to be in danger.
    - ii) Safety enhanced if there is no contact between perpetrator and victim in the immediate crisis.
  - c) The victim must receive whatever medical care, crisis intervention, financial support, safe housing, and counseling necessary for creating a new context for living.
- 2) In order to stop abusers, church leaders must use wider community structures of accountability.
  - a) Often must be legal consequences.
  - b) In confronting an abuser privately and accepting reassurances that things will change, a pastor only enables the abuser to hide his or her actions better and to further threaten the victim or victims.
  - c) Pastor may have inadvertently warned the abuser to lie low until the crisis blows over.



- d) Almost impossible for repentance to take place without expert help and a structure of accountability.
  - e) If involves abuse of child, the pastor should report on behalf of that child immediately to the state child protection service.
- 3) Church leaders must be able to combat the secrecy and deception that abusers use to hide their crimes.
- a) When confronted, abusers will minimize, lie, and/or deny responsibility for their actions.
  - b) All abusers depend on deceiving others about the nature of their behaviors.
  - c) Child molesters threaten and manipulate their victims into silence.
  - d) Batterers batter in the privacy of their homes while a “normal” façade is presented to the public.
  - e) Rapists choose dark and private times and places to avoid confrontation.
  - f) Abusive professionals use the privacy of counseling and other confidential settings to hide their exploitative behaviors.
  - g) Church leaders who would confront abusers must be alert to a web of lies even in those who hold positions of trust within the community.
- 4) The church must not allow a misuse of confidentiality to prevent it from acting to intervene in situations of abuse.
- a) Purpose of confidentiality in the religious setting is to provide a safe place for victims to understand their suffering without the glare of the community’s judgment.
  - b) Rules of confidentiality must not jeopardize those who are least able to protect themselves.
  - c) Confidentiality is not equated with secrecy; keeping confidence is not keeping a secret.
    - i) Secrecy is the key to a pattern of abuse; abuse thrives on secrecy.
    - ii) The only way to assist the abuser and the victim is to break the silence which sustains the secret.
  - d) Confidentiality means that one does not share information received in confidence without legitimate reason.
  - e) If information divulged in confessional, pastor can encourage the abuser to report himself.
    - i) Rarely does the disclosure of an abusive situation occur in the formal confessional setting.
    - ii) More likely to come in counseling or conversation; most often from the victim rather than from the abuser.
  - f) The right of women and children to protection from physical and sexual violence overrides the value of secrecy.
- 5) In order to stop abusers church leaders must work cooperatively with other professionals.
- a) Every community has a network of social workers, psychologists, and legal agencies that specializes in intervention, counseling, and prevention in situations of abuse.
    - i) Rape counseling centers.
    - ii) Battered women’s shelters.
    - iii) Child protection agencies and family courts.
    - iv) Police and criminal courts.
  - b) Mark of trained pastor is his willingness to call upon or cooperate with the specialized resources needed to protect those who are vulnerable to abuse and stop those who are responsible.

- 6) Churches must institute effective structures of accountability and consequences for leaders who abuse their power.
  - a) The church has a long, sad history of covering up the sins of men in powerful positions who abuse women and children.
  - b) Pastors who are perpetrators have moved quietly to other congregations where no one has been warned of the danger.
  - c) Clergy who have abused wives and children have been supported for the sake of family unity.
  - d) Churches need to reassess their own policies and procedures for identifying and dealing with abuse among their leaders.
    - i) Investigations should be fair to those who are charged as well as to victims.
    - ii) Consequences must be severe enough that abusers will be held accountable and stop their destructive behaviors.

## **Conclusion**

This lesson suggests the need for a courageous and assertive response on the part of the church to abusers in its midst. Large numbers of children who have been sexually and physically abused carry lifelong consequences because of their trauma. As victims come forward, their stories lead us to reassess our understanding of ourselves as Christian communities.

## **Summary**

- 1) The church must respond more aggressively to the danger facing women and children by providing victims with safety and needed resources for healing.
- 2) The church must call for better societal structures of accountability and consequences for abusers, inform itself on the role of secrecy and deception in abuse, reevaluate its practice of confidentiality, cooperate with other professionals and agencies, and institute internal structures of accountability for leaders of its own community.
- 3) The church must be much better informed about the dangers of abuse and much more assertive in establishing its vision of justice and mercy for all persons.