

## 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

- 1. 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