- I. Understanding Abuse
  - A. Definition: The use of physical violence and emotional coercion to maintain power in a relationship. Categories:
    - 1. Child abuse
    - 2. Spouse abuse
    - 3. Sexual Abuse (child or adult)
  - B. How Abusers Use Coercion To Maintain Power
    - 1. Control
    - 2. Manipulation
    - 3. Self-justification
  - C. How Victims Are Tempted To Respond
    - 1. Denying that it's abuse
    - 2. Trying to be perfect enough to prevent mistreatment
    - 3. The victim trap
      - a. Focus on sins of the abuser and relative blindness to my own sins results in:
        - i. Self-pity
        - ii. Bitterness
      - b. Angry with God
- II. Confronting Lies With Gospel Truth
  - A. Abusers Lie To Their Victims
    - 1. You deserve to be mistreated because you're bad.
    - 2. You need to be mistreated to make you stop being bad.
    - 3. If you will just be perfect enough, I won't have to hurt you.

- B. The Gospel Speaks the Truth To Abused People
  - 1. You deserve to go to hell, BUT Jesus paid the penalty for your sins (Galatians 3:10,13; Ephesians 2:3-5).
  - 2. You can't make yourself perfect enough, BUT Christ has already lived a perfect life in your place. You get the credit for Jesus' sinless life by virtue of your union with Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).
  - 3. God is not like your abuser (Numbers 23:19; Lamentations 3:22,23). He is your Perfect Heavenly Father (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:4-6). He is your Perfect Heavenly Husband (Isaiah 54:5; Romans 7:4; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

## III. Gospel Enemies Of Abused People

### A. Fear

- 1. Of People (Psalm 118:6; Proverbs 29:25; Hebrews 13:6)
  - a. People have hurt me.
  - b. People may hurt me again.
  - c. God is sovereign over the hurts that come to us from others (Genesis 50:20; Lamentations 3:32).

#### 2. Of God

- a. Is he good? (Exodus 34:6; Lamentations 3:22,23,25)
- b. Is he for me? Does he love me? (Psalm 56:9; Romans 8:28-39)
- c. Is he angry with me? Is he punishing me? (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 2:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1 John 5:9,10)
- d. Does the gospel apply to me? (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 10:13; John 1:12)
- e. Where was/is he?
  - i. He is sovereign (Psalms 103:19; Lamentations 3:37,38).

- ii. He causes all things to work together for good (Romans 8:28; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).
- iii. He doesn't always tell me what he's doing (Deuteronomy 29:29; Romans 16:25,26).
- f. Will he hurt me? (Lamentations 3:32,33; Hosea 6:1,2; Isaiah 53:4-11)
- g. Will he protect me? (Psalm 61:1-4; Psalm 91)
- B. Looking To My Own Resources
  - Self-comfort—Looking to myself, instead of God, to feel better
    - a. Distraction: overwork, "retail therapy"
    - b. Checking out: alcohol, prescription medicines
    - c. Tension-decreasing behavior: cutting, masturbation
    - d. Control behavior: eating disorders
  - 2. Self-salvation—Looking to myself, instead of God, to feel safe
    - a. Anger
    - b. Controlling others
    - c. People-pleasing
    - d. Self-protection
- IV. Learning to Look To God's Resources—For Comfort, And To Build Faith In God
  - A. His Word
    - 1. Is a means God uses to comforts you (Psalms 23:4; Psalms 119:50,52,76).
    - 2. Builds your faith because it:
      - a. Is absolutely trustworthy (Isaiah 48:3, 55:11; John 10:35).

- b. Feeds your soul (Matthew 4:4; Acts 20:32; 1 Peter 2:2).
- c. Lights your path (Psalms 19:8; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19).

# B. Prayer

- 1. Is another means to experience God's comfort (1 Samuel 1:15-18; Psalms 119:82; 2 Corinthians 1:3,4).
- 2. Builds your faith (1 Kings 8:27-61, 9:3; 2 Kings 20:5; Psalms 6:9, 102:17)

## C. His Church

- 1. Yet another means to experience God's comfort (2 Corinthians 7:6, 13:11; Philemon 1:7).
- 2. Builds your faith (Romans 1:12; Colossians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Jude 20,21
- V. Trusting Christ in Painful Circumstances