

Caring for the Abused

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I. Introduction: Defining abuse.

- A. **A dictionary definition.** *Abuse is an improper treatment towards another when one abuses his natural powers, privileges, or advantages.*
- B. **Government definitions of abuse.**
1. **Government categories of child abuse.**
 - a. **Physical abuse.** *Physical abuse is defined as behavior that results in the non-accidental injury of a child.*
 - b. **Physical neglect.** *Neglect is the failure to provide the basic necessities of life to the extent that a child's well being is endangered.*
 - c. **Sexual abuse and exploitation.** *Sexual abuse is any use of a child by an adult for the purpose of providing sexual gratification to the adults or the child.*
 - d. **Emotional abuse.**
 2. **Spouse abuse.**
 - a. **Physical assault**
 - b. **Threats.**
 - c. **Emotional abuse.**
 3. **Problems with secular definitions of abuse.**
- C. **A Biblical understanding of abuse.** Mt. 5:21f 18:6 Js. 4:1-2 Pr. 15:32-33 16:32 25:28
- D. **Understand the difference between child abuse and legitimate discipline.**
1. **The Bible authorizes disciplinary spanking: inflicting physical pain as part of training.** Prov. 22:15 13:24 23:13-14 29:15
 2. **The Bible does not authorize personal revenge, including a parent to a child.** Rom. 12:19
 3. **Parental discipline brings loving correction on God's behalf.**
 4. **When an angry parent takes revenge on a child:**
 - a. **He is guilty of serious sin.** Mt. 5:21ff
 - b. **He is likely going to provoke the child to anger.** Col. 3:21
 - c. **He is in danger of becoming guilty of a crime punishable by the government.**
- E. **The Bible never authorizes the use of force against a spouse.**
- F. **When should abuse be reported?**
1. **Some cases of abuse are crimes and must immediately be reported to the authorities.**
 2. **Some counselors and pastors are mandated reporters of child abuse.** Ro. 13:1-7
 3. **It is desirable to use the biblical means of confronting sin through the church.** Matt. 18:15ff I Co. 5

4. If the abuser will not submit to the authority of the church, it is appropriate to involve the civil authorities.
5. How much discretion may you use?

G. Churches, schools, and families should take precautions to prevent abuse. Pr. 27:12

II. Counseling the abused.

- A. You have a duty to protect victims of abuse. Ps. 82:3-4 Pr. 31:8-9 22:22-23
1. Do whatever is necessary to ensure the victims are safe.
 2. Is violent abuse grounds for separation or divorce? I Co. 7:12-16 I Ti. 5:8
- B. How can you know if someone has been abused? Prov. 18:17
1. All claims of abuse have to be taken seriously.
 2. It is also important to protect people from being falsely accused.
 3. Do extensive data gathering.
 4. Abuse is often hard to prove because it usually takes place without third party witnesses. Deut. 19:15
 5. Some “victims” have used false claims of abuse to seek revenge or control.
 6. Some counseling appears to have created false memories of abuse (False Memory Syndrome).
 7. Many victims refuse to report their abusers.
- C. Help the one who has been abused to understand what has happened biblically.
1. She needs to honestly face personal sinfulness. Mt. 7:3-5 I Jo. 1:9 Dt. 22:23-25
 2. She needs to honestly face the sinfulness of others. Dt. 23:25-27
 3. Help her to confront the abuser when appropriate and feasible. Mt. 18:15f Lu. 17:3
 4. Is it sinfully vengeful and unforgiving to report abuse? Rom. 12:19 13:4
- D. Victims of abuse can become overcomers, by God’s grace. Rom. 12:21 I Co. 10:13
1. Offer biblical hope and comfort. Ro. 15:4 II Co. 1:3f 4:7-10 Re. 7:17 21:4 He. 4:15
 2. Build a biblical view of suffering. II Co. 4:16-17
 - a. Recognize that God is sovereign over suffering. Eph. 1:11 Job 1-2
 - b. Why does God allow abuse? (from Elyse Fitzpatrick).
 - (1) To bring deliverance to others. Gen. 50:20
 - (2) To build character in us. Rom. 5:3-5 James 1:2-5 I Pet. 1:6-9
 - (3) To equip us to comfort others. II Co. 1:3-11
 - (4) To display the works of God. John 9:1-3
 - (5) To help us to appreciate the hope we have in Christ. Rom. 8:18,28-29
 3. Teach her how to forgive biblically. Mt. 6:12 18:21ff Eph. 4:32
 - a. When should a victim forgive an abuser?
 - b. She needs to recognize the characteristics of true repentance. II Co. 7:10-11
 - c. Does forgiveness require that charges not be pressed?
 - d. Forgiveness is only possible because Christ has forgiven us. Eph. 4:32

- e. Forgiveness is freeing.
- f. Can she forgive if the abuser is not repentant?
- 4. Believers have resources to gain victory over the effects of abuse. Rom. 6:1ff II
Co. 5:17 II Pe. 1:3 Phil. 1:6
- 5. She does not have to fall into sins of:
 - a. Being angry and abusive herself. Rom. 12:17-21
 - b. Having a “dysfunctional” family of her own.
 - c. Lifelong bitterness. Heb. 12:15
 - d. Being angry with God.
 - e. Fear and worry. Mt. 6:25ff Phil. 4:6-9
 - f. Self pity.
 - g. Self-righteousness.
- 6. Help her to rid her life of idols common to victims of abuse.
 - a. Desire for safety/security.
 - b. Desire for control.
 - c. Man pleasing/fear of man. Pr. 29:25
 - d. Self indulgence. Ga. 5:19-22
- 7. Teach her to give thanks for God’s blessings in her life. I Th. 5:18
- 8. Teach her to live by faith, not feelings. II Co. 5:7

E. Homework for victims of abuse.

1. Learn from Joseph. Gen. 50:17-21 (See “How to Forgive” p. 21: *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, by Jim Newheiser).
 - a. He was horribly abused by family members. Gen. 37
 - b. He was able to thrive for many years before his abusers sought his forgiveness.
 - c. He recognized the sovereignty and goodness of God, even in what happened to him. Gen. 50:20 41:51
 - d. He refused to take revenge, trusting God to deal with those who wronged him. Gen. 50:19 Rom. 12:19 I Pet. 2:23
 - e. He was able to forgive and bless his abusers. Gen. 50:21 Rom. 12:20-21
2. Women Helping Women, by Elyse Fitzpatrick, chapter 14: *Counseling Women Abused as Children*.
3. What Do You Do When You’re Abused by Your Husband?, Needham and Pryde.
4. Abused? How you can find God’s Help, by Richard and Lois Klempel.
5. Confront/report the abuser.
6. Emergency phone numbers, safe houses, etc.

III. Conclusion.

