

A decorative border of birds and branches framing the text. The border is composed of several birds perched on various types of branches and leaves, arranged in a roughly rectangular shape around the central text. The birds are drawn in a simple, line-art style.

# **Making Home**

**a Place of**

# **Peace & Healing**

**1997 Family Ministries Planbook**

**Karen & Ron Flowers  
Audray Johnson  
Elaine and Willie Oliver**

# **Making Home** a Place of **Peace** & **Healing**

1997 Family Ministries Planbook

Including resources for  
Christian Home and Marriage Week—February 8-15, 1997  
Family Togetherness Week—September 20-27, 1997

Prepared by  
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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



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# Preface

*My heart is in anguish within me,  
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.  
Fear and trembling come upon me,  
and horror overwhelms me.  
And I say, 'O that I had wings like a dove!  
I would fly away and be at rest. . . .'*

*It is not an enemy who taunts me—  
then I could bear it;  
it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—  
then I could hide from him.  
But it is you, my equal, my companion,  
my familiar friend.*

*My companion stretched out his hand against his friends,  
he violated his covenant.  
His speech was smoother than butter,  
yet war was in his heart;  
his words were softer than oil,  
yet they were drawn swords.  
(Ps. 55:4-6, 12-13, 20, 21, RSV)*

"David's sentiments in this psalm are familiar," Seventh-day Adventist Church President Elder Robert Folkenberg wrote recently. "In relationships in which a person should be able to depend on love and trustworthiness, the introduction of deceit, exploitation, and betrayal constitutes life's bitterest experience. Intensified by physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse and violence, these experiences are devastating. And compounded by isolation, secrecy, and unanswered spiritual questions, they are ruinous." (*Adventist Review*, Oct., 1995 NAD edition)

Among the stories of the Bible are some sad accounts that on the surface seem to have no redeeming value. There are no happy endings, no obvious lessons to be learned, just lots of hard spiritual questions raised. Many of these sad stories are about women—like Hagar (Gen. 16; 21:9-21), Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-22), a concubine with no name (Judges 19), and the daughter of Jephthah (Judges 11:29-40). Women used and abused. Women incested, raped, molested. Women rejected, dismembered, discarded, sacrificed. Elsewhere we read of horrifying acts against children. These are sad stories witnessed by few, but preserved and pressed to our attention by God to penetrate our silence and call us to accountability and action in the protection and defense of abuse victims.

For too long abuse and family violence have been the unmentionable words, scarcely acknowledged as part of a Seventh-day Adventist vocabulary. Words we'd rather not bring to mind, much less to our lips. But painful victim accounts, heart-rending appeals from medical and mental-health professionals whose days are filled with listening, caring, protecting, and hard research data from Adventist families worldwide compel us to face a frightening reality: incidences of abuse and family violence are present in our midst in proportions not unlike the general population.

The silence has been shattered by the anguished cries of many courageous survivors. It has been broken, too, by the unspoken witness of many who did not survive the horrors of the assault upon them. For more than two decades now, an appropriate church response to a series of piercing wake-up calls has been taking shape in many denominations, including our own. More than one-fourth of the official delegation to the 1995 General Conference Session in Utrecht responded to the call of world Church leaders to address abuse and family violence as one of six major issues confronting the Church. So those who carry responsibilities for ministry to families must intensify their voices. We speak loudly in the hope that many who are in the bondage of abuse might be released and restored to personhood and esteem. We speak loudly because we desire that abusers, who in their lust for power over others have become captives themselves, may find healing through the power of acknowledgment, responsibility, restitution, and new patterns of relating that put abuse and violence behind them. We speak loudly in the hope that mutual respect and love for one another, as beings created and redeemed at great cost in Christ, might distinguish us as a community of faith.

The 1996 Planbook is dedicated to the threefold task of (1) raising consciousness regarding the nature and extent of abuse and family violence, (2) outlining the elements of an appropriate Church response, and (3) exploring ways to suppress this scourge by helping individuals and families to discover, or perhaps rediscover, the peace that only Jesus Christ can bring to human hearts. To this end we have entitled this resource *Making Home a Place of Peace and Healing*.

Resident within the truth as it is in Jesus is wonderful news: He is our peace (Eph. 2:14). In Him, we are at peace with God. In Him, we know internal peace from the ceaseless unrest and disturbance of the soul that is the legacy of sin. In Him, the walls that divide are broken down and we are at peace with each other. The followers of Jesus, as no others on earth, may live intimately in peace. In no other arena of life is this reality of our faith more desperately needed than within the family circle. May the angel herald of God's peace bring hope and courage to each one in whose hands this resource falls, that you may be an instrument of His peace in your family, in the Church, and in the world.

Karen and Ron Flowers, Directors  
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# The Marriage Miracle

by Karen and Ron Flowers

Directors, Family Ministries, General Conference

## Theme

Jesus' transformation of water to wine at the wedding feast symbolizes His transformation of the marriage institution. God's redemptive act in Christ lifted the curse, permitting couples to enjoy equality and mutuality in marriage without the control of one by the other and the abuse which so often results.

## Theme Text

John 2:1-12

## Presentation Notes

Throughout the following outline a superscript number <sup>1,2,3</sup> will indicate illustrations, quotations and other material found in the section called **Sermon Illumination** that may be helpful in your sermon development and delivery.

## Introduction

John 2:1-12. In the wedding feast at Cana, we see Jesus *endorsing* marriage, *transforming* marriage, and *supplying* married couples with their needs.

## Jesus Endorsed Marriage

- **He enjoyed a wedding festival.** The serious business of the work of the Kingdom did not stop Him from participating in the joyous, light-hearted atmosphere of a wedding reception. Such social fellowship was, and is, an important aspect to life in His Kingdom community.
- **He inaugurated His ministry for the human race at a wedding.** At creation, a wedding ceremony marked the climax of the Creator's activity when He made the first man and woman. Sin had radically altered the relationship between the sexes and the institution of marriage. In His redemptive work, Christ's first activity was in the context of a wedding ceremony. Even as humanity was redeemed, so marriage itself as an institution was recreated by the Savior's ministry.<sup>1</sup>
- **God has not changed His mind about marriage.** Despite the sad state to which marriage had deteriorated, He who created it and pronounced it very good still desired for His people to know the lasting commitment, the friendship, and the romantic delights it afforded. At Cana and elsewhere (Compare Matt. 19:4-8) Jesus announced that His ministry would endorse and uphold marriage as it was meant to be.<sup>2</sup>
- **Jesus declared Himself to be the Heavenly Bridegroom.** In the most extravagant tribute thinkable, Jesus magnified marriage, making it a symbol of the union between Himself as the Bridegroom



and the redeemed, His Bride (Matt. 9:15; John 3:29). A wedding parable described the kingdom of God (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13).

### **Jesus Transformed Marriage**

- **Marriage before and after the Fall.** In their sinless state neither of the sexes ruled the other. They were co-regents over the earth, each reflecting the Creator's image, each blessed and charged with the responsibility of procreation, two genders in one humanity, equal to each other in every respect, true partners in marriage (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18, 23, 24). With the entrance of sin, marriage fell under the curse (Gen. 3:16).<sup>3</sup> Henceforth, where sin reigned, marriage suffered from human selfishness and the tendency to exploit or dominate one another. Even among God's professed followers, women fared but little better than in pagan societies. The practices of taking more than one wife, infidelity, easy divorce, and denigration of womanhood became commonplace. The Pharisee's daily devotional prayers included, "I thank God that I was not made a woman."

- **Difference between the curse and the gospel.** Sin perverted marriage, but the gospel restored its purity and beauty.<sup>4</sup> The kingdom of God has come to us in Christ (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:21). Believers are rescued from the powers of this present evil age (Gal. 1:4) and enabled to taste the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:5). In Christ there is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). As Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, we may be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:17-19). In Christ the curse is removed.<sup>5</sup> In the place of division and strife between individuals, there is peace in Christ (Eph. 2:14-17).<sup>6</sup>

- **The miracles of Jesus have a symbolic purpose.** The miracles are "signs" portraying the special characteristics of our Lord's person and work (John 2:18; 6:30). The loaves and fishes miracle, for example, goes beyond simply supplying a meal for a crowd of weary listeners. The disciples did not understand the greater meaning, otherwise their experience on the lake after the miracle would have been different (Mark 6:51, 52). On the day following, Jesus contrasts the manna of Moses' time with the "true bread" which the Father sends from heaven, namely Himself (John 6:26, 27, 48, 51, 58). He appeals to His hearers to receive Him, to let His words be spirit and life for them (John 6:63). Through this feeding miracle, the glory of Jesus is seen to supersede the practices and traditions of the past.

- **The wedding miracle manifests Christ's glory.** The water-to-wine miracle is a "marriage miracle." Like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, its intention is more than the supply of an immediate need. It manifests His glory (John 2:11). Cana heralds the arrival of the gospel. (The gospel teaching of Jesus is compared to new wine in several places: Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37, 38.) The waterpots at the wedding reception represented the past with its customs and traditions. They have been supplanted by the One who offers an abundance of the new and better beverage of the gospel in His new kingdom age.

Jesus not only transformed water to a superior drink, but redeemed and elevated those divinely designed religious and social institutions that had been trodden down by the curse of sin.<sup>7</sup> He taught principles and practices of gospel living which would have a profound effect of renewal and change in the hearts of married couples and others in whom His Spirit dwells. These principles and practices would be incompatible with old forms and traditions and would require containers new and pliable, like new wineskins (Mark 2:22), believers with converted hearts (Ez. 11:19; 36:26).

- **Some Christians fail to see Christ's redemption of marriage.** Many a woman even today can testify that the curse is alive and well. Around that curse has developed a model of marriage that some Christians perpetuate and defend.<sup>8</sup>

- **Radical changes in marriage in the gospel.** The marriage miracle at Cana was not simply making the existing water more fit to drink or adding a few more minerals or flavoring. The miracle was a radical change. Marriage is different for Christians in Christ. Mutual submission to each other under the Lordship of Christ is God's new plan for marriage (Eph. 5:21-25).<sup>9</sup> Husband and wife are heirs together of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7).

Ellen G. White described the effect of the gospel upon the husband-wife relationship in marriage:

Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal. . . . She should feel that she is her husband's equal—to stand by his side, she faithful at her post of duty and he at his. (*The Adventist Home*, p. 231)

Woman . . . may stand on an equality with her husband as adviser, counselor, companion, and co-worker, and yet lose none of her womanly grace and modesty. (*Evangelism*, p. 467)

Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other. (*Testimonies, Vol. 7*, p. 47)

### Jesus Is the Source of Supply for Marriage

The Cana miracle was evidence of Christ's ability and willingness to supply our needs. (Compare Phil. 4:19). "They have no wine," said the mother of Jesus. What they lacked, Jesus supplied in abundance and in a way far superior to their expectations.

- **God promises to give if we will ask.** Jesus spoke about God's willingness to give gifts to His people (Luke 11:13). His rest (Matt. 11:28) and His peace (John 14:27) can transform our homes, our marriages, as we come to Him in faith.

- **God supplies grace that we may give to others.** In God's covenant we experience grace, love, forgiveness, commitment, acceptance, intimacy, and even sacrifice, that our deepest needs might be met. As what we have found in the gospel is reflected to our families, our relationships take on characteristics like God's relationship with us. Christian family members respond to the call to be gracious, to love, to serve one another, and to forgive just as He loves, serves and forgives us. Strength and grace from God are promised to accomplish that to which God calls us (Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 20:26-28; Eph. 2:8; 4:32; Heb. 8:10-12; 1 John 3:16).

Some today may be in need of something very tangible, very material, as were the couple in Cana. We can lay that need before Him also. But in a special way today we ask Him to help us to repent of our

tendency to disregard His will, to confess our need for His plan to be more fully carried out in our lives, and to enable us to receive the supplies of grace and truth He has offered.

### Conclusion

The Cana miracle has implications for our homes. First, Jesus' endorsement of marriage must be proclaimed today. This institution coming from Eden, this twin of the Sabbath, is deserving of the kind of attention and consideration by Adventists that has been given to the Sabbath. Secondly, God's redemptive act in Christ transformed marriage, lifting the curse and permitting couples to enjoy equality and mutuality in marriage without the control of one by the other and the abuse which so often results. Finally, God will supply our needs. He will give to us His grace and power to carry out His will in our marriages and homes. Let us heed His call to live our married lives according to His gospel plan.

### Sermon Illumination

<sup>1</sup> He who gave Eve to Adam as a helpmeet, performed His first miracle at a marriage festival. . . . Thus He sanctioned marriage, recognizing it as an institution that He Himself had established. (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 356)

<sup>2</sup> Neither Roman nor Greek civilizations provided an atmosphere that elevated the marital union. The Greek statesman, Demosthenes, (3000 B.C.) indicated that it might take several of this lesser order of being—women—to take care of man's needs: "Mistresses we keep for pleasure, concubines for daily attendance upon our person, wives to bear us legitimate children and be our faithful housekeepers." The wife could be repudiated and simply dismissed for barrenness or even if her husband found her unattractive or uncongenial. (Mazat, 1981, pp. 27, 28)

<sup>3</sup> When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. . . . But after Eve's sin, as she was the first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse. (*Testimonies, Vol. 3*, p. 484)

<sup>4</sup> Like every other one of God's good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin; but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty. (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 64)

<sup>5</sup> Without any fuss or publicity, Jesus terminated the curse of the Fall, reinvested woman with her partially lost nobility, and reclaimed for his new kingdom community the original creation blessing of sexual equality. (Stott, 1984, p. 136)

<sup>6</sup> Faith in Christ abolishes all barriers, whether religious, cultural, or social, that separate people from each other. Discussing further the unity Christians know despite their background as Jews and Gentiles, Paul exalted the cross of Christ as the source of reconciliation. In doing

so, he used language that one could as easily apply to the separation between male and female (Eph. 2:14-18). "To create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace" (NEB) is good news that addresses the curse on marriage in Genesis 3 and makes the way possible for couples to know the "one flesh" experience of Genesis 2. (Flowers, 1992, p. 83)

<sup>7</sup> Christ came not to destroy this institution, but to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation. He came to restore the moral image of God in man, and He began His work by sanctioning the marriage relation. (*The Adventist Home*, p. 99)

<sup>8</sup> Robert Tislund was a powerful, pulpit pounding preacher. He had schooled his thirty-one year-old wife Lucy and five children in unwavering subjection to his demands. He expected perfection from them all, he said, and he beat them regularly to accomplish it, including their seven-year-old, twenty-five pound, blind, deaf and brain-damaged son. When the child died, Lucy grieved, but Robert beat her before and after the funeral for doing so, saying that her sin had caused this "imperfect child."

"He was my husband, and I knew I was supposed to follow his decisions. You get married and the Bible says you are to obey your husband. Right from the start he was the boss. 'Wives, be subject to your husbands as unto the Lord.' That was his main verse."

Despite the violence, he bragged that there were no problems in their marriage. She went nowhere without his permission and had only twenty-five cents in her possession for a phone call. She never wore slacks or make-up, except when he permitted it to cover a bruise. Although he was her husband, Robert was referred to by Lucy as "Pastor" or "Sir."

One day he came home furious. His questionable relationship with a fourteen-year-old girl at the church school had been found out. When Lucy questioned him about it, he beat her three different times, beat the children and then, with a wild look in his eyes, went to bed. She would never see the light of another morning, he said, for he intended to kill her.

While he slept, she pulled the loaded revolver out from under his pillow where he always kept it. He opened his eyes and began to lunge toward her. Then she shot him. She then took her children to a friend's house and called the police.

A troubled jury deliberated over her sad testimony. She was finally acquitted. (Adapted from Alsdurf & Alsdurf, pp. 13-15, 1989)

<sup>9</sup> In *Fulton's Footprints in Fiji* Eric B. Hare (1969) tells of the conversion of Ratu Ambrose. The cruel chief had squandered the lives of many of his faithful subjects while pursuing his aggressive goals. Scarred and broken in body, one old fisherman, Matui, had survived the torturous experience of being one of the human "logs," men bound with ropes and used as rollers upon which Ratu Ambrose had launched his heavy war canoes.

Pastor John Fulton's evangelistic efforts brought both Ratu Ambrose and Matui into the same Seventh-day Adventist church. God's power to transform hearts and habits powerfully demonstrated itself when the new believers celebrated their first Lord's Supper and footwashing service. Ratu Ambrose quickly took a towel and basin and knelt down before Matui to wash his feet. The bent, elderly fisherman at first resisted. "It is not right for you to wash my feet; you

are a great chief." As Ratu Ambrose went on to bathe the feet of his former subject with tears filling his eyes and his heart, he replied, "There is only one Chief here in this room tonight, and that is Jesus." (Flowers, 1992, pp. 85, 86)

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# The Light of God in a Child's Eyes

by *Audray Johnson*

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## Theme

The spiritual development of our children is an important part of parenting and is a task of the church. Adults have a positive duty to enable children's faith in God and to avoid any attitudes or behaviors toward children that would cause them to stumble.

## Theme text

Mark 9:36-42

## Presentation Notes

Throughout the following outline a superscript number <sup>1,2,3</sup> will indicate illustrations, quotations and other material found in the section called **Sermon Illumination** that may be helpful in your sermon development and delivery.

## Introduction

Like most Christians, Seventh-day Adventists have been concerned about the character development of their children. The amount of money we spend for our children's education and the many denominational schools, academies, colleges and universities we have built demonstrates how serious we are about our children. We want them to grow up to be Christians. We want them to grow up in the church we love and to believe as we have believed. We want them to be saved. We want them to be in heaven. So we willingly make sacrifices, live frugally, put off making major purchases, sometimes even take additional jobs so we can provide for them.

Despite our concerns and our investment in them, we are painfully aware that many of our children choose to follow paths different from what we had dreamed for them. Others seem to have graduated from church when they graduated from academy or college. What happened? Why do those who once took such delight in lisping the name of Jesus seem so far away from Him now?

The answers to the questions of why older children and adolescents make the choices they do are complex. One important point that must be made is that spiritual development is not the same as indoctrination. The religious experience of many youth has been one of indoctrination rather than spiritual development. Almost anyone can learn a set of rules or memorize doctrinal statements, but a living relationship with Jesus, though it includes doctrinal understandings, is surely much, much more.

## Jesus Honored Children

- **Jesus identified closely with children.** Jesus honored children and taught us about their spiritual development. In one instance, He motioned to a child, held the little one in His arms and said, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me" (Mark 9:37). What a curious thing for Jesus to say! What did that have to do with the new kingdom? One can almost hear some of His

disciples thinking, "What does He know about little kids? Does He know what a mess they can make of things, or what it costs to raise them, or what the tuition is down at the synagogue school?"

- **Jesus elevated the faith of children.** A related passage adds an additional thought, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). How astonishing that Jesus would hold up the faith of a child as the standard for entrance into the kingdom! Do children believe in God? Jesus maintained that they do. Notice His words, "these little ones who believe in me" (Mark 9:42).

Child psychiatrist Robert Coles (1990) conducted an interesting study in which he interviewed children from many backgrounds—Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Native American, atheist, even Seventh-day Adventist. What he learned was that children, particularly those in the early pre-teen years, do indeed have an active spiritual life and a definite opinion that God is important in their lives. Most people who have taken the time to really listen to children will not find that surprising. Could it be that we have missed the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the little ones around us, a work that is taking place whether we tell the story of Jesus or not, whether we indoctrinate them or not? Have we missed the fact that God is trying to reach these little ones, whoever and wherever they are? Why wouldn't He? Why wouldn't God, who is pouring out His grace on all humankind, find it valuable to work with human minds who are young, fresh, and more likely to hear His voice?<sup>1</sup>

- **Jesus warned about causing children to sin.** In earlier verses in Mark 9, we find that the disciples had been in dispute over who should be the greatest and they were somewhat uncomfortable with Jesus' object lesson, as is indicated by their response. The disciple John changed the subject, bringing up an unrelated incident about a man whom the disciples rebuked for driving out demons in the name of Jesus. Jesus honored John with a brief response, but then drew him and all the disciples back to the point He was making about children. "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck" (Mark 9:42).

What is Jesus talking about when He pronounces such a terrible consequence upon those who offend a child? What does it mean to cause a child to sin? Few parents would deliberately teach a child to steal, murder, or commit other sins. Jesus must be referring to something different from that. Could it be that Jesus considers this offense against children to be anything that adversely affects the child's belief in Him? Evidently Jesus is referring to attitudes and actions that lead a child away from God, discourages him or her, or does something that would make it hard for the child to believe in a loving God of grace. Jesus would have older ones to encourage the spiritual development of our children and the church's children by teaching, by examples of grace, love, peace, joy and all the evidences of the fruit of the Spirit of God within. There are several practical ways in which we do this.

### **Safeguarding a Child's Spiritual Development**

- **Provide your child with emotional security.** If it is safe to talk about anything at home, with reasonable calmness, children will learn to be comfortable talking about anything with God. If it is safe to discuss things in Sabbath School and leaders are open to working with minds that are learning and

questioning, then it will be easy for the child or youth to bring his or her concerns to God. However, if anger and shouting have become the pattern in the home, if parents and teachers become disturbed or shocked or angry with inquisitive young minds, it will be much harder for a child to believe that everything can be brought to God. The still, small voice of God may well be drowned out by the angry, hurtful voices of parents and siblings. A child who grows up in a verbally abusive atmosphere is left with a hunger for peace, emotional safety, and someone to listen and take him or her seriously. Too often he or she may attempt to satisfy that hunger in some spectacular secular experience or in some deeply spiritual pursuit.

- **Encourage your child's trust.** When home is a caring place where physical and other needs are met, children readily learn that God can be counted on to care for them.<sup>2</sup> But what of those who have been neglected? How shall they learn that God really does supply our every need?

- **Develop your child's sense of personal worth.** Healthy self-esteem is formed when children are affirmed and youth are encouraged (and when Mom, Dad, Grandma, and Grandpa affirm one another!). When children are made aware of how precious they are to their care-givers, it will help them to understand that God values them as well.<sup>3</sup> Yet, discouraging words and, what is worse, soul-destroying expressions can be uttered so thoughtlessly and flippantly. "You can never do anything right!" "How can you be so stupid?" "I wish you had never been born." Many Seventh-day Adventist parents find it all too easy to hit children on the head with Bible verses or with Ellen White quotations. Children who are assaulted this way find it hard to feel valued by anyone, much less by the God of the universe.

- **Use appropriate discipline with your child to develop self-discipline and respect.** When children are taught from an early age through loving and appropriate discipline, they learn to order their lives with self-discipline. They learn how to live under the authority of God and to properly respect earthly authorities. Everyone, including a child, learns respect by being respected. Teaching respect to children is best done by earning their respect.

### **Damage Caused by Family Abuse and Violence**

- **Lack of self-discipline.** If children are ruled by punishments, beatings and other physical abuse, self-discipline will be hardly learned at all.

- **Impaired perception of God.** What is worse for their spiritual experience is that, in their minds, God will carry the biggest stick of all. Many adults have been struggling all their lives to relate to God as a God of love. Confused, they may have settled for an intellectual understanding that God probably loves them. However, they cannot escape the fear that, if they step out of line, God stands ready to mete out harsh punishments.

Many people in society today have expressed grave concern over the growing tendency toward violent behavior, particularly among youth. They believe what is needed is a "return" to corporal punishments. In their frustration these well-meaning citizens forget that the worst offenders are almost always individuals who have already been beaten and abused countless times.



- **Arrested character development.** Recent studies have shown that the more corporal punishment is used, the less chance there is for character development. Christians should not be surprised at this because of the patience and longsuffering of God and His great reticence to expose His beloved people to any kind of harsh correction, yet history provides a sad commentary on the use of harsh punishments by Christians. Seventh-day Adventists should be even less surprised, for we have specific counsel from Ellen White about the adverse effects of harsh, punitive correction.<sup>4</sup>

- **Increased combativeness.** Ellen White once traveled westward by train. At one stop, her attention was drawn to a mother traveling with several children, one of whom was misbehaving. This woman was yelling at her son, hitting him, and threatening him with all sorts of dire punishments when they got home. The whole scene reminds us of episodes we have seen in public places today! Mrs. White, however, had the courage to go sit with this mother, listen to her frustrations and talk to her. Among the things Mrs. White said was, "Violence will only raise his combativeness and make him still worse."<sup>5</sup> Remarkably, that is exactly what behavioral scientists are learning today!

### **Provide for Children the Right Kind of Touch**

- **Effects of loving touch.** When healthy, appropriate touch is commonplace in the family, love is learned and returned. Those affectionate little hugs and kisses, holding children close, reading to them, telling them stories, those tender moments when little ones feel loved, those are the times when children learn about love. The love of parents and other humans teaches about God's love. They will delight in the stories of Jesus who picked up the children and held them on His lap. They will carry with them into adulthood the notion that God delights in them, holding them dear.

- **The betrayal of sexual abuse.** When sexual abuse takes place, especially by a parent, how can that little one learn what it is to relate to the perfect love of God? How many adults still struggle with that today! Only those who have experienced sexual abuse can understand that while the grace of God helps get them through, the pain of the experience never completely disappears. Betrayal of this kind goes to the deepest part of the soul and produces very ugly scars.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion to which we are brought is that Jesus views offense to children so seriously that He reserves the most dire consequence for those who offend. It is important to have discipline and order in the home or in society, but such teaching and discipline must always be in the context of grace. It is often hard to learn to do things in ways other than they were done to us. Most parents do things the way their parents did. From generation to generation habits have been passed down, and cultural programming is hard to override. But Jesus arrives and informs us, even in our cultural setting, that we are different! We can, through the power offered to us, learn the ways of the kingdom of God.

God has called us to serve Him with a heart of love. He has called us to pass along that love to our children and our children's children. Beginning with those times when our babies were in the crib, we taught them our theology as we picked them up. When we ourselves cried in the crib and we were picked up and kissed, we learned that we were loved. We teach our children that they are sacred when we do the same for them.

Jesus had a deep love for the children. They held a special place in His heart and He held them up as models in the realm of God, a sacred trust to be treated with special love and compassion. The innocence, simplicity and trust of the child reveal those dimensions of God to us as well as give us insight into how human life is meant to be lived. Their infectious joy consoles and lifts our spirits. Their ability to attract loving attention is much like that of God, whose irrepressible love attracts a loving response from us. Let the children come, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

### Sermon Illumination

<sup>1</sup> Three-year-old Timothy had not had a good day. In fact, the past many weeks had been difficult because his Dad had to go to the hospital again and again for chemotherapy. This time, however, it seemed to him that Dad was very sick indeed. He began to worry that Dad would die. Out on the hospital lawn he cried and screamed and refused to get into the car to go home. He wanted to go back and be with his Dad. "Daddy's too sick. He's not going to get better and I won't have a daddy," he cried. It took me, his Grandma, a while to get him to realize that his dad was my little boy and that I was very sad, too. Knowing someone else shared his sadness seemed to help. He agreed to go home with me in the car. All the way there this three-year-old and I talked about Job, part two—our part. It was an adult conversation about pain and suffering and us and God, only with a child's vocabulary.

I did not realize what that conversation meant for Timothy until later when I was showering and trying to wash away my sadness along with the dirt and grime of the day. Just then I heard a little voice from the other side of the shower curtain. Timothy was there in the bathroom, near me, and singing quietly, "Praise Him, praise Him, all you little children." He sang this children's hymn all the way through. But he wasn't finished yet. As he stroked and cradled his favorite bathtub toy, a little rubber duck, he quietly said, "I love you, God." Sacred moment!

*(Editor's note: Timothy's grandma is Audray Johnson. His Dad is now home and doing fine.)*

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Bradley Arnston of Mission Viejo, California, compares the treatment of the Torah scroll with the treatment of a child. When the rabbi and elders enter the synagogue with the sacred Torah, they carry it in their arms as one carries a child. They unwrap (undress) it, kiss it, read it and then wrap it again carefully and lovingly. Then they carry it to its sacred "cradle." This, says Rabbi Arnston, is how we must regard the little ones given to us.

<sup>3</sup> Rex Johnson, a pastor and therapist from Long Beach, California, suggests that we can find creative ways to affirm our children. For example, "Someday I'll be proud to carry your brief case!" Comparing our children with exquisite stores or luxury items can provide fresh ways of expressing their value. "You have a Neiman-Marcus mind!" (Perhaps your choice will be Macy's, Harrods, or the finest store or high quality item your family knows about.)

<sup>4</sup> Your children are God's property, bought with a price. Be very particular, O fathers and mothers, to treat them in a Christlike manner. (*Child Guidance*, p. 27)

Exact obedience in your family; but while you do this, seek the Lord with your children, and ask Him to come in and rule. Your children may have done something that demands punishment; but if you deal with them in the spirit of Christ, their arms will be thrown about your neck; they will humble themselves before the Lord and will acknowledge their wrong. That is enough. They do not then need punishment. Let us thank the Lord that He has opened the way by which we may reach every soul.

If your children are disobedient, they should be corrected. . . . Before correcting them, go by yourself, and ask the Lord to soften and subdue the hearts of your children and to give you wisdom in dealing with them. Never in a single instance have I known this method to fail. You cannot make a child understand spiritual things when the heart is stirred with passion. (*Child Guidance*, p. 244)

<sup>5</sup> This mother's mode of government set my mind on a study. She forced them to self-assertion in various improper ways, showing the mother's management was a sorry failure. . . . All this mother seemed to know of government was that of brute force. She was threatening, intimidating. Her youngest children seemed to have a fear to stir. Others looked hard and defiant. Some looked ashamed and distressed.

I longed to preach a sermon to that mother. I thought if that mother knew her responsibility as a mother, she would not pursue the course she had done in that depot. . . . Every harsh word, every passionate blow, would react upon her again. If she were calm and patient and kind in her discipline, the power of her example for good would be seen in her children's deportment. . . . How many souls such mothers will gain to the fold of Christ is a question. I really do not believe they will gather one soul to Jesus. They train, they rule, they ruin. (E. G. White, quoted in *Adventist Heritage*, Summer, 1990, p. 26)

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# A New Design for Relational Power

*by Karen and Ron Flowers*

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## **Theme**

Healthy Christian relationships exhibit mutual caring, support, and respect for human equality and dignity. The gospel overcomes dominance and control in relationships through the principle of mutual submission to one another in Christ.

## **Theme Text**

Philippians 2:1-4

## **Presentation Notes**

Throughout the following outline a superscript number <sup>1,2,3</sup> will indicate illustrations, quotations and other material found in the section called **Sermon Illumination** that may be helpful in your sermon development and delivery.

## **Introduction**

The schoolyard see-saw can teach us a lot about life. One learns very quickly that he affects his partner's ride and his partner affects his. Each adjusts his position to achieve balance and the riding friends glide rhythmically and comfortably on the see-saw. It becomes scary when individuals larger or heavier exploit one's vulnerability by inappropriate use of their weight or by dismounting unexpectedly. The see-saw, that could bring so much joy, becomes a place of pain.

## **The Relational "Seesaw"**

A close relationship with another family member, a friend, or fellow believer at church creates relationship linkages that may be compared to the experience on a see-saw. As each of us mounts the relational "see-saw," our personal characteristics, such as temperament, emotional well-being and social status, combine to constitute the "weight" or personal power which we exert on our end. The way we use our weight affects our experience and our partner's experience. As is true of childhood play on the seesaw, the ride feels most satisfying when there is a sense of balance and a pleasurable rhythm.

## **Hindrances to Relational Balance**

It takes goodwill on the part of each child to achieve an enjoyable ride for both himself and his friend on a see-saw. Likewise individuals experience the most satisfying relationships when there is unconditional acceptance and warm regard for each other. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). The absence of this spirit may make the relationship unsatisfying at best and, at worst, painful, perhaps even terrifying.

- **Selfishness.** The sinfulness of humanity is often expressed in self-centered thoughts and actions. Preoccupied with themselves, self-absorbed people tend to be less sensitive to the feelings of others. The caring concern for the other that is so necessary for a good relationship is skewed by selfish attitudes.

- **Social status.** Society tends to grant more social weight to some people than to others. For example, the wealthy enjoy more social weight than the poor, the employed more weight than the unemployed, the educated more than the uneducated, the physically attractive more than the unattractive, the talented more than the untalented. Custom often accords more social weight to parents than to their children, to men more than women, and to husbands more than wives. When those with this greater social weight are insensitive to their power in the relationship, or worse, take advantage of their power, abuse often results.

- **Adjustment efforts.** Because people depend heavily on their families and close relationships, those who sense their power to be weaker will likely attempt to adjust as much as they can around the dominating people in their families or relationship system in order to protect themselves and sustain the relationship. Alternative expressions of power may appear in an attempt to balance the system. These adjustment efforts may be overt or covert, wise or unwise, and may occur in healthy or unhealthy ways.<sup>1</sup>

- **A biblical example.** Jacob is an example of one who attempted to achieve greater power in his relationships (Genesis 27). As the firstborn, his twin, Esau, had important status. His interests and personality also endeared him to their father, Isaac. Furthermore, Esau personified what was then considered the ideal man—hairy, masculine features, adventurous, and a fearless hunter. He had two wives and sons. Jacob, on the other hand, was his mother Rebekah's favorite. A single man, he helped with meals and other domestic duties. In contrast to his brother, he was a "smooth" man. Both Jacob and his mother schemed to increase Jacob's power in the family, especially in the relationship with Esau. He took advantage of Esau's impulsiveness to secure the birthright. He exploited Isaac's old age impairments to win the patriarchal blessing of the firstborn. More honesty and openness in communication, a greater commitment to truthfulness, mutual sharing of feelings and a determination to resolve differences in ways that left each person feeling valued and important would have contributed to this family's harmony and peace. As it was, the ill-conceived efforts of all to gain advantage over others resulted in great emotional distress, anger, conflict and alienation.

### **Scriptural Prescription for Relational Balance: Equality and Mutuality**

The principles of equality and mutuality appear in Scripture as core characteristics of God's ideal for balance in relationships.

- **The creation record.** From creation, the two genders of humanity are presented as equals (Gen. 1:26-28). Their mutuality was evident in their sharing the image of God (vs. 26), receiving the same designation "man," Hebrew *Cadam*, (vss. 26, 27), participating together in the procreative blessing (vs. 28), and serving as co-regents with shared dominion over the earth (vs. 28).

- **The description of the curse.** By viewing the results of sin, we learn what ought *not* to happen in relationships. The bible presents the results of sin as a rulership of one over the other (Genesis 3:16), a self-centered seeking of power in relationships with marriage partners (Genesis 3:16), with siblings (Gen. 4:2-8; 37:3-28), and with parents (Gen. 27). Because of the curse, the relational see-saw is out of balance. There is domination, disregard for the rules of equity, fairness and justice, the creation of situations where the partner is manipulated, exploited, and abused.

- **The gospel.** The gospel seeks to rectify power imbalances. Christ broke down barriers which separated ethnic groups (Matt. 8:5-13), social classes (Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 19:2-10), men and women (Luke 10:42), children and parents (Matt. 19:13-15). The gospel eliminates the curse, it does not simply enable us to live more graciously with it.

It is not our job to perform the Curse more nicely, or in a more spiritual way than the rest of the world does. God has given us a new plan. It is our wonderful freedom to grow in relationships that carry out God's plan. (VanVonderen, 1992, p. 23)

### **A New Design for Relational Power: Empowerment**

Several important biblical concepts unfold the gospel design for relationships in which the sinful use of power is replaced with *empowerment*, the realization that we have strength and we can use it to help others. Our relationships as Christians flourish when these principles are adopted in our lives.

- **Equality and mutuality in Christ.** The apostle Paul catalogs the areas of human difference that tend to divide the race: religious, ethnic, cultural, political, social status, economic, and gender (Gal. 3:28). He might have extended the list to include: family of origin, nationality, age, education, appearance, and temperament. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has triumphed over sin which causes individuals to assume superiority over one another (Eph. 2:14-16). He has brought us together in Himself. We now may approach one another in fundamentally different ways, as relatives in Him because of His redemptive work.

- **The model of Christ.** Christ's putting superior power aside is the model for Christian living (Phil. 2:3, 4). He did not find it necessary to cling to His power and position as a source of His identity. The gospel call is for us to receive this mind of Christ as our own (Phil. 2:5).

- **Ministry to one another.** The apostles frequently present the practical side of caring and mutuality in Christ. The relational ties that bind us together are to receive a high priority:

- Love one another (John 15:12).
- Give preference to one another (Rom. 12:10).
- Serve one another (Gal. 5:13).
- Bear with one another (Eph. 4:2).
- Forgive one another (Col. 3:13).
- Comfort and edify one another (1 Thess. 5:11).

- **Empowerment.** The gospel overturns the sinful, selfish, self-centered misuse of power and replaces it with *empowerment*. "Empowering is the process of helping another recognize strengths and potentials within, as well as encouraging and guiding the development of these qualities" (Balswick and Balswick, 1989, p. 28). The Christian approach is to constantly be looking for ways to strengthen and encourage and build up one's relational partner.<sup>2</sup>

### **Counsel for the Aggressive and the Compliant**

The Bible addresses both groups who are potentially on either end of the relational see-saw: 1) those who, for whatever reason, may possess an extra measure of power and 2) those who may acquiesce or be too compliant. Christ and the apostles were aware of entrenched social customs that shaped the lives of believers, customs that would change ever so slowly. Yet they carefully presented Christian principles in language befitting their time which their hearers would understand, confident that, under the guidance of the Spirit, believers would steadily grow into conformity to the will of God. Three great gospel principles appear to apply directly to our riding together on our relational "see-saws":

**1. The more powerful are called to serve.** Jesus used the occasion of His disciples' request for positions of power to set in sharp contrast the way of the gospel with common practices in society (Matt. 20:20-28). The One who came not to be served brought an end to misuse of power, control and domination in relationships, "Whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all" (vs. 26 NEB).

**2. Passive, compliant individuals may grow stronger.** The gospel intention is to "strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees" (Is. 35:3). Some find in the counsel to endure suffering (1 Peter 2:19-21) a reason to remain passive, compliant, and yielding, even if victimized by a powerful person. Their suffering, goes the reasoning, accomplishes a purpose, perhaps their own salvation or the salvation of their abusers.

The letter of 1 Peter does not teach that suffering abuse will save anyone. Atonement for sin has been accomplished by a merciful God through the sufferings of Christ. Submission to suffering for the Lord's sake is not something to be sought. The apostle simply offers here a small consolation for his audience, mostly Christian slaves, who have no options. Their willingness to suffer may at least testify to the fact that they are part of the Lord's people who shun the use of force, abuse, and control in relationships. When other resources and possibilities are available to help victims escape destructive relationships, the use of such options is not necessarily contrary to the spirit of 1 Peter.

**3. All may submit to one another.** The concept of submission to one another "out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21) serves as the foundational principle for all Christian relationships. This principle is radically different from other well-intentioned efforts to help people "even the score at home and gain respect" ("Karate: Effective Tool . . .?", 1983).<sup>3</sup> Mutual submission introduces a totally different dynamic, a unique Christian dynamic, to relationships.

Mutual submission forms the backdrop for Paul's discussion of three of the most unequal relationships of his day: wife-husband, child-parent, slave-master (Eph. 5:22-6:9). In each case, society gave enormous power to the second in the pair. Paul addresses the weaker side of the relationship first

and places their particular submission in a Christian context. This, however, is followed by a directive to the one considered more powerful in society to also act in submissive ways. These directives must have astonished the believers of the first century:

- Husbands—to love sacrificially as did Christ (Eph. 5:25).
- Parents—to parent in ways that nurture children (6:4).
- Masters—to be caring, knowing that God, who is Master all, knows no partiality (6:9).<sup>4</sup>

### **Conclusion**

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, He calls us to relate to His other children as our relatives in Him. The power of the Holy Spirit enables believers to fellowship together in Christ, with a full appreciation of each other's essential equality and personal worth. The gospel has terminated the abuse of power in relationships. Loving Him first and most of all, we no longer want to exercise authority, power and control in ways that dishonor Him or one of His children. Instead, His Spirit in our hearts replaces control and manipulation with the concept of empowerment, the use of our strengths and abilities to serve others, to lift up the fallen, and to enable the unable.

Let us determine by His grace to bring our relationships into greater harmony with His plan. Let us avail ourselves of tools and resources available to us to change where there is need for change and to stretch and grow. Let us seek to do His will more fully.

### **Sermon Illumination**

**1.** John was a very forceful and dominating husband. He ordered his family about as if he were a military commander. When he said, "Jump," family members asked, "How high?" as they leaped. His wife, Mary, however, had her own way of dealing with him. One day, when he was in a particular rush to go someplace with her, he had gone out to the car to wait, a non-verbal signal that he wished her to hurry. When she didn't come as he had expected, he blew several sharp blasts on the horn. She heard the horn, but instead of going to the car, she went to the back of the house and leisurely inspected her rose garden, plucking a few weeds out and sniffing the fragrance of a few of the emerging blossoms. She made her way to the car in her own good time.

**2.** Empowering is a biblical model for a use of power which is completely contrary to the common use of power in the family or in society at large. Empowering can be defined as the attempt to establish power in another person. Empowering does not necessarily involve yielding to the wishes of another person or giving up one's own power to someone else. Rather, empowering is the active, intentional process of enabling another person to acquire power. The person who is empowered has gained power because of the encouraging behavior of the other.

Empowering is the process of helping another recognize strengths and potentials within, as well as encouraging and guiding the development of these qualities. It is the affirmation of another's ability to learn and grow and become all that he or she can be. It may require that the one who would empower others be willing to step back and allow the empowered to learn by doing and not by depending. The uniqueness of those being empowered must be respected and must be helped to see strength in their individual ways to be competent. Empowering does not involve controlling or



enforcing a certain way of doing and being. It is, rather, a reciprocal process in which empowering takes place between people in mutually enhancing ways. . . .

The power given by Jesus is power of a personal order—power which is mediated to the powerless. To us in our sinful and powerless condition God gives the ability to become children of God. This is the supreme example of human empowering. Jesus redefined power by his teaching and by his relating to others as a servant. Jesus rejected the use of power to control others, and instead affirmed the use of power to serve others, to lift up the fallen, to forgive the guilty, to encourage responsibility and maturity in the weak, and to enable the unable. (Balswick and Balswick, 1989, pp. 28, 29)

3. From our Christian perspective, a faulty understanding of how to achieve equal power in relationships is illustrated by the following experience:

Karate training allows abused wives to even the score at home and gain respect without permanently injuring their mates, suggests psychiatrist Robert Stolberg, M.D. . . . Stolberg noted the case of a New York City couple who came to him; the wife was periodically beaten by her husband. During consultation, the couple told Stolberg that they loved each other and wanted to stay together. While the husband promised never to abuse his wife again, this promise was not kept.

Stolberg then sent Gloria (not her real name) for training in karate. In just under six months, Stolberg and her instructor felt that she was ready to use her skills to stop her husband's violence. At the beginning of the next violent episode, Gloria pinned her husband to the floor and held him down for an hour. His behavior was what she had been told to expect. "He raged, he reasoned, then pleaded and finally wept in surrender." He never beat her again. ("Karate: Effective Tool for Battered Women?," 1983)

4. The letter of Paul to Philemon illustrates the principle of mutual submission at work in the world of the first century. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master, Philemon, which was in accordance with law and social convention. However, to Philemon, Paul gave the unique, radical Christian message to receive him "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother . . . in the Lord" (Philemon 16).

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# His Hands Wouldn't Go Round

by Archa O. Dart

Pedro looked like a giant toadstool that morning as he sat on a small stump with his poncho, or loose coat, thrown around his shoulders and his large sombrero, or hat, covering him completely. From his lofty seat on that high mountainside he could look for miles in every direction and watch the clouds as they constantly formed faces and images of man and beast. Pedro sat motionless, gazing into the quiet valley far below, while his goats nibbled at the short tough grass about him.

All at once he became aware that someone was coming up behind him. Before he had time to become frightened and run away, the stranger had smiled and spoken kindly to him. After talking for a little while, the man asked, "Sonny, how would you like to go to school?"

Now Pedro did not know whether going to school was like going to Lima, the big city on the other side of the mountains, or like going hunting. He had never heard of school before.

But the kind man told him so many interesting things about school that he decided that he would like to see what it was all about. So when the day came for the mission school to open, Pedro was right there. He saw a number of things that interested him in that little schoolroom, but there was one thing that was a great curiosity indeed. It was a queer little object on the teacher's desk. After a time, Pedro decided to ask the teacher what that queer little thing was.

"Teacher, what is this?"

"That, Pedro, is a clock," she answered.

Pedro didn't know any more now than he did before. "What is it for?" he asked.

"That tells me the time of the day," she replied.

"I can sit right here in this room and tell where the sun is all day long by that little clock. I can tell when it is time to eat dinner and when it is time to dismiss school, so you boys and girls can reach your homes before dark."

This was almost more than Pedro could believe.

The teacher explained further, "When the two hands of this clock point straight up, the sun will be right overhead. Your shadow will be the shortest at that time of day. And when the hands are right here at three o'clock, the sun will be about there," she said pointing to a spot in the west.

This all seemed very strange indeed to Pedro. But sure enough, when the teacher announced that it was time for their noonday lunch, Pedro saw that the hands of the clock were right straight up and the sun was directly overhead. He scarcely had any shadow at all. He wondered and wondered how that little clock could tell where the sun was all day long.

Day after day Pedro watched that clock. It seemed to know just where the sun was all the time.

One day the teacher said, "Pedro how would you like to have a clock of your own?"

"What? You mean one that I could take home with me to keep?"

"Yes, Pedro," she answered. "If you bring me your centavos—that is, pennies and nickels— I shall keep them for you until you have enough to buy a clock for your own."

Pedro was very happy. Every time he sold some of his goat cheese, he would give the money to his teacher, until finally he had quite a little sum.

One morning the teacher had a large package on her desk. "Pedro, come here," she greeted him when he arrived. "I have something for you."

No boy or girl has ever been any happier on a birthday than Pedro was that morning when the teacher handed him his clock. He danced about for joy. The teacher showed him how to wind it up with the key and start it by swinging the pendulum, or loose arm, as he called it. Pedro took the clock home and put it right by his little bed. It was the last thing he looked at each night and the first thing he saw in the morning.

But one morning when he looked at his clock, he found that the hands were not going round. The loose arm was not swinging. It was not making that queer little sound. He was afraid his clock was dead, but he took it to his teacher, as he had learned to do with all his troubles, and asked her to fix his clock. She took the clock, gave it a shake or two, and it began ticking again, and the hands began going around. Every time after that when his clock would stop, he would give it a shake, and it would begin ticking again.

One morning Pedro woke up and found that his clock has stopped during the night. He gave it a shake, but nothing happened. Another big shake, and another, and another. All the shaking that Pedro could give it did not start it ticking. He thought it was dead for sure this time. Again he brought the clock to his teacher for her to repair.

The teacher tried the same remedy, but nothing happened. The teacher handed it back to Pedro, saying, "Pedro, I cannot repair your clock. I do not know what is wrong with it, but there is a man in Lima who makes and repair clocks. He can make it go all right. You take it to him, and he will make the hands go round again."

This brought some hope to Pedro. He was relieved to know that there was someone who could

repair his clock. He took his clock back home and waited for the day to come when he and his father would make another trip to Lima.

All this time Pedro was getting along very well in the new mission school. He was learning many things. But one day he found himself standing by the teacher's desk, twisting his thumbs. He felt that everything was not just right with him. The look on the teacher's face told him plainly that he was in trouble.

The teacher began in a very solemn manner, "Pedro, you are not acting right out on the playground. When the other boys do not do as you say, and you do not have your own way, you begin to hit them with your fist. I thought you wanted to become a man, to be a real hero, to be a Christian gentleman. No Christian gentleman uses his fist to gain his point. Only cowards do that."

"Yes, teacher, I do want to be a real man, a Christian gentleman," Pedro answered quietly, "but there is something wrong with my hand. When a boy does something that I do not like, before I know it, my hand has hit him. I am sorry for it, but you see there's something wrong with my hand. I can't control it."

"Oh, no," answered the teacher, "there is nothing wrong with your hand, Pedro. Your hand is all right, but there is something wrong inside you."

Pedro felt his chest. What could the teacher mean? "Oh, no teacher, there is nothing wrong inside. I feel all right in there."

"Yes, Pedro, you have something wrong inside that makes your hand hit boys the way it does."

Pedro was puzzled. He thought a great deal about what the teacher had said. Everything went along as usual for a few days. Then Pedro found himself back by the teacher's desk again. He was twisting his thumbs as before, for he was afraid that something was certainly coming this time. The teacher had that same expression on her face.

"Pedro," the teacher began in a solemn tone, "I thought you wanted to become a brave, good soldier for the Lord, but sometimes I hear you call some of the children names. You say things that are not good. Why do you do that?"

"Oh, teacher, I do want to be a good boy and become a real brave soldier for the Lord, but there is something wrong with my tongue. When the boys and girls do things that I do not like, this tongue of mine says things that I do not want to say. I am sorry, but I cannot control it."

"No, Pedro," answered his teacher, "there is nothing wrong with that tongue of yours. It is all right, but there is something wrong inside of you."

Pedro thought she must be mistaken. He felt his chest. He felt all around. He was not sore anywhere. "No, teacher, there is nothing wrong inside. I do not hurt there at all."

"Yes, Pedro, there is something wrong inside of you, and until you get right inside, your tongue will continue to speak bad words."

Pedro went home thinking of what the teacher had told him. But still he could not make out just what was wrong inside of him. Several days went by, and he tried to be just as good a boy as he could.

By and by Pedro's father said, "Son, get your cheeses ready. We are going to Lima tomorrow to sell them." That was delightful news to him. Right away he thought of his clock.

The next morning when they had everything ready and were about to start, Pedro went into his room to get his clock. He stopped a moment to look at it. It was a large clock. It would get rather heavy with the other things he was planning to carry with him over the mountain. You see, he had no automobile or streetcar to ride in. He had to walk all the way.

Then, too, *all* the clock did not need repairing. The wood part was as good as ever, the numbers on the face were still all right, the back had not changed. In fact, the only thing that was wrong, so

Pedro thought, was that the hands wouldn't go round. A bright idea came into his mind. Pedro opened the glass door of the clock and very carefully removed the two hands from the face, wrapped them up in a piece of paper, and put them into his pocket.

At last they arrived in the city of Lima, Pedro went directly to the watchmaker and unwrapped the two hands before the man. "Here, Señor, these hands will not go round, I want you to fix them so they will go."

The man smiled and said, "Sonny, I cannot fix those hands."

"Oh, yes, you can," Pedro pleaded. "My teacher says you can. I must have them fixed. They will not go round."

Seeing how anxious the little fellow was to have his clock repaired the good man explained, "Now see here, young man, there is nothing wrong with those hands. They are all right, but there is something wrong with the inside of your clock. Inside of your clock there are a number of little screws and wheels, and when dust or dirt or water or rust gets into them, they stop, and that stops the hands from going around. The next time you come to Lima, you bring me the *inside* of your clock, and I shall be happy to clean it and fix it so the hands will go around all right on the outside."

Pedro wrapped the hands up again and put them back into his pocket. On the way home he began thinking of what the watchmaker had said. It seemed very strange indeed that dirt and dust on the inside would keep the hands from going round on the outside. Then he thought of something. He would find out as soon as he got back to school.

He went to his teacher and told her what had happened in Lima about his clock. Then he added, "Teacher, what kind of screws and wheels are inside of me that need fixing?"

The teacher said, "Pedro, I have been waiting for you to ask that question for a long, long time. You see, Jesus, who made you, put something

inside of you that can think. When you allow bad thoughts to come into your mind, you do bad things. It's just like getting dirt or rust into your clock. Every time you think about taking something that does not belong to you, or telling something that is not true, it is allowing dirt to come into your mind. But it is not easy to get into our minds to clean out all that dirt."

"How can I have my mind cleaned up?" asked Pedro.

"You do not need to go to Lima, Pedro, but you can begin by kneeling down right down here at my desk and asking Jesus to clean you up inside. Then your hands will do kind, loving acts, and your tongue will speak sweet, pleasant words."

Dart, A. O. (1966). *Tips for storytellers*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association. Adapted and used by permission.

# Reggie's Angry Face

by Gary Oliver, adapted by Ron Flowers\*

Reggie liked to make funny faces and do silly things just to get his friends laughing and smiling. Reggie had one face though, that sometimes would scare his friends away. When Reggie got really angry, his face wasn't funny anymore.

One hot summer day, Reggie went looking for his friends. He hoped that no matter what happened, he would be able to keep his angry face hidden away. He wanted his friends to like him, not be scared off by his anger.

As he came to the end of the block, he saw Carla, Elwood and Bruce just standing around. "Hi, what are you doing?" he said. Carla answered, "We can't decide what to do."

"Let's go see if we can get some friends and play ball," said Reggie.

"Play ball? You've got to be kidding," Carla remarked. "I'm no good at playing ball."

Reggie was frustrated, but he didn't want his friends to know. So he **stuffed** his anger inside. But he could still feel it. And when he did this, his eyes began to get squinty.

"What about hide and seek," said Reggie.

"I hate that game," said Bruce, who was quite fat and couldn't run very fast. "I always lose."

This time Reggie **stomped** his foot in anger, but he didn't tell Bruce what he was feeling. And now not only were his eyes still squinty, but he could feel his ears getting bright red and hot.

Finally, with a pouty kind of voice, Reggie said, "How about all of us racing to the park and we can throw rocks in the creek." He was a fast runner.

Elwood, who was also a fast runner said, "Let's go." So off they ran.

Elwood was faster than Reggie that day. And when Elwood beat him, he got very, very angry.

His eyes were still squinty and his ears bright red and hot. In a loud voice he **snapped**, "You guys are no fun and I don't want to play with you anymore."

Bruce, who just got to the park in time to hear Reggie say this, said, "Reggie, you're our friend. And usually you're funny and we like to play with you. But when you **stuff** and **stomp** and **snap**, you change. Then we don't like to be with you."

With that, Bruce and Elwood and Carla walked away.

"Well, I never liked them anyway," Reggie mumbled as he stomped around the park and scuffed stones with his shoes. "I'll go to my secret place and play by myself."

His secret place was in a little grassy spot behind a lilac bush next to the fence at the far corner of the lot behind his family's house. When he felt like nobody liked him, when he didn't understand his feelings, when he wanted to feel safe, Reggie would go to this secret place.

"Nobody will find me here," he muttered. So he sat and sat and muttered and muttered. There was no one to make him frustrated, or hurt, or sad. But there was nobody to talk to either. He thought he would feel better, but he didn't. He felt lonely.

Suddenly, he heard a noise. Somebody was nearby, just on the other side of the fence. He looked up to see Mr. Jones peering over the fence at him. Mr. Jones was retired, and he had a flower garden just on the other side. Reggie hoped Mr. Jones hadn't heard him muttering.

"Is that you, Reggie? What are you doing here alone?" Mr. Jones asked.

"Just having fun by myself," Reggie muttered and looked down at the ground.

"If you're having so much fun, why do you look and sound so sad?"

"I'm angry and I want go to be alone," Reggie replied.

Mr. Jones looked deep into Reggie's eyes and said, "Sometimes when we get hurt or feel frustrated, we get angry. And sometimes if we sit on our anger, it can become red hot. And when we let our anger get red hot, we can do or say things that hurt people."

"What do you do when you feel red-hot anger?" asked Reggie.

"My feelings don't get red hot very often."

Reggie was surprised to hear Mr. Jones say that. He thought everyone felt things the same way he did. "Why don't your feelings get red hot very often?" he asked.

"Because," said Mr. Jones, "when I start to get angry, I've learned to talk about what I'm feeling."

Reggie replied, "When I get angry, I stuff and stomp and snap."

Mr. Jones reached down to pick off a dead blossom from one of his flowers, "Does it help you to stuff and stomp and snap?"

"It doesn't," Reggie admitted.

"And how do you feel when your friends don't like you?"

"I feel hurt and sad. And then I feel mad."

"So, sometimes when you feel mad, it's because you first felt hurt and sad?" asked Mr. Jones.

"I guess so," said Reggie. "I had never thought of that."

"Well," said Mr. Jones, "if stuffing and stomping and snapping don't help, what else could you do that might work better?"

Reggie didn't know how to answer.

Mr. Jones turned to go. Next time you want to stuff and stomp and snap, tell your friends what you feel and see if that helps.

Next day, Reggie went by himself to the park to throw stones in the creek. He saw his friends having a wonderful time at the other side of the park playing hide and seek. He went over to them and hoped they would invite him to play. "Hi," he said. They waved back, but continued with their game. They did not invite him to play. Reggie felt really hurt inside. He felt sad.

When Elwood saw that he was sad and not mad, he called, "Reggie, would you like to play with us?"

"Sure," said Reggie. But in his eagerness to get to his friends, he slipped in the mud at the edge of the creek and fell in. He had mud all over. He heard his friends start to snicker. When he stumbled toward them, they laughed even louder.

Reggie was embarrassed that he had fallen in the mud. He didn't like his friends laughing at him. He felt his eyes grow squinty and his ears get red and hot. He snapped. But this time he said something different. "It doesn't feel good to be laughed at!"

"We're not making fun of you. We thought you were being silly again."

Reggie looked down at himself. He did look pretty funny. He began to laugh at himself. It felt good to laugh instead of stuffing or stomping or snapping.

Then they all went back to their game of hide and seek.

\* Adapted from *Hip Hop and His Famous Face*, Chariot Victor Publishing, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Chariot Victor Publishing.

# How Spot and Stripe Made Peace

*The Toymaker, adapted by Ron Flowers\**

*This story illustrates in a striking way how human beings are connected together through their Creator. You will need a number of small blocks of wood or cardboard for the wall, a small mirror, two small sticks, and two simple mitten-style hand puppets, one with a spotted face and the other with stripes.*

Spot: *(He comes in singing.)* I'm like you, you're like me. We're like each other and it's fun to be! Wheeeee! *(Spot and Stripe laugh).* Well, what shall we do today? Would you like to build something with my building blocks?

Stripe: Oh, I don't know. You build something with my blocks.

Spot: *(Laughter)* Well, it really doesn't matter who builds with what, as we are both alike.

Stripe: Yes!

Spot: Isn't it nice we have the same kind of head!

Stripe: Yes, and the same kind of hands.

Spot: Yes, and the same kind of shirt.

Stripe: Yes, and the same kind of spots!

Spot: What did you say?

Stripe: I said it's nice we both have spots!

Spot: Who has spots?

Stripe: We do!

Spot: *(Laughter)* You mean stripes. We have stripes!

Stripe: Well, I know the difference between spots and stripes!

Spot: All I know is that we have stripes!

Stripe: Spots!

Spot: Stripes!

Stripe: Spots!

Spot: Spots! I mean stripes!

Stripe: Don't be silly. Look at yourself!

Spot: How can I look at myself?

Stripe: In a mirror! Here!

Spot: *(He looks.)* Hey! I *do* have spots!

Stripe: That's what I told you. We have spots!

Spot: No! No! Just me! You have



- stripes. *(He shows him the mirror.)* Look!
- Stripe: *(Looking in the mirror)* Hey, I do have stripes!
- Spot: That's what I told you.
- Stripe: Yeaah! And they're very handsome too! *(He whispers to himself.)* He doesn't have stripes. Only I have stripes. There must be something special about me. I don't know that I ought to have any more to do with him. *(Admiring himself in the mirror again)* Mm . . .mmm! Oh, you handsome fellow!
- (Looking again at Spot, he mutters to himself.)* He's different from me. I'd better watch him. You can't trust people who are different! They might take advantage of you. I'll just not have any more to do with him. Instead, I'll play with my own blocks. *(Stripe begins to build a wall with his blocks.)*
- (Spot begins to build also. A common wall goes up between them with each adding a block when the other isn't looking.)*
- Stripe: There now! And you stay on your side of the wall! I don't allow anybody over here unless he has stripes like mine!
- Spot: Well, who cares! I wouldn't come over there if you begged me to! Stripes! Stripes are nothing. Anybody can have stripes. Chipmunks have stripes. *(He shouts over the wall.)* Skunks have stripes!
- Stripe: *(Stripe, upset with Spot's remarks, peers around the wall and jeers.)* Nah, nah, ni, nah, nah. Blaaaaaaaaah! *(He retreats behind the wall and then calls out.)* So what are you going to do about it? *(No answer)* What's the matter? Are you jealous or something?
- Spot: *(Spot creeps close to the wall and makes a loud noise like a gun firing.)* Bang! Bang! Bang! *(He chuckles to himself.)*
- Stripe: Sounds like a gun! I'll bet it is a gun! He's getting ready to fight me! *(Sounds frightened).* I don't want to fight him. What am I going to do?
- Spot: Now what do you think, Stripe? *(Silence)* It's too quiet over there. He's up to something. He's probably getting ready to hurt me! I don't want to fight him! I don't want to fight anybody! If I could just scare him enough, then he wouldn't dare hurt me!
- Stripe: *(Stripe pretends he is a big snake and practices making loud hissing sounds and snake-biting gestures.)* I'm a big snake! *(Laughter)* When old Spot meets me, he will run like a sissy! Yeaah!
- Spot: *(Spot pretends he is a lion and growls fiercely.)* I am a lion. *(He laughs)* When Stripe meets the

king of beasts he'll fall in a faint. *(More laughter)*. I guess I'd better practice my roar.

*(Each one dances around on his side of the wall, getting ready to look over it to scare the other.)*

Both: *(They suddenly look over the wall, making their fierce noises and gestures at each other. Both then scream in fear and retreat.)*

Spot: *(Crying)* He's too big for me to fight! I'm too little! *(He wails)* I need help!! There's nothing to me but my little head *(touching each part)* and my little hands and my little shirt and . . . *(He discovers a large arm and then sees the Toymaker)*. Ooooooh! Who are you?

Toymaker: I am the Toymaker!

Spot: What do you make?

Toymaker: I made you.

Spot: You did?

Toymaker: Yes.

Spot: Well then, do you like me?

Toymaker: Yes, very much.

Spot: Well, if you like me, you must be on my side! And you're so big, too! Much bigger than my friend, Stripe, I mean my enemy, Stripe. Wait till I go get my club and I'll

show old Stripe who's more important around here. *(He leaves to get his club.)*

Stripe: *(Stripe moans and cries.)* What am I going to do? I can't fight him. He's too fierce. I know what I'll do, I'll hide. Here's a hill *(the Toymaker's biceps and shoulder.)* I'll climb up in the hills and hide. *(He climbs up the Toymaker's arm and snuggles behind his neck.)*

Toymaker: What are you doing?

Stripe: I'm climbing this hill . . . Wait a minute! . . . Hills can't talk! See here! You're no hill!

Toymaker: No, I'm the one who made you!

Stripe: Well, when did you get here?

Toymaker: I've been here all the time.

Stripe: Well, I never saw you before!

Toymaker: You never looked. But I'm right with you every minute.

Stripe: Is that so?! Well, then I can beat the spots off Spot! You will be right behind me?

Toymaker: Oh, I'll be closer than that!

Stripe: Good! *(To himself)* I wonder what he meant by that? Oh, well, with him behind me, what can I lose! *(He leaves to get his weapon.)*

*(Spot returns with a club, humming*

- a military song behind his wall. Stripe comes with a stick.)*
- Stripe: *(Taunting from behind his wall)*  
All right you over there, get ready to fight like a man! *(He beats the air with his stick.)* I defy you! *(The swinging of his stick breaks parts of the wall and they grimace at each other.)*
- Spot: *(Challenging)* You'd better not hit anybody with that stick, boy!
- (Spot cries out as the blows fall on him.)* Ow! Ow! Ow!
- (They exchange blows, with shouts and cries of pain. Finally they butt heads and knock each other unconscious.)*
- (As Spot regains consciousness, the Toymaker is sitting in the background.)*
- Spot: What happened! Something went wrong. What became of the Toymaker?
- Toymaker: I'm still right here.
- Spot: Well, I thought you were on my side!
- Toymaker: I am.
- Spot: Then why didn't you help me beat Stripe?
- Toymaker: Because I'm on his side too. *(Stripe regains consciousness.)*
- Spot: You are?
- Toymaker: Of course. I made you both, and I love you both. And I couldn't take sides against either of you. After all, you are both the same thing.
- Spot: Oh, no, we're not. We're very different! I have nothing in common with him!
- Toymaker: Well, lets see if that's so. Stripe, go over and hit Spot.
- Spot: Now wait a minute!
- Toymaker: Be still, Spot. I just want to show you something. Go ahead, Stripe.
- Stripe: *(Stripe hits Spot with his fist. Spot howls with pain. Stripe laughs at first, then sadly drops his head.)*  
Ooooh!
- Toymaker: What's the matter, Stripe?
- Stripe: I don't know . . . I don't feel so good. I guess I don't really want to hit him.
- Toymaker: That's what I want you both to understand. Do you know what you are?
- Stripe: Sure! Here's my little head and my little hand and my little shirt and my . . . a . . . a . . .and your arm, and your shoulder and you! And I'm part me and I'm part you!
- Toymaker: Yes, but there's more than that. Keep going.

Stripe: Well, then there's your other shoulder and your other arm and then, there's . . . Spot! Hey, Spot! We're all one thing! You, me and the Toymaker!

Spot: *(To Stripe)*  
Then, when you hit me it hurts you, because . . .

Toymaker: Because?

Stripe: Because I'm really hurting part of myself.

Toymaker: That's right.

Spot: But wait! I have spots and he has stripes. If we are both the same thing, why don't we look alike?

Toymaker: I never make any two things look exactly alike. Else how could anyone tell them apart? But you are really both the same. You are *really* part of me.

Stripe: Hey, Spot?

Spot: Yeah?

Stripe: If the Toymaker is always with us, then we don't need to be afraid! Or angry or lonely.

Spot: You can play with my blocks any time you want to!

Stripe: Thank you. That makes me very happy.

Spot: And that makes me very happy!  
*(He laughs in a deep giggle.)*

Both: *(They sing.)* I am you, you are me.  
We are each other and it's fun to be.

\* Adapted from the film script *The Toymaker(1959)*.  
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# Putting Anger in Its Place

*A Marriage Enrichment Seminar*

*by Karen and Ron Flowers, Directors*

*Department of Family Ministries, General Conference*

*with Harold and Nelma Drake, Marriage Enrichment Facilitators, NAD*

## **Theme**

Anger is a God-given emotion. With proper management under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit, our anger can help us grow in marital intimacy.

## **How to Use These Resources**

These resources are designed for a marriage enrichment program of 1-2 hours in length. The materials may be adapted for use with support groups and presentations to audiences of youth and singles. Along with the **Presentation Module** the following components are supplied to support the seminar:

## **Presentation Helps**

#1 *An Angry Episode: David and Michal*

#2 *Anger and Intimacy* (camera-ready master for an overhead transparency)

## **Handouts**

#1 *Guidelines*

#2 *An Angry Episode: Reflections*

#3 *When Anger Flares*

## **Reprinted Article**

*The Walls of Anger* may be used as additional resource material for presenters and/or distributed to participants as follow-up reading.

The presentation will be most effective if shared by one or more husband-wife teams as presenters. Appropriate preparation for this seminar by presenters should include familiarization with the topic of anger through study and/or consultation with a qualified mental health professional. Awareness and prior processing of one's own anger issues are an important prerequisite. Also, recognition of the limitations of the enrichment seminar environment and the extent of one's expertise in working with anger issues are also essential. Responsible leadership includes adherence to the seminar guidelines, sharing one's own personal material with discretion, maintaining individual and group confidentiality, and advocating follow-up with professionals for interested individuals or couples. A listing of professional counselors for your area should be made available for distribution.

## **Suggested Seminar Outline**

Welcome and Distribution of *Guidelines*

Dramatic Presentation: *An Angry Episode: David and Michal*

Reflections

Presentation module

Leader couple dialogue  
Participants' exercise and dialogue  
Closing

### **Welcome and Guidelines**

After a welcome and general introduction to the program, distribute and read with the group Handout #1 *Guidelines*.

### **Dramatic Presentation**

See Presentation Helps #1 *An Angry Episode: David and Michael*

### **Reflections on 2 Sam. 6:12-23**

Following the dramatic presentation *An Angry Episode*, read the Scripture passage from 2 Sam. 6:12-23. Then allow for a brief reflection and response to the biblical episode and the drama. Handout #2 *An Angry Episode: Reflections* includes several questions which may be distributed for couples or small groups to consider. As an alternate approach, discuss one or more of these questions with the group as a whole. Without extensive comments, proceed with the presentation module, using your own adaptation of the material that follows.

## **Presentation Module**

### **Introduction**

Anger in the homes of God's people is a reality common to all, yet one which is hard to acknowledge. It is often a carefully guarded secret; in public we put our best selves forward. In times of greatest stress, when our anger does escape our best attempts at concealment, it is typical for us to call it by another name to justify its presence.

One woman at a seminar on anger blurted out, "Good Christians don't get angry, and this whole discussion *irritates* me!" A cartoon we once saw showed a ruffled pastor responding to a church member's query as to whether he was angry. "Good Christians do *not* get angry," he stoutly affirmed. "They may get vexed in their spirits, but *they do not get angry!*" Though called by any other name, the emotion is the same. Scripture, as we have seen, however, candidly shows that God's people experience anger as a part of their human makeup and as an inevitable part of their relationships.

### **Anger Is Inevitable in Intimate Relationships**

It is not unusual for individuals living in close relationship to each other to experience some friction and anger (See Presentation Helps #2 *Anger and Intimacy*). For example, one of the presenting causes of anger in our marriages is often our differentness. Ironically, characteristics we found attractive in each other in the beginning may cause friction later on. When we come to marriage, we each bring our own suitcase. On our wedding day these are deposited side by side. Marriage is the process of bringing these two suitcases together into one—not his or hers, but theirs. That can be challenging, causing anger to appear.

*(Illustration: Bring two actual suitcases packed with items which symbolize him and her. Items may be displayed piece by piece showing their different interests, characteristics, etc. that they bring to their relationship.)*

If we are able to process and resolve our anger, we can progress toward deeper intimacy. If not, we may be propelled further away from each other in the direction opposite from the intimacy we seek. If unresolved, anger will likely be destructive to relationships. At best, it short-circuits our energy for growth and leads to persistent low-level hostility. At worst, anger can become violent and abusive. The good news is that we can come to understand our emotion of anger, bring it under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, learn to appreciate it, and harness its energy for the good of our relationships.

### **An Emotion with a Good Purpose**

Anger is an important part of our God-given human emotional package. While all our feeling capacities have been altered by sin, it is the purpose of the gospel to bring about a restoration, a healing of our emotions, so that they fulfill God's intentions for them. As a passionate expression of a self-centered heart, uncontrolled by God's Spirit, anger is destructive to individuals and to relationships. Scripture condemns such angry attitudes and behaviors (Ps. 37:8; Gal. 5:19-21). These belong to the "old man" which Christians are called to "put off" (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8).

Anger is an emotion of an individual in Christ (Eph. 4:22-27). The apostle indicates that believers are to be angry, yet not sin (vs. 26). Anger and sin can and should be separated. Ellen G. White supports the concept of anger as appropriate for Christians:

*It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening their heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven. (The Desire of Ages, p. 310 Emphasis supplied)*

As we unfold the pertinent Scriptures and this supporting thought by Ellen G. White, we discover that anger has at least these important purposes:

- **Anger defends God's name and cause.** Jesus was angry at the attitude and behavior shown toward the worship of God (Matt. 21:12; Mar. 11:5; John 2:14-17; Compare Ex. 32:19).
- **Anger opposes all injustice and oppression of the innocent.** Jesus was angry at the attitude and behavior shown toward the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-5). All human beings, ourselves included, are valuable to God. Mistreatment of innocent human beings should arouse anger in us (Compare Neh. 5:6; 2 Sam. 12:5).
- **Anger signals the need for attention in some part of our life or our relationships.** Anger serves as an early warning system. A number of Christian authors have considered this feature of anger:

Sometimes people signal us to warn or alert us to something we are not fully aware of at that moment. Those signals are for our own benefit. We learn to listen to them. But one of the signals of life that we don't always listen to is anger. *It is a message system telling us that something is not right.* We may be hurt, needs may be unmet, our rights have been violated, or we have recognized an injustice. *Anger tells us that there is something in our life that needs to be addressed.* (Oliver & Wright, 1992, p. 22 Emphasis supplied)

Anger will never be sinful if we learn to make it the servant of our love and use it creatively to promote the growth and enrichment of our relationship. . . . Two analogies may be helpful:

1. Anger is like the smoke-alarm signal in your home. It warns you when there is danger and enables you to take appropriate action.

2. Anger is like the squeak in the motor of your car, which tells you that something needs to be fixed. Attend to it, and the car will run better than ever. Ignore or avoid it, and you may end up with a breakdown on a lonely road on some dark and stormy night. (Mace, 1982, p. 80)

- **Anger limits the acceptance of abuse.** Abuse is an extraordinary expression of injustice and oppression, the exploitation of an individual in an intimate, trusting relationship. The emotion of anger (along with the underlying emotions of fear and hurt) generated in the abused individual are reliable warning indicators of the violation. Anger stimulates action to limit the abuse and secure self-protection. The Psalmist experienced anger at his mistreatment, gave voice to his distress, sought help, and called out for a redress of the wrong done to him (Ps. 4:1-8; compare Ps. 7:1, 6, 10; 35:1, 2, 4, 17, 23, 24; Luke 18:3-8).

### When Anger Harms Relationships

Anger patterns among couples typically take the form of *venting*, *suppressing*, or *processing* (Mace, 1982). By their nature the first two of these are more harmful than helpful to the relationship.

- **Vented anger.** Vented anger takes the form of verbal outbursts that range from raised tones of voice, crying, and screaming, to shouting, cursing, hurling insults and other vocal means of releasing anger. Vented anger can be physical--stomping about, hitting or kicking things, throwing objects, slamming doors, or otherwise acting out the anger energy in physical ways. Often it has the effect of shutting down responses from opposition and creating distance from others. Vented anger may soon dissipate after the verbal or physical outburst. However, such anger creates alienation in relationships. It is the form of anger most commonly condemned by Christians, due to its obviousness and its dramatic effects.

- **Suppressed anger.** Suppressed anger is the emotion pushed down inside an individual. There may be outright denial of the feeling, an attempt to seek peace at any price, or an attitude of "Let's just forget it." Other manifestations of suppressed anger include: putting up a sweet phony front to camouflage the anger ("Just as you wish, dear"); silence to punish; criticism, nagging, or passive-aggressive behavior. Suppressed anger is stored and will appear forcefully, perhaps with only the slightest provocation, after building up over time. Research indicates that suppressed anger has



detrimental effects upon health, including greater incidence of heart disease, cancer, accidents, suicide and earlier age of death (Oliver & Wright, 1992). Not readily identifiable, suppressed anger is often thought to be acceptable. It leads, however, to low-key hostility in relationships.

*[A note about rage. While this seminar is designed to help couples with normal ranges of anger, it is important to note that for some, the anger being vented or suppressed in their relationships may transcend normal ranges. Their anger response seems to far surpass that which could in any way be construed as appropriate to the circumstances. Rage, as this intense anger is called, has complex characteristics beyond the scope of this seminar. Bussert (1986) suggests that the cultural socialization of males often deprives them of normal feeling responses. "The so-called heart emotions such as sadness, hurt, disappointment, regret, feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability, are all channeled into and given expression in one single emotion—explosive anger" (pp. 44, 45). Oliver and Wright (1992) point out that explosive rage and fury exhibited by both men and women in adulthood is related to over control as well as denial and repression of anger in one's family during childhood. Seminar leaders should suggest professional follow-up to individuals or couples whose expressions of anger involve rage.]*

### **How to Be Angry Without Sinning**

While anger is our enemy when it is vented and suppressed, it can become our friend when it is processed. Processing anger involves several steps:

- **Acknowledge the emotion.** Growing couples who take a positive approach to anger give each other permission to be angry and to report this anger immediately without a sense of guilt, as easily as they report being hungry or tired. Part of their agreement is to *never* attack, blame, put down, or belittle each other for acknowledging the feeling. While they realize that the anger may reside in only one of them, they make a commitment to work on it and resolve it together when it gets expressed in the relationship.
- **Share in a non-problem time.** Look at the situation as objectively as possible, allowing first for sufficient time to pass so that the heat of the emotion is not likely to pose a barrier to its resolution. Patience with each other is important, since within couples there is frequently a difference in how speedily they each can address an anger issue.
- **Explore the primary emotions.** What processing anger does is to say in effect, "We got angry with each other, and we need to find out exactly why. Anger is a secondary emotion, usually triggered off by one or more underlying primary emotions. Let's try to explore our anger to get back to the primary emotions—fear, frustration, lowered self-esteem, hurt feelings, etc.—that produced the anger in the first place. Then let's see how we can help each other work through those deeper feelings." (Mace, 1982, p. 80).

Many of us are not accustomed to analyzing our anger. So often it arises so quickly that we do not discern its components. This step attempts to carefully identify the feelings that gave rise to the anger.

*(Illustration: Draw the outline of an iceberg on a chalkboard or an overhead transparency, with the larger portion underwater. Write "Anger" above the waterline as the secondary emotion. Then ask participants to suggest the primary emotions—fear, hurt, frustration, etc.—which are under the waterline, beneath the anger. Save the lowest portion of the diagram for "low self-worth.")*

"By getting behind the anger to the hurt feeling that has triggered it, a couple can learn something important about their relationship and clear it up. This is one of the most valuable ways in which relationships grow" (Mace & Mace, 1953, p. 58).

- **Listen for feelings.** Listen for feelings and accept one another, even though the feelings expressed may be difficult to hear. Talk together about the deeper feelings, what they mean and how they could be resolved.

*(Illustration: Draw the outline of an inflated balloon. Show the balloon full of "FEELINGS," with "facts" in small letters nearly lost at the bottom of the feelings. Show how, as the partner listens for feelings and endeavors to reflect these feelings unconditionally, it is like opening a hole in the balloon and allowing the inflated "feelings" of the other to drain out. Simultaneously, the "facts" grow larger and the one who has been angry is better able to get facts and feelings into perspective.)*

- **Give affirmation.** At the foundation of much of our anger are perceived attacks on our personal worth (*Review the iceberg diagram showing low self-worth at the bottom*). Anger is a healthy defense for the person who has a secure sense of personal worth rooted in creation and redemption. But sin has so warped us that many of us struggle to accept ourselves as valuable and we harbor the internal conviction that we are worthless human beings. Anger then becomes for us a desperate means of protecting ourselves, of guarding from the discovery of others the awful truth we believe about ourselves.

Jesus can bring healing to our damaged emotions. The answer to our inner sense of worthlessness can only be found in Him who created us and redeemed us and bestowed inestimable worth upon us, not for who we are or anything we have done, but because of who He is and what He has done. By our positive attitude toward each other in times of anger, by our commitment to work through the anger, and hear the hurting heart of our partner, we can be Christ's instruments to get that message of His love and value through to our partner in a practical way.

### **Leader Couple Dialogue**

*(Talk together in front of the group for a few moments about the way you have confronted anger in your marriage. Show that you have not always done so in a positive way, but are learning to use anger more constructively in your marriage. This dialogue between you as spouses will help to model for the couples the process you have been describing and give them an example of how they are to proceed with the exercise which follows.)*

### **Participant's Exercise and Dialogue**

Distribute Handout #3 *When Anger Flares*. Invite couples to take 10 minutes to fill out the worksheet and a final 10 minutes to share their responses with each other.



**Closing**

Affirm couples for their attention and hard work together. Encourage them to continue discussing together the concepts they have learned. Pray to close.

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## An Angry Episode: David and Michal

A Dramatization of 2 Samuel 6:12-23

Michal: *(Pacing the floor)*

David has had nothing on his mind for weeks except the moving of that ark! I don't know why he's so anxious to get it here after what happened the last time! But he's not listening to me anyway. They've been gone all day; I don't know what's taking so long.

*(She pauses, then speaks again with disgust.)*

And David, the King of all Israel, left here this morning dressed like a common priest. He said something about being on an equality with his subjects and lifting up only Jehovah. I think it's going a bit far.

*(She peers out the window.)*

Look, there they are now approaching Jerusalem. Oh, I can't believe my eyes! I am so mortified! After all I've done to protect him. How can he embarrass me like this? How will I ever face the people as a queen with him making a fool of himself in the streets? See for yourself! He leaps and whirls like a school boy without sense!

*(She clenches her fists and speaks with disdain.)*

Singing with the commoners to the gates! "Lift up your heads!" Yes, "Lift up your heads" all right! "Lift up your heads and watch your King act like a childish fool!"

David: *(He enters the room where Michal is and calls out his greeting with great delight.)*

Blessings be upon the household of David! This day the ark of the covenant has been returned to Jerusalem! Blessings and honor and glory be to Him who reigns on High forever and ev . . .

Michal: *(Interrupting him)*

What a sight was the King of Israel today! Running around undressed in front of the servant girls like a fool who takes off his clothes without shame.

David: *He pauses, stunned, then responds, his voice quaking with anger.)*

What I did, I did for the Lord! You seem to forget that the Lord chose me to take your father's place! He didn't choose anyone from Saul's family, but appointed me to be the leader of His people.

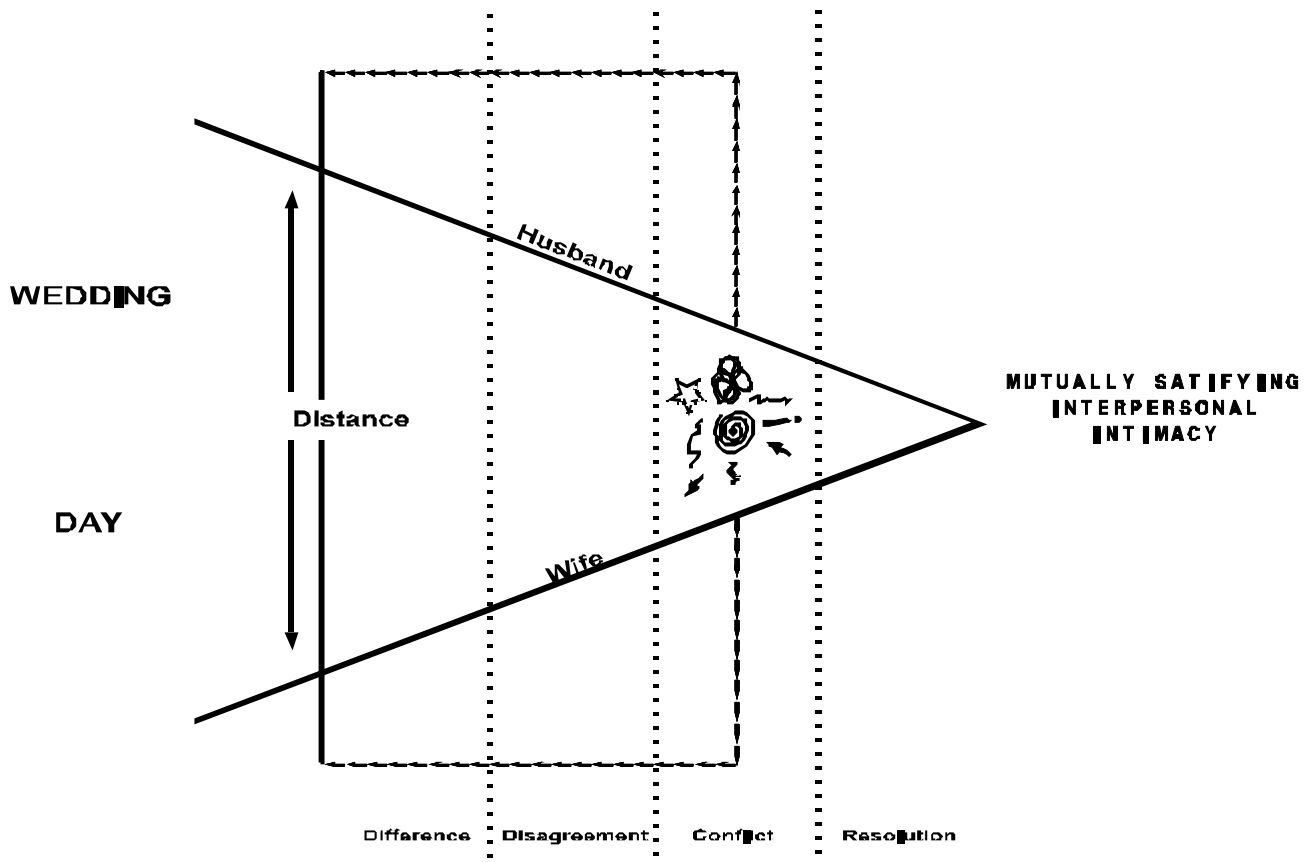
Michal: *(She turns her back to him.)*

Humph!

David: *With raised voice sneering)*

So I'll celebrate before the Lord the way I want to. I might even do something worse! And who cares what you think? Plenty of women like me just the way I am!

# Anger and Intimacy



## Guidelines

**Encourage a spiritual atmosphere.** Invite God's Spirit to be present. Pray often for one another.

**Focus on your own relationship.** Avoid topics or discussions that detract from this.

**Share your own experience.** Avoid interrupting, analyzing, confronting, giving opinions or prescribing solutions for other couples.

**Speak for yourself.** Do not assume you know how the other person feels.

**Share voluntarily.** No one should feel pressured to share. Silence is respected.

**Respect your sacred circle.** Avoid sharing aspects of your relationship that would make your spouse uncomfortable. Either spouse may request that their dialogue be terminated and shall be respected in that request.

**Maintain confidences.** Confidentiality is essential to preservation of group trust.

**Honor concerns.** Whenever an individual has a concern, this has precedence within the group at any time.

**Keep commitments.** Attendance at scheduled group sessions is expected. The sense of community is lost by irregular attendance of participants.

## **An Angry Episode: Reflections**

*Read together 2 Samuel 6:12-23. Discuss the following questions:*

1. How was David feeling about himself as he came home?
2. How was Michal feeling when David came home?
3. Imitate what you think her body language and tone of voice was like as she spoke to David.
4. Describe the feelings in each of them as they exchanged their heated words.
5. Think of modern-day terms or expressions that David and Michal would have used.
6. How do you think their words made each other feel inside themselves?
7. Why do you think Michal never had any children?
8. How could Michal and David have handled the situation in a less destructive manner?

Adapted from Flowers, R., & Watts, K. (Eds.) (1985). *Preparing for Marriage*. (1985). Silver Spring, MD: Department of Family Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



## When Anger Flares

*Write separately and then share alone as couples on the following:*

1. The kinds of situations that make me get angry with you.

2. My feelings when I'm angry with you.

<input type="checkbox"/> Hurt	<input type="checkbox"/> Jealous	<input type="checkbox"/> Helpless	<input type="checkbox"/> Bitter
<input type="checkbox"/> Afraid	<input type="checkbox"/> Lonely	<input type="checkbox"/> Vindictive	<input type="checkbox"/> Offended
<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/> Defeated	<input type="checkbox"/> Resentful	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious
<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<input type="checkbox"/> Misunderstood	<input type="checkbox"/> Exasperated	
<input type="checkbox"/> Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/> Manipulated	<input type="checkbox"/> Victimized	

3. My actions when I'm angry with you.

4. What I wish we could both do when we get angry with each other.

## The Walls of Anger

by Delmer and Betty Holbrook

Former Directors, General Conference Home and Family Service

### Introduction

"Better to live in the desert than with a nagging and ill-tempered wife" (Prov. 21:9, NEB).

"A nagging wife is like water going drip, drip, drip on a rainy day. How can you keep her quiet? Have you ever tried to stop the wind or ever tried to hold a handful of oil?" (Prov. 27:15, 16 TEV).

Solomon evidently knew the misery of living with contention and conflict in the close relationship of marriage and believed life in marriage should be different. Yet, we would have to ask, "Don't we Christians experience the same thing? What is it about nagging and ill-temper and conflict? Is it appropriate for Christians to have anger and conflict?"

If we are talking about violent encounters, verbal or physical, the answer would have to be a resounding NO! But it is normal to have disagreements. Even two saints like Paul and Peter did not agree on everything. Paul said he "withstood Peter to his face" (Gal. 2:11).

### Hot and Cold Anger

In the context of marriage, conflict and anger often go together. And there are two kinds of anger: hot and cold. Hot anger can be described like this: In the first year of marriage the husband speaks and the wife listens. In the second year of marriage the wife speaks and the husband listens. In the third year of marriage both speak and the neighbors listen!

That is hot anger; it is excited and often cruel. It is loud and frequently crushing. It's like riding a wild horse and no one is sure what is going to happen next. But there is communication. You do have some idea of what the other is thinking. It isn't accurate, but there may be some consolation that we care enough to be angry.

Cold anger, on the other hand, is like an iceberg. We see only the tip of it and have no idea what's underneath. It can be a devastating silence, a coldness, strangers living under the same roof. You see, we've heard it said, "Anger met with silence quickly dies away." But we haven't heard or read the *whole* statement that says, "Anger met with silence, *in a tender, forbearing spirit*, quickly dies away" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 486). And so we retreat into a shell of silence, congratulating ourselves on perfect self-control.

Cold anger can take another form. It can become what we like to call being "an angelic phony"—a cover-up courtesy that is full of pretense and deception. It says, "No, dear . . . Yes, dear . . . Anything you'd like, dear." But behind the seemingly sweet words is a spirit of coldness, where feelings have been anesthetized, or worse, extinguished.

Must it be a choice? Does conflict mean fight? It takes just about the same amount of energy to support a good relationship as a bad one, and we need to decide how we will spend our energies. The

problem is, though, that we usually know only two ways to settle disagreements—either by submission or anger. We can outwardly submit and turn the anger inward in cold silence, or we can blast away at those we love the most.

### **What is Anger Really?**

Why do we erupt or freeze into silence? Anger is a secondary feeling; it always has a cause. Selfishness is the major problem. It is, in fact, the basis of all sin. Cain, for example, wanted to do it *his* way, wanted to present *his* fruits, the products of *his* labors. He was angry at Abel that his judgment should be questioned, until his selfishness and resentment turned to anger and the anger to hatred and murder.

Intolerance, jealousy and envy are also closely related. Saul and his attitude toward David is a good example. For Saul every rumor about David was credible. Anything detrimental to David's character was an excuse for his envy and hatred, until he was like a madman, venting his anger on anyone who might possibly stand in his way, including 85 priests of the Lord and all the inhabitants of Nob. Of him it could be said:

Some are nervous, and if they begin to lose self-control in word or spirit under provocation, they are as much intoxicated with wrath as the inebriate is with liquor. They are unreasonable, not easily persuaded or convinced. They are not sane; Satan for a time has full control. (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 3, p. 1161*)

It is no wonder that Solomon said, "Peace of mind makes the body healthy, but jealousy is like a cancer" (Prov. 14:30 TEV).

Another cause of anger is fear and anxiety. We relate fear and anxiety to weakness, and we have a need to feel strong. Blazing anger gives us the feeling of strength, that we are in control, when in reality we are out of control.

A parent paces the floor wondering why a son or daughter hasn't come home yet. It is past time and worry consumes the parent. Has something happened to the child? Has he been in an accident? Has he been hurt? Finally the door opens and a nonchalant son is home again. He's had a wonderful evening. What happens to the parent's concern and worry? Suddenly it's gone and anger has erupted, harsh and loud. It would be weakness to display anxiety. Or would it?

Anger is a demand. It says, "I am ordering you to do something." It is explosive. It uses "YOU" statements. It criticizes. It doesn't see the good, only the flaws, constantly picking and nagging. It devalues the other person, saying "I'm right; you're wrong."

Anger also blames. It is someone else or some situation that makes me angry. It's more comfortable when it isn't my fault. I have no responsibility because I cannot change someone else or some undesirable situation. When we take that attitude, however, we are not facing up to what is happening in us and to us.

There are a number of proverbs about anger that we can reflect on:

"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and quarrels are as bars of a castle" (Prov. 18:19 Modern Language Bible).

"A soft answer turns away anger, but a sharp word makes tempers hot" (Prov.15:1 NEB).

"Why do you keep tormenting me with words? Time after time you insult me and show no shame for the way you abuse me" (Job 19:1-3 TEV).

"Evilspeaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer" (*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 176*).

"Harsh, angry words are not of heavenly origin" (*Child Guidance, p. 246*).

"Unkindness, complaining, and anger shut Jesus from the dwelling" (*The Adventist Home, p. 422*).

### **How to Deal with Anger**

The best concept we can pass on is that we must accept the ownership of our anger, our feelings. Only when we do accept that ownership can we be free to choose what we will do with our anger. We can choose to be angry or icy, or we can choose to be loving, kind, and responsive.

Solomon says, "Better be slow to anger than a fighter, better govern one's temper than capture a city" (Prov. 16:32 NEB). He also says, "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:9 KJV).

A statement that has been helpful to many who have struggled with anger is this: "Circumstances have but little to do with the experiences of the soul. It is the spirit cherished which gives coloring to all our actions. A man at peace with God and his fellow-men cannot be made miserable" (*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 488*).

We have the challenge, the privilege, of choosing what we will do with anger. But, we say, mine is a "righteous anger." After all, Christ was angry, wasn't He? There are appropriate occasions for righteous anger outlined in the following quotation:

It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven. (*The Desire of Ages, p. 310*)

Unresolved anger is stored. It closes channels of communication. Today's anger becomes tomorrow's resentments, and resentment aged becomes bitterness. Ultimately it can affect every facet of our lives. Our words are a reflection of our thoughts, but it is also true that our words shape our thoughts. Paul said, ". . . if you go on fighting one another tooth and nail, all you can expect is mutual destruction" (Gal. 5:15 NEB).

### **Attitudes for Solving Conflicts**

There are skills that help in solving conflicts, but far more basic is attitude. That is the point from which to begin, using our head and our heart—thinking things through and using compassion. We can be

so wrong in our rightness.

**Think things through.** Conflict often has set patterns, and we need to ask ourselves, "Why do we fight?" To clear the air? Because one has a short temper? Because the other person usually starts it? Because the pressure builds up from storing problems over a period of time? Because we are so different and don't think alike? Or is it because I want attention and this is the only way I can get it.

We also need to ask ourselves what happens during disagreements. What is the worst thing about our conflicts? Is it labeling, name-calling? Getting historical—digging up the past? Is it being unable to say I'm sorry? Having the coldness last so long? Always being the loser?

**No win or lose.** So often we get caught in the trap of thinking, "I always seem to be losing . . .; he won last time, now it's my turn." It's important to remember that it is not the husband who wins, or the wife who wins, it is the marriage that wins.

**No blame.** Paul says, "Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:5, 6 NEB). It takes two to have a problem. There is no doubt that sometimes one is about 90 percent at fault, the other only 10 percent. But the next time it could be the other way around. Things have a way of coming out more evenly than we would like to admit, and when we get into the habit of trying to find out who is most to blame we are missing the point and not solving our problems.

**All of life is not meant to be taken seriously.** There are times when we need to be able to laugh at ourselves, and with each other. Molehills can so easily become mountains. The difference between happy and unhappy couples is not how much conflict they have, how many differences they must resolve, but *how* they handle them.

### **Conditions for Solving Conflicts: The Power of Truth and Love**

Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. *God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.* (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 759 Emphasis supplied)

Paul understood the power of truth and love. Speaking of the way to obtain unity, he says: "But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things" (Eph. 4:15 NEB).

If we use truth without love it can be brutally frank, destroying the very one we profess to be helping. We use words, and even Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, like bludgeons, leaving behind a withered and broken wreck of humanity.

When we use what we think is love without truth, we sometimes forget to ask ourselves what the outcome will be. We can fail to be helpful to a person who is desperately needing to hear the truth spoken in love.

Ellen White, writing to Sister F, gives good counsel on this point:

Sister F, if you are grieved because your neighbors or friends are doing wrong to their own hurt, if they are overtaken in fault, follow the Bible rule. "Tell him his fault between thee and him and

alone." As you go to the one you suppose to be in error, see that you speak in a meek and lowly spirit . . . Be careful in your manner. Avoid anything in look or gesture, word or tone, that savors of pride and self-sufficiency . . . With care avoid every appearance of anger; and though you use *plainness of speech*, let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of warmth but that of earnest love . . . Nothing but kindness and gentleness can flow from a heart of love. . . . God reproves you for a sin of omission in not telling your brother his fault, and you excuse and comfort yourself by a sin of commission by telling your brother's faults to another person! (*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 2, pp. 52, 53* Emphasis supplied)

The words of Jesus and Paul speak to the same point: "If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23, 24 NEB). "Then throw off falsehood; speak the truth to each other, for all of us are the parts of one body. If you are angry, do not let anger lead you into sin; do not let sunset find you still nursing it; leave no loop-hole for the devil" (Eph. 4:25-27 NEB).

Truth states simply and honestly what you think. Love will focus on the behavior, the act, not the person. Listen to the difference between the following sets of statements:

"How can you be so thoughtless!" "Why do you always do such dumb things?"

Let's take the emphasis off the person now and focus on the behavior that we are objecting to:

"I really wish you could remember to close the door softly. I'm feeling very badly about the mud you track in on your shoes."

Both Paul and Ellen White give some very pertinent counsel on how we should deal with others: "Love is . . . not . . . rude" (1 Cor. 13:4 NEB). "No bad language must pass your lips, but only what is good and helpful to the occasion, so that it brings a blessing to those who hear it" (Eph. 4:29 NEB). "Have done with spite and passion, all angry shouting and cursing, and bad feeling of every kind. (Eph. 4:31 NEB).

How grieved Christ is by the lack of love and tenderness manifested by His people in their dealings with one another! He notes the words, the tones of the voice. He hears the harsh, severe judgment passed on those whom He, in infinite love, is presenting to the Father. He hears every sigh of pain and sorrow caused by human harshness, and His Spirit is grieved . . . . By creation and redemption thou art mine. . . . Show all men respect, even though they do not reach the standard you have set for them. (*Review and Herald, March 17, 1903*)

Love will not be opinionated and judgmental; it will refuse to drag in the past; it will avoid sweeping generalizations; it will say, "I'm sorry." Sometimes it will help, even when you think you may not be wrong, to go to that person as if you were the greatest offender. It is Christ's work "to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18 KJV).

"Love suffereth long, and is kind," and when we use truth with love it brings healing, it enables us to grow, and it produces change. It's wonderful to know the peace that passes all *misunderstanding*.

Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love that is enduring. (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 362)

### **A Final Word of Encouragement**

Regardless of how close we put our heads together, we will never see things precisely the same way. We are humans, and we are married to humans. We have a lifetime of prejudices and problems behind us. We have our own ideas of marriage, life, money, sexuality, religion and parenting. To blame someone for being human is to be unchristian.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." And Paul said, "There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope and its endurance" (1 Cor. 13:7 NEB). It is also important to remember that "the secret of true unity is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 179). "The gospel is a wonderful simplifier of life's problems" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 363).

Talk it over. Pray it through. Work it out. That is mature love.

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Adapted from Flowers, K., Flowers, R., Holbrook, B., & Holbrook, D. (1988). *Caring for Marriage*. Department of Church Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

**Editor's note:** Betty and Delmer Holbrook revitalized ministry for families in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the first directors of the Home and Family Service which was established in 1975. Betty died on May 23, 1996. Countless couples fondly remember the blessing of their co-presentations on this and other topics related to marital growth.

# Correction with Grace

*A Seminar for Parents*

by Karen and Ron Flowers, Directors

Department of Family Ministries, General Conference

## Theme

Child discipline and correction must be shaped by the redemptive principles of the gospel.

## How to Use These Resources

The following resources are designed for a 2 to 3-hour seminar for parents. Presenters may wish to spread the material over several shorter sessions. Adaptations can be made for use in parent support groups and home and school meetings.

Superscripts <sup>1,2,3</sup> appear throughout the text as a reference to additional material in the **Seminar Illumination** section which may be helpful. Presenters should endeavor to incorporate local illustrations whenever possible. Use discretion with personal stories, secure the necessary permission, and maintain confidences.

In addition to the **Presentation Module** below, the following resources are included to support the seminar:

### **Presentation Helps.**

- Presentation Helps #1: *Agree-Disagree Exercise*

### **Handouts.**

- Handout #1: *Four Parenting Styles*
- Handout #2: *Authoritative Parenting*
- Handout #3: *Natural and Logical Consequences*
- Handout #4: *Consider the Consequences*
- Handout #5: *Guidelines for Correction*

## Suggested Seminar Outline

Welcome and Prayer  
Agree-Disagree Exercise  
Presentation Module  
Closing

## Agree-Disagree

This exercise serves to help warm up the group and to engender enthusiasm in the subject matter. It can also help to indicate some of the beliefs and presuppositions of the participants. One interesting way to use the exercise is to designate opposite sides of the meeting room as "Agree" and "Disagree." As the statements are read aloud, participants move back and forth in accordance with their responses. No



explanations of the statements are given; any ambiguity within the statements are calculated to stimulate the learning process.

## Presentation Module

### Introduction

A well-known proverb enjoins parents, "Withhold not correction from the child . . ." (Prov. 23:13 KJV). As we approach this important, but often controversial, topic, there are some important questions we should ask.

*(Seminar leaders may invite participants to contribute any questions they may have about correction. Summarize the list incorporating the following questions.)*

What is correction? What do the Scripture passages mean? What is God's expectation of parents today? Is there a difference between correction and punishment? What purpose does correction serve? How do we implement it in our parenting? When is it appropriate? What are the best ways to correct a child? Is the type of correction advocated in the bible appropriate for today? Can correction be abusive? How can we know if our correction has been too much or too little? How can we reconcile the conflicting messages from parents, from friends, from the media about correction?

### Making Disciples: Our Parenting Mission

*(As a lead-in to this section, seminar leaders may invite a brief discussion on the question: "What is our mission as parents?" Participants could respond verbally, or spend a few moments writing out their understanding of their parenting mission. Then share as a group.)*

Our mission is to help our children become responsible adults, acquainted with the Savior, and fully capable of choosing to love and serve the One who has saved them by His grace. We hope that they will actually embrace Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. But it is helpful to remember that this act of receiving Christ is their choice. Our responsibility is to lead them to Him, to invite them to follow Him. Jesus instructed His followers, "Go into all the world and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). Whatever our work for God, helping our children become His disciples is our first responsibility.

As workers for God, our work is to begin with those nearest. It is to begin in our own home. There is no more important missionary field than this. (*Child Guidance*, p. 476)

The first consideration of the parents should be to work for the salvation of their children. (*Child Guidance*, p. 549)

**Loving discipleship.** Developing their capacities to be loving individuals constitutes a crucial aspect of our children's becoming Christ's disciples (Compare John 13:35). This calls for a parenting approach which cultivates love.

You may be evangelists in the home, ministers of grace to your children. (*Child Guidance*, p. 479)

Love must infuse all aspects of our life with our children. In no part of our parenting is it more important to remember our mission and the primacy of love than in the correction and discipline of our children.

### **Understanding and Influencing Children's Behavior**

He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity. (*Education*, p. 78).

Emphasis on shaping the child's behavior has been the focus of much that has been done in parent education through the years. Too often this behavior-driven focus has been narrow, neglecting to perceive the child as a complex person with spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social and physical needs. The biblical view of persons is a wholistic one which recognizes the dynamic connection between the outward behavior and the inner life of the person. Change in the inner life is reflected in outward behavior (cf. Luke 6:45). The greater objective of correction relates to the growth of the whole person, not just to changing behavior.

An important question to think about is, What does the child's behavior signify? Dr. Ruth Murdoch, a Seventh-day Adventist educator and child psychologist whose teaching influenced many parents and teachers, used to ask, "I wonder *why* the child does that?" An awareness that a child's behavior is purposeful, driven by needs and concerns within, will help put the behavior in perspective and enable us to define more clearly what kind of parental response will be most helpful for him. There are several ways in which parents demonstrate their understanding and exercise their influence over children's behavior.

- **Provide well for your child's needs.**

Sometimes what we call misbehavior arises from a child's unsatisfied physical needs or her needs for love, security, a sense of belonging, and freedom from fear, anxiety and loneliness. Needs will vary as the child develops. Tailor your expectations of the child to her developmental level. So-called misbehavior may actually be behavior that is appropriate to the child's age. Sensitivity to a child's development and better provision for her physical, emotional and social needs will often take care of the misbehavior.<sup>1</sup>

- **Keep parental feelings from defining misbehavior.**

Sometimes a child's behavior feels like misbehavior because it is annoying or inconvenient for us, causes us embarrassment, or seems to reflect on our parenting. Our tension, fatigue, stress, worry and anger, that are likely unrelated to the child, often color our responses toward him. A child should not have to carry the burden or the pain of our adult feelings. To be more objective, we need to find time and space to rest and let our feelings calm down, or to discuss our child's behavior with our spouse, another relative, a friend or a mental or medical health professional. We may discover that the child's misbehavior is a misperception brought about by our own needs.

- **Improve family system functioning.**

A child's misbehavior may reflect dynamics at work in the family system that are stressful or anxiety-producing. As surprising as it may seem, these sub-surface dynamics often result in children assuming difficult, even life-altering roles to help their families reduce conflict and maintain internal stability or equilibrium.<sup>2</sup> Studies have shown a linkage between children's behavior and conflict in their parents' relationship (Minuchin, Rosman & Baker, 1978). Improvement in marital and family functioning will likely have a positive effect on the behavior of our children.<sup>3</sup> Consult with a trained family counselor for help in this area.

- **Adopt a parenting style which provides both kindness and firmness.**

Studies of parenting and family management have identified the significance of two major factors: *support* and *control* (Balswick & Balswick, 1991; Flowers, 1992; Neff & Ratcliff, 1995). Each of these can be conceptualized on a continuum or scale with "high" and "low" on opposite ends. *Support* involves the degree to which parents respond to children and provide affection. High support represents high sensitivity and responsiveness to children's need for warmth and affection. Low support means these needs are ignored or hostility is shown. *Control* involves the degree to which parents exercise control over their children, with the continuum running from no control to high control.

If the two scales are made to bisect each other at right angles, four quadrants result, each representing a style of parenting characterized by the kind of support and control it exhibits (See Handout #1 *Four Parenting Styles*). The four styles are: *Neglectful* (little or no support, little or no structure), *Permissive* (support, but with laissez-faire control), *Authoritarian* (little or no support, dictatorial control), *Authoritative* (good support, appropriate limits). "Each of the parenting styles has been linked to definite consequences in the child's life. . . . Clearly the winner is the judicious combination of control and responsiveness with affection, the authoritative style of parenting" (Neff & Ratcliff, 1995, p. 67). (See Handout #2 *Authoritative Parenting* for a summary of the authoritative approach.)

**Ellen White's concepts of kindness and firmness.** The notions of support and control were long ago present in the counsel to parents given by Ellen G. White (See chapter "With Love and Firmness," *Child Guidance*, pp. 258-268). The concepts of *kindness* and *firmness*, which frequently appear in tandem, closely parallel the characteristics of the authoritative family management style described in modern parenting literature.

Children should not be left to wander away from the safe path marked out in God's Word. . . . Kindly, but *firmly*, with persevering, prayerful effort, their wrong desires should be restrained, their inclinations denied. (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 391 Emphasis supplied)

Let *kindness* be the law of the home and of the school. Let the children be taught to keep the law of the Lord, and let a *firm*, loving influence restrain them from evil. (*Child Guidance*, p. 259 Emphasis supplied)

In order to maintain . . . authority, it is not necessary to resort to harsh measures; a *firm*, steady hand and a *kindness* which convinces the child of your love will accomplish the purpose. (*Child Guidance*, p. 283 Emphasis supplied)

*(Illustration: On a flip chart or chalkboard draw a pathway that begins in the foreground and stretches into the background. Write the words "Path of Parenting" on this pathway. Write "Kindness" on one side of the pathway and "Firmness" on the other. The experience of parenting is bounded by these two concepts. Effective parenting integrates the characteristics of both and avoids the extremes in either direction. Many parents find that the path for them winds along unevenly at times, sometimes zig-zagging between the poles of kindness and firmness. What is important is that parents continually monitor themselves and endeavor to correct their course in harmony with these guiding principles. The parents' acts of monitoring and correcting their parenting style can, in fact, become an example to their children about the process of correction in our lives.)*

It seems clear from the writings of Ellen G. White that a home in which the principles of kindness and firmness are present has a built-in mechanism for correction. With the two great twin principles of justice and mercy in operation (*Child Guidance*, p. 261, 262), correction is an on-going, integrated process, beyond which few, if any, supplementary measures of specific "correction" will be necessary.

### **Correction: Helping Children with Their Sinful Desires and Inclinations**

There are likely to be some times, however, when children exhibit such traits as self-centeredness, unkindness toward others, and disobedience toward authority despite the best efforts of parents to meet their needs and to implement a parenting style that is loving, kind and firm. Ellen G. White speaks of some children demonstrating "hatred of restraint," "love of indulgence" and "indifference to things of eternity." These, she adds, "must be carefully dealt with" (*Child Guidance*, p. 250).

**Children have a sinful nature.** Children are younger members of the human family and they participate in the sinful condition that is common to the human race (Rom. 3:23). We take the side of Scripture and part company with popular psychology's notion that children possess an innate capacity for right behavior. Rather, they possess an inclination in their nature which, without help, they cannot resist. With this nature the child must cope from his earliest years.

The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. *There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist.* To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Co-operation with that power is man's greatest need. (*Education*, p. 29 Emphasis supplied)

**Children are precious.** While they are fallen human beings, they are nevertheless very valuable to God. "Children," says the Psalmist, "are a heritage from the Lord" (Ps. 127:3 NKJV).<sup>4</sup> Christ loves children. While on earth He identified closely with them, bade them come to Him, elevated their faith **as the standard for entrance into His Kingdom**, and issued a severe warning to anyone who would cause their feet to stumble (Matt. 18:3; 19:14; **Mark 9:37-42**; Luke 18:16).

Children are the heritage of the Lord, and we are answerable to Him for our management of His property. (*The Adventist Home*, p. 159)

Remember that your sons and daughters are younger members of God's family. He has committed them to your care, to train and educate for heaven. (*The Adventist Home*, p. 161)

Christ placed such a high estimate upon your children that He gave His life for them. Treat them as the purchase of His blood. Patiently and firmly train them for Him. Discipline with love and forbearance. (*The Adventist Home*, p. 279)

**An act of committed love.** From both the human and divine standpoints correction is presented in Scripture as an act of committed love. "The ones I love, I correct and discipline . . ." (Rev. 3:19 Modern Language; cf. Proverbs 13:24). Every effort must be made to make this vital link between correction and love in our parenting. Permissive parents often have difficulty appreciating this aspect of love.<sup>5</sup>

**Recovering fallen image bearers.** Crabb (1987) speaks of human beings as being "fallen image bearers." Sinful, yes. Precious, yes. Still bearing God's image. Still the object of His great recovery project. Ellen G. White conveys this same idea in her description of the lost coin in Jesus' parable (Luke 15:8, 9).

The coin, though lying among dust and rubbish, is *a piece of silver still*. Its owner seeks it because it is of value. So every soul, however degraded by sin, is in God's sight accounted precious. As the coin bears the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God; and *though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul*. God desires to recover that soul and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 194 Emphasis supplied)

In correcting their children, parents are given a small, but significant part to play in the divine rescue plan for their children. Rightly understood, correction is not punitive, nor an expression of power and authority of one over another, but a process whereby loving parents, who have come to recognize the strength of the sinful bent in their nature and have found their only help in Christ, may guide their children's footsteps in His direction also. The process of kind and firm correction helps children become aware of their nature, of their profound need to change in order to rightly respect themselves and others and to participate in community. Correction shows them how to change, enlists their will on the side of change, and empowers them to do so.

Correction also seeks to spare children from long-term irreversible effects of wrong choices and habits. Loving parents correct their children, restrain and guide them in an external way through their vulnerable, formative years until at last those restraints are internalized and the growing youth of his or her own volition trusts in God and cooperates with the divine plan for growth and maturity. As adults, we never outgrow our need for certain types of correction, but our parents no longer play the part they once did during our formative years.

*(Illustration: When transplanting a young tree, horticulturalists and landscapers typically provide external supports to guide the tree and protect it against destructive forces until it grows stronger. Those restraints are then removed, lest they inhibit further growth.)*

### Three Forms of Correction

#### • Verbal correction

The Biblical word for this type of correction is translated as “rebuke” (Ps. 39:11; Luke 17:2). Verbal correction confronts the individual in an honest, yet caring and compassionate way to communicate to him the seriousness of his error. As in all forms of correction, caring must be evident. Voice tones and body language must convey this caring.

This kind of correction may occur through quiet conversation, through a letter (1 Corinthians 4:14, 15; 4:21; 2 Timothy 3:16), the right use of a question, (“What do you think will happen if this continues to take place?” “Have you thought about how this will affect your future?”) or through a Bible story or other character-building story. Nathan used a parable when sent by God to correct David (2 Sam. 12). King David was corrected in a dramatic way by the power of Nathan's story. Jesus used parables frequently, not only to instruct and to teach, but also to correct.

In parables He rebuked the hypocrisy and wicked works of those who occupied high positions, and in figurative language clothed truth of so cutting a character that had it been spoken in direct denunciation, they would not have listened to His words, and would speedily have put an end to His ministry. . . . He made truth so clear that error was manifested, and the honest in heart were profited by His lessons. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 22)

How will you successfully educate your children? Not by scolding for it will do no good. Talk to your children as if you had confidence in their intelligence. Deal with them kindly, tenderly, lovingly. Tell them what God would have them to do. (*Child Guidance*, p. 33)

Some methods of communicating parental concerns with children entail less risk to the relationship than others. Framing the concern as an “I” message will often be sufficient to bring about a corrective response. “When you stay out beyond the time you promised to be home I get anxious about your safety.” “When all the buttons on Daddy's calculator are pushed at once I get frustrated because it won't be in working order when I need it.” “When you talk to your friends during the worship service in church I'm annoyed because I'm unable to concentrate.”

#### • Experiential correction

This approach allows the individual to be corrected by experiencing the consequences of his or her choices (Luke 15:11-32).

Help him [the child] to see that all things are under law, and that disobedience leads, in the end, to disaster and suffering. When God says “Thou shalt not,” He in love warns us of the consequences of disobedience, in order to save us from harm and loss. (*Education*, p. 287)

**Natural consequences.** Consequences may be considered in two categories: *natural* and *logical* (Dreikurs, 1964). *Natural* consequences are those that come about because of the natural order of things, events which may be expected to occur if there is no interference. Table 1 on Handout # 3 *Natural and Logical Consequences* provides examples of natural consequences.

The responsibilities of the parent, if natural consequences are to be effective, include (1) making the child aware of the consequences, (2) allowing the child the freedom of choice, and (3) guarding against the child being placed in situations where the choices are too weighty for him, or where a wrong choice would affect the child's safety or unduly harm his health (A responsible parent would not allow a child to experience the consequences of playing in a street where there is busy automobile traffic.). Parental threats are to be avoided that will make the experience of choice appear as punitive. If the parent cannot release the decision into the child's hands, then the benefits of experiential correction break down and the child does not grow in responsibility.

**Logical consequences.** In situations where natural consequences would be unacceptable, then a reasonable substitute must be found, i.e. a *logical* consequence. Examples are shown in Table 2, Handout #3 *Natural and Logical Consequences*.

Natural consequences represent the pressure of reality without any specific action by parents and are always effective. In contrast, logical consequences cannot be applied in a power struggle except with extreme caution because they usually deteriorate into punitive acts of retaliation. For this reason, natural consequences are always beneficial but logical consequences may backfire. (Dreikurs, 1964, p. 84)

**Do not remove consequences.** In experiential correction, the child is being taught by the natural and logical order of things to reason from cause to effect and to shape his behavior accordingly. Such a process will undoubtedly involve some level of pain to the child. This is where parents must be supportive, but not undo the lesson that is being learned. Avoid making the pain worse by saying, "I told you so!" Avoid relieving the pain by removing the consequences.<sup>6</sup> The experiencing of consequences by the child occurs within the context of a loving relationship with his parents. Correction should never imply the possibility of a loss of this relationship.

*[Illustration: Note the response of the father of the prodigal (Luke 15) upon the return of his son. There was no scolding ("I told you so!") or interrogation ("Where have you been?") or lecture ("You should have listened to me. "). The father welcomed him home before he had a chance to say he was sorry. He didn't need to be told the error of his way; he had learned a lesson that words could never convey. He had "come to himself" (vs. 17). Correction had done its work. Also, the returned son had to live with the consequences of his experience.<sup>7</sup>]*

*(Small group exercise: For practice using experiential correction, distribute Handout #4: Consider the Consequences.)*

- **Physical correction**

Scriptural references to a manner of correction of youth which is physical are very few and occur in only one biblical book (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15). The "rod" (Heb. *shebet*) was the stick or staff of the shepherd (Lev. 27:32; Ps. 23:4; Micah 7:14). Typical references to the use of the *shebet* refer to the discipline of slaves (Ex. 21:20), as a metaphor for God's promise to David that He would, if necessary, chasten the royal heirs of David (2 Sam. 7:14), Messianic judgment on the nations (Ps. 2:9), and more generally an instrument of war or execution literally or figuratively (Ps. 89:32; Lam. 3:1; Micah 5:1).

Corporal correction of youth was apparently practiced during bible times, but the weight of Scripture reflects the importance of talking with a child, reasoning with him, and allowing him to be corrected by the consequences of his choices. Physical correction of children as it has typically been practiced may result in compliance, but frequently generates hostile emotions within the child. Christ's warning not to offend the little ones (Mark 9:42) and Paul's counsel, "Fathers do not exasperate your children . . ." (Eph. 6:4) stand as counsel to parents to avoid treatment of offspring which create emotional problems for them.

**Spanking and abuse.** The use of corporal correction today has stirred much controversy. James Dobson (1973), who supports the use of spanking in child discipline, nevertheless sees a linkage between spanking and abusive beatings. Speaking of the abuse that can occur when parents use spanking, he stresses the importance of parents being in emotional control. "The beatings are rarely premeditated; they may occur when an ordinary spanking gets out of hand, or when an emotionally disturbed parent loses control" (p. 59). This potential for abuse in the use of corporal punishment has led many parent educators to advocate a turning from the practice of spanking altogether (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972; McGinnis & McGinnis, 1990). McGinnis and McGinnis (1990), for example, believe that "nonviolent discipline" is logically consistent with their concept of nonviolent child-raising. They use reasoning, natural and logical consequences, time out/cooling off periods, and the discussion forum of a regular family council to handle issues of correction.

Ellen White urged great parental restraint in the matter of physical correction. She placed numerous conditions around it. Such correction was to be a last resort after milder measures of correction had been exhausted. It was to be done in love, after a period of prayer by the parent, and when the parent was free from anger. Afterward there was to be a period of restoration and joint prayer with the child. Even then, her estimate was, "Frequently one such correction will be enough for a lifetime . . ." (*Child Guidance*, p. 250).<sup>8</sup>

(Share "Guidelines for Correction," Handout #5)

## **A Final Word**

The work of correction is a delicate process. Hastiness, over-reaction, heavily laden emotionsC all complicate the process. Frequently we replicate with our own children what has long been ingrained in us from the modeling in the homes in which we grew up. This represents an area in which growth is needed ourselves. "Be what you wish your children to be," wrote Ellen G. White (*Child Guidance*,



p. 278). As they see us more willing to bear rebuke for our mistakes, to graciously accept correction when it is needed, deep impressions are made upon them; we offer them a positive model with staying power far beyond our words.

### Seminar Illumination

<sup>1</sup> Some parents do not understand their children and are not really acquainted with them. There is often a great distance between parents and children. If the parents would enter more fully into the feelings of their children and draw out what is on their hearts, it would have a beneficial influence upon them. (*The Adventist Home*, p. 190)

<sup>2</sup> Among the roles children may assume are the *hero*, who shoulders the responsibility for maintaining the system's integrity and preserving its positive image, the *mascot*, who seeks by clowning to distract the family from its internal pain, and the *scapegoat*, who draws the blame for system difficulties to himself or herself and achieves a kind of harmony among others because their focus has shifted to the scapegoat's misbehavior.

<sup>3</sup> A mother wondered why her primary and junior-aged sons fought more when their father was home than when he was working. In a subsequent interview with both parents, a look at their marital relationship revealed that their communication was poor, they were often in conflict, and had virtually no private couple life. As they described the typical scenario of fighting between the sons they were helped to see their family system in predictable action: (1) fighting upsets and angers dad; (2) dad administers discipline; (3) boys appeal to mother for help; (4) mother approaches father to discuss the boys' needs; (5) boys play contentedly nearby while father and mother are together and talking. It was suggested that an intentional improvement in the parents' relationship that was visible to the sons would likely lead to improved behavior on the children's part. The need to enact a scenario to bring mother and father together will have been reduced.

<sup>4</sup> The word *heritage* signifies an inheritance given, not according to hereditary right, but according to the willing desire of the giver. Every new child born into a Christian home is a gracious gift from God, a lovely legacy from the Lord entrusted to our care to be loved, cherished, provided for and properly molded for his glory. (Strauss, 1975, p. 17)

<sup>5</sup> No parent or teacher who has at heart the well-being of those under his care will compromise with the stubborn self-will that defies authority or resorts to subterfuge or evasion in order to escape obedience. It is not love but sentimentalism that palters with wrongdoing, seeks by coaxing or bribes to secure compliance, and finally accepts some substitute in place of the thing required. (*Education*, p. 290)

<sup>6</sup> We do not have the right to assume the responsibilities of our children, nor do we have the right to take the consequences of their acts. These belong to them. (Dreikurs, 1964, p. 77)

<sup>7</sup> Correction was the result of a process that included losing an inheritance, the pain of starvation, and the ashes of riotous living. He was home and loved and sheltered, but his inheritance was gone—the natural consequences of sinful living. His father did not re-parcel the estate and give him a portion of his brother's inheritance; he had to live with the consequences of his behavior. (Narramore, 1979, pp. 72, 73)

<sup>8</sup> A child is not a horse or a dog to be ordered about according to your imperious will, or to be controlled under all circumstances by a stick or whip, or by blows with the hand. Some children are so vicious in their tempers that the infliction of pain is necessary, but very many cases are made much worse by this manner of discipline. (*Child Guidance*, p. 251, 252)

Whipping may be necessary when other resorts fail, yet she [mother] should not use the rod if it is possible to avoid doing so. But if milder measures prove insufficient, punishment that will bring the child to its senses should in love be administered. Frequently one such correction will be enough for a lifetime, to show the child that he does not hold the lines of control. (*Child Guidance*, p. 250)

Frequently . . . [parents] cannot properly control their children because of their own impatience, neither can they teach them the right way. Perhaps they take hold of them roughly and give them an impatient blow. I have said that to shake a child would shake two evil spirits in, while it would shake one out. If a child is wrong, to shake it only makes it worse. It will not subdue it. (2 *Testimonies*, p. 365)

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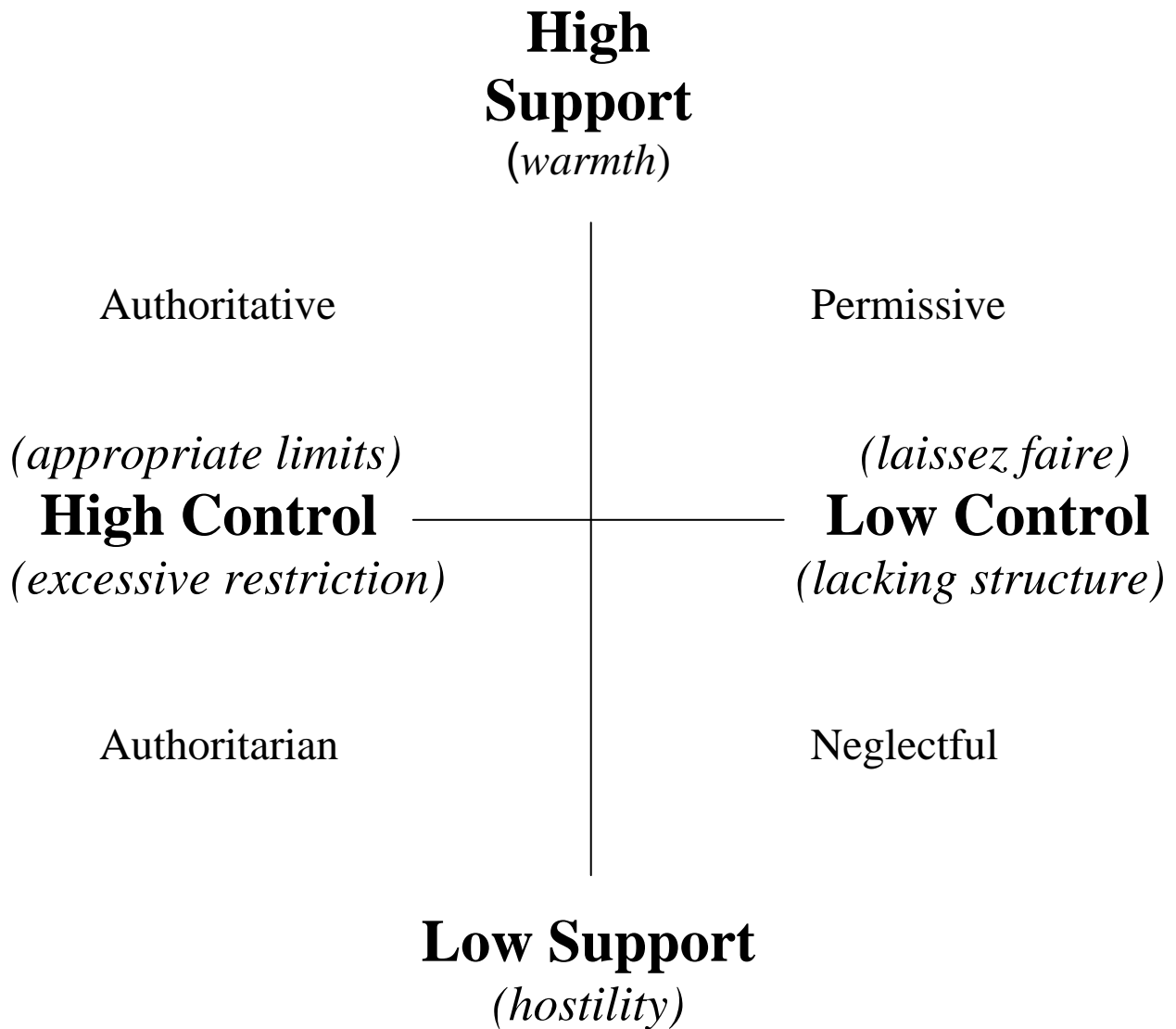
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## Agree - Disagree

1. Our ultimate goal as parents is to keep our children from misbehaving.
2. We have not fulfilled our mission as parents if our children do not accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.
3. Better provision for a child's physical, emotional and social needs will only make a child more difficult to manage and encourage misbehavior.
4. Fear is more effective than love in maintaining authority.
5. It is not unusual to find a link between marital conflict in the home and a child's misbehavior.
6. Correction shows children the need for change, how to change, enlists their will on the side of change and empowers them for change.
7. The Bible counsels parents to avoid treatment of offspring which create emotional problems for them.

# Four Parenting Styles



## Authoritative Parenting

- Sets consistent limits
- Is firm, patient, loving, reasonable
- Considers the child's needs
- Communicates freely
- Tolerates no put down or harassment at another's expense
- Maintains warm relationships with children
- Practices self-control
- Teaches children to reason and make choices
- Shares family responsibility across family members according to age and ability
- Releases freedom with increasing responsibility

## Natural and Logical Consequences

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Natural Consequence</b>
Forgetting one's lunch Not wearing proper clothing Staying up past bedtime Clothes not placed in laundry hamper Destructive play with toys Homework not done	Hunger Coldness or wetness Fatigue Unwashed clothes Destroyed toys Teacher's displeasure, low grades

TABLE 1

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Logic</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
Neglecting to brush teeth	Candy and sweets destroy unbrushed teeth	No sweets
Failure to care for pet	Pet depends upon home for needs.	Find pet another home
Excessive noise while riding in car	Driving requires undisrupted concentration	Stop car, — trip is longer

TABLE 2

## Consider the Consequences

*In small groups, discuss how the concept of correcting by the use of consequences could be used to help a child to learn.*

John, age 7, loves football and has saved his allowance to purchase one for himself. Grandma and Mom and Dad have made gifts as well. John usually plays football outside with his friends in the neighborhood until the last minute before supper and then gets caught up in the family evening routine, frequently forgetting to bring his ball inside for the night. Mom is worried it will be lost.

Maria, age 4, likes to stay up and play with Papa after supper. Mother has explained that little girls need so much sleep in order to be healthy. If she wishes to stay up at night, she has to take a nap in the afternoon. But Maria continues to put mother through a grueling fight everyday at nap time. Mother is looking for an alternative.

Mark, age 13, likes to build things with scrap lumber and father's tools. Father remembers doing the same as a boy and is willing, but Mark repeatedly leaves the tools scattered through the work room, sometimes even outside. Dad doesn't appreciate having to look for missing tools or replacing ruined ones.

Ramon, age 17, is involved in after-school activities in the late afternoon. Mom has checked his schedule with him and they have agreed that supper should be at 6:30. But Ramon likes to talk and often doesn't get home until after 7:00. Mom wants everything cleaned up by then so she will have time left in the evening for her plans.

Julie, age 10, loves to play with animals and wants a dog more than anything. Father and Mother have stated that neither of them has time to care for one, but agree to get the pet if Julie will take the responsibility for its care. Julie says she will, but forgets often in the rush to get off to school.

Todd, age 11 months, doesn't like to go to bed. After the full bedtime routine—dry pants, playtime, hugs and kisses, feeding, tucking in—Todd seems contented and happy . . . until mother shuts the bedroom door. Todd then proceeds to bump his head on the crib and scream until someone comes.

Handout # 4 *Correcting with Grace*



## Guidelines for Correction

- √ Make sure you have provided and trained well first.
- √ Make sure your motives are to help the child, not to relieve your own frustrations.
- √ Pray—by yourself and with your children.
- √ Correct in private.
- √ Consider the individuality of the child.
- √ Protect the will of the child.
- √ Be quick to forgive and offer another chance.

Handout # 5: *Correction with Grace*

# The Family Council: Learning Peaceful Cooperation

*A Seminar for Parents*

*by Karen and Ron Flowers, Directors*

*Department of Family Ministries, General Conference*

## **Theme**

The Family Council helps families to respect and appreciate each other as persons equal in the sight of God, to live more happily and productively together, and to carry into the world the value of harmony and peaceful cooperation.

## **How to Use this Program**

This program can be used with a group of parents, or adapted for use as a multigenerational learning activity for families at church. It is suitable for use as a Sabbath afternoon program, an Adventist Youth meeting program, or for use at family camps and church retreats. The approximate time involved is one hour.

## **Preparing for the Program**

Prepare a setting that represents a living room, or other room at home where the family might gather for a weekly meeting. If possible, set up this "room" in the middle of your meeting area where those in attendance can gather around the "family."

### **Supplies and props.**

- Tablet and pencil for the secretary of the family council to keep notes.
- Name tags and pens to identify members of the "family"
- Flip chart or chalkboard

**Handouts.** Prepare a sufficient number of copies of Handout #1 *The Family Council*.

## **Introduction**

One of the ways which many families have found to help their family life run more smoothly, to communicate the values of equality, mutuality and peaceful coexistence is to hold a regular family meeting which we call "The Family Council." In this program we will learn about the Family Council and practice how to conduct such a meeting.

## **Selection of the "Family"**

Choose persons at random from the participants to be members of the "family." If a multigenerational audience is present for the meeting, select a father, a mother, one or more grandparents or other relatives, children of various ages, and any others who might be present in one of the kinds of

families found in your church. If adults only are present, ask for volunteers or designate certain individuals to represent parents, children and other family members.

*(When the "family" has been selected, give them a little time to "settle in" by deciding on a family name for themselves, such as the household of Jacob, of Daniel, or of Chloe, etc. Have the family assign names and ages to each of the family members, where their home is located, and what time of year it is. Use name tags for each of the family members so that their names and ages can be remembered.)*

Using the material which follows, give a brief summary of the purpose of the family council. Address the "family," but with all other seminar participants listening.

### **Presentation Module**

#### **What is a Family Council?**

A family council is a planned time for a meeting of all family members together. Though it could meet on Sabbath, it will probably get together on another occasion during the week—perhaps a Sunday morning after breakfast or on a weeknight after the evening meal. It can be a natural follow-up to family worship. Each family will have to give the meeting time some thought and settle on their own particular time.

At this meeting anything can be discussed. There is freedom to talk about anything you have on your mind without fear. You can discuss needs, ideas, wants, events, vacations, home duties, problems, finances. It is a time for talking and sharing together. At this meeting planning can be done, decisions may be made, conflicts may be resolved, BUT *the major purpose is to improve relationships.*

**Who's in charge?** You should have a chairman and a secretary for each meeting. The chairman, who may be a woman or a man, a girl or a boy, directs the meeting and the secretary keeps notes and records the decisions and actions to be carried out. Although parents may take the leadership of some meetings, *these positions should be passed around*, if children are old enough.

*(At this point, have the "family" select the chairman and secretary for this meeting and its "next" meeting.)*

**How long will the meeting last?** Generally it will be short—from a few minutes up to 20 or 30 minutes. It might go longer than this, especially if you're having an enjoyable time. If there is general agreement, you may extend your meeting a few minutes longer—perhaps to finalize on something urgent. One way to stay on time is to select someone with a watch or timer as time keeper. This individual can notify the chairman when the agreed upon time has passed.

*(Have the "family" select a timekeeper.)*

**What do we do first?** Each person tells about a positive or exciting event that happened to him or her during the past week. An alternative to this would be for each person to share a positive comment

about each other person in the council ("What I really appreciate about \_\_\_\_\_ is that . . ."), or have each person tell about one good thing that he or she believes has taken place in the family since the last meeting.

*(Let the chairman of the family council decide which of these the "family" will do and have them begin their role play. When this part of the council time is completed, proceed with the presentation module.)*

**Agenda.** Basic categories to cover:

- Minutes from the last meeting, including review of solutions to previous problems.
- Calendar of activities for the coming week.
- Allocation of chores for the week.

**Sharing concerns.** Some families have a sign-up sheet on the family bulletin board where concerns and agenda items can be listed preferably ahead of time for the family council. However, any family member can feel free to contribute topics to the agenda at the time of the meeting. Unfinished agenda items may need to be carried over to a subsequent meeting. If any family members have concerns, needs, problems or frustrations, the family council is the time to share them. They should be shared without assigning blame to anyone.

**A helpful way to share to concerns.** A helpful way to state concerns is to express your personal feelings about them. "When (*identify the problematic behavior which happens without naming anyone or blaming*), I feel (*upset, angry, frustrated, concerned, or whatever the feeling may be*) because (*state the effect it has on you*)." For example, mother might say, "When the dirty laundry is not taken to the laundry room, I feel frustrated because it means extra trips back and forth to the laundry room for me."

*(Place the "formula" for sharing concerns on a flip chart or chalkboard and encourage the "family" to state their concerns using this technique:*

"When \_\_\_\_\_ (*behavior happens*),  
I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (*identify your feeling*)  
because \_\_\_\_\_ (*state the effect on you*)."

*(Give the family members opportunity to share their concerns. If none are forthcoming spontaneously in the role play, then you may send in on slips of paper some concerns which you have devised for the occasion to help the family practice the process of managing concerns. For example: Child: Favorite foods are not served often enough; Teen: Older brother, with whom he shares a room, plays music too loudly; Dad: Pet is not fed regularly; Mom: Clothing is left strewn on the floor. Help the family members to frame their concerns using the technique described.)*

**Exploring alternatives and solutions.** Possible answers to concerns are discussed and alternative solutions to problems are offered. The secretary makes notes of the concerns and the solutions which have been suggested. Plan to evaluate the solution(s) at the next family council. Some concerns may be more involved or may take longer to solve than the time available in the family council. For this or other

reasons they may need to be handled in another fashion. But the family will have a satisfying experience if as a group it can respond in some helpful ways to the needs of its members.

*(Let the family respond to problems presented in non-blameful ways, discussing the needs of the individuals concerned. Help the family to process the concerns so that the feelings of each individual are heard. Demonstrate for them how to brainstorm a number of possible solutions without evaluating them. Then, through a process of elimination, discover which possibility or combination of possibilities could be a workable solution.)*

**Family business.** Now is the time to share family news, schedule activities, assign chores and plan special events. Each person's responsibilities are posted on a bulletin board.

*(The "family" role plays this part of the family council.)*

**Closing the family council.** Close with a prayer and expressions of thanks to one another. Have a special treat, take a walk or play a game.

*(The "family" closes its meeting.)*

### **Some Additional Thoughts on the Family Council**

- Hold councils regularly, not just for emergencies.
- Parents should plan ahead for it to be as enjoyable as possible; it is not a time to mete out punishment.
- Limit the amount of time spent dealing with complaints, conflict and chore assignments to half the meeting; otherwise interest will fade.
- Parents should take their turn with distasteful household chores.
- Each member has an equal voice and equal vote.
- Avoid "winners" and "losers" in decision-making as much as possible. Strive for consensus.

### **Importance of Commitment to the Council Concept**

The continuation of the council is important, because at first it is difficult for children to believe that their parents really mean to treat them as equals, to listen to them, and to take their suggestions seriously. If parents keep on trusting the strength of the family in the Family Council, it will come to have a life of its own. The Family Council is not another in a long list of remedies for a family to try when all else has failed. It is a way of bringing together all family members to grapple with their mutual concerns. In order for it to function effectively, it must continue through dull weeks as well as exciting weeks. The temptation may be great to skip a meeting now and then, and this is not a calamity; what is important is that parents not lose their trust in the concept.

For every family that wants efficiency and harmony, as well as for every individual who lives in close collaboration with others and wants to function fully and happily, it is essential to recognize social equality for all—expressed through shared responsibility in the Family

Council. The unjust assumption of superiority of one person or one group over another is the basic cause for social conflicts, especially those of marriage and family.

(Dreikurs, R., Gould, S., & Corsini, R., 1974, pp. 8, 9.)

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## The Family Council

### What is a Family Council?

A family council is a planned time for a meeting of all family members together. Though it could meet on Sabbath, it will probably get together on another occasion during the week—perhaps a Sunday morning after breakfast or on a weeknight after the evening meal. It can be a natural follow-up to family worship. Each family will have to give the meeting time some thought and settle on their own particular time.

At this meeting anything can be discussed. There is freedom to talk about anything you have on your mind without fear. The family discusses needs, ideas, wants, events, vacations, home duties, problems, finances. It is a time for talking and sharing together. At this meeting planning can be done, decisions may be made, conflicts may be resolved, BUT *the major purpose is to improve relationships.*

**Who's in charge?** You should have a chairman and a secretary for each meeting. The chairman directs the meeting and the secretary keeps notes and records decisions and actions to be carried out. Although parents may take the leadership of some meetings, these positions are to be passed around, if children are old enough.

**How long does the meeting last?** Generally it will be short—from a few minutes up to 20 or 30 minutes. It might go longer than this, especially if you're having an enjoyable time. If there is general agreement, you may extend your meeting a few minutes longer—perhaps to finalize on something urgent. One way to stay on time is to select someone with a watch or timer as time keeper. This individual can notify the chairman when the agreed upon time has passed.

**What do we do first?** Choose one of the following and invite each person to participate:

- Tell about a positive or exciting event that happened during the past week.
- Share a positive comment about each other person in the council ("What I really appreciate about \_\_\_\_\_ is that . . .").
- Have each person tell about one good thing that he or she believes has taken place in the family since the last meeting.

**Agenda.** Basic categories to cover:

- Minutes from the last meeting, including review of solutions to previous problems.
- Calendar of activities for the coming week.
- Allocation of chores for the week.

**Sharing concerns.** If any family members have concerns, needs, problems or frustrations, they may share them at the council but without assigning blame. Establish a family bulletin board and put a sign-up sheet on it where concerns and agenda items can be listed ahead of time for the family council. Any family member can contribute topics to the agenda.

A helpful way to state concerns is to express your personal feelings about them. Here is a sample way to express your concerns which you can practice as a family:

"When (insert the behavior which happens without using the word "you"),  
I feel (upset, angry, frustrated, concerned, or whatever the feeling may be)  
because (state the effect it has on you personally)."

For example, mother might say, "When the dirty laundry is not taken to the laundry room, I feel frustrated because it means extra trips back and forth to the laundry room for me."

Here is the sample way to state your concerns again, so you can fill in the blanks:

"When \_\_\_\_\_,  
I feel \_\_\_\_\_,  
because \_\_\_\_\_."

**Exploring alternatives and solutions.** Possible answers to concerns are discussed and alternative solutions to problems are offered. The secretary makes notes of these concerns and the solutions arrived at. Plan to evaluate the solution(s) at the next family council. Some concerns may be more involved or may take longer to solve than the time available in the family council. For this or other reasons they may need to be handled in another fashion. But the family will have a satisfying experience if as a group it can respond in some helpful ways to the needs of its members.

**Family business.** Now is the time to share family news, schedule activities, assign chores and plan special events. Each person's responsibilities are posted on a bulletin board.

**Closing the family council.** Close with a prayer and expressions of thanks to one another. Plan some extra time to have a special treat, take a walk, play a game or engage in some other pleasant family activity.

#### **Some additional thoughts on the Family Council**

- Hold councils regularly, not just for emergencies.
- Parents should plan ahead for it to be as enjoyable as possible; it is not a time to mete out punishment.
- Limit the amount of time spent dealing with complaints, conflict and chore assignments to half the meeting; otherwise interest will fade.
- Parents should take their turn with distasteful household chores.
- Each member has an equal voice and equal vote.
- Avoid "winners" and "losers" in decision-making as much as possible. Strive for consensus.

Handout #1b *The Family Council: Learning Peaceful Cooperation*



# An Appropriate Church Response to Family Violence and Child Sexual Abuse

*A Seminar for Church Leaders*

*by Karen and Ron Flowers, Directors*

*Department of Family Ministries, General Conference*

## **How to Use This Resource**

This collection of resources provides an orientation for denominational leaders, pastors and local church leaders to heighten awareness of the reality and experience of abuse and family violence and to outline the elements of an appropriate church response. It may also be useful in such settings as pastors' meetings, church staff retreats, youth camp staff meetings, school board meetings, meetings of the Family Ministries committee and other departmental councils. As church leaders become informed and involved these resources will provide an information base for breaking the silence in the congregation.

Along with the text for the **Presentation Module** the following supporting materials are supplied:

### **Presentation Helps**

- #1 *Maria's Story: A Case Study*
- #2 *A Survivor's Litany*

### **Handouts**

- #1 *Abuse and Family Violence: Toward Some Definitions*
- #2 *Abuse Indicators*
- #3 *A Leader's Response to Abuse and Family Violence: Worksheet*
- #4 *Dealing with Abuse and Domestic Violence: Do's and Don'ts for Church Leaders*

## **Suggested Program**

Dramatic presentation

Presentation module

Small group activity

Litany

## **Dramatic Presentation**

See Presentation Helps #1 *Maria's Story: A Case Study*

This presentation will quickly help participants understand the nature of abusive behavior, the underlying messages which prepare a woman to accept abuse, and the way in which the circumstances of a battered woman's life limit her options. Hope is present also, as the kinds of releasing experiences and beliefs are presented which can make it possible for her to break out of her bondage and seek help.

As the introduction to the case study suggests, the individual playing the part of the abuse victim will need to be chosen carefully. Also, since the story is a composite of scenarios from many battered women, and since the dynamics appear to be similar universally, it is appropriate for the couple to carry names suitable to your locale.

## Presentation Module

### Introduction

**A top priority.** At the 1995 General Conference Session in Utrecht, Holland, world president Elder Robert Folkenberg isolated abuse and family violence as one of six major topics of concern confronting the church. More than one-fourth of the official delegation to the General Conference Session underscored the concern of world church leaders by their participation in the scheduled breakout session convened to address the topic. There it was urged that our denominational pastors and church leaders receive information and education on the topic and that an appropriate church response be made a top priority. The 1997 Family Ministries Planbook, and this particular orientation seminar, are among the resources directed toward the fulfillment of this mandate.

### Recent Activity Within Our Denomination

- **Abuse and Family Violence Taskforce.** Early in 1995, and again in early 1996, the General Conference Department of Family Ministries convened an interdivision, interdepartmental Abuse and Family Violence Taskforce. The Taskforce brought together family professionals, with experience in dealing with both the abused and abusers in therapeutic and community service settings, and church administrative and departmental leaders. The taskforce has reviewed global population statistics on abuse and available Seventh-day Adventist data on the incidence and nature of family violence and child sexual abuse. Additional data on the topic throughout the Adventist world is being collected. The taskforce has reviewed published denominational materials, programs and services, prioritized issues, developed a strategy for confronting these issues with increased intentionality in our church.

- **Denominational statements.** At the 1996 General Conference Annual Council, a statement on Family Violence was voted by the delegates (See Appendix A, 1997 Planbook *Making Home a Place of Peace and Healing*). A statement on Child Sexual Abuse has been drafted and will be brought for approval in 1997.

- **An orientation video** for pastors and church leaders is in process and will be released during 1997. Print resources accompanying the video will be useful in contextualizing the church's response to local communities and cultures.

- **Annotated listing of books, videos, curricular resources.** A number of books, videos and curricular resources from both a Christian and secular perspective have been annotated (See *Selected Resources on Abuse and Family Violence*, 1997 Planbook *Making Home a Place of Peace and Healing*). Local churches, districts of churches, as well as union and conference/mission departments are urged to review this annotated list and establish a working and/or lending library, making as many as possible of these resources available to members, pastors, lay leaders, administrators and departmental directors.

Together we can break the silence. Together we can offer support to families struggling beneath the cloak of secrecy and the burden of abuse and family violence. Together we can open the path toward peace and healing in Adventist homes.

## Definitions

*(Distribute and present the material from Handout #1 Abuse and Family Violence: Toward Some Definitions.)*

## What the Statistics Show

Research toward providing reliable estimations of the incidence of abuse and family violence is relatively new. Only in the last 25 years have these concerns been broadly recognized. The only large scale studies available have been conducted in the United Kingdom, the United States and Papua New Guinea. Developing countries are only beginning to gather information systematically, with Nigeria, Columbia, Bangladesh, and Chile among the first to gather such information.

Current methods of estimating the extent of the problem rely mainly on reported incidents of abuse in records, for example, those kept by police, welfare agencies, hospitals and women's shelters. Data available through such records or through phone and field surveys reveal only very conservative estimates of the magnitude of the problem since victims are often very reluctant to report that they have been abused. Many do not report because of feelings of guilt and shame, fear of loss of the economic support of their husband, fear of damaging their husband's career, fear of police and/or legal intervention, and fear for their lives and safety of their children. This much is clear: we are confronted with an epidemic of abuse and family violence which is global in its proportions. The limitations of the data available cannot be construed as hope that the plague is confined.

*(To help your group appreciate the magnitude of the global statistics, invite them to participate in a statistical demonstration. Number them in groups of ten, with each person in each group assigned a number from 1 to 10. Call upon the various numbers to stand to represent the percentage of the population reporting abuse and violence experienced in the categories that follow.)*

**Murder:** *(Ask persons with numbers 1-5 to stand.)* You represent the 1:2 women (50%) murdered between 1983 and 1985 in Bangladesh who were victims of domestic violence. In Canada, it is 3:5. In the U.S., 1:3. In England and Wales, 1:4. In Michigan, a woman is killed every five days the year around in an incidence of domestic violence.

**Battery:** *(Ask persons with numbers 1-7 to stand.)* You represent the 67% of a comprehensive random sample of wives in Papua New Guinea who, in 1986, suffered the nightmare of marital violence. Data for 1992 in the United States indicate that episodes of violence will occur at least once in two-thirds of all marriages. During a six-month period following an incident of domestic violence, 1:3 of the women will be victimized again. If a woman stays with her abusive husband, she will be at 75% higher risk of being killed by her husband than non-battered wives. In a summary of Texas shelter research, one-half of the women seeking shelter services were reported to have experienced abuse on a weekly basis. Studies emerging from Australia, Kuwait, Kenya, Thailand, Austria and Nigeria place family violence at significant levels.

**Assault:** (*Ask persons with numbers 1-9 to stand.*) In Columbia, 94% of all assault victims are women. (This statistic holds across the international research available.) You represent these women as they stagger, bruised and bleeding, often alone, into the hospital emergency rooms of Bogota. Forty percent of you are pregnant. Many for the first time. You are at twice the risk for miscarriage as other pregnant women.

**Rape:** (*Ask persons with numbers 1-5 to stand.*) Among women 12 years and older, 133,000 will be victims of rape or attempted rape in a year's time in the United States alone. You represent the 55% of these victims whose capacity to trust is violated as deeply as your bodies because you know your rapists. In one of the most devastating experiences imaginable, 1:8 married women will be coercively raped by their husbands.

**Child abuse:** (*Ask persons with numbers 1-3 to stand.*) You represent the 1:3 girls who will be sexually abused before you reach the age of 18. One half of these girls will have to face throughout their lifetimes the horrible realization that they have lived with daddies and grandpas and brothers and uncles who are tragically different from other men. Not all daddies and grandpas and brothers and uncles abuse girls in the name of "love," in ways which make love feel so wrong, as their men have done. They will have to face that they have been robbed of their innocence. Many have been robbed of their childhoods.

The Statistical Abstract of the United States reports that in 1993 there were 838,232 cases of neglect, 204,404 cases of physical abuse, 129,404 cases of sexual abuse, and 49,123 cases of emotional abuse. In one-half of these cases, the abuse was perpetrated against female children, with the greatest incidence among children ages 3-5. These are *substantiated* cases. Heaven alone has the records on the total number of cases occurring in families where the code of silence remains unbroken.

**Among Seventh-day Adventists.** (*Ask persons with numbers 1-6 to stand.*) In a study conducted in one union in North America, with over 500 randomly selected Adventist church members responding, 56% said that physical abuse had been directed toward them or their siblings in the homes in which they grew up. Significant levels of physical, emotional and sexual abuse were reported by the nearly 8,000 randomly selected respondents to the Adventist Family Study initiated by the General Conference Department of Family Ministries in 1994. A range of 8-18% of female respondents reported being sexually abused. (The range indicates the lowest and highest percentages reported in the world divisions for which data is currently available.) The percentages of women reporting physical (15-43%) and emotional abuse (27-69%) were considerably higher than those reporting sexual abuse. On average, women reported greater levels of abuse than men. A range of 4-12% of males reported sexual abuse, 15-55 % physical abuse, and 6-37% emotional abuse. As with women, reports of sexual abuse among men were lower than other forms of abuse.

### **A Profile of Abuse Victims and Their Abusers**

It is not likely that a victim of abuse and/or family violence will announce that they are being battered or sexually exploited. If they reveal anything at all about their circumstances, they often speak in terms that are general or vague. But professionals mark a number of indicators that characterize families in which abuse may be occurring. The presence of these indicators should put pastors and church leaders on alert that a spouse, child, or family may be at risk. It is true that abuse and violence are blind to age,

social status, color, culture and creed. There is no typical victim, no typical perpetrator, except insofar as the victim is overwhelmingly female and the perpetrator male. It is also true that the presence of any one of these general indicators does not necessarily mean that abuse or violence is present. But as the number of these observable indicators increases, concern for their safety and well-being should increase on the part of church leaders.

*(Distribute and present the material on Handout #2 Abuse Indicators.)*

When you suspect abuse, create safe opportunities for the individual to share her story with you. Remember that in some abusive situations, violence occurs in a three-phase cycle. Tension builds (stage 1), there is an abusive episode (stage 2), followed by what appears to be remorse on the part of the abuser (stage 3), gestures of "love" and promises that it will never happen again. What is likely happening, however, is that the abuser has merely changed tactics and seeks to gain control in another way. However, because many victims want so badly to believe that these actions represent a genuine intention to change on the part of the abuser, attempts to intervene during this part of the cycle (stage 3) are usually ineffective. The best time to open the opportunity for her to talk with you is when she appears frightened, angry, depressed, or reaching out for help. Ask her questions such as, "Are you in danger now?" "What does your husband do when he gets angry?" "Are you worried about the safety of yourself and your children?" "What options do you see yourself as having?"

Wounded individuals and families victimized by abuse and family violence deserve a ready and compassionate response from the church. To remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior. To respond with caring concern, understanding, and practical help is the church's moral responsibility and tangible evidence of the presence of Christ in the midst of the community of faith.

### **An Appropriate Church Response**

In dealing with abuse and family violence, the full range of services provided through preventive education, support systems such as the church, and professional mental health and social services should be utilized. The church has a significant part to play in breaking the silence on abuse and family violence. Pastors and their spouses as well as respected church leaders are powerful voices both within the congregation and in the surrounding community, holding high God's ideal for marital and parent-child relationships. At the same time, they may use their voices to keep the church and community in firm touch with the hard realities of a world of sin and to establish a climate in which the truth can be confronted and resources marshaled to respond to the needs of families in which abuse and family violence are occurring. Most pastors do not have adequate training or the necessary licensure to treat abuse victims or their abusers. However, they can take their appropriate place in a supportive role and as a bridge to the full network of professional and community resources available.

The New Testament metaphor for church as the "household of faith" creates a vision of community, of family, where members turn from the total pursuit of personal agendas to become involved in one another's lives. To be involved means:

- To "care-front" one another when disconcerting indicators call for compassionate inquiry.
- To endeavor to protect the vulnerable and to stop abuse.
- To hold abusers firmly responsible for their behavior.

- To become actively aware of professional family resources in the church and the community.
- To help families find and access these resources.
- To provide support and encouragement for all family members as they process their pain with professionals trained to help them.
- To respond to the spiritual questions which arise out of abusive and violent experiences.
- To minister to families as they move toward reconciliation when true repentance on the part of the abuser—which always includes acceptance of responsibility for the abusive behavior, restitution in every way possible for the harm done, and evidence of changed attitudes and behavior—opens the way for forgiveness and new beginnings.
- To assist families in grieving the loss of significant relationships severed by continuing abuse and violence.

### **Practical Suggestions for a Helpful Response**

*(Distribute Handout #3 A Leader's Response to Abuse and Family Violence. This is a worksheet with the following main points and opportunity for participants to make their own notes.)*

#### **1. Speak out about abuse and family violence in your church and community.**

Communities of faith must move beyond denial and face the hard realities of abuse and family violence in their midst and in the communities around them. For too long abuse victims and survivors have suffered in silent fear and dread, with even the closest of friends, work associates, fellow church members, and family unaware of their painful secret. They need pastors and church leaders who will declare that abuse and violence are wrong and who are prepared to follow through on their convictions.

**Disseminate information.** Your church can play an important role in breaking the silence on these issues by disseminating the best information available, from the pulpit, through your church newsletter, your Sabbath School classes, and your leadership committees. Premarital guidance sessions, marriage enrichment retreats and parent education classes all provide opportunities to share information that will be helpful in prevention and intervention. When you speak out, chances are you will not only be making the most of your best opportunities to disseminate good information. You will also be creating an atmosphere in which victims and survivors can safely tell their stories and find help.

Your church and community needs:

- Your ringing affirmation of the dignity and worth of every human being made in God's image and redeemed by the blood of Christ;
- Your voice lifted with those of others to decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and violence because love and mutuality, not force and the abuse of power, are to characterize Christian relationships;
- Your acknowledgment of the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects of abuse and family violence upon the lives of all involved;

An indication of your willingness to be actively involved in addressing these problems.

Speaking out is the first step in both prevention and intervention.

## **2. Prepare yourself to make appropriate referrals.**

Make it your responsibility to learn all that you can about the resources available to victims of abuse and family violence within your congregation and in the community. The most successful response to abuse and family violence utilizes the full range of professional and support services available. The goal is to bring abuse and family violence to the attention of those who can help and to put the family members in touch with the professional resources necessary to bring about change. Individual and group therapy combined over a substantial period of time has proven most effective. However, a network of friends in the church who can be available to offer practical support is also needed. Without this network, many victims and perpetrators will be unable to benefit from the help available.

**Become informed about available services.** Acquaint yourself personally with the personnel and services of local shelters for battered women and children, child abuse prevention organizations, rape crisis centers, support groups and the agency to whom reports of suspected child abuse are to be made. Discover in advance how you can expect them to respond to your call when a woman seeks your help and you are needing to make a referral.

Introduce yourself and become acquainted with a network of Christian counselors with expertise in the fields of abuse in order to establish a ready list to whom you can refer. Know the services available through local law enforcement, for legal counsel, and where emergency babysitting services, medical care, food, clothing and temporary financial support can be found. Keep the names and telephone numbers of contact persons close at hand, as well as the numbers for local crisis hotlines. To become more proficient with abuse issues, you may wish to train as a volunteer and offer your services to one of these community organizations.

## **3. Recognize that your primary role is to listen and support those who have the courage to tell someone about the presence of abuse and violence in their family.**

**Take any report of abusive behavior seriously.** Most battered women will minimize the abuse; few will exaggerate. Children, in most cases, simply do not have the experience or vocabulary to lie. Presume she is telling you only a small part of her story. Her worst fear is that no one will believe her. Affirm her for her courage. Likely she is very embarrassed and even now wondering if she is doing the right thing. Listen with compassion and empathy. Do not assign blame or interrogate her with questions like, "What did you do to make him angry?" Do not suggest that she go home and try harder to please him or imply that she has it in her power to stop the abuse.

**Abuse is a choice made to control another person.** Affirm that abuse is learned behavior. It is about the desire of one person to exercise power and control over another. It cannot be excused by alcoholism, stress, the need to fulfill sexual desires, or any behavior of the victim. In many abusive situations, alcoholism, stress, or poor relational skills are also present. However, it has been shown that many who are alcoholics, who are in stressful situations, or who possess poor relational skills do not abuse their wives and children. Abuse is a choice made by the abuser. Victims do not deserve abusive behavior nor do they cause the abuser to abuse. What is happening to them is not their fault. No change in their behavior will bring an end to the abuse. Professional treatment can bring about a change in the abuser's behavior, but only if the abuser can be brought to the place where he takes responsibility for his abusive behavior and seeks help to change.

**Help the abuse sufferer discover options.** Do not minimize her fears for her life, whether she chooses to stay or to leave. Ask about her options for a safe place in which she herself and her children can take refuge when they are in immediate danger. You may need to help her find options—the home of a friend or relative, a shelter, a motel, or with someone in the church who is willing to provide safe haven. If the woman is in need of immediate medical attention, it can be very helpful for another woman whom she trusts to accompany her. Point out to her the importance of telling a physician the details about the origin of her injuries so that this information can accurately be included in her medical records.

Help her to explore the alternatives open to her. Her ability to perceive her alternatives or to evaluate them may be impaired by the circumstances. Offer assurance that the church will not abandon her or her family as they work through the problem one step at a time, no matter what lies ahead. Provide practical, short-term assistance as needed, but guard against making her dependent on others for the long run. Dependence breeds low self-esteem.

**Support the victims' choices.** Allow her to make her own choices in her own time. It is not appropriate for you to tell her what to do. Your task is to support her decisions, even if you do not agree with the course of action she has chosen. You may, of course, share your concerns for her safety should she decide to stay in the relationship. It is never appropriate for you to urge her to stay in a destructive relationship in which the abuser refuses to take responsibility for his behavior and to seek professional help to change. A victim is not responsible for preserving the marriage, keeping the family together, or the salvation of her husband. The marriage covenant is built upon mutuality, love and trust. When these are violated, covenant has been broken.

You have ministered well when you have helped the victim to discover and maximize her own resources. Your task is to open the way for her to access as many professional resources as you can and to offer your's and the congregation's practical support as she utilizes these resources to benefit herself and her family.

**Respect privacy.** Be sensitive to the family's need for privacy and confidentiality. The congregation can be supportive without the family feeling as though they have become spectacles whom everyone is gossiping about. Reassure victims that you will not discuss their situation with anyone without permission.

**A sequence to remember:**

**First,** protect the victim and her children.

**Second,** support the family in identifying and utilizing professional resources to get help.

**Third,** help her deal with her spiritual questions.

**Fourth,** help her evaluate the relationship to determine if reconciliation is possible or if the relationship is too destructive for reconciliation. Offer her help with the reconciliation process and/or help to grieve the loss of a significant relationship.

In the best of circumstances, the wounds of abuse and family violence run deep. Scars inevitably remain. Only the senile forget. But with professional counseling the intense pain can be diminished and abusive experiences need no longer be incapacitating when the memory of the abuse recurs throughout



one's lifetime. God provides His own balm, the healing balm of forgiveness, which, in response to true repentance, can open the way for reconciliation and new beginnings.

**The meaning of genuine repentance.** Only when the perpetrator takes full responsibility for his action, makes restitution for harm done in every way possible, undergoes treatment and gives evidence of a radical change in behavior, can repentance be considered genuine. Do not be easily taken in by an abuser's claim to a religious conversion or reconversion without the earmarks noted above. Apart from true repentance and professional treatment, the abuse will almost certainly begin again if the family is reunited.

**Forgiveness is a process.** Forgiveness is often misunderstood. It is a process which takes a person(s) from an experience of deep pain to eventual healing. It is not a process which should be hurried. Reconciliation may take a very long time if it is possible at all. There is an aspect of forgiveness which can bring peace to a victim even when the abuser does not respond with repentance, restitution in every way possible, and changed behavior. But in this case, forgiveness is a choice which frees the victim from bitterness and a desire for revenge. When restoration in the relationship is not possible, it is helpful for the pastor to assist family members in grieving the loss of an important relationship.

#### **4. Safeguard the children.**

When a child makes a report, remember most children do not have the vocabulary or the experience to make up a convincing story. When, as is often the case, the abuser is a family member, friend, or someone else the child should have been able to trust and to count on to love and care for him or her, the abuse is particularly devastating. It is best for a pastor to simply listen and accept the child's account and feelings and to provide caring support. It is appropriate to ask questions like, "Is there anything more that you need to tell me?" or "What exactly did your uncle do?" If the child needs to be questioned further about details, it is best for these questions to be asked by professionals who have been trained in this area.

**Report abuse to authorities.** When you suspect a child is being victimized, it is morally responsible to make a report to appropriate authorities in order to protect them from further harm. In many places, making a report is also a pastor's legal responsibility. It is your responsibility to know the laws in your jurisdiction. Remember that often the involvement of the authorities is the most powerful motivator for an abuser to seek the professional treatment necessary to end the abuse. Where there are no civil authorities who will ensure the protection of children, it is incumbent upon Christians to do whatever they can to protect them

Children need a great deal of care and support when their families are in the midst of the turmoil brought on by abuse. They need reassurance that no matter what has happened, it is not their fault. While treatment toward healing from the trauma of abuse should be left to a professional counselor, the child needs his or her pastor and friends from the church to stay close and provide a safe, caring circle when everything else when the child's world seems to be falling apart.

#### **5. Hold the abuser firmly accountable for his actions.**

Many abusers will vehemently deny their abusive actions or minimize their severity or incidence. You will need to be caring but firm in your statements that the abusive behavior must cease immediately.

For your own safety, do not confront the abuser alone. Do not suggest marital or couple counseling. Couple counseling is not effective at this point because the victim will not be free to talk without putting herself and her children at further risk. The first goal is not to save the marriage but to stop the abuse.

**Treatment for abuse is complex.** The abuse perpetrator should be placed in the care of professionals with expertise in this area as soon as possible. Without such professional help, the abusive behavior will almost surely continue. Without such help the abuser will be unable to see the abusive nature of his behavior or identify the patterns of control and the abuse of power in his relationships. It should be made clear that any hope for restoration of his family relationships rests on his active participation in treatment and a radical change in his behavior.

#### **6. Address the spiritual dimension.**

Victims of abuse and violence in the church often struggle with deep spiritual questions. Where was God when I was being abused? If He is all powerful, why doesn't He stop my abuser? Is God punishing me for something I have done? Does He think I need to learn a lesson? I must be bad, else God would have protected me. Many feel God-abandoned and wrongly blame themselves and worry about whether God can ever forgive them.

At this time they need a faith community who accepts them, questions and all, recognizing that God will make Himself known to them as they are able to come to some understanding about the inevitability of suffering as part of life in a fallen world. They will come to see that you can't save anyone by letting them hurt you. With the passing of time they will become more open to your clarification about God's design for mutual submission in marriage, Christ's teachings about power and authority, and the difference between discipline and punishment.

They may need help to identify the earmarks of true repentance which always includes taking responsibility for wrongs committed, a change in behavior, and restitution wherever possible for harm done. They may need help to distinguish between the forgiveness which may someday free them from bitterness and a desire to hurt as they have been hurt even if there is no repentance on the part of the abuser, and the forgiveness that may open the way for the restoration of a relationship when true repentance and treatment which brings about changed behavior makes reconciliation possible. But for now, do not be hasty to correct theology or to offer directives or solutions. Leave room for God to do His work.

*(Allow time for discussion in small groups regarding the orientation material that has been presented. Distribution of the Handout # 4 Dealing with Abuse and Domestic Violence: Do's and Don'ts for Church Leaders may add to the discussion. Encourage participants to focus on plans for implementation of these principles and concepts in their local area and in the arenas over which they have responsibility and influence.)*

*(Close with A Survivor's Litany, Presentation Helps # 2.)*

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## Maria's Story: A Case Study

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### Introduction for Seminar Presenters

The purpose of this presentation is to help participants understand the nature of abusive behavior, the underlying messages which set a woman up to accept abuse, and the way in which the circumstances of a battered woman's life limit her options. It is also meant to demonstrate the kinds of releasing experiences and beliefs which can make it possible for an abuse victim to break out of her bondage and seek help.

Caution should be taken in the use of this exercise to insure that the person acting the part of the abuse sufferer is not personally an abuse victim, or if so has adequately processed her personal abuse with a professional counselor. The experience is too intense for someone who has experienced abuse without having processed the issues in counseling, and playing the part of the wife in this drama could inflict further pain.

Since the story is a composite of scenarios from the lives of many battered women in several parts of the world, and since the dynamics appear to be similar globally, it is appropriate for the couple to carry names suitable to your locale.

The idea for this presentation was derived from an exercise developed by the Duluth Project and Ellen Penz. See Marie M. Fortune's book, *Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1991).

**The drama.** As the narrator reads the script, an actor, the "victim," sits where she can be seen by the audience. As prompted by the narrator, audience participants (previously designated) place or remove blankets on the actor.

**Stage props.** Eight light-medium weight blankets; a chair or stool

### The Case Study

Maria is 35 years old. Her husband Pedro asked her to marry him sixteen years ago. She has three children: A son and two daughters, with ages from 9 to 14 years.

When Maria was a girl, she often heard her father call her mother all sorts of degrading names whenever she dared to disagree with him. More than once she cringed behind the wall, fearing for her mother's life as her father beat her mother savagely and threatened to throw her and the children into the street. But when Maria talked back to men her mother chided, "Do you want to get married? If you do, you better start learning not to talk back to men the way you do. You are too strong headed. Why do you insist on having your own opinions?" To Maria's response that she had to speak to let people know how she felt, her mother responded, "Don't you know that what people hate most is a woman who can't bridle her tongue?" When Maria retorted, "You talk back to my father!" her mother sighed, "Yes, and you know the consequences." But when Maria concluded it might be best not to get married, her mother despaired, "Don't talk like that. What sort of a woman will you be without a husband?"

*(Ask a participant to put **blanket 1** over Maria's head, draping over her shoulders and down to the floor).*

Before Maria reached adolescence, her mother put her in charge of her younger siblings and taught her to cook. Actually, she was in charge of all of the household operations while her mother cleaned for several affluent families in order to have some money for clothes for the children. Her father gave her mother an allowance, but it was barely enough to buy food, and he wanted what he wanted to eat, no matter what the cost! Whenever Maria complained that she wanted to continue her schooling, her mother would respond that it was not as important for women to study as for men. She was needed in the house and her mother could not do without her. She also got the message from her mother that it is harder for a very educated girl to find a husband, because men like to feel superior and are threatened by a woman who is too educated. Through these and other subtle messages Maria learned to consider men as superiors, and as rulers of both home and the lives of women. Maria was taught that it was her role to be a dutiful, hard-working, self-sacrificing, obedient wife who should not question her husband's words or decisions, because "men know best." She was to be dependent on him; his care and affection would come in exchange for her obedience and devotion.

As a boy, her brother was being taught very different lessons about his role in the family and in the world. He was being groomed to take charge, to rule his family with authority. As a young boy he was sent off to boarding school where he was encouraged to learn a profession and to be tough stern, aloof, and in charge as a way of showing that he was now a man. There were a lot of jokes that demeaned women as sentimental and lacking in judgement and elevated men as superior and rescuers of the weaker sex. There were also jokes about the importance of showing women who was the "head of the house:" (*Ask for another volunteer to place **blanket 2** over Maria.*)

Maria yearned to go away to school or to be married just to be beyond the reach of her father's tyranny. "I grew up fearing my father," she says. "The very sound of his voice set me trembling and crying, especially if he was drunk. As a child I would sometimes urinate in my panties when he threatened to beat me for something I had done wrong." Whenever Maria and her sisters bought things without consulting him he would lecture them about wasting his money and their duty to respond to his wishes. Once he nearly set their home on fire burning the new school clothes their mother had saved months to purchase. If they talked back to him he became irate. "As long as you live under my roof," he would bellow, "you'll do as I say." Maria and her sisters knew better than to answer back.

As Maria reached puberty, her father began to be unexpectedly sweet on occasion and to bring her gifts, but she quickly learned that gifts were in exchange for "favors" and though her father's touch made her feel terribly uncomfortable, she got the message that she was to keep his sexual advances a secret. Her duty was to please him.

*(Blanket 3 on)*

Through some friends in the church, Maria was finally able to go to academy, and later continued on to college. There she met Pedro, a popular young man who was considered very intelligent and stood out as a leader. When he asked her to be his fiancé, Maria was pleased. She loved Pedro and believed Pedro loved her. Sometimes she had mixed feelings, even doubts about their relationship, when he would make demeaning remarks about her in front of their friends, or when he got angry if she so much as suggested something different from what he had in mind.

But when she mentioned her concerns to her friends, the usual response was that "men are like that." When she was afraid, she could only pray that he would not abuse the tremendous power which both society and the church gave him over her, as her father had abused his power over her mother. But most of the time she suppressed her fears, believing that if she was a loving and dutiful wife, Pedro would be as kind and faithful a husband as he had been an attentive suitor during their courtship.

***(Blanket 4 on)***

Before they were married Pedro forced Maria to have sexual relations with him. At first he tried to charm her and get his way with her by using his best wiles as a lover. But when she resisted, he said that she had sexually aroused him and that he could not return to his studies until he was satisfied. Then he turned vicious, calling her a string of horrible names and forcing her down onto the ground. After this, she was almost sure that she should not marry him, but what could she do? Pedro was so popular on campus, she was sure no one would believe her if she tried to tell anyone what had happened. And she was not a virgin anymore. Who would want her if they really knew? So she married Pedro, for better or for worse.

"For worse" began to unfold very early in their marriage as Pedro's affection began to wane because Maria did not perform all her wifely duties just as he thought she should. She became pregnant very soon after the marriage, and she dared to hope that he would be pleased by her fertility, especially if she was able to give him a son. In every way she could she tried to please him so he would love her and life would be good for their child. But despite her best efforts, he belittled her as a wife and as a lover, all the while making insatiable demands on her. She felt betrayed, misused, and worthless. But her options were few. She had no money and could not work now that she was pregnant. She was living far from her relatives and closest friends, and even if they had been nearby, she did not want anyone to know what was going on. Pedro was a leader in the church, and it would all be too embarrassing. Besides, if anyone knew, Pedro might even lose his job. At least now there was food on the table and shelter over her head.

***(Blanket 5 on)***

When Maria gave birth to their firstborn son, Pedro seemed pleased, but instead of deepening his affection for her, all too soon his behavior toward her took a dramatic turn for the worse. He would slap and pummel her with fists for not serving him food on time or for telling him to fetch his own drink when she was busy nursing the baby. He would blow up into a rage if she occasionally requested his help with a household task. "Do you take me for a woman?" he would rant. He prohibited her from having any male friends and falsely accused her of cheating on him. He forced her to stop singing in the church choir and threatened to beat her if he came home and found any of her lady friends at the house "keeping her from her chores and gossiping." One day Maria had had enough and decided to leave, but when Pedro came home and found her packing, he pleaded for her forgiveness, blamed his abusive behavior on his hard childhood, and promised to stop hurting her. He sounded so sincere, she believed him. Like many other women, she didn't want to face up to the truth, so she stayed.

***(Blanket 6 on)***

One day she did not respond to a message to meet Pedro because the baby was very sick. When he came home, he stormed into the house and slapped her hard across the face without a word. When she tried to explain, he wouldn't listen. "When I tell you to meet me, I mean for you to meet me! Do you understand?" he bellowed.

"Please don't ever do that again," she responded through gritted teeth.

"What did you say" Pedro bellowed again, and before she knew it he had punched her in the stomach and sent her staggering across the room. Feeling helpless and terrified, she fell silent.

From that moment on, Maria was constantly on edge. She never knew when something she might say or do would send him into a rage. By then, she was pregnant again. Sometimes when he looked at her, she could feel his hatred. But when Maria visited her own mother and wanted to stay, her mother sent her back. "It's just a phase men go through," her mother said. "You should have more patience with him. Men often hurt women. Look what your father did to me. But I had patience with him, for the sake of you children. You too must save your marriage for the sake of your babies. Besides, you have no biblical grounds for divorce."

***(Blanket 7 on)***

As her children grew, Pedro grew increasingly impatient with them and would punish them for trifles in ways that were disproportionate to the offense. One time he hung her little boy by his feet and beat him. Often he would punch and shove them around. Once he broke one of the girl's legs. Family worship became a nightmare! If one of the children made the smallest movement or said anything, he would call them irreverent and rebellious children and punish them in horrible ways. The children were terrified of him. Maria knew then that she must get out of the situation. Her determination was sealed a few days later when, in an angry fit of rage, Pedro threatened her and the children with a knife. From that moment on, her every waking moment was absorbed with thoughts about safe ways she could leave him. But there seemed to be none.

***(Blanket 8 on)***

*(Narrator addresses Maria under blanket.) "Why do you put up with this Maria? Why don't you just leave him? (Person under blanket replies nonverbally by attempting to move, but is restricted by weight of blankets.)"*

Maria remembers that her junior Sabbath School leader talked to her personally about God's love for her and her specialness and her worth as a child of God, made in His image.

***(Invite a participant to remove blanket 8)***

Maria read a story in the local paper about a battered woman about her age. She learned of the existence of a shelter for women and children victimized by family violence in her city. Until then, she had thought she was the only one.

***(Remove blanket 7)***

Maria's friend Delcina was also in an abusive marriage, but she started her own business during the day while her husband was away selling simple breads that she made herself. When she had saved some money, she was able to rent a small space in the market and her business was growing. When her husband's unmerciful beatings continued despite her attempts to improve their relationship, she kicked him out, confident that she could take care of herself and the children. Maria admired her courage and strength.

***(Remove blanket 6)***

Maria knew that her mother-in-law had influence over her husband. Once, when they were visiting her, Maria got up her courage and told her mother-in-law a few selected details about the situation at home. Maria's body language and account were convincing. What her mother-in-law did was to call both of them together, make her son apologize, and make Maria promise to forgive him and to "not to provoke him by being disobedient."

***(Replace blanket 6 )***

Maria read in her Bible, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." (1 Cor. 3:16, 17)

***(Remove blanket 6)***

Maria thanked God for a friend of her husband who lived next door and who would bang on the wall and beg Pedro to stop when he heard the thuds and crashes and screams and slaps of a battery in full progress.

***(Remove blanket 5)***

Sometimes Maria would think about leaving her husband. But by now her husband was the first elder of the church and Maria had started to work as a teacher in the school operated by the church. She was too ashamed to let anyone know what was happening, and was afraid that if she left she would lose her job and be a bad example for the young people and others in the church. Occasionally she would hear stories similar to her own, but usually the stories were used to imply that families struggling with abuse and violence were not as spiritually healthy as they should be and they needed to pray more, and surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit, and have more faith that the Lord could fix things. One message always rang clear: Christian women should save their marriages at all costs and never under any circumstances leave their husbands. She even knew of a case in which an abused woman, who finally decided to leave a very destructive relationship, was put under discipline by the church for initiating a divorce from her abusive husband. Many blamed the woman for the breakup of her marriage and implied that she was responsible for the soul of her husband and should have stayed to work for his salvation. Maria felt that she certainly could not face so much shame, and was plagued by the fear that God would hold her responsible for the loss of her husband's soul.

***(Replace blanket 5 )***

Maria's pastor talked about forgiveness in a sermon on Sabbath morning. He said forgiveness was a process that could bring persons who had been deeply wounded in a relationship from an experience of deep pain to eventual healing and reconciliation in the relationship. But he said forgiveness should never be offered as a reason a person had to stay in an abusive relationship. He said that true repentance always included a change in behavior and restitution in every way possible for the wrong that had been done. Some relationships, he said, could not be restored because the abuser refused to follow through with professional help and make changes in their lives.

***(Remove blanket 5)***

A woman Maria respected in the church started a small Bible study group in her home. As the group studied and prayed together, they began to share some of their concerns with one another. Maria was not



ready to talk about her situation at home, but she thought that if ever there were a group with whom she could share, this would be it. Maybe someday she would be able to tell them and they would reach out to help her.

***(Remove blanket 4)***

A friend who was on the church board told Maria about a video the pastor had shown to the board about abuse and domestic violence. She learned that the board's response had been supportive of abuse sufferers. The Family Ministries leader was now assembling a list of the resources available to abused persons in the community. Church leaders had promised to be available to help abuse survivors access these resources.

***(Remove blanket 3)***

Maria's friend told her that the church leaders had pledged themselves to hold abusers accountable for their actions and take whatever steps were necessary to protect victims and their children, but at the same time they would support them as they made restitution for the wrong they had done in every way possible and sought the professional help they needed to change their patterns of behavior.

***(Remove blanket 2)***

Maria began to believe that she could turn to her church for help and they would hear her cries. She made an appointment to see the pastor the next day.

***(Remove blanket 1)***

*(The discussion which follows this presentation will add much to its value. Give participants a chance to reflect on what they have seen. Debrief in small groups or with the group as a whole. Suggested questions: What did you see? What feelings did you have for Maria? In what ways did this experience help to make real the victim's experience? What behaviors constitute abuse? What preventive steps might be taken in the family to keep "blankets" from piling up? What can be done to help remove "blankets" from other Maria's in our congregations?)*

*Conclude the presentation by drawing out some of the points you would like to emphasize, i.e. what constitutes abuse, the messages Maria believed from her childhood which victimized her, the messages her husband received which contributed to his belief that he had every right to do what he was doing, the things that made it so difficult for Maria to extricate herself from the abusive situation, the appropriate anger that arises in persons who see another person being victimized, and better messages which need to be intentionally articulated in the church and in families.)*

## A Survivor's Litany

*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.\**

**I dwell in another secret place.  
It's called the land of forgetfulness and suppression.  
Many are the shadows lurking in that land,  
yet none are called the shadow of the Almighty.**

*I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*

**O, how I longed for You to be my refuge and my fortress!  
Where were You, God, when I desperately needed You?  
I didn't willingly give up my innocence.  
I was seized in an act of betrayal and terror.**

*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

**I believed You would deliver me, God. Why didn't You?  
Why didn't You stop it *before* it began?  
You tell me to trust. How can I?  
I'm sorry, Lord, but when someone tells me to trust,  
I get scared even when that Someone is divine.**

*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.  
A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.*

**Not true, God. Even now I walk in terror and aloneness.  
I am one of the ten thousand who fell at Your right hand.  
I was an *innocent child* who believed in You.  
God, You *know* that evil came near me *crevolyntly* near.**

*Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*

**Let me tell You what my eyes see, Lord.  
My eyes see adults who protect their spouses, or relatives, or friends, or reputations  
rather than their children.  
My eyes see children intimidated by a justice system they don't understand,  
but whose hostility they feel.**

**My eyes see scars  
Cugly scars  
Carried by survivors,  
often for the rest of their lives.**

**My eyes see a road most traveled by survivors  
Ca road devoid of self-esteem  
and self-respect, a road of alcoholism, drug addiction, obesity, sexual  
dysfunction, prostitution, divorce, and suicide.**

**And through bitter tears, my eyes see a church whose silence regarding  
my plight is deafening.**

\* Scripture passages (lightface, italic type) are from Psalm 91.

By Robert H. Lloyd, Pastor, Kailua Seventh-day Adventist Church, Hawaii, USA. Reprinted from *Ministry*, January, 1995.  
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## Abuse and Family Violence: Toward Some Definitions

*(The following definitions were accepted by the General Conference Abuse and Family Violence Taskforce meeting in joint session with the 1996 General Conference Family Ministries World Advisory.)*

Abuse and violence may be physical, sexual, or psychological. In the case of children and the elderly, it may also take the form of severe neglect. To address issues of abuse and violence we must come to some definition of what constitutes unacceptable conduct. It is inappropriate to use the terms abuse and violence to describe minor incidents or isolated events without serious consequences, as unfortunate as they are. Victims and perpetrators can be of any age. For example, while we often hear of the abuse of children and youth, teenagers may also abuse their parents verbally, emotionally or physically.

**Physical abuse** involves aggressive behavior towards the victim's body. It includes behaviors like pushing, pinching, spitting, kicking, biting, pulling hair, slapping, hitting, punching, choking, burning, clubbing, stabbing, limb twisting, and confining. It also includes throwing acid, boiling water, or objects; throwing the victim down, against a wall, or down stairs; mutilating with knives, scissors or other dangerous objects, and the use of guns. The common practices in some parts of the world of selective amniocentesis and the killing of female newborns, bride burning, and female genital mutilation constitute violent physical abuse. Harm done in incidents of physical abuse can range from minor bruising to murder, often beginning with what may seem like trivial acts intended to threaten the victim and then escalating into more frequent and injurious attacks.

**Psychological or emotional abuse** includes among other things behaviors like consistent and harsh criticism, degrading, belittling, and disparaging name-calling. It can also include verbal threats, episodes of rage, depreciation of character and person, and unrealistic demands for perfection. The regular use of menacing, violent, and obscene language directed at another person are also included. In addition, excessive possessiveness, isolation, and deprivation of physical and economic resources are psychologically abusive. Such abuse may also involve denial of sexual contact or activity resulting in sexual frustration, self-doubt and guilt about sexual attractiveness. Violent activity which is destructive of property belonging to the victim such as clothing, furniture or pets is also emotionally abusive.

**Sexual abuse** can include inappropriate fondling, touching and verbal remarks. Incest, molestation, rape, and oral/genital contact or the fondling of genitals or breasts are also a part of this category. It is also sexually abusive to insist that the victim touch the perpetrator's body. These actions may not be forced, but they are nonetheless abusive when perpetrated against an underage victim or by a pastor, teacher, parent, or any adult in a position of trust who takes advantage of the vulnerability of the victim or of the trust relationship to meet his or her own needs or desires.

### Sources

Fortune, M. (1991). *Violence in the family*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.

*Violence against women in the family*. (1989). New York: United Nations.

## Abuse Indicators

### General Abuse Indicators

- Social isolation
- Low self-esteem
- Indicators of high levels of stress, i.e. depression, psychosomatic complaints
- Physical injuries for which explanations seem inadequate
- Minimizing personal feelings and needs
- Acceptance of responsibility for maltreatment, i.e., self blame, expressions of guilt
- High defensiveness about traditional male-female roles
- Unrealistic hopes that change is imminent
- Drug and alcohol abuse and/or other self-destructive behaviors

### Child Abuse:

- Sadness, fear, depression, anxiety
- Aggressive, disruptive, and/or destructive behavior
- Passive, compliant behavior
- Withdrawal
- Drug and alcohol abuse and/or other self-destructive behaviors
- Sexual acting out
- Running away
- Assumption of parental responsibilities
- Poor school performance
- Presence of bruises, lacerations, swollen areas or marks, specific injuries such as human bites, cigarette burns, broken bones, punctures or missing hair
- Presence of numerous injuries in various stages of healing
- Delayed or inappropriate treatment for injuries
- Inadequate or changing explanations for injuries

### Child Sexual Abuse

- Breast or genital irritation, pain or injury
- Torn or stained underclothing
- Difficulty sleeping, bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of the dark
- Unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters
- Sexual acting out
- Expressing affection in ways which should be beyond the child's experience and understanding

## A Leader's Response to Abuse and Family Violence

### Worksheet

1. Speak out about abuse and family violence in your church and community.
2. Prepare yourself to make appropriate referrals.
3. Recognize that your primary role is to listen and support those who have the courage to tell someone about the presence of abuse and violence in their family.

*First*, protect the victim and her children.

*Second*, support the family in identifying and utilizing professional resources to get help.

*Third*, help her deal with her spiritual questions.

*Fourth*, help her evaluate the relationship to determine if reconciliation is possible or if the relationship is too destructive for reconciliation. Offer her help with the reconciliation process and/or help to grieve the loss of a significant relationship.

4. Safeguard the children.
5. Hold the abuser firmly accountable for his actions.
6. Address the spiritual dimension.

## Dealing with Abuse and Domestic Violence: Do's and Don'ts for Church Leaders

*Karen and Ron Flowers*

1. **Do** accept the reality that abuse and family violence occurs within the families of church members.  
*Don't* perpetuate the belief that becoming a church member automatically changes the learned behavior of the abuser.
2. **Do** break the silence on abuse.  
*Don't* perpetuate the belief that what takes place between family members in their own homes is a private matter and the church has no responsibility to become involved.
3. **Do** understand that abuse and domestic violence are about power and control and forcing the will of one person over another.  
*Don't* accept the common rationale that the perpetrator's abusive behavior may be blamed on alcohol, stressful situations, or the behavior of the victim.
4. **Do** listen and accept the victim's feelings without judgment.  
*Don't* blame the victim.
5. **Do** ask questions such as the following when abuse is suspected : "What does your husband do when he gets angry? Are you in danger? Are you worried about the safety of yourself and your children?" Listen and take seriously the victim's assessment.  
*Don't* minimize or discount her fears, even for her life.
6. **Do** take seriously all reports of incidences of physical, emotional or sexual abuse.  
*Don't* minimize the seriousness of the episodes reported or deny those asking for help the protection they need at this time when they are most vulnerable.
7. **Do** respect a victim's right to make decisions about how they will respond to the abusive situation in which they find themselves. Help them find as many alternatives for action as possible.  
*Don't* get angry with victims who do not take your advice or cannot seem to extricate themselves quickly from their abusive situations.
8. **Do** respond in the sequence: (1) **Protect** the victim(s). (2) **Stop** the abuse. (3) **Evaluate** the relationship to see if it can be salvaged. (4) **Facilitate** reconciliation in the relationship or grief recovery from the loss of that relationship.  
*Don't* proceed too quickly to forgiveness and reconciliation. Since the immediate goal is not to save the marriage but to stop the violence, couple counseling is not the first task. Couple counseling can be effective only after the cycle of violence is stopped.

9. **Do** enable family members to access the full network of professional services available within the church or in the community.  
*Don't* perpetuate the myth that good Christians should resolve all their problems through prayer and Bible study alone, with no help from outside their families.
10. **Do** help the victim to find a safe place for herself if she or her children are in physical danger..  
*Don't* tell the victim she must stay with her husband because she is responsible for keeping the marriage together or responsible for the salvation of her husband.
11. **Do** listen and expect the full range of negative emotion to be expressed by victims reporting abusive experiences.  
*Don't* force the victim to suppress anger and grief. It is part of the process of recovery.
12. **Do** assure the victim that abuse is never her fault. The abuser has made a deliberate choice to exercise power and control over her to achieve his own desires.  
*Don't* perpetuate the myth that victims somehow bring abusive treatment upon themselves.
13. **Do** help the victim discover and develop her own resources B money, friends, relatives, employment - so she will have as many options as possible.  
*Don't* expect the victim to be able to break out of the situation alone.
14. **Do** maintain confidentiality. Let the victim know you will not discuss this matter with anyone without her permission. This is critical for her safety.  
*Don't* use her story as a sermon illustration or speak of the problem in any wider circle than is necessary to facilitate the victim's healing, and then only with her permission.
15. **Do** help abuse survivors deal with the spiritual questions with which they are struggling: i.e., Is God punishing me? Why didn't God protect me? What does forgiveness require of me?  
*Don't* criticize the victim for struggling spiritually in the aftermath of abuse or send them away to just "pray" about it.
16. **Do** provide justice for victims so they can become survivors by: listening to their reports and acknowledging the wrong done to them, holding the abuser accountable for his behavior, insisting that genuine repentance always involves changed behavior and restitution to the fullest extent possible, and facilitating the healing process so that over time, as the victim is ready, wounds may become scars which no longer incapacitate fulfilling life.  
*Don't* blame the victim or minimize the incident. Don't encourage reconciliation until there is repentance and changed behavior on the part of the abuser. Do not attempt to rush the healing process.
17. **Do** provide a supportive network of helpers and friends in the church who can be available on an ongoing basis to offer hospitality and friendship to abuse victims and their children, including safe haven for those who find themselves in immediate danger.



- Don't* encourage the abused to stay in an abusive relationship and endure suffering.
18. **Do** offer the victim ongoing support. Maintain contact by checking with her regularly to see how she is doing and offer practical help.  
*Don't* abandon victims in their ongoing need.
19. **Do** confront the abuser only after the victim and her children are in a safe place.  
*Don't* confront the abuser alone. Take another church leader with you for your safety.
20. **Do** anticipate the typical abuser responses: vehement denial of any wrongdoing, minimization of the seriousness of the situation, limited admittance of guilt ("This was the only time and I'll never do it again.").  
*Don't* be tempted to accept his word, in the face of evidence to the contrary, and turn from your responsibility to the victim.
21. **Do** report abusive and violent incidents to local authorities as required by law.  
*Don't* attempt to shelter the abuser from the law. Your action may rob the perpetrator of a primary incentive needed to seek treatment.
22. **Do** insist on professional therapeutic treatment for perpetrators.  
*Don't* attempt to counsel beyond the level of your professional training and expertise.
23. **Do** hold perpetrators accountable for their behavior which is destructive both to themselves and to their family.  
*Don't* offer forgiveness apart from true repentance, which is always evidenced by changed behavior and restitution in every way possible.
24. **Do** provide support and encouragement for perpetrators who are receiving treatment. Assure them of God's rich compassion and forgiveness. Remember repentance is always evidenced by behavior and restitution in every way possible.  
*Don't* be deceived by an apparent "conversion experience" which may be only a ploy to get the abuse victim to return home.
25. **Do** heighten awareness of the warning signs of a battering personality.  
*Don't* expect that such behavior will change without intervention.

26. **Do** heighten awareness of the abuse cycle. The most successful intervention occurs in the brief period immediately after an abusive incident when motivation for change on the part of the victim is at its peak.  
*Don't* assume that the "honeymoon" phase represents recovery and reconciliation. Interventions during this period are generally futile.
27. **Do** provide opportunity for building communication and conflict resolution skills.  
*Don't* assume all Christian families can develop these skills without help.
28. **Do** provide parent education which focuses on the difference between punishment and correction.  
*Don't* perpetuate the use of physical punishment as a primary method of correction.
29. **Do** provide education regarding sexuality which includes information regarding the destructive nature of sexual abuse.  
*Don't* be restrained by societal taboos which discourage open discussion of sexual issues.
30. **Do** define abusive behavior (physical, emotional and sexual) and make it clear that under no circumstances is abusive behavior acceptable.  
*Don't* excuse abusive behavior, even when the abused person seems to "want" or "deserve" the abuse.
31. **Do** accept your professional responsibility to maintain the highest of ethical standards as a minister of the gospel, recognizing that your profession places you in a position of trust and power.  
*Don't* enter into a sexual relationship with anyone other than your spouse, even if you believe the other person wants such a relationship.
32. **Do** foster a healing atmosphere in your congregation. Recognize the impact of abuse and emphasize God's love and grace.  
*Don't* add further to a victim's pain through condemnation, judgment, or criticism.
33. **Do** teach children about inappropriate touch and secrets, and identify persons to whom they can turn for help.  
*Don't* assume children are safe within the family circle, the church, or among friends.
34. **Do** help clarify church members' understanding of such issues as:
- the role of pain and suffering in the life of a Christian
  - the difference between punishment and correction of children
  - forgiveness which does not require toleration of an abusive relationship
  - the nature of husband-wife relationships in Christian marriage
- Don't* perpetuate misunderstanding about these issues through preaching and teaching or the failure to address theological misunderstandings that leave individuals vulnerable to abuse.

## **Families Where Peace is in Place: Parenting Children for Healthy Interracial Relationships**

*Elaine and Willie Oliver, Department of Family Ministries, North American Division*

It was Alexander Pope, who once said: "Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined." Ellen White (1954) offers a similar concept by stating: "Too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his [her] character than all that it learns in the future years" (p. 193).

As parents, we have often talked about the seven-year window, and how important it is to share all the right concepts and experiences with our children during this time. Jessica, our daughter, is beyond this window now, and we sometimes wonder if we did enough of the "right stuff" to prepare her for a productive Christian life. Soon Julian, our other child, will have his seventh birthday and be beyond the seven-year window.

We don't have very much in earthly belongings, but we are happy to have spent most of our resources providing new and wonderfully diverse experiences for our children in their early years. From traveling throughout the United States and Canada, to spending time in the Caribbean, Latin America and Europe, we have been conscious that we are giving our children a perspective of the world as a global village. While we have visited children's museums, natural history and art museums in many cities, including the Louvre in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim in New York City, our children have been in tow. Other places on our "must visit" list are Africa, Asia and the South Pacific.

Our reason for sharing these experiences with our children has been to inculcate in their minds from their very early years an appreciation for God's magnificently heterogeneous creation. We want our children to acknowledge the difference in cultures, skin complexions, races and languages as a phenomenon to accept, celebrate and enjoy, instead of a reality to be tolerated, shunned or denied. We often hear people say of racial or cultural diversity, "God doesn't see color." We frequently wonder if there is a need to "blind" God in order to ease our own discomfort with this subject of diversity. A color-blind mentality makes little sense, especially when dealing with young children. They are excellent observers; they notice differences. To deny that differences exist is to give children a sense that differentness is negative. Different is really neither negative nor positive. Different is simply different.

Many individuals, including some Seventh-day Adventist Christians, would like to believe that racism no longer exists, not in the world at large, and especially not in the church. We are particularly naive when it comes to understanding the impact of racism and its ugly realities on our young children. We would like to believe that skin color is not a barrier to friendship, that all young children have a strong racial identity, and that equity and equality exists among the races. Then real life interrupts this preferred view of our world and our children's world.

A few years ago, we moved from one state to another in the middle of our daughter's first grade school year. One afternoon during the first week of attendance at her new school (a Seventh-day Adventist school), Jessica came home and nonchalantly reported a bit of dialogue with a girl classmate

that had taken place during recess. "You can't play with us," the classmate had said to Jessica, "we only play with white kids."

We can't say that we were shocked! But that incident did serve to confirm other personal experiences, our reading in recent sociological literature, and news media reports we'd heard about race relations in the United States of America going backwards in many instances, rather than improving. A further confirmation was the blatant contrast between the reaction of African Americans and the reaction of European Americans to the acquittal of murder defendant O. J. Simpson on October 3, 1995 in Los Angeles, California.

Children learn racism and bigotry from their elders and significant others. The converse is also true. Children reared by parents or guardians who relate to racial and cultural diversity with openness, acceptance and respect will emulate the behavior modeled by their parents or guardians. Social research affirms that the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of young children regarding race are influenced by the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of society around them. Anthropologist Mary Ellen Goodman, in her 1952 landmark study on racial attitudes in young children (focused specifically on four-year-olds), concluded, "It [white over brown] . . . is the most comprehensive idea to which our children are exposed. The idea is pervasive and it pervades silently, like a creeping fog, and is just about as difficult to stop" (quoted in McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988, p. 18). The sad commentary is that, though this research was conducted forty-five years ago, current studies are reaching the same conclusion.

Recent empirical research conducted by sociologists of the University of Florida in Gainesville suggests that young pre-school children engage in sophisticated racial interaction. In their study of 58 three-, four-, and five-year-old children in a large preschool in a southern city, Debra Van Ausdale & Joe R. Feagin (1996) observed children using racial and ethnic concepts to exclude and control their peers. The racial/ethnic makeup of the sample included: White ' 24, Asian ' 19, Black ' 4, biracial ' 3, Middle Eastern ' 3, Latino ' 2, and other ' 3. Note the following exchange among the children in which racial and ethnic concepts are used to exclude others:

Using the playhouse to bake pretend muffins, Rita (3.5: White/Latina) and Sarah (4: White) have all the muffin tins. Elizabeth (3.5: Asian/Chinese), attempting to join them, stands at the playhouse door and asks if she can play. Rita shakes her head vigorously, saying, "No, only people who can speak Spanish can come in." Elizabeth frowns and says, "I can come in." Rita counters, "Can you speak Spanish?"

Elizabeth shakes her head no, and Rita repeats, "Well, then you aren't allowed in." Elizabeth frowns deeply and asks Debi (the participant observation researcher) to intercede by telling her, "Rita is being mean to me." Acting within the child-initiated framework, Debi asks Rita, "If only people who speak Spanish are allowed, then how come Sarah can play? Can you speak Spanish Sarah?" Sarah shakes her head no. "Sarah can't speak Spanish and she is playing," Debi says to Rita, without suggesting she allow Elizabeth in. Rita frowns, amending her statement, "OK, only people who speak either Spanish or English." "That's great!" Debi responds, "because Elizabeth speaks English and she wants to play with you guys." Rita's frown deepens. "No," she says. Debi queries, "But you just said people who speak English can play. Can't you decide?" Rita gazes at Debi, thinking hard. "Well" Rita says triumphantly, "only people who speak two languages."

Elizabeth is waiting patiently for Debi to make Rita let her play, which Debi has no intention of doing. Debi then asks Rita, "Well, Elizabeth speaks two languages, don't you Elizabeth?" Debi looks at Elizabeth, who now is smiling for the first time. Rita is stumped for a moment, then retorts, "She does not. She speaks only English." Debi smiles at Rita, "She does speak two languagesC English and Chinese. Don't you?" Debi invites Elizabeth into the conversation. Elizabeth nods vigorously. However, Rita turns away and says to Sarah, "Let's go to the store and get more stuff." (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996, p. 781)

It is interesting to note that language was the ethnic marker employed by Rita to determine the rules for joining the game. However, Rita soon discovered that her efforts to exclude Elizabeth by demanding two languages had collapsed. This three-year-old child had contrived a social rule predicated on a critical cognizance of ethnic markers. The final "two languages" criterion did not admit the fact that Sarah only spoke English. Rita's option of language as an exclusionary gimmick was aimed at discouraging Elizabeth from participating, not at adhering to a bilingual play space. Another example of racial exclusion found in this research is shared in the following field note entry:

Carla (3: White) is preparing herself for the resting time. She picks up her cot and starts to move it. The head teacher, a White woman, asks what she is doing. "I need to move this," explains Carla. "Why?" asks the teacher. "Because I can't sleep next to a nigger," Carla says, pointing to Nicole (4:5 African/biracial) on a cot nearby. "Niggers are stinky. I can't sleep next to one." Stunned, the teacher's eyes widen, then narrow as she frowns. She tells Carla to move her cot back and not use "hurting words." Carla looks amused and puzzled but complies. Nothing more is said to the children but the teacher glances at Debi and shakes her head. (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996, p. 782)

The racial status analysis Carla, a three-year-old, made of one of her peers was sophisticated and demonstrated comprehension not only of how to use racial epithets but also of the disapproving mark associated with black skin. Like most children observed in this research, Carla was not the unsophisticated, naive child described in the mainstream literature. She used information she had decidedly learned from other sources, plausibly in interaction with other children or adults, and she related this material to a distinct interactive episode.

On using racial concepts to have control or power over others, Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996) share the following episode taking place within the same group of children in their research:

Brittany (4: White) and Michael (4: Black) come to Debi demanding that she resolve a conflict. Mike tearfully demands that Debi tell Brittany that he "does too have a white one." As he makes this demand, Brittany solemnly shakes her head no. "A white what?" Debi asks. "Rabbit!" he exclaims. "At home, in a cage." Brittany continues shaking her head no, infuriating Mike. He begins to shout at the top of his lungs, "I do too have a white one!" Debi asks Brittany, "Why don't you think he has a white rabbit at home?" "He can't," she replies, staring at Mike, who renews his cries. Debi tries to solve the mystery, asking Mike to describe his bunny. "She white," he scowls at Brittany. "You do not," she replies. Mike screams at her, "I DO TOOO!" Debi hugs Mike to calm him

and takes Brittany's hand. Brittany says, "He can't have a white rabbit." Debi asks why, and the child replies, "Because he is Black." Debi tells Brittany, "He can have any color bunny he wants." Mike nods vigorously and sticks his tongue out at Brittany, who returns the favor. "See," he says, "you just shut up. You don't know." Brittany, who is intensely involved in baiting Mike, shakes her head, and says, "Can't." She sneers, leaning toward him and speaking slowly, "You're Black." Mike is angry, and Debi comforts him.

Then Debi asks Brittany, "Have you been to Mike's house to see his bunny?" "No," she says. Debi asks, "Then how do you know that his bunny isn't white?" Debi is curious to find out why Brittany is intent on pestering Mike, who is usually her buddy. "Can't you see that he's Black?" She gazes at Debi in amazement. Debi replies, "Yes, of course I can see that Mike is Black, but aren't we talking about Mike's rabbit?" Debi is momentarily thrown by the child's calm demeanor. Brittany again shakes her head slowly, watching Debi for a reaction all the while. "Mike is Black." She says, deliberately forming the words. She repeats, "He is Black." Debi tries again, "Yes, Mike is Black and his bunny is white," now waiting for a response. Brittany shakes her head. "Why not?" Debi tries. "Because he is *Black*," Brittany replies with a tone suggesting that Debi is the stupidest person she has ever met. "Have you been to his house?" Debi asks her again. She shakes her head no. "Then," Debi continues, "how do you know that his bunny isn't white?" "I know," Brittany replies confidently. "How?" Debi tries one last time. "He can't have just any old color rabbit?" Debi asks. "Nope," Brittany retorts firmly, "Blacks can't have whites." (p. 787)

Brittany persisted that Mike could not own a white rabbit because he was Black. She "knew" it and reiterated this point until he was compelled to solicit adult mediation. Mike was forced to tears by Brittany's assertions. "Blacks can't have whites" was her social norm. The power of skin color had been transformed into a tool in Brittany's hands that she exploited to control interaction with another child. "The traditional literature accepts that children display prejudice by the time they arrive at school, but offers no explanation about the acquisition of this prejudice beyond it being an imitation of parental behavior" (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996, p. 791).

Not long ago, while presenting a seminar on "Families and Racial/Cultural Diversity," we had the 200-member audience divide into small work groups of seven or eight people and work on several questions, sharing first with each other, and then having a representative from each group share some thoughts with the entire group. Some of the questions asked were: *Think of the significant people in your life when you were a child (e.g., relatives, friends, or teachers). What do you remember about their attitudes toward other ethnic groups? What can you hear them saying?* One of the participants, a man from West Africa, said, "We were taught, when I was growing up, that our tribe was superior to the other tribes in our country. That we were more intelligent and superior to others." We appreciated this kind of honesty and we wonder what kind of response each of us as Seventh-day Adventist Christian parents would give if we were forthright about the voices we heard on this topic while we were growing up.

So, here we are at the dawn of the twenty-first century—parents, guardians, educators, ministers, and significant others in the lives of young children. We have to seize the opportunity to help liberate our

own children and future generations of children from the ignorance of bigotry and xenophobia. It is obvious that society at large already has and will continue to have an impact on the racial attitudes of our children. The question is, how can we have a positive influence upon them? How can we lay a foundation so that our children will view "difference" as a positive, rather than a negative? How can we help our children celebrate the diversity that God has so wonderfully made? We present in the remainder of this article "Strategies for Adults" and "Strategies With Children" to help answer these questions.

### **Strategies for Adults**

In order for us to move toward greater recognition and acceptance of differences it is essential for us as adults to examine our own attitudes and personal growth regarding race, culture, and diversity. Intercultural (interracial) sensitivity is not part of our natural fallen behavior. Social scientist Milton Bennett (1986) suggests that intercultural sensitivity has not been characteristic of most of human history. Cross-cultural contact has often been accompanied by bloodshed, oppression, or genocide. Clearly, this pattern cannot continue. We must begin to challenge how we view the concept of "difference." Today, the failure to exercise intercultural sensitivity is not only immoral; it is also self-destructive.

The following reflective exercises give an opportunity for us to examine how our own attitudes, beliefs, biases, and behavior reflect the attitudes and beliefs of our family of origin culture, i.e., the families in which we grew up. In answering these questions, we may see how our present has been shaped by our past situations and circumstances.

#### **Exercise #1**

1. What is your racial/ethnic background?
2. How did your family define this identity for you during your childhood?
3. How did your family relate to individuals of a different race/ethnicity in your community, church or school during your childhood?

#### **Exercise #2**

1. How do you feel when you meet people from a different race?
2. How often do you use stereotypes or derogatory language when referring to people from a different race?
3. How do you feel when you see an interracial couple? Why? Are your feelings Christian?
4. When do you socialize with people from a different race?
5. What would you do if you knew a pastor from a different race was preaching at your church on Sabbath?
6. When you think of government-sponsored welfare assistance, do you immediately associate it with people from a certain race? What race? Why?
7. When talking about a person from a different race, do you refer to his/her race when describing him/her?
8. How many close friends do you have that are members of a different race?
9. How often do you speak about people of a different race? Is your conversation about these individuals usually positive or negative? Or do you deal with everyone the same?
10. How do you feel about people who live in (a) the cities? (b) the country? (c) the suburbs?

11. What do you think about people who speak with a different accent from yours, or don't speak your language at all? Did you know that we all speak with accents?
12. What comes to mind when people use the word *ethnic* or *ethnicity*? Did you know that we all belong to ethnic groups?
13. What would you do if your children went to an Adventist college or academy and were assigned a roommate from a different race?
14. When dealing with people from a different race, is your attitude usually one of acceptance or tolerance? Do you appreciate being tolerated?
15. How would you enjoy heaven since there will be no racial or cultural segregation there?

Answer the following on the questions you have just read.

- What impressed you most about this activity?
- What did you learn about yourself that surprised you?
- Now that you have brought many of your feelings to awareness, what, if anything, would you like to change and/or do?

### Strategies With Children

Pre-school children are often filled with enthusiasm, energy, an ability to like people, and to make friends with everyone. Distrust, apprehension, distress, and antagonism based on race are not inherent in their natures. Whatever we do at this stage of life to help children be open to individuals who are different from them will have a lasting effect (McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988).

**Visual images around the home.** Pre-school children are very visually oriented. They absorb their values from pictures and other things around them in their homes. Consequently, it is important for children to experience a variety of cultures, skin colors, racial features and diverse images that communicate an "I am OK, you are OK" feeling.

It is especially important for children whose cultures may not often be affirmed by society at large to have pictures and images in their homes that validate and reinforce their culture. This helps develop healthy self-esteem and an appropriate cultural pride, especially when they have been shown massive hostility and their race/culture has been denigrated in the society for many years (McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988).

**Toys.** The type of toys we select for our children will greatly influence the way they perceive their world. In an informal survey of U.S. stores with toys for children less than five, conducted by Kathleen McGinnis and Barbara Oehlberg (1988), the researchers did not find the population's ethnic composition well represented. Of one store they wrote, "The images on toys and toy packages are overwhelmingly white. I found one out of twenty dolls to be Black in our toy store, with no Hispanic, Native American, or Asian dolls. There are such dolls but their availability is not widespread (pp. 27, 28).

**Reading.** The books we read to our children during these early critical years help inform them about different peoples. Books should meet the following four criteria: (1) they should present authentic information about elements of different cultures; (2) they should counter racial stereotypes; (3) they should depict children and/or adults of different racial or cultural groups in non-stereotypic ways in



everyday situations and settings, (4) they should offer positive role models or heroes from different racial or cultural groups (McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988).

**Television.** Although we often consider television an intruder that has little that is positive to offer our children, there are some television programs that can help play a positive role in the formation of healthy racial attitudes. Watching these programs with our children and commenting favorably on them may reinforce the positive messages that we want our children to absorb. On the other hand, television programs that are negative or stereotypical of certain cultures should be avoided altogether. As examples, we should avoid reinforcing the stereotypical negative image of Native Americans as war-like, tomahawk-wielding peoples and Blacks as lazy or as drug-dealers (McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988).

**People in our home.** It is important that our children have the experience at home of meeting and sharing with a variety of individuals from different cultures, nationalities and language groups. With a diverse group of people as family friends, our children will realize that diversity is a high value in our homes and will more likely grow up to choose such friends for themselves (McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988).

**Professionals.** Children perceive the professionals and other highly skilled people to whom we go for help as "important people." Whenever possible, the individuals who serve our families professionally should be drawn from diverse ethnic/racial groups. This will also help our children to understand that there are competent professionals in every race and/or cultural group (McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988).

**Discussion of racism.** Although pre-schoolers cannot fully fathom the complexities of racism, they should be taught about inequality in society. From an early age, children should be instructed about the evils of stereotyping people by race or culture. Involving one's family in the discussion of current events where racism has taken place is a good way of exposing our children to means of dealing with issues of diversity in a positive way (McGinnis & Oehlberg, 1988).

## Conclusion

One author defines race as a somewhat suspect concept used to identify large groups of human beings who share a more or less distinctive combination of hereditary physical characteristics. In other words, race is a social construct that defines people by classifications that are literally only skin deep. The notion of race does not take into consideration the plethora of groups that defy such classifications. Further, the notion of race often forces people to adopt or deny parts of their identity. To be sure, race is a classification that is quite arbitrary and hides the vast commonalities that we all share as human beings. The Bible clearly states that human beings were all created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). That is you and me, no matter the color of our skin.

As followers of Jesus Christ, let us not allow worldly classifications to prescribe how we relate to one another. As stated in Scripture, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13: 34, 35). We urge you by the power of God to teach the children to love. By breaking down the walls and barriers of ignorance that have kept us apart for too long, we will change the way we view each other.

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## A Litany of Acknowledgment

(2 Samuel 13:1-21)

*Leader: Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.*

**People: We acknowledge the Tamars among us, beautiful sisters, deserving love and living in danger. For them we give thanks and ask protection.**

*Leader: But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand.'"*

**People: We acknowledge that there are those among us, trusted friends and family, who plot and scheme against our vulnerable children.**

*Leader: So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Pray let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand." Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him."*

**People: We acknowledge the pain and conflict of parents who are, like David, deceived, manipulated, and caught in webs of collusion.**

*Leader: So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out every one from me." So every one went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother.*

**People: We acknowledge the trust of our children and their desire to please us. We grieve that these qualities, born of their love and dependence on us, place them at risk. We acknowledge the compounding of this risk by secrecy and isolation.**

*Leader: But when she brought them near to him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this wanton folly. As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the wanton fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her.*

**People:** We acknowledge the realities of violence and abuse that are forced on our children in secrecy. We acknowledge the courage and resistance of those who, in the face of superior strength and deaf ears, have few options and little hope of protecting themselves.

*Leader:* Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone." But she said to him, "No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other which you did to me." But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her." Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for thus were the virgin daughters of the king clad of old. So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her.

**People:** We acknowledge the guilt, anger, and hatred of those who abuse our children and recognize that these feelings are often projected onto our children. We acknowledge that, in the rejection and banishment of child victims, the cycle of victim blaming comes full circle.

*Leader:* And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent the long-sleeved robe which she wore; and she laid her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went. And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar dwelt, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house.

**People:** We acknowledge that, all too often, when victims break silence and in grief, shame and desolation reach out for help, they are counseled to hold their peace and the circle of secrecy and denial widens. We acknowledge the Tamars among us, beautiful sisters, violated, grieving, and desolate. For them we give thanks and ask healing.

**All:** We acknowledge the pain and suffering of all persons—child victims, adult survivors, family members, friends, and offenders—who are affected by child sexual abuse and domestic violence.

*Leader:* Let us examine our hearts and actions and ask God's forgiveness for the times when, through word, silence, deed, or inaction, we have added to the burdens of pain and suffering caused by sexual abuse and domestic violence.

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Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission.

Prepared by Kelly Jarrett, Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc., New Haven, Connecticut.

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## A Litany for Healing

*Leader: God of grace, you nurture us with a love deeper than any we know, and your will for us is always healing and salvation.*

**People: We praise you and thank you, O God.**

*Leader: God of love, you enter into our lives, our pain, and our brokenness, and you stretch out your healing hands to us wherever we are.*

**People: We praise you and thank you, O God.**

*Leader: God of strength, you fill us with your presence and send us forth with love and healing to all whom we meet.*

**People: We praise you and thank you, O God.**

*Leader: God of love, we ask you to hear the prayers of your people.*

**People: Hear us, O God of life.**

*Leader: We pray for the world, that your creation may be understood and valued.*

**People: Hear us, O God of life.**

*Leader: Touch with your healing power the minds and hearts of all who suffer from sickness, injury, or disability, and make them whole again.*

**People: Hear us, O God of life.**

*Leader: Touch with your healing power the minds and hearts of all who live in confusion or doubt, and fill them with your light.*

**People: Hear us, O God of life.**

*Leader: Touch with your healing power the minds and hearts of all who are burdened by anguish, despair, or isolation, and set them free in love.*

**People: Hear us, O God of life.**

*Leader: Break the bonds of those who are imprisoned by fear, compulsion, secrecy, and silence.*

**People: Come with your healing power, O God.**

*Leader: Fill with peace those who grieve over separation and loss.*

**People: Come with your healing power, O God.**

*Leader: Restore to wholeness all those who have been broken in life or in spirit by abuse and violence within their families; restore to wholeness all those who have been broken in life or in spirit by abuse and violence within our Family of Nations; restore to them the power of your love; and give them the strength of your presence.*

**People: Come, O God, and restore us to wholeness and love.**

*Leader: Let us now name before God and this community gathered those, including ourselves, for whom we seek healing. (The congregation may call out names.)*

*O God, in you all is turned to light, and brokenness is healed. Look with compassion on us and on those we lift up in prayer, that we may be re-created in wholeness, in love, and in compassion for one another.*

**AMEN.**

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Developed by the Rev. Caroline Sproul Fairless, as part of "What Does Love Require: A Family Violence Manual for the Church Community," M. Div. honors project, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, May, 1989. Fairless is an ordained Episcopal priest, and is currently assistant rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, San Rafael, CA.

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## Intercessory Prayer

*Leader: Sisters (and brothers), we acknowledge that violence exists in families in our land, and we commit ourselves to exposing that violence and to freeing those who suffer such violence from its crippling effects. Therefore, let us pray.*

*Leader: For children who suffer pain, degradation, and rejection from those responsible for their care,*  
**People: Grant them safety and protection, Lord.**

*Leader: For parents who suffer the anguish of their failures as parents,*  
**People: Grant them insight and healing, Lord.**

*Leader: For women who are abused and battered by those who profess to love them,*  
**People: Grant them strength and courage, Lord.**

*Leader: For men who batter those they love,*  
**People: Grant them love, solace, and healing, Lord.**

*Leader: For all Christians and people of good will,*  
**People: Grant them openness to and compassion for those who suffer family violence, Lord.**

*All: God of Love and Creator of the universe, restore all families to your loving care. Teach them calm strength and patient wisdom that they may overcome arrogance and division as well as anger and violence, that they may resolve conflicts without violence, and nurture one another in the spirit of love and peace proclaimed by Jesus our Lord.*

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Developed by the Rev. Caroline Sproul Fairless, as part of "What Does Love Require: A Family Violence Manual for the Church Community," M. Div. honors project, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, May, 1989. Fairless is an ordained Episcopal priest, and is currently assistant rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, San Rafael, CA.

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# Selected Resources on Abuse and Family Violence

## Books

Alsdurf, J., & Alsdurf, P. (1989). *Battered into submission*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 168 pp.

In an attempt to discover why the problem of wife abuse is so prevalent in Christian homes, the authors look at the circumstances of women involved and also at the attitudes and theological views of those in church leadership. They suggest the church reconsider its fundamental attitudes toward the treatment of women and its views on marriage and headship. Practical suggestions for intervention and ministry are provided.

Brown, J. C., & Bohn, C. R. (Eds.). (1989). *Christianity, patriarchy, and abuse*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press. 173 pp.

An examination from a feminist perspective of the theological views which support traditional patriarchy and result in the perpetuation of violence as an acceptable norm. Main sections include historical perspectives, ethical and theological considerations, a psychological perspective on the effects of violence on the individual, and implications for pastoral care.

Bussert, J. M. K. (1986). *Battered women: From a theology of suffering to an ethic of empowerment*. New York: Lutheran Church in America. 120 pp.

A thoughtful, persuasive discussion of the theological and sociological roots of violence against women and how the church can respond in practical, sensitive ways. The author provides insights into the inner worlds of both the battered and the batterer. The church is urged to avoid what the author considers to be the regressive views held by the Religious Right which perpetuate the abuse of women. Numerous practical materials, suggestions and resource listings for leadership orientation and intervention are included.

Drake, B. (1995). *Friends: good, bad, secret*. CHJ Publishing, 1103 West Main, Middleton, ID 83644. 50 pp.

A sensitive, helpful book by a Seventh-day Adventist counselor for very young children about child molesting. Gives children understanding and knowledge without frightening them. Introduces them to the specialness of their private parts, warns them of secret friends who want to look on or touch them in inappropriate ways, and encourages children to tell if it happens.

Epp-Tiessen, E. (Ed.). *Expanding the circle of caring: Ministering to the family members of survivors and perpetrators of sexual abuse*. Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Women's Concerns.



88 pp.

Addresses the needs of those indirectly affected by acts of sexual abuse—the family members of victims, survivors and perpetrators. These "secondary victims" are often overlooked or forgotten, and this booklet is designed to promote understanding and compassion for their unique experiences.

Fontes, L. A. (Ed.). (1995). *Sexual abuse in nine north American cultures: Treatment and prevention*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 303 pp.

Due to various misunderstandings, sexual abuse is often mishandled by professionals working with minority populations. This volume attempts to improve this unfortunate reality by exploring themes of cultural identity, family organization, treatment of female sexuality, child rearing practices, gender roles, and interpersonal boundaries among several different kinds of groups: Cambodians, African Americans, gay men and lesbian women, Asians, Pacific Islanders and Filipino Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Anglo Americans. Jews and Seventh-day Adventists are singled out as two minority religious groups deserving special understanding.

Fortune, M. M. (1987). *Keeping the faith: Questions and answers for the abused woman*. Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco. 94 pp.

Addresses the sensitive spiritual and practical questions of abused Christian women to help empower them in dealing with an abusive spouse. Brings assurance that there are Christian women as well as men who do understand their pain, fear and doubt. Includes a practical section for pastors in counseling and supporting abused women.

Fortune, M. M. (1989). *Is nothing sacred? When sex invades the pastoral relationship*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers. 167 pp.

Covers the ethics of pastor-parishioner sexual contact through the story of the sexual misconduct of a pastor with six women. This shocking case study of abuse of power and trust by a pastor compassionately but unsparingly demonstrates that churches are obligated by their own mission to expose such occurrences to public scrutiny and to protect their vulnerable members.

Fortune, M. M. *Sexual violence: The unmentionable sin*. (1993). Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press. 240 pp.

Examines sexual violence, the "unmentionable sin" in the religious community, from an ethical perspective. Silence on the subject has been misinterpreted as an absence of a problem. Lack of ethical and theological clarity about sexual violence has further reinforced this silence. The book provides as well a practical response to assist pastors in dealing with victims and breaking the silence.

Gil, E. (1983). *Outgrowing the pain: A book for and about adults abused as children*. Rockville, MD: Launch Press. 83 pp.

Assists adults who have been abused as children to surmount the pain of their experiences. The author hopes that this book will provide a "good first step" in the healing process for adult survivors of child abuse to put the experiences in perspective and make positive changes for the future.

Gil, E. (1988). *Treatment of adult survivors of childhood abuse*. Walnut Creek, CA: Launch Press. 301 pp.

Offers guidelines to professionals for creating an effective treatment plan based on typical problems encountered by adults abused as children. Sections include: an examination of behavioral indicators of abuse, exploration of the internal thoughts and perceptions of the abused child, a review of literature on adult survivors emphasizing common effects, goals of treatment, and therapeutic issues and techniques.

Gil, E. (1996). *Systemic treatment of families who abuse*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 241 pp.

Geared to help professionals feel more competent in a systems approach to the treatment of abusive parents. Also discussed are advance interventions for family members who may contribute to the problem, and directives for overcoming potential obstacles to successful treatment.

*He told me not to tell: A parents' guide for talking to children about sexual assault*. (1991). King County Sexual Assault Resource Center, P. O. Box 300, Renton, WA 98507, USA. (206) 226-5062.

A collection of ideas gathered from parents for dealing with the difficult subject of talking to children about sexual assault. Covers definitions, suggestions for prevention, choosing language with which to discuss the topic with children, indicators of sexual abuse, and what to do if an assault on your child occurs.

Hindman, J. (1985). *A very touching book*. Durkee, OR: McClure-Hindman Associates. 51 pp.

A positive approach to communicating with children about the prevention of child abuse. Through its text and illustrations, the book gives basic sexual information about boys and girls, deals with the issues of inappropriate touching ("secret touching"), and encourages children to tell someone about inappropriate sexual contact by another.

Horton, A.L., & Williamson, J.A. (Eds.). (1988). *Abuse and religion*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books. 297 pp.

Practical insights on the needs of abuse victims from a wide range of professional, cultural, and religious authors. Presents guidelines for diagnosis, intervention, and treatment of domestic violence within the religious environment.

Krupinski, E., & Weikel, D. (n.d.). *Death from child abuse . . . and no one heard*. Winter Park, FL: Currier-Davis Publishing. 130 pp.

In order to introduce and alert the reader to the tragedy of child abuse, the first section of this book relates the story of the abuse and death of a five-year-old child. The remainder of the book is designed to assist in the recognition, prevention, reporting, and treatment of child abuse. This section is not copyrighted and the authors encourage photocopying of the material to spread awareness and to assist in the identification and prevention of child abuse.

Levy, B. *In love and in danger*. (1993). Seattle, WA: Seal Press. 107 pp.

Personal stories about dating violence with information to help teenagers identify and understand the facts about abusive relationships. Several chapters provide practical exercises to assist teenagers in processing their thoughts and feelings.

Mather, C. L., & Debye, K.E. *How long does it hurt?*. (1994). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 265 pp.

A recovery guide by an incest survivor for teenage victims of incest or sexual abuse. Presents the steps to recovery and alternatives for dealing with the conflicting emotions generated during the healing process.

McGinnis, J., & McGinnis, K. (1990). *Parenting for peace and justice: Ten years later*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. 162 pp.

A review and update of the authors' classic work of ten years earlier: *Parenting for Peace and Justice*. They share their struggles and experiences in ministry with others and in living at home their philosophy of non-violence. Major topics include stewardship/simplicity, nonviolence in the family, violence in our world, helping our families appreciate multiculturalism, sex-role stereotyping, family involvement in social action, and prayer and parenting.

McGinnis, K., & Oehlberg, B. (1988). *Starting out right: Nurturing young children as peacemakers*. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books. 127 pp.

Two parents committed to educating children for peace present parenting strategies to enable children to grasp several significant peace-oriented values: healthy racial attitudes, equality of sexes, respect for the aged and disabled, commitment to domestic and world peace. Includes a strong chapter on the importance of healthy self-esteem as a foundation and a section with practical suggestions for engendering peace as a value when selecting toys, handling competition, and television programming.

Poling, J.N. *The abuse of power: A theological problem*. (1991). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 224 pp.

A theological examination of power and the abuse of power as manifested in sexual violence toward women and children. Focuses on the structure of domination in the personal, social, and religious areas of human life that produce human suffering. Includes implications for ministry, practical theology and a discussion of principles for effecting change in ministry practice.

Pope-Lance, D. J., & Engelsman, J. C. (1990). *A guide for clergy on the problems of domestic violence*. New Jersey Dept. of Community Affairs, Division on Women, Office on the Prevention of Violence Against Women, William Ashby Community Affairs Building, 101 South Broad Street CCN 801, Trenton, NJ 08625-0801. 68 pp.

An invaluable, off-the-shelf, simply written, practical handbook for pastors which briefly, yet comprehensively addresses the major issues related to wife battering. Contains sections with an overview of domestic violence, religion and domestic violence (both Christian and Jewish perspectives are

included), suggested religious responses and appendices containing state agencies, legislation, and resource listings.

Quinn, M.J., & Tomita, S.K. (1986). *Elder abuse and neglect*. New York: Springer Publishing. 322 pp.

Calls attention to the overlooked but prevalent problem of elder abuse and neglect in America. Main sections cover the assessment process, diagnostic and intervention techniques, and methods of legal intervention.

Rutter, P. *Sex in the forbidden zone*. (1989). New York: Ballentine. 288 pp.

A candid look at the sexual exploitation of women by men in traditional positions of power, i.e., therapists, doctors, clergy and teachers. The author investigates the psychological and cultural characteristics of a society that allows such abusive patterns. Some suggestions as to why women permit themselves to be thus exploited are offered as well as a consideration of the damage caused by this behavior, methods of recovery, and preventive measures.

Sonkin, D. J. (Ed.). (1987). *Domestic violence on trial: Psychological and legal dimensions of family violence*. New York: Springer Publishing. 254 pp.

A collection of articles to help health, legal, and other professionals serving as advocates for battered women and children make informed decisions about how best to respond to their clients' needs. Covers the historical roots of domestic violence found in the patriarchal system, woman battering as a social problem rather than a person problem, and the legal issues of battering.

Steinmetz, S.K. *The cycle of violence: Assertive, aggressive and abusive family interaction*. (1977). New York: Praeger Publishers. 191 pp.

A study of the dynamics of family violence based on a survey of conflict resolution between husband-wife, parent-child, and sibling interaction in 57 "normal American families." Compares and contrasts family violence and other types of criminal violence. The Appendix includes a helpful collection of research instruments related to the study of intrafamily conflict resolution.

Trible, P. (1984). *Texts of terror: Literary feminist readings of biblical narratives*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press. 128 pp.

Through a literary-feminist reading of the tragic abuse stories of Hagar, Tamar, the daughter of Jephthah, and an unnamed concubine, the author challenges the misogyny of Scripture, its current existence in the church, and offers comfort to victims today.

*Violence against women in the family*. (1989). New York: United Nations. 120 pp.

Provides a comprehensive picture of violence against women in the family as a world issue in the hopes that information and education will lead to action for eradication of this violence. The several sections cover definitions of abuse, rate of incidence, causes and results of the problem; current responses from legal, health, welfare and community sectors; and recommended strategies to confront the problem.

Walker, L. E. *The battered woman*. (1979). New York: Harper Perennial. 270 pp.

The ground-breaking classic study of battering based on interviews with hundreds of abused women. The author reviews the common myths and stereotypes and pushes on to detail the complex psychological and sociological factors which contribute to the cycle of violence. The main areas of the book include: a psychological perspective through which to view the victim, coercive techniques commonly reported, and types of intervention needed to assist battered women.

Watts, K. (Ed.) (1995). *Understanding sexual abuse*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association. 48 pp.

A team of professionals addresses a variety of issues related to sexuality and sexual abuse: a biblical understanding of sexuality, incest, abuse of power, reasons for sexual abuse, an appropriate Christian response, aspects of healing, and resources for offenders and victims.

## Curriculum Resources

Fortune, M. M. (1984). *Sexual abuse prevention: A study for teenagers*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press. 32 pp.

Designed as a course for twelve to eighteen-year-old youth to provide information about sexual abuse to help prepare them for situations they may encounter during adolescence. Five sessions cover various forms of sexual abuse with suggestions for prevention. Includes instructor's course outlines, resource listings, discussion topics and participant activities.

Fortune, M. M. (1991). *Violence in the family: A workshop curriculum for clergy and other helpers*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press. 278 pp.

Comprehensive leadership development materials for individuals and groups on ways to mobilize religious and secular resources to cope with violence in the family. Includes sample outlines, workshop models and numerous supplementary materials.

Reid Goring, K. (1989). *Preventing child sexual abuse: A curriculum for children ages nine through twelve*. New York: United Church Press. 125 pp.

Secular and biblical resource materials organized into ten sessions with activities to teach sexual abuse prevention in a religious education program. Each session contains objectives, lesson outlines, resources, preparation helps, and student activities.

Reid Goring, K. (1994). *Preventing child sexual abuse: A curriculum for children ages five through eight*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press. 120 pp.

Similar to the nine through twelve curriculum listed above.

## Videos

***Note: These videos are intended for the education of pastors and church leaders and are suitable for adult audiences only. Survivors who share their stories at times use strong language and provide explicit descriptions of abuse and violence. In a group of any size, the likelihood runs high that one or more survivors will be present. They may or may not have benefited from professional help toward personal healing from the experience. Thus these videos should be shown by family professionals, counselors, or someone able to make referrals to professionals with expertise in abuse and family violence if necessary.***

***These videos are excellent educational resources for pastors and local church leaders. Districts of churches and/or conferences may wish to pool their resources to purchase these videos and make them available to a wider circle.***

*After Sexual Abuse.* Produced by the Mennonite Central Committee, 21 South 12th Street, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501. (717) 859-1151. [In Canada: 134 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9. (204) 261-6381] Color. 52 minutes. Includes discussion guide.

An actress and storyteller presents an incest survivor's story in two parts, paraphrasing from the victim's personal diary which chronicles her struggles to deal with her abuse. The first narrative, "Seeking the Lord," opens a window on how one incest survivor grappled with her confusion and anger with a God who failed to protect her and how she came to new understanding. The second story, "Learning to Leave" looks anew at biblical teachings on forgiveness. Powerfully identifies common religious misunderstandings which contribute to a survivor's pain, teachings which the church must intentionally clarify.

*Break the Silence: Kids Against Child Abuse.* Produced by Arnold Shapiro Productions with host Jane Seymour. Copies available for \$7.00 from Break The Silence Videotape, P. O. Box 514, New York, NY 10013-0514. Color. 29 minutes.

Kids speaking out about their abuse to children and parents in the hopes of stopping the abuse of others. Offers understandable definitions of physical and sexual abuse and neglect and sends a clear message about what to do. Follow-up video to *Scared Silent: Exposing and Ending Child Abuse*.

*Bless Our Children: Preventing Sexual Abuse.* Produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103. (206) 634-1903. Color. Running time: 40 minutes. Includes a comprehensive discussion guide and 25 audience brochures.

The story of one congregation's process in making the decision to educate their children about abuse and following through on their decision. Portrays the value of educating children and leaders who work with children in advance of a child's report of sexual abuse and illustrates how prevention programs can be incorporated into religious education in the church and school setting.

*Broken Vows: Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence.* Produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103.

(206) 634-1903. Color. Running time Part I: 37 minutes, Part II: 22 minutes.

An excellent coverage of the religious response to domestic violence—where we are and where we should be. Combines survivor accounts and perceptions with commentary from clergy and religious leaders. Clearly identifies the misuse of power and control as the key factors in domestic violence. Refutes commonly held myths. Provides practical help for creating a healing atmosphere within the congregation, an atmosphere in which silence can be broken, abusers are held firmly accountable for their actions, professional resources within the church and community are networked to provide help for both the abused and their abusers, and the spiritual questions which often concern survivors are addressed. Includes a comprehensive discussion guide and 25 audience brochures.

*The Crown Prince*. Produced by The Media Guild, 11722 Sorrento Valley Road, Suite E, San Diego, CA 92121. (619) 755-4931. Color. 38 minutes. Includes discussion guide.

A thought-provoking drama which looks at the problem of wife assault from the perspective of the children. Demonstrates the multigenerational nature of abuse and family violence through a drama in which a teenage son comes to the explosive realization of his likeness to his father. On the verge of adulthood himself, he must cope with the legacy of his father's abusive behavior toward his mother in his own beginning relationships with women. Highlights the importance of breaking the silence and the choices that must be made to bring an end to the cycle of violence.

*Deck the Halls*. Time Out Series. Produced by Select Media, 74 Varick St., Suite 303, New York, New York 10013. (212) 431-8923.

A very realistic dramatic portrayal of the cycle of violence within a family. Illustrates graphically the reality that abuse and family violence are about the misuse of power and control and the personal and relational damage that inevitably comes in the wake of such dominance on the part of a father.

*Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse*. Produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, (206) 634-1903. Color. Running time: 48 minutes. Includes a comprehensive discussion guide and 25 audience brochures.

An excellent documentary on the role of clergy and lay leaders in preventing child abuse. Provides helpful definitions, understanding of the impact of neglect and/or physical, emotional and sexual abuse in childhood, warning signs, and ideas for breaking the silence. Emphasis is placed on priorities for clergy and lay leaders to report the abuse to appropriate authorities, protect the child, stop the abuse, and participate with a broad network of professionals in the healing process. Offers helpful answers to the spiritual questions which often plague survivors and a perspective on when forgiveness and reconciliation are possible, the nature of the process, and the reality that some survivors need to be helped in grieving the loss of a significant relationship which cannot be restored.

*Loved, Honored and Bruised*. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada and marketed by The Media Guild, 11722 Sorrento Valley Road, Suite E, San Diego, California 92121. (619) 755-9191. Color. 25 minutes.

A stark narrative of domestic violence in the two voices of the survivor. Can "outer voice" which objectively reports the awful details of her husband's acts of violence against her and her daughters, and an "inner voice" which taps deep into her pain. Interspersed with defensive, minimizing, self-justifying, detached, unfeeling monologues by her abuser. Portrays her journey from a sense of entrapment to reluctant independence in which she and her children choose safety over life with an abuser who refuses to acknowledge and take responsibility for his abusive behavior and seek professional help to change.

*Not in My Church.* Produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, (206) 634-1903. Color. Running time: 45 minutes. Includes a comprehensive discussion guide and 25 audience brochures.

An outstanding docudrama to help people deal with the problem of clergy misconduct involving sexual abuse in the ministerial relationship. Emphasizes the ethical duty of pastors to maintain professionalism in relationships with members in their position of sacred trust and power. Illustrates the effects of clergy sexual abuse on victims and the wider circle of the congregation, typical perpetrator lines, the challenge of putting in place procedures which hold pastors and church leaders accountable for their behavior, and the long-range impact of not protecting others from victimization once a report has been made.

*Scared Silent: Exposing and Ending Child Abuse.* Produced by Arnold Shapiro Productions with host Oprah Winfrey. Copies available for \$8.50 from Scared Silent, Box 933022, Los Angeles, California 90093. Color. 50 minutes.

Disclosing that she herself is a survivor of child sexual abuse, Oprah Winfrey hosts this program in which the stories of several abusive families are told. Stories which focus on the long road to recovery and the difficulties of reconciliation even in the best of circumstances when a perpetrator acknowledges the wrong he has done, seeks intensive treatment, and enters willingly into the long process which can make forgiveness and restoration of relationships possible. Illustrates the multi-generational nature of abuse and the importance of parent education.

*Too Close to Home.* Produced by Adventist Media Centre, South Pacific Division, 150 Fox Valley Road., Wahroonga, N.S.W. 2076, Australia for the Trans-Tasman Union Conference of SDA. Color. 34 minutes.

A Christian perspective on issues surrounding abuse and family violence for education among church leaders and members. Survivor accounts are interspersed with commentary by family professionals and church leaders. Heightens awareness that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not immune.



# Domestic Violence: Why Does It Happen?

*And how can it be stopped?*

*By Mable Dunbar*

Tina reported that she grew up in a well-ordered, strict Adventist home. Her father was very disappointed that she, his oldest child, was not a boy. He required her to do heavy chores on the farm.

When Tina was 19, she was raped by an Adventist young man who also came from a very strict Adventist home. She became pregnant. Furious, her father kicked and abused her, and encouraged her siblings to do likewise. Once he pinched her earlobes with a pair of pliers because she did not hear him calling her. Her mother tried to shield her from the abuse, but to no avail.

Tina is now a grown woman with children. She does not understand how her father, a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and an elder in the church, could have so abused her. Although she attends church, the memories of her father overshadow any concept of a loving God.

Jan worked in an Adventist institution for almost 30 years. During most of those years she was battered by her Adventist husband. She sought help from church members but they would not believe her "stories." She eventually confided in her minister.

He encouraged her to stay in the relationship for the Lord's sake. When she told me her story, her arm was in a cast. Her husband was still abusing her.

Why didn't she leave? She did not want to bring shame upon Adventists or be shunned by church members. Having a very meager retirement income of her own, she does not think that she could live alone.

## **The Facts**

In 1991 the report "Violence Against Women: A Week in the Life of America" was presented by the majority staff of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee. Data collected from across the nation showed, for the first time ever, the terrifying extent of violence in homes every single week of the year.

According to police reports, at least 21,000 domestic crimes against women took place every week. Nearly 20 percent of all aggravated assault occurred in the home. Overall a total of 1.1 million assaults, aggravated assaults, murders, and rapes against women were reported to the police in 1991. Unreported crime may be more than three times this total.<sup>1</sup>

While male battering exists, approximately 95 percent of the victims of domestic violence are women.<sup>2</sup>

Children often suffer in the cross fire of violence between their parents. A major study of more than 900 children at battered women's shelters found that close to 70 percent of the children were victims of physical abuse or neglect.

The male batterer most often abused the children. In about one quarter of the cases both parents abused the children. Only in a few instances did the mother alone abuse the children.<sup>3</sup>

Lenore Walker discovered in her 1984 study that mothers were eight times more likely to hurt their children when they were being battered than when they were safe from violence.<sup>4</sup>

One study asserts that "wife beating results in more injuries that require medical treatment than rape, auto accidents, and muggings combined. Each year more than 1,000 women—or about four women per day—are killed by their husbands or partners."<sup>5</sup>

### **We Aren't Exempt**

Domestic violence cuts across all racial, socioeconomic, educational, religious, and cultural lines. It occurs in middle- and upper-class homes, as well as in working-class and poor homes.

Unfortunately, Adventist homes are not exempt. As the administrator of a domestic violence agency I have worked with abused Adventist women. Some reported that their husbands did not think it was wrong to "coerce them into submission."

I also travel from church to church to present workshops on domestic violence. Most who confide in me feel the church would abandon them if they shared their secret. They have been warned not to "air dirty linen." They fear losing the support of family members or being classified as trouble-makers who are "making up stories" to hurt others.

### **Incorrect Views**

Seventh-day Adventists must address abuse for what it is: a crime, a *sin*. No Christian principle and no correct exegesis of Scripture condones abuse.

*Of Scripture:* We sometimes misinterpret the Bible to abused women. We emphasize that "what therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6).

Well-meaning people tell abused women to turn the other cheek (Mat. 5:39), for "as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in *everything*" (Eph. 5:24). They urge these women to "do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Matt. 5:44).

An abused woman reasons, "If the abuse continues, does this mean God is not hearing my prayers? Is something wrong with me because I can't endure? Am I not a good Christian?"

*Of parenting:* Victims may also be told that it is their Christian duty to provide a good home for their children. Yet children who grow up in abusive homes learn to keep secrets. They learn to wear masks. They learn to hide their feelings.

Such children tend to grow up frustrated, disillusioned, and full of anger toward God and the church. If these issues remain unresolved, in adulthood they are likely to perpetuate the cycle of violence.

*Of God:* Some Adventists stay in abusive relationships fearing that they will incur the wrath of God if they "break" the marriage covenant by leaving. They don't want to be "lost." Although they may be in danger of losing their lives, they feel they must be prepared to die at the hands of their husbands, and hope this "sacrifice" will be acceptable to God.

Other victims see God as a stern judge who seeks retribution for their sins and as a controlling Father who expects total obedience. Unconsciously they place responsibility for their abuse on *God*, not the abuser. This allows them to forgive perpetrators "seventy times seven."

*Of themselves:* Some victims blame themselves for the abuse. They feel they must be doing something wrong for which they deserve to

be punished. When we offer counsel to abused women (or men) and children, it is imperative that positive, correct views of marriage be clarified. A truly Christian marriage means a mutual respect and mutual giving that recognize the full equality of husband and wife.

### **Why Do Men Batter?**

*Physical dominance.* One reason men batter is because they can. By battering they maintain power and control in a relationship. They also batter because their abuse is not confronted clearly as "violence against women."

*Status.* Historically a man has been viewed as "the breadwinner," "the king of the castle," and "the head of the home." Some men derive prestige, power, and status from ordering their homes according to their will.

*Negative views of women.* "Throughout history man, through pride, ignorance, or moral perversion, has treated woman as being greatly inferior."<sup>6</sup> Women have been required to "learn in silence with all subjection" (1 Tim. 2:11), not only in society but also in the church (1 Cor. 14:34). They have been told to "reverence" their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

When these texts are used by a man who seeks dominance over a woman or his children, abuse is likely to occur.

*Cultural influences.* Traditional gender roles and stereotypes contribute to domestic violence. According to Adventist sociologist Sara Terian, while "the rules for gender roles, natural as they may seem, were not given by God, there is nothing wrong in following them when so doing fulfills each partner's goals and aspirations. But when either partner feels oppressed or stifled, a reexamination is in order."<sup>7</sup>

*Lack of accountability.* Men batter because they are rarely held accountable for abuse. When questions do arise, batterers excuse their actions by shifting the blame to victims. "If only she

would . . . I wouldn't have to . . ." or "I needed to teach her a lesson." When people sympathize with him, the door is open for justifying the abuse.

*Additional reasons.* Battering also occurs because laws to protect victims are not well enforced, resources to help victims are scanty, and many service providers do not understand the dynamics of domestic violence. Also, in most cultures there is a subtle dehumanization of women: men tend to see females as objects created for their pleasure. Many churches and other institutions tend not to view physical violence toward women as a criminal act.

Not all abusers necessarily come from abusive families. In one batterer's program, for example, it was found that 30 percent of participants came from nonviolent homes. But witnessing domestic violence as a child has been identified as one of the most common risk factors for becoming a batterer in adulthood.<sup>8</sup>

### **Why Don't Women Leave?**

The question is asked again and again: "Why don't battered women leave?" A better question to ask is "Why do women *stay*?"

*To avoid more violence.* A battered woman is afraid to leave because this often triggers more violence.

Research indicates that a woman who leaves her abuser is at 75 percent greater risk of being killed by her batterer than is a woman who stays.<sup>9</sup> The batterer may threaten to kill the children and/or other family members. He may vow to follow her wherever she goes and kill her.

*Shame.* An abused woman is ashamed to leave. She is pressured by society—and often by the church—to keep the family together "at all costs."

*Lack of support.* An abused woman is often isolated. Her husband may have kept her away

from family and friends. She is often financially dependent on her abuser.

*Love.* Though battered, a woman may genuinely love her husband. She stays hoping that a magic moment will arrive when he will change.

*Fear of sinning.* Victims who are Christians fear that by leaving they will do "something wrong."

### How to Get Help

Families caught in domestic violence need to seek help from professionals who are knowledgeable about the dynamics of domestic violence.

Most U.S. cities and counties have crisis hot lines or centers to help people experiencing domestic violence. These can usually be accessed through police departments and hospitals.

*Steps for victims.* Even if a domestic violence incident occurs only once, do not minimize the action. The likelihood of violence occurring again is extremely high.

First, an abused woman should find safety for herself and her children. She needs people who will assist her in making changes in her life that are in the best interest of herself and her children.

Second, she and the children need counseling. She should be open to grow in self-esteem, self-empowerment, and assertiveness.

Third, she needs to understand that she is not responsible for the abuser's reactions. No matter how she changes her actions or tries to please him, he will not change until he wants to change.

Fourth, she must recognize that she does not deserve to be abused. She is made in God's image and is worthy of respect and honor.

*Steps for abusers.* The abuser must also be open to counseling. He or she must be willing to explore the issues that trigger an abusive response. Abusers must admit that they are solely responsible for their actions and are the only ones

who can change this behavior. They must be willing to learn new ways to deal with feelings of anger and resentment.

Abusers must recognize that abusive behavior is criminal and subject to discipline. Abusive behavior is learned and can be unlearned.

### The Abuse Cycle

**Phase 1:** Tension builds and minor battering incidents occur. Along with physical abuse, the batterer may ridicule, threaten and place restrictions on the victim. The victim becomes loving and compliant to prevent the rage from escalating.

**Phase 2:** The batterer attempts to teach the victim a lesson by using acute physical force.

**Phase 3:** The batterer may act remorseful and beg for forgiveness, promising to reform. This becomes the prelude for phase 1, and the cycle repeats.

### Our Responsibility to Stop Abuse

We cannot afford to bury our heads in the sand and hope that domestic violence will go away. Abuse is stopped only by intervention.

All abusers, no matter how prominent or powerful, no matter how wealthy or highly educated, must be held accountable. We must work together to help victims and perpetrators find safety and healing from these abusive relationships. In so doing we will be fulfilling our mission: "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Does domestic violence exist in Adventist homes? Yes. But with God's help and skilled intervention, abuse can be stopped. We can live abundant lives.

As one Adventist writer has put it so well: "Whole, healthy families will produce whole, healthy churches. God will bless our efforts, and we shall then be prepared and ready for the great climax of history."<sup>10</sup>

1. Figures based on a survey by the majority staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991, Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Chair, Oct. 1, 1992.

2. Bureau of Justice statistics, *Report to the Nation on Crime and Justice: The Data*

(Washington, D. C.: Office of Justice Program, U.S. Department of Justice. 1983).

3. Jean Layzer et al., "Children in Shelters," *Children Today*, March-April 1986.

4. Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome* (New York: Springer.1984).

5. National Woman Abuse Prevention Project.

6. Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1977).

7. "Roles—Fixed or Flexible?" *Adventist Review*,

Apr. 2, 1992, p. 27.

8. Abuse Prevention Project.

9. Ibid.

10. Madelynn Haldeman, "A Decade of Healing," *Adventist Review*, Jan. 4, 1990.

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# No One Deserves To be Abused

*For many women and children, home is the most violent place in society.*

*By David R. Williams and Ruth Williams Morris*

**V**iolence against women and children is a significant health and social problem affecting virtually all segments of society. The Adventist Church, like much of the rest of society, has failed to grasp either the scope or the seriousness of this problem.

The home is the single most violent place in society. In the United States one fifth of all citizens are victimized sexually and/or physically by their midteens.

## **Physical Abuse**

A female runs a greater risk of assault, physical injury, and even murder in her own home than in any other setting. Spousal abuse is more common than automobile accidents, muggings, and cancer deaths combined, with domestic violence being the leading cause of injuries to women aged 15-44. Seventy percent of all women murdered in the U.S. are killed by a current or former husband or boyfriend. A similar pattern exists around the world.

A recent national study found that one in every six U.S. couples experiences at least one violent episode each year.<sup>1</sup> In 3.4 million households this violence is as severe as kicking, punching, biting, and choking. Women assaulted by their husbands are beaten an average of six times per year. Experts estimate that from 25 to 34 percent of all women will be

physically assaulted by an intimate male during adulthood.

Studies in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean reveal that the abuse of women is commonplace.<sup>2</sup> In these studies, from 20 to 70 percent of women report having been victims of domestic violence.

The problem of abuse may be especially acute among Adventists, because prior research indicates that domestic violence appears to be more common in small, conservative religious denominations.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is also rampant in today's world. In the U. S. a woman is raped every six minutes, and at least one in every five women will be a victim of a completed rape in her lifetime. Forty to 50 percent of all women will experience some form of sexual harassment.

International data reveals that one to two thirds of rape victims are 15 years old or younger. Rapes are particularly high among college-aged women in several countries, and a half million American girls are raped before their high school graduation. A majority of perpetrators of rapes are not strangers, but people known to the victim.

The seduction of women by male professionals (doctors, therapists, pastors, lawyers, and teachers) is also commonplace. A

recent study of ministers from several denominations found that one in every four pastors admitted to having engaged in some form of inappropriate sexual behavior with a parishioner.

### **Health Consequences**

Physical and sexual abuse takes a severe toll on the health of women. Injuries sustained by women as a result of marital violence include bruises, cuts, broken bones, concussions, and miscarriages, as well as permanent injuries such as damage to joints, partial loss of hearing or vision, scars from burns and knife wounds, and even death.

Battered women also have higher rates of chronic headaches, abdominal pains, muscle aches, recurrent vaginal infections, and sleep and eating disorders. Recent research also indicates that domestic violence can lead to arthritis, hypertension, and heart disease.

As many as one third of all U.S. emergency room visits by women are for symptoms related to abuse from a partner. Women who have been raped or assaulted also have medical costs more than twice those of non-victimized women. A recent World Bank report indicates that the treatment associated with rape and domestic violence consumes a large portion of scarce health resources and is roughly equivalent in the industrialized and the developing world.

### **Long Term Effects**

For many women the psychological consequences of abuse are more debilitating than the physical impact. Many women in abusive relationships live in a state of constant fear and terror because of the emotional abuse, humiliation, and the ever present threat of violence. Much of men's violence against their spouses is motivated by jealousy. Abuse often

indicates a loss of openness and trust in the relationship.

Abuse also has long-term mental health consequences. Studies in the U.S. indicate that abused women are four to five times more likely to require psychiatric treatment and five times more likely to attempt suicide than nonbattered women. Abuse is also one of the most important precipitants of suicide attempts among women in the developing world.

The psychological and physical impact of rape is also severe. Even many years after the incident victims of sexual assault are more likely than non-victims to be diagnosed with psychiatric disorders such as major depression, alcohol abuse, drug dependence, generalized anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Victims everywhere must also endure the shame and stigma that cultures ascribes to sexual violation.

In some countries the stigma of rape is so great that women are driven to suicide or are killed by relatives to restore the family's honor.

### **Why Does Abuse Occur?**

- *Women's low status.* Most cultures in the history of the world have assumed the inferiority of women. Men were expected to be strong, aggressive, and dominant, while women were supposed to be passive, submissive, and dependent. Many men believe that they must always be in charge, and feel pressure to prove their masculinity in sexual terms.

The use of physical or psychological force to get one's way in general or to pressure an unwilling female into a sexual relationship may be an extreme of culturally prescribed male behavior but not a departure from it. Similarly, the subservient role to which women have been socialized can lead them to go along passively with men's effort to initiate sexual behavior.



Not surprisingly, domestic violence occurs more frequently in homes in which the husband is dominant in family decision-making, the wife is a full-time housewife, and the economic resources of the husband and wife are unequal. Many women are concerned about their economic survival if they leave a violent husband. The jobs historically open to women in most societies are lower in status and pay than those of men. Currently in the U.S., male college graduates earn \$10,000 more per year on average than female college graduates.

- *Violence seen as a way to resolve conflict.* In contemporary society violence is a commonplace method of problem solving. In children's TV programs (cartoons), for example, violence is the first choice in conflict resolution and lacks lasting consequences, since the crushed or exploded victim is magically restored in the next frame. In the U.S. one of three husbands and one in four wives believe that "a couple slapping each other" is at least somewhat necessary, normal, or good. Similarly, the majority of high school and college students believe that under certain circumstances the use of force is acceptable to obtain sexual relations.

- *A pattern of violence.* Abusive behavior is often learned through experience. Men who abuse their wives are likely to have been beaten as children. Victims of violence have often witnessed marital violence or have been psychologically or physically abused as children.

### **The Use and Misuse of Scripture**

The Bible has been used to provide the ideological and moral support for a tradition of male superiority and to enforce rigid boundaries for the behavior of husbands and wives.

Ephesians 5:21-33 is probably the most famous of the passages that have used to justify the abuse of wives by their husbands. Many

husbands believe that Paul's command in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, be subject to your husbands,"\* gives them license to use physical force. Many wives accept violence as part of their God-ordained lot in life.

Such views misrepresent Paul's teachings. In this passage Paul calls for *mutual submission* on the part of both husband and wife (verse 21), and the command for wives to be subject to their husbands must be balanced by the three commands for husbands to love their wives. Nine of the 13 verses describe how husbands are to nourish and cherish their wives. Similarly, Paul explicitly admonished in Colossians 3:19, "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

Peter's counsel in 1 Peter 3:1-9 has also been misinterpreted. Peter encouraged Christian slaves and wives to play the social roles that their culture dictated because outsiders were accusing these new converts of impiety, immorality, and insubordination. Wives were exhorted to shame those who were reviling them by being submissive, gentle, quiet, and chaste in their behavior *in order that they might win their husbands for Christ*. Moreover, verse seven of this passage calls on husbands to "live considerately with your wives," and verse eight encouraged all to have "a tender heart."

### **Solutions**

There are no easy solutions for eliminating violence against women and children, but there is much that Adventists can do.

1. As a church we must take a decided stand on the issue of physical and sexual abuse, and provide information in sermons, workshops, seminars, and classes that abuse is inappropriate behavior. Training in parenting skills is also needed.

Men must be taught that God requires them to take full responsibility for their actions. Most abusive men do not admit to a problem.

Similarly, Christian women must be empowered and encouraged to seek help when they have been taken advantage of, and be reassured that God approves of their saying no to men for unwanted sexual advances. Both the abused and the abuser must be assured of the willingness of God to forgive all sins, including sins of abuse.

### What Is Abuse?

► **Child abuse** includes physical, emotional, and sexual maltreatment.

Physical abuse is a deliberate assault to the body that produces injury, such as cuts, bruises, broken bones, burns, and the selective malnourishment of female children.

Emotional or psychological abuse refers to any action that attacks and destroys a child's self-esteem and damages the individual's social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual functioning.

Sexual abuse refers to involving or exposing a child to sexual activities, including forced prostitution and female genital mutilation.

► **The abuse of women** can take several forms. It can be physical involving shoving, hitting, punching, the use of dangerous weapons, and dowry-related murder. *Wife battering and domestic violence* are other terms used to describe these harmful behaviors.

Abuse can also be sexual, involving sexual coercion and assault, or demands for unreasonable sexual response.

In economic abuse a spouse is deprived of basic necessities or denied access to spending money.

Finally, psychological abuse involves verbal attacks—intense criticisms, name-calling, and verbal harassment—and the constant erosion of one's self-image. Abuse also includes restraint from normal activities, life-threatening deprivation, and isolation from friends.

real pain caused by physical and sexual abuse.

We must provide opportunities for healing and reconciliation for those who have been injured, and confrontation and appropriate assistance for those who have been abusers. Adventist churches and conferences should consider appointing respected, sensitive persons from whom the victims of abuse can receive support and referrals. Many women are hesitant to discuss their victimization because of feelings of self-blame, shame, loyalty to the abuser, or fear.

Women's ministries groups could ensure that sympathetic listeners are available to the abused. Several Latin American countries have discovered that the creation of women-only police stations greatly facilitates the reporting of abuse.

3. The ignorance and stigma associated with domestic violence highlight the need for educating Adventist pastors and other church employees and volunteers with regard to abuse. Insensitive treatment of victims reinforces guilt and humiliation.

4. Ministers who provide pastoral counseling services should be screened for abuse. Unfortunately, standard assessment procedures in most health-care settings do not routinely include questions about physical and sexual abuse.

5. As Christians we must reach out to the abused in our communities. Christ requires that His followers take care of those who are unprotected, wounded, and without an advocate (Matt. 25:31-46). Some congregations should establish shelters that provide safe temporary housing to abused women and children. The U.S. currently has three times more animal shelters than women's shelters, and one third of women who seek shelter are unable to find it.

6. Violence is a dramatic indicator of communication and relationship failure. Our congregations need training in anger management, communication skills, alternatives to violence, and conflict resolution. This training in interpersonal skills should begin early. We need to teach our children how to listen and negotiate, how to express their feelings regularly and nondestructively, and how

to respect each other's rights and needs. Children learn to listen by being listened to and learn to be respectful by being respected.

7. Effective intervention approaches must provide assistance to the entire family. All members of a family are affected by violence.

Scientific studies find that women commit violence against men almost as often as men do against women. Some of this violence is in retaliation and self-defense, but much of it is violence initiated by women.<sup>3</sup> However, because men are typically bigger than women, they are less likely to be injured and more likely to inflict serious injury in violent encounters.

8. Churches need to establish mechanisms for addressing problems of sexuality within congregations.

Resolving clergy-parishioner sexual involvement by moving the minister to a new district is inappropriate and irresponsible. Transferring a minister does nothing to break the cycle of repetitive and possibly escalating sexual abuse. In most cases the same behavior will occur in a new church setting. Repeat abusers may need to be removed from ministerial work altogether.

9. The traditional approach of individual counseling has only limited success with most abusers. There is a compulsive, repetitive quality to much male abusive behavior. There is little compelling evidence of long-term efficacy of treatment. When recovery occurs, it takes a long time, and maintaining self-control is a lifelong full-time job that can be successfully attained only by dependence on divine strength.

The organization of American States, the World Bank, and the United Nations have all recently recognized violence against women as a major human rights and health issue. The Adventist Church cannot sit idly by when so many of God's children are being hurt.

\* All Scripture references in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

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# Let's Address Family *Violence*—Quickly

The three phases of violence may mistakenly  
lull us into inaction.

*By Alberta Mazat*

**It is not enemies  
who taught me—  
I could bear that:  
it is not adversaries who deal  
insolently with me—  
I could hide from them.  
But it is you, my equal,  
my companion,  
my familiar friend,  
with whom I kept  
pleasant company;  
we walked in the house of  
God  
with the throng.  
— Psalm 55:12-14, NRSV**

## First of two parts

The psalmist's words vividly describe his personal dismay at being persecuted by someone he once trusted. Those words of betrayal and hurt are also a sad but realistic portrayal of the feelings of those who are suffering from family violence today.

Will we as Seventh-day Adventists take time to understand the indignities and abuses that are going on in many of our families around the world? What will cause us to work diligently to remove this baleful influence from our homes?

Or should we say anything about it at all?

Is it better to keep silent? Some urge us to do just that. Are they wiser than those who wish to address the subject openly?

## God's View of Violence

As we consider how to respond to this issue, it is important to review the teaching of Scripture.

The Bible describes God as one who hates violence.<sup>1</sup> God is the one who instructs us to seek justice and encourage the oppressed<sup>2</sup> and who warns that there will be divine punishment for those who offend the little ones, the children.<sup>3</sup>

The God of Scripture wants to hear praise and song from the lips of children and infants<sup>4</sup>—not cowering screams. And God desires that husbands

love their wives in the same tender, self-sacrificing way that Christ loves the church,<sup>5</sup> not subject them to bullying and brutality.

I believe we are doing God's work when we assist those who are victimized as well as those who are stuck in their roles as perpetrators—those who commit hurtful acts that are so destructive. To bring about this redemptive change, the cycles of violence in our homes must be broken. As Christians, we are called to help stop this violence.

#### **Predictable Patterns**

We once thought that abuse was something that happened in families occasionally. We felt that it wasn't nice, but that things like this just happened.

We did not know that family violence is predictable. This attitude has often lulled us into inaction.

And so, knowledge about violence—its patterns, its pain, its long-term impact—was kept locked up within individual families. We averted our eyes. We considered it "their business."

We thought family violence happened primarily because

someone had a bad temper. Sometimes we thought it was necessary punishment.

**T**oday we know differently. Research and careful study show that family violence is serious and ongoing. The question is, What will we Christians do about it?

One of the most helpful concepts from the research is that there is a *cycle* to violent behavior. Violence doesn't come out of a blue sky. It is rarely a onetime happening. Worse yet, when nothing is done to stop it, violence generally escalates rather than abates.

In the cycle there are three distinct phases. How long each phase lasts may vary greatly. But the pattern itself is unmistakable.

Understanding this pattern gives us information about when to intervene. It gives us hope. We *can* break the cycle of violence.

In describing the three phases in the cycle, we will use a wife-battering situation. Men are also battered. Statistics show, however, that wife-battering is by far the most prevalent.

#### **Phase 1: Tension-building**

The abuser becomes nervous, edgy, and restless. Tension that hints of rage mounts. The wife recognizes the buildup of these feelings. She tries to avoid any behaviors that have caused previous explosions. This might be something as innocuous as

#### **Are You a Person Prone to Violence?**

1. Do you believe that as head of the house your wishes should be carried out without discussion or challenge?
2. Are you possessive and jealous of your spouse or friend?
3. Do you feel upset and threatened when this person is talking to someone else of the opposite sex?
4. Do you have a quick temper?
5. Do you blame your spouse or others when your anger flares?
6. Do you make this individual account for her or his time when not with you?
7. Do you sometimes check up on your spouse by telephone or with an on-the-spot check to make sure that she or he is at the place you expected?
8. Have you ever thrown anything in anger?
9. Have you ever shoved, kicked, or hit your spouse?
10. Do you insist on having sex even at times when he or she would rather not?
11. Do you feel justified in criticizing, ridiculing, or insulting this individual?
12. Were either or both of your own parents harsh disciplinarians who were violent with one another, you, or your brothers or sisters?

If several of these behavior characterize your relationship, see help immediately for the sake of your marriage and for your own happiness and that of your children. This is your reasonable responsibility. With appropriate outside help, your family life can change and improve.

### Are You the Victim of a Violent Relationship?

1. Do you make excuses for your spouse's or friend's rough or harsh behavior?
2. Has this individual ever kicked, shoved, or hit you?
3. Are you frightened by his or her bad temper?
4. Are you afraid to disagree with him or her?
5. Do you often try very hard not to displease him or her.
6. Do you have to account for the places you go, or for the people you see on a regular basis?
7. Does he or she accuse you of being too friendly with or flirting with those of the opposite sex?
8. Does this individual control where you work or if you will be allowed to work outside the home?
9. Does this individual control all the money and how it is spent?
10. Are you afraid not to have sex with this individual, even when for some reason you would rather not?
11. Does he or she often criticize, ridicule, and insult you?
12. Was this individual's father and/or mother demanding, critical, or violent with him or her in the home?

If several of these behaviors are present in your relationship, seek help immediately. With appropriate outside help, your family relationships can change and improve.

folding a shirt "wrong" or not having a meal ready on time.

The wife defers to her husband and tries to mollify him. This phase may last for a long period of time, with alternating periods of greater or less tension, or it may be of short duration. Eventually the trigger point is reached and an assaultive explosion occurs.

#### Phase 2: Violence

In this stage the abuser's rage is out of control; he looks for reasons to blame his wife for provoking him. He feels that he must teach her a lesson and that it is vital for him to remain in power.

Violence may begin by

pushing and shoving, slapping or pinching then escalates. It includes such terrors as physical throwing, choking, beating—and may lead to disfigurement and death. The reign of terror may be brief, or it may last for hours; it may go on intermittently for days.

The victim does not usually fight back, since she believes this could only bring forth more anger. She is fearful of calling for help, either from friends, family, or the police, since this is often interpreted by the abuser as a "lack of loyalty," which gives further justification for escalating the violence.

The victim often placates the abuser by minimizing her

injuries or agreeing that she has a part in causing his attack. Eventually she comes to believe that she is at fault.

#### Phase 3: Calm

The calm is referred to as the "honeymoon" period. The calm is the "reward" to the one who has been abused for staying in the relationship.

The abuser frequently becomes repentant and contrite. However, while he may ask for forgiveness, he does not take responsibility for what has happened. Rather he suggests that if his wife just didn't make him angry, they could be happy together.

The husband will do loving things, buy unexpected presents, and express a great need for his wife. She often wants so much to believe that he is truly repentant—and that he *will* change—that she becomes unrealistically optimistic and believes his promises.

She feels it is her responsibility to be forgiving and to hold the family together. She gives him yet another chance.

Days, months, or years may go by before the cycle begins again. In other cases, the three phases occur on a daily basis.

Many times the batterer offers the excuse that he "got carried away," and didn't realize what he was doing. However, it is important to realize that the batterer does *not* behave this way to his boss, his work colleagues, or his church friends. He has learned that the

family is a safe place to exercise violence. He chooses his victims consciously and selectively. He selects the types of abuse he will inflict. He even selects the parts of the victim's body that are least likely to reveal his

**When nothing  
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violent behavior to others.

If we are inexperienced about family violence, we adopt

the same attitude toward the abuser as the one being battered.

First, we find it hard to believe that the violence occurs at all. Second, we blame the victim instead of the abuser. We believe the victim must have provoked the outburst.

Third, we hope that phase three — calm — will prevail indefinitely. We hope that the abuser will keep his promise not to become violent again. We may encourage the victim to pray more and "be a better spouse." We are lulled into inaction.

Such reactions do not stop the violence but actually allow it to continue. In the next article I will explore ways to prevent family violence and appropriate ways to intervene.

*Next week: "The Only Answer to Family Violence— Intervention/" In this concluding article, the author explains the spiral of violence, and lists sources of help for families in*

*crises.*

<sup>1</sup>Ps. 11:5; Mal. 2:16.

<sup>2</sup>Isa. 1:17; Luke 4:18.

<sup>3</sup>Matt. 18:6.

<sup>4</sup>Ps. 8:2, NIV.

<sup>5</sup>Eph. 5:25.

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# The Only Answer to Family *Violence* — Intervention!

Second in a series of two parts

By Alberta Mazat

Last week I discussed the three phases in the *cycle* of family violence. Unless we recognize this cycle, those of us who are looking on may be lulled into inaction.

We may be tempted to think that violence by one family member against another is accidental or the result of his or her bad temper. We may suppose that the victims did something wrong and "had it coming."

When we recognize the cycle, however, we will think and act differently. Without intervention by someone outside the family, the violence will escalate rather than abate. It will become more and more severe rather than lessen in intensity. Caring people—particularly those with a Christian commitment—need to help stop the violence.

This week I want to emphasize that beyond the *cycle* of violence, we must also become aware of

the *spiral* of family violence.

The cycle is *not* a free-standing entity that disappears on its own sooner or later.

Researchers have clearly demonstrated that there is a link between generations. In other words, the pattern of violence is passed on from one family to the next. Sometimes it is possible for families to trace violence back through several generations. The abuse may be physical,

emotional, sexual, or all three.

Abusers have been reared in homes in which they themselves have been abused, or in which they have regularly observed abuse upon other family members. Abuse and violence are the usual, routine responses to frustration, anger, stress, and feelings of powerlessness and low self-esteem.

Children growing up in these homes hate this environment.

Yet when they establish homes of their own, there is a strong tendency to follow the same patterns. Violence was their model. They have learned no other responses.

And so violence *spirals* from one generation to the next.

## What Violent Behavior Teaches

The fallout from family violence is destructive and widespread. Many children will grow up unable to build lasting or satisfactory

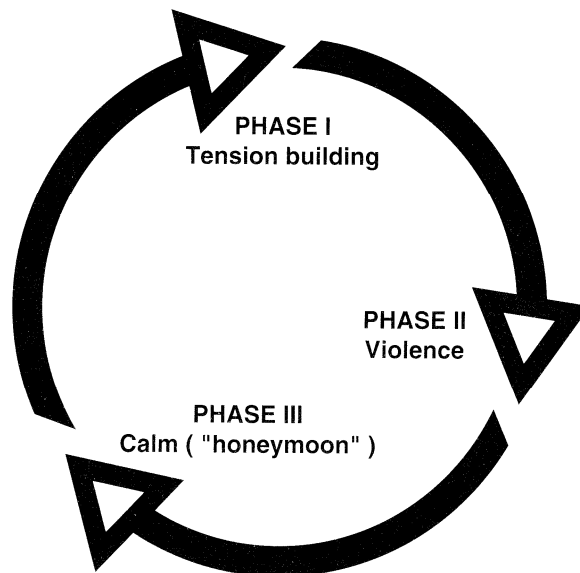


Figure 1: The Cycle of Violence



relationships. Others will experience marital dysfunction and sexual problems (including promiscuity and prostitution). Others will have mental and physical illness, thoughts or attempts of suicide, and in some cases homicide.

The spiral of violence widens from generation to generation, since each child growing up in the family is affected by this virus. The number of individuals affected increases as each generation grows to adulthood and establishes new homes in which abuse and violence are prevalent.

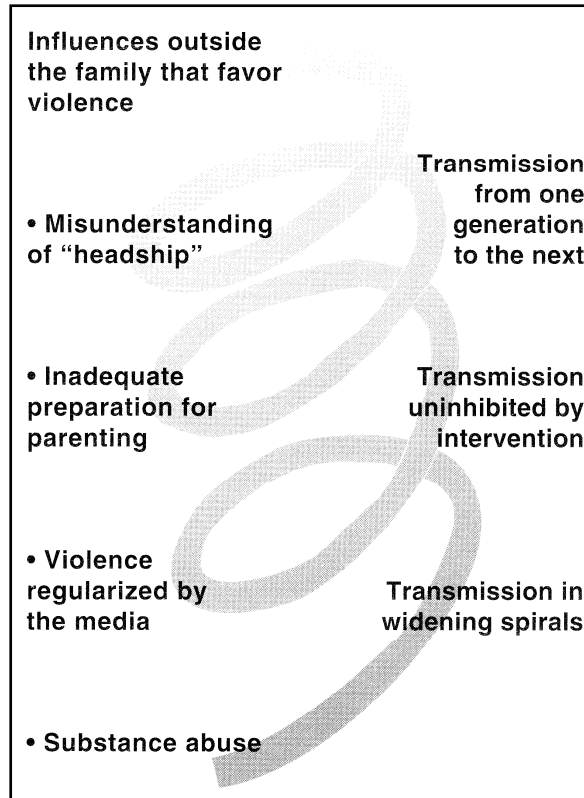
The spiral is aided and abetted by other circumstances. Among them:

*Violence in the media* glorifies this behavior and portrays it for its recreational value.

*Inadequate parental training* means many mothers and fathers know no other way to express displeasure or punishment than to hit one another and the children.

There is a *lack of community* in a world in which constantly moving families do not have the opportunity to form caring networks with neighbors. Neighborhood bonding not only alleviates stress but also tends to promote accountability.

We could also add that *drugs and*



**Figure 2: The Spiral of Violence**

*alcoholism* contribute to family violence by removing inhibitions that might otherwise hold violence in check at times. But in fact, family violence still thrives without substance abuse.

**How Can We Break the Cycle?**

The cycle of violence can be broken. But it will take knowledge and strength beyond what one family possesses of itself.

Society's tradition of not interfering in family affairs may present no problems when a family is working well. But when battering and abuse are present, not to intervene

serves to isolate the victims and protect the abuser.

Nonintervention is a way of condoning abuse. The message the abuser receives (when the abuse is known but not halted) is that his or her behavior isn't that serious.

When we consider that breaking the *cycle* of violence will also halt the *spiraling* effect, we realize the importance of working diligently to banish abuse and battering from our homes.

How can we break the cycle of violence? Let us look briefly at specific ways in which intervention can take place.

• **Intervention During Phase 1—Tension Building.**

*Education is vital.* Education about what abuse consists of and how it affects both victims and perpetrators can build awareness of what is going on.

Denial and minimalization must be confronted. Therapy can help an abusive person realize and acknowledge his or her need for control. The abuser must also acknowledge *full* responsibility for the violence; it cannot be blamed on the victim.

An abuser must learn how to choose nonviolent behavior.

The victim must learn that getting help and taking action against the abuser is not "breaking up the family," but an essential step toward healing a family that is already broken!

Education must go beyond the main actors in this drama (the family members themselves). Churches, schools, and communities must have programs that alert everyone to this evil. For family violence occurs among people in all walks of life regardless of their economic status, race, religion, education, or standing in the community.

- **Intervention During Phase 2—Violence.**

*Outside help is essential.* The victim must be assured of a haven and of all the support that communities, churches, and friends can provide.

The violent incident must be reported to appropriate authorities. Police, medical caregivers, clergy, teachers, friends—all must feel morally obligated to acknowledge the violence and not cover it up.

Abuse does not stop by itself. Someone or some power has to say authoritatively to the abuser, "Stop! We will not allow this!"

Victims must be warned to leave and not return until someone with appropriate knowledge and

authority has evaluated the situation and feels it is safe for the family to reunite.

- **Intervention During Phase 3—The Calm.**

*A clear understanding of the cycle of violence must guide our actions.* In phase 3, when the violence stops and the abuser is contrite, the victim (and others) may feel such relief that they may be lulled into inaction.

We must warn victims that "honeymoons" don't last in this cyclic nightmare. As in phase 2, victims must be urged to leave and not return until someone with appropriate knowledge and authority has evaluated the situation and feels it is safe for the family to reunite.

Therapy must be undertaken. It should include individual, group, and family sessions. It must take place over a period of months, perhaps even years. Short-term therapy does not bring about effective healing.

While this is going on, the extended family, friends, clergy, schools—all must take part in providing assistance and support that may be necessary.

A time of separation from the family while therapy is going on will have the effect of making the abuser consider the unacceptability of his or her behavior in a way that overlooking or minimizing the violence will never do.

## **Prevention Is Better!**

*For toddlers.* We must start educating about appropriate family behavior when our children are toddlers. They need to grow up feeling good about themselves, and feeling love and support from family and friends.

*For children.* Our children have to be taught how to make good choices. For example, they must learn how to express frustration and anger—but not to act on it.

*For teenagers and young adults.* During the teen years we can begin to detect personality traits that could lead to violence. Research shows that as much as 30 to 40 percent of marital battering begins during dating.

Learning to recognize behaviors that can lead to violence is crucial. Learning how to communicate with peers effectively should be part of our educational curriculum.

Premarital counseling should begin when dating becomes serious, not two months before the wedding. Many problems that will later cause unbearable frustrations can be detected and worked on.

*For couples.* Married couples need repeated marital enrichment experiences to keep their marriage on track. They must learn how to engage in positive conflict resolution.

Understanding how one's own family background might contribute to violent behavior is crucial. Studying the cycle of violence should be understood by all as a means of preventing violence.

The church can play an important role in preventing violence.

Pastors, along with administrators in conferences, unions, divisions, and the General Conference, must take some responsibility for alerting members to the evil of family violence and then bringing assistance to church communities.

*We as members* must be not only vocal in voicing our enthusiasm for this type of help, but active in our support of it.

As family members and as followers of Christ, we have a high calling. As Paul put it: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4, NIV).

Yes, we are our brother's, our sister's, our children's keepers, their supporters and helpers. As we work together to remove the cycles and spirals of violence, we are acting in behalf of our heavenly Father for each of the least of these.

## Resources Every Adventist Church Should Have

*Alberta Mazat*

### 1. Social Service Resource Directory.

This directory can be obtained at the county seat, usually through the social services department. It is normally updated every two years and is an invaluable resource. It will list places to get crisis intervention, counseling, shelters, and support groups for victims and perpetrators. Because the directory can be expensive, the church should have a copy available for members to consult.

### 2. Pastor's File of Counseling Resources.

The pastor should compile a list of resources in the community by contacting Christian counseling centers, the Council of Churches office, and the local phone book. He or she should have called some of these in advance to discover their policies on fees. Their philosophy and their availability in emergencies.

Local phone books may list resources for those experiencing domestic violence under such headings as "abuse," "battered wives," or "family abuse."

Individuals experiencing distress will find it difficult to make these inquiries and accurately hear what is being said. The pastor's help and support can be invaluable here.

### 3. Material From the National Resource Center (NRC) on Domestic Violence.

Professionals and laypersons are welcome to use their services. They can be contacted at 1-800-537-2238 or by FAX at 717-545-9456. The address is 6400 Flank Drive, Suite 1300, Harrisburg, PA 17112-2278.

The NRC, for example, can provide for many states a "state domestic violence crisis hot line," which is toll free, available 24 hours a day, and specializes in crisis intervention. Note that in most cases the 1-800 number will work only if called from *within* the given state.

\* Most items listed here are relevant to the United States only.

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## Statement on Family Violence

Family violence involves an assault of any kind—verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or active or passive neglect—that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family, whether they are married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. Current international research indicates that family violence is a global problem. It occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socioeconomic levels, and in families from all types of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburbia, and rural communities.

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, it may be a physical attack on one's spouse. Emotional assaults such as verbal threats, episodes of rage, depreciation of character, and unrealistic demands for perfection are also abuse. It may take the form of physical coercion and violence within the marital sexual relationship, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behavior. It includes behavior such as incest and the mistreatment or neglect of underage children by a parent or another guardian that results in injury or harm. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material, and medical abuse or neglect.

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or tear one another down. There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, His disciples are called to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept males and females as equals, and to acknowledge that every person has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way violates their personhood and devalues human beings created and redeemed by God.

The apostle Paul refers to the Church as "the household of faith" which functions as an extended family, offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to all, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged. Scripture portrays the Church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as feelings of betrayal, rejection, and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust, and wholeness. The Bible also speaks of the Christian's personal responsibility to protect his or her body temple from desecration because it is the dwelling place of God.

Regrettably, family violence occurs in many Christian homes. It can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of God, self, and others.

It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.
- b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense of victims both within the community of faith and in society.
- c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling by Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available or other professional resources in the community.
- d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities.
- e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships. Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse.
- f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together.
- g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.

2. To strengthen family life by:

- a. Providing family life education which is grace-oriented and includes a biblical understanding of the mutuality, equality, and respect indispensable to Christian relationships.
- b. Increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence.
- c. Developing ways to prevent abuse and violence and the recurring cycle often observed within families and across generations.
- d. Rectifying commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up family violence. For example, while parents are instructed by God to redemptively correct their children, this responsibility does not give license for the use of harsh, punitive disciplinary measures.

3. To accept our moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards. Any indications or reports of abuse must not be minimized but seriously considered. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

If we are to live as children of the light, we must illuminate the darkness where family violence occurs in our midst. We must care for one another, even when it would be easier to remain uninvolved.

(The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Ex 20:12; Matt 7:12; 20:25-28; Mark 9:33-45; John 13:34; Rom 12:10, 13; 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:2, 3, 21-27; 6:1-4; Col 3:12-14; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Tim 5:5-8.)

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# A Commentary on Religious Issues In Family Violence

Marie M. Fortune

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## The Importance of Religious Issues: Roadblocks or Resources?

The crisis of family violence affects people physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Each of these dimensions must be addressed, both for victims and for those in the family who abuse them. Approached from either a secular or a religious perspective alone, certain needs and issues tend to be disregarded. This reflects a serious lack of understanding of the nature of family violence and its impact on people's lives. Treatment of families experiencing violence and abuse requires integrating the needs of the whole person. Thus, the importance of developing a shared understanding and cooperation between secular and religious helpers to deal with family violence cannot be emphasized too strongly.

Occasionally, a social worker, psychotherapist, or other secular service provider will wonder, "Why bother with religious concerns at all?" The answer is a very practical one: religious issues or concerns that surface for people in the midst of crisis are *primary issues*. If not addressed in some way, at some point, they will inevitably become roadblocks to the client's efforts to resolve the crisis and move on with her or his life. In addition, people's religious beliefs and community of faith (church or synagogue) *can* provide a primary support system for them and their families in the midst of an experience of family violence.

For a pastor, priest, rabbi, lay counselor, or other person approaching family violence from a religious perspective, there is little question about the relevance of religious concerns. These are primary for any religious person. Rather, the clergy may doubt the importance of dealing with concerns for shelter, safety, intervention, and treatment. "These people just need to get right with God and everything will be fine." This perspective overlooks the fact that these other issues are practical and important as well. Family violence is complex and potentially lethal; these seemingly mundane concerns represent immediate and critical needs.

When confronted with a personal experience of family violence, as in the case of any other crisis, whether chronic or sudden, most people also experience a crisis of meaning in their lives. Very basic life questions arise and are usually expressed in religious or philosophical terms. Questions such as, "Why is this happening to me and my family?" or "Why did God *let* this happen?" or "What meaning does this have for my life?" are all indications of people's efforts to understand, to make sense out of experiences of suffering, and to place the experiences in a context of meaning for their lives. These questions are to be seen as a healthy sign because they represent an effort to comprehend and contextualize the experience of family violence. Through such efforts, people can regain some control over their lives in the midst of crisis.

Thus, for many individuals and families in crisis, the questions of meaning will be expressed in religious terms, and more specifically, in terms of the Jewish or Christian traditions, since the vast

majority of people in the United States today grew up with some association with these traditions. Many continue as adults to be involved with a church or synagogue. In addition, Jewish and Christian values overlap with cultural values of the majority American culture, so most Americans carry a set of cultural values, consciously or unconsciously, which are primarily Jewish or Christian in nature.<sup>i</sup>

Religious concerns can become roadblocks or resources for those dealing with experiences of family violence because these concerns are central to many people's lives. The outcome depends on *how* they are handled.

The misinterpretation and misuse of the Jewish and Christian traditions have often had a detrimental effect of families, particularly those dealing with family violence. Misinterpretation of the traditions can contribute substantially to the guilt, self-blame, and suffering that victims experience and to the rationalizations often used by those who abuse. "But the Bible says . . ." is frequently used to explain, excuse, or justify abuse between family members. This need not be the case. Reexamining and analyzing those biblical references that have been misused can lead to reclaiming the traditions in a way that supports victims *and* those who abuse while clearly confronting and challenging abuse in the family. A careful study of both Jewish and Christian scriptures makes it very clear that *it is not possible to use scripture to justify abuse of persons in the family*. However, it is also clear that it *is* possible to *misuse* scripture and other traditional religious literature for this purpose. This is a frequent practice (see below). Attempting to teach that there are very simple answers to the very complex issues that people face in their lives is another potential roadblock within contemporary teachings of some Jewish or Christian groups. Thus, religious groups have often not adequately prepared people for the traumas they will face at some point in their lives: illness, death, abuse, divorce, and so forth.

"Keep the commandments and everything will be fine."

"Keep praying."

"Just accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you will be healthy, prosperous, popular, and happy."

"Go to services each week."

"Pray harder."

While these teachings may be fundamental teachings of religious faith, alone they are inadequate to deal with the complexity of most experiences of human suffering, such as family violence. When offered as simple and complete answers to life's questions, they create in the hearer an illusion of simplicity that leaves the hearer vulnerable to becoming overwhelmed by an experience of suffering. In addition, the teachings set up a dynamic that blames the victims for their suffering.

"If you are a *good* Christian or a *good* Jew, God will treat you kindly, or take care of you, or make you prosper as a reward for your goodness."

"If you suffer, it is a sign that you *must not be* a good Christian or a good Jew and God is displeased with you."



If one accepts this simple formula (which makes a theological assumption that God's love is conditional), then when one experiences any form of suffering, one feels punished or abandoned by God. The simple answer alone cannot hold up in the face of personal or familial suffering. When people attempt to utilize the simple answer and it is insufficient, they feel that their faith has failed them or that God has abandoned them. In fact, it may be the teachings or actions of their particular congregation or denomination that have been inadequate to their needs. Thus they may be feeling abandoned.

The religious teachings of the Jewish and Christian traditions *are* adequate to address the experiences of contemporary people when the traditions acknowledge the complexity, the paradox, and sometimes the incomprehensible nature of those experiences. The most important resource that the church or synagogue can provide is to be available to support those who are suffering, to be a sign of God's presence, and to be willing to struggle with the questions that the experiences may raise. Offering sweet words of advice to "solve" life's problems reduces the experience of the one who suffers to a mere slogan and denies the depth of the pain *and* the potential for healing and new life.

### **Cooperative Roles for Secular Counselor and Minister/Rabbi**

Both the secular counselor and the minister or rabbi have important roles to play in response to family violence. Families in which there is abuse need the support and expertise of both in times of crisis. Sometimes the efforts of the two will come into conflict, as illustrated by the following situation:

We received a call at the Center from a local shelter for abused women. The shelter worker indicated that she had a badly beaten woman there whose minister had told her to go back home to her husband. The worker asked us to call the minister and "straighten him out." Ten minutes later we received a call from the minister. He said that the shelter had one of his parishioners there and the shelter worker had told her to get a divorce. He asked us to call the shelter and "straighten them out."

In the above case, both the shelter worker and the minister had the best interests of the victim in mind. Yet they were clearly at odds with each other because each did not understand the other's concerns as they related to the needs of the victim. The shelter worker did not understand the minister's concern for maintaining the family, and the minister did not understand that the woman's life was in danger. We arranged for the minister and the shelter worker to talk directly with each other, sharing their concerns in order to seek a solution in the best interests of the victim. This was accomplished successfully.

Clearly there is a need for cooperation and communication between counselors and ministers or rabbis so that the needs of parishioners, congregants, and clients are best served and so that the resources of both religious and secular helpers are utilized effectively.

#### **Role of the Secular Counselor**

In the secular setting, a social worker or mental health provider may encounter a victim or abuser who raises religious questions or concerns. When this occurs, the following guidelines are helpful.

1. Pay attention to religious questions, comments, and references.
2. Affirm these concerns as appropriate and check out their importance for the client.
3. Having identified and affirmed this area of concern, *if you are uncomfortable with it, yourself, or feel unqualified to pursue it*, refer the client to a pastor, priest, or rabbi who is trained to help and whom you know and trust.
4. If you are comfortable and would like to pursue the concern, do so, emphasizing the ways in which the client's religious tradition can be a personal resource and pointing out that it can in no way be used to justify past abuse or to allow abuse or violence to continue in the family. (See below.)

### **Role of Clergy**

The minister or rabbi can most effectively help family abuse victims and offenders by cooperating with secular helping professionals. Combined, these resources provide a balanced approach that can deal with specific external, physical, and emotional needs while addressing the large religious and philosophical issues.

When approached about family violence, the minister or rabbi can use the following guidelines:

1. Be aware of the dynamics of family violence and utilize this understanding in evaluating the situation.
2. Use your expertise as a religious authority and spiritual leader to illuminate the positive value of religious traditions while clarifying the fact that they do not justify or condone family abuse. (See below.)
3. Identify the parishioner or congregant's immediate needs and *refer* the person to a secular resource (if available) to deal with the specifics of abuse, intervention, and treatment.
4. If you are comfortable pursuing the matter, provide additional pastoral support and encouragement to help families dealing with violence take full advantage of available resources.

## **Scriptural and Theological Issues**

### **Suffering**

The experience of physical or psychological pain or deprivation can generally be referred to as "suffering." When a person experiences suffering, often the first question is, "Why am I suffering?" This is really two questions: "Why is there suffering?" and "Why me?" These are classical theological questions to which there are no totally satisfactory answers.

Sometimes a person will answer these questions in terms of very specific cause-and-effect relationships:

"I am being abused by my husband as punishment from God for the fact that twenty years ago, when I was seventeen years old, I had sexual relations with a guy I wasn't married to."

In this case, the victim of abuse sees her suffering as just punishment for an event that happened long ago and for which she has since felt guilty. This explanation has an almost superstitious quality. It

reflects an effort on the part of the woman to make sense out of her experience of abuse by her husband. Her explanation takes the "effect" (the abuse), looks for a probable "cause" (her teenage "sin"), and directly connects the two. This conclusion is based on a set of theological assumptions that support her view: God is a stern judge who seeks retribution for her sins, and God causes suffering to be inflicted on her as punishment.

Unfortunately, the woman's explanation does not focus on the real nature of her suffering (the abuse by her husband) nor does it place responsibility for her suffering where it lies: on her abusive husband.

Sometimes people try to explain suffering by saying that it is "God's will" or "part of God's plan for my life" or "God's way of teaching me a lesson." These explanations assume God to be stern, harsh, and even cruel and arbitrary. This image of God runs counter to a biblical image of a kind, merciful, and loving God. The God of this biblical teaching does not single out anyone to suffer for the sake of suffering, because suffering is not pleasing to God.

A distinction between voluntary and involuntary suffering is useful at this point. Someone may choose to suffer abuse or indignity in order to accomplish a greater good. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., suffered greatly in order to change what he believed to be unjust racist laws. Although the abuse he experienced was not justifiable, he chose voluntary suffering as a means to an end.

Involuntary suffering, which occurs when a person is beaten, raped, or abused, especially in a family relationship, also cannot be justified, but it is never chosen. It may, on occasion, *be endured* by a victim for a number of reasons, including a belief that such endurance will eventually "change" the person who is being abusive. However, this belief is unrealistic and generally only reinforces the abuse.

Christian tradition teaches that suffering happens to people because there is evil and sinfulness in the world. Unfortunately, when someone behaves in a hurtful way, someone else usually bears the brunt of that act and suffers as a result. Striving to live a righteous life does not guarantee that one will be protected from the sinfulness of another. A person may suffer from having made a poor decision (for example, as a result of marrying a spouse who is abusive). But this in no way means that the person either wants to suffer or deserves abuse from the spouse.

In Christian teaching, at no point does God promise that we will not suffer in this life. In scripture, God *does* promise to be present to us when we suffer. This is especially evident in the Psalms, which give vivid testimony to people's experience of God's faithfulness in the midst of suffering (see Psalms 22 and 55).

One's fear of abandonment by God is often strong when one is experiencing suffering and abuse. This fear is usually experienced by victims of abuse, who often feel they have been abandoned by almost everyone: friends, other family members, clergy, doctors, police, lawyers, counselors. Perhaps none of these people believed the victims or were able to help. It is therefore very easy for victims to conclude that God has also abandoned them. For Christians, the promise to victims from God is that even though all others abandon them, God will be faithful. This is the message found in Romans:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rules, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. –Romans 8:38-39

Often this reassurance is very helpful to victims of violence or to those who abuse them.

Sometimes people who regard suffering as God's will for them believe that God is teaching them a lesson or that hardship builds character. Experiences of suffering can, in fact, be occasions for growth. People who suffer may realize in retrospect that they learned a great deal from the experience and grew more mature as a result. This often is the case, but only if the person who is suffering also receives support and affirmation throughout the experience. With the support of family, friends, and helpers, people who are confronted with violence in their families can end the abuse, possibly leave the situation, make major changes in their lives, and grow as mature adults. They will probably learn some difficult lessons: increased self-reliance; how to express anger; that they may survive better outside than inside abusive relationships; that someone can be a whole person without being married; that they can exercise control over their actions with others; that family relationships need not be abusive and violent.

However, this awareness of suffering as the occasion for growth *must come from those who are suffering* and at a time when they are well on their way to renewal. It is hardly appropriate when someone is feeling great pain to point out that things really are not so bad and that someday the sufferer will be glad that all of this happened. These words of "comfort and reassurance" are usually for the benefit of the minister, rabbi, or counselor, not the parishioner, congregant, or client. At a later time, it may be useful to point out the new growth that has taken place and very simply to affirm the reality that this person *has survived* an extremely difficult situation. Suffering may present an occasion for growth: whether this potential is actualized depends on how the experience of suffering is managed.

### **Nature of the Marriage Relationship: A Jewish Perspective**

The Jewish marriage ceremony is known as "Kiddushin," or sanctification. Through it, a couple's relationship is sanctified, or set apart before God. This sanctification reminds Jews to strive to express their holiness through marriage and the home in a covenantal relationship based on mutual love and respect.

Judaism views marriage as necessary for fulfillment. Marriage is part of God's plan. The first time God speaks to Adam, God says that it is not fitting that Adam should be alone. "Shalom Bayit," peace in the home, is a major family value in Judaism. "Shalom," which is simply translated as "peace," also signifies wholeness, completeness and fulfillment. Peace in the home, domestic harmony, encompasses the good and welfare of all the home's inhabitants.

The rabbis consider domestic tranquility as one of the most important ideals because it is the essential forerunner to peace on earth. "Peace will remain a distant vision until we do the work of peace ourselves. If peace is to be brought into the world we must bring it first to our families and communities."<sup>ii</sup>

The concept of Shalom Bayit should not be misinterpreted as encouraging the preservation of an abusive marriage. When domestic harmony is impossible because of physical abuse, the only way for peace may be dissolution of marriage. Although marriage is viewed as permanent, divorce has always been an option according to the Jewish tradition.

In Judaism conjugal rights are obligatory upon the husband, who must be available for his wife.

A wife may restrict her husband in his business journey to nearby places only so that he would not otherwise deprive her of her conjugal rights. Hence he may not set out without her permission.<sup>iii</sup>

While the husband is responsible for his wife's sexual fulfillment, the wife, in return, is expected to have sexual relations with her husband. Maimonides<sup>iv</sup> teaches us about the relationship between husband and wife in a Jewish marriage. He asserts that if the wife refuses sexual relations with her husband

she should be questioned as to the reason. . . . If she says, "I have come to loathe him, and I cannot willingly submit to his intercourse," he must be compelled to divorce her immediately for she is not like a captive woman who must submit to a man that is hateful to her.<sup>v</sup>

This suggests that no wife is expected to submit to sexual activity with a husband she fears or hates. The arena of sexual sharing for Jewish couples is one of mutual responsibility and choice.

### **Nature of the Marriage Relationship: A Christian Perspective**

Christian teaching about the model of the marriage relationship has traditionally focused heavily on Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Corinthians, and Colossians. Misplaced emphasis on or misinterpretations of these texts create substantial problems for many married couples. Most commonly, directives on marriage based on scripture are given to women, and not to men, and state that wives must "submit" to their husbands. This often is interpreted to mean that the husband and father is the absolute head of the household and that the wife and children must obey him without question. Unfortunately, this idea has also been interpreted to mean that wives and children must submit to abuse from husbands and fathers. This rationalization is used by those who abuse, as well as by counselors, clergy, and the victims of the abuse themselves.

A closer look at the actual scriptural references reveals a different picture. For example:

Be subject to *one another* out of reverence for Christ –Ephesians 5:21, emphasis added

This is the first and most important verse in the Ephesians passage on marriage and also the one most often overlooked. It clearly indicates that all Christians—husbands and wives—are to be *mutually subject* to one another. The word that is translated "be subject to" can more appropriately be translated "defer to" or "accommodate to" so that v. 22 might read:

Wives *accommodate* to your husbands as to the Lord.

This teaching implies sensitivity, flexibility, and responsiveness to the husband. In no way can this verse be taken to mean that a wife must submit to abuse from her husband.

For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. –Ephesians 5:23-24

The model suggested here of husband-wife relationship is based on the Christ-church relationship. It is clear from Jesus's teaching and ministry that his relationship to his followers was not one of dominance or authoritarianism, but rather one of servanthood. For example, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in an act of serving. He taught them that those who would be first must, in fact, be last. Therefore, a good husband will not dominate or control his wife but will serve and care for her, according to Ephesians.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church. –Ephesians 5:28-29

This instruction to husbands is very clear and concrete. A husband is to nourish and cherish his own body *and* that of his wife. Physical battering that occurs between spouses is probably the most blatant violation of this teaching and a clear reflection of the self-hatred in the one who is abusive.

It is interesting that the passages quoted above from Ephesians (5:21-29), which are commonly used as instruction for marriage, are instructions primarily for husbands. Nine of the verses (5:25-33) are directed toward the husband's responsibilities, and one verse (5:21) refers to wives' responsibilities, and one verse (5:21) refers to both. Yet contemporary interpretation often focuses only on the wives and often misuses those passages to justify the abuse of the wives by their husbands. While spouse abuse may be a common pattern in marriage, it certainly cannot be legitimated by scripture.

In terms of sexuality in marriage, again this passage from Ephesians (see also Colossians 3:18-21) has been used to establish a relationship in which the husband has *conjugal* rights and the wife has conjugal *duties*. In fact, other scriptural passages are explicit on this issue:

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. –1 Corinthians 7:3-4

The rights and expectations between husband and wife in regard to sexual matters are explicitly equal and parallel and include the right to refuse sexual contact. The expectation of equality of conjugal rights and sexual access and the need for mutual consideration in sexual activity is clear. The suggestion that both wife and husband have authority over the other's body and not their own refers to the need for joint, mutual decisions about sexual activity rather than arbitrary, independent decisions. A husband does not have the right to act out of his own sexual needs without agreement from the wife; this applies to the wife also. This particular passage directly challenges the incidents of sexual abuse (rape) in marriage that are frequently reported by physically abused wives.

## **The Marriage Covenant and Divorce**

A strong belief in the permanency of the marriage vows may prevent an abused spouse from considering separation or divorce as options for dealing with family violence. For the Christian, the promise of faithfulness "for better or for worse . . . until death do us part" is commonly taken to mean "stay in the marriage no matter what," even though death of one or more family members is a real possibility in abusive families. Jews view marriage as permanent, but "until death do us part" is not part of the ceremony. The Jewish attitude embodies a very delicate balance. Marriage is taken very seriously. It is a primary religious obligation and should not be entered into or discarded flippantly. Nevertheless, since the days of Deuteronomy, Jewish tradition has recognized the unfortunate reality that some couples are hopelessly incompatible and divorce may be a necessary option.

For some Christians, their denomination's strong doctrinal position against divorce may inhibit them from exercising this means of dealing with violence in the family. For others, a position against divorce is a personal belief, often supported by their family and church. In either case, there is a common assumption that any marriage is better than no marriage at all and, therefore, that a marriage should be maintained at any cost. This assumption arises from a superficial view of marriage, a view concerned only with appearance and not with substances. In other words, as long as marriage and family relationships maintain a facade of normalcy, there is a refusal by church and community to look any closer for fear of seeing abuse or violence in the home. The covenant of Christian marriage is a lifelong, sacred commitment made between two persons and witnessed by other persons and by God. Jews also regard marriage as sacred and intend that it be permanent. A covenant between marriage partners has the following elements:

1. It is made in full knowledge of the relationship.
2. It involves a mutual giving of self to the other.
3. It is assumed to be lasting.
4. It values mutuality, respect, and equality between persons.

A marriage covenant can be violated by one or both partners. It is common thinking in both Jewish and Christian traditions that adultery violates the marriage covenant and results in brokenness in the relationship. Likewise, violence or abuse in a marriage violates the covenant and fractures a relationship. In both cases, the trust that was assumed between partners is shattered. Neither partner should be expected to remain in an abusive situation. Often one marriage partner feels a heavy obligation to remain in the relationship and do everything possible to make it work. This is most often true for women. A covenant relationship only works if both partners are able and willing to work on it. In both Christian and Jewish traditions, it is clear that God does not expect anyone to stay in a situation that is abusive (that is, to become a doormat). In the Christian tradition, just as Jesus did not expect his disciples to remain in a village that did not respect and care for them (Luke 9:1-6), neither does he expect persons to remain in a family relationship where they are abused and violated. In Jewish literature, the expectation is also clear:

If a man was found to be a wife-beater, he had to pay damages and provide her with separate maintenance. Failing that, the wife had valid grounds for compelling a divorce.<sup>vi</sup>

If there is a genuine effort to change on the part of the one who is abusive, it is possible to renew the marriage covenant, including in it a clear commitment to nonviolence in the relationship. With treatment for the family members, it *may* be possible to salvage the relationship. If the one who is being abusive is not willing or able to change in the relationship, then the question of divorce arises. At this point in the marriage, divorce is really a matter of *public* statement: "Shall we make public the fact that our relationship has been broken by abuse?" The other option, of course, is to continue to *pretend* that the marriage is intact. (A woman reported that she divorced only a month ago but that her marriage ended ten years ago when the abuse began.)

In violent homes, divorce is not breaking up families. Violence and abuse are breaking up families. Divorce is often the painful, public acknowledgment of an already accomplished fact. While divorce is never easy, it is, in the case of family violence, the lesser evil. In many cases, divorce may be a necessary intervention to generate healing and new life from a devastating and deadly situation.

### Parents and Children

"Honor your father and your mother" is one of the Ten Commandments taught to all Jewish and Christian children. Unfortunately, some parents misuse this teaching in order to demand unquestioning obedience from their children. In a hierarchical, authoritarian household, a father may misuse his parental authority to coerce a child into abusive sexual activity (incest). Parents may use this commandment to rationalize their physical abuse of a child in retaliation for a child's lack of obedience.

For Christians the meaning of the Third Commandment is made very clear in Ephesians:

Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*, for this right. "Honor your father and mother"—this is the first commandment with a promise: "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up *in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*. —Ephesians 6:1-4, emphasis added

Children's obedience to their parents is to be "in the Lord"; it is not to be blind and unquestioning. In addition to instructions to children, instructions are also given to parents to guide and instruct their children in Christian values, that is, love, mercy, compassion, and justice. Any discipline of a child must be for the child's best interest. The caution to the father not to provoke the child to anger is most appropriate. If there is anything that will certainly provoke a child to anger, it is physical or sexual abuse by a parent.

Jewish tradition deals with the same concern, making a distinction between children based on maturity.

One is forbidden to beat his grownup son; the word "grownup," in this regard, refers not to age but to his maturity. If there is reason to believe that the son will rebel, and express that resentment by word or deed, even though he has not yet reached the age of Bar Mitzvah (13), it is forbidden to beat him. Instead he should reason with him. Anyone who beats his grownup children is to be excommunicated, because he transgresses the Divine Command (Lev. 19:14)



"Thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind" (for they are apt to bring sin and punishment upon their children).<sup>vii</sup>

Even though Jewish law gives great authority to the father in relationship to the children, the requirement for restraint is clearly indicated. Again, the priority is on the welfare of the child. The other scriptural injunction that is commonly used to justify abusive discipline of children is the adage, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." This adage, a quotation from Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, is based on Proverbs 13:24, "Those who spare the rod hate their children . . ." It is commonly interpreted to mean that if a parent does not use corporal punishment on a child, the child will become a spoiled brat. This is a good example of a misinterpretation based on a contemporary understanding. In fact, the image referred to in Proverbs 13:24 is probably that of a shepherd and the rod is the shepherd's staff (see Psalm 23:4: "your rod and your staff—they comfort me"). A shepherd uses his staff to guide the sheep where they should go. The staff is not used as a cudgel.

With this image of the shepherd guiding the sheep in mind, it is certainly clear that children need guidance and discipline from parents and other caring adults in order to grow to maturity. Children do not need to be physically beaten to receive guidance or discipline. Beating children as discipline teaches them very early that it is all right to hit those you love "for their own good." This kind of lesson fosters early training for persons who grow up and subsequently physically abuse their spouses and children.

### **Confession and Forgiveness**

The need of an abusive family member to admit wrongdoing is a healthy sign that the offender is no longer denying the problem but is ready and willing to face it. The offender may seek out a minister or rabbi for the purpose of confessing.

Sometimes, however, an abusive father confesses, asks forgiveness, and promises never to sexually approach his daughter again, or a mother swears never to hit her child in anger again. The minister or rabbi is then put in a position of assuring forgiveness *and* evaluating the strength of the person's promise not to abuse again. Even an abuser who is genuinely contrite is seldom able to end the abuse without assistance and treatment.

The minister or rabbi needs to assure the person of God's forgiveness *and* must confront the person with the fact that he or she needs additional help in order to stop the abuse. For some people, a strong word from a minister or rabbi at this point is an effective deterrent: "The abuse *must* stop now." Sometimes this strong directive can provide an external framework for beginning to change the abusive behavior.

For the Jew, the Hebrew term "teshuvah" is the word for repentance. "Teshuvah" literally means "return," clearly denoting a return to God after sin. In Judaism there is a distinction between sins against God and sins against people. For the former, only regret or confession is necessary. For sins against people, "teshuvah" requires three steps: first, admission of wrongdoing; second, asking for forgiveness of the person wronged (here, the person abused); third, reconciliation, which can be accomplished only by a change in behavior.

The issue of forgiveness also arises for victims of abuse. A friend or family member may pressure the victim: "You should forgive him. He said he was sorry." Or it may arise internally: "I wish I could

forgive him. . . ." In either case, the victim feels guilty for not being able to forgive the abuser. In these cases, often forgiveness is interpreted to mean forgetting, or pretending that the abuse never happened. Neither is possible. The abuse will never be forgotten—it becomes a part of the victim's history. Forgiveness is a matter of victims' being able to say that they will no longer allow the experience to dominate their lives—and will let go of it and move on. This is usually possible if there is some sense of justice in the situation, either officially (through the legal system) or unofficially. Forgiveness by the victim is possible when there is repentance of the part of the abuser, and real repentance means a change in the abuser's behavior.

Another issue is timing. Too often the minister or rabbi or counselor's need for the victim to finish and resolve the abusive experience leads the helping professional to push a victim to forgive the abuser. Forgiveness in this case is seen as a means to hurry the victim's healing process along. Victims will move to forgive at their own pace and cannot be pushed by others' expectations of them. It may take years before they are ready to forgive; their timing needs to be respected. They will forgive when they are ready. Then the forgiveness becomes the final stage of letting go and enables them to move on with their lives.

## Conclusion

This commentary addresses some of the common religious concerns raised by people dealing with family violence. It is an attempt to help the reader begin to see ways of converting potential roadblocks into valuable resources for those dealing with violence in their families.

Personal faith for a religious person can provide much-needed strength and courage to face a very painful situation and make changes in it. Churches and synagogues can provide a much-needed network of community support for victims, abusers, and their children.

It is clearly necessary for those involved in Jewish and Christian congregations and institutions to begin to address these concerns directly. In ignorance and oversight, we do much harm. In awareness and action, we can contribute a critical element to the efforts to respond to family violence in our communities.

## Notes

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i. The discussion of religious issues included here reflects a Jewish and Christian perspective owing to the background and experience of the authors and contributors. Although there are other religious traditions present in the pluralistic American culture, the focus of this discussion is limited by the authors' perspectives and experiences.

ii. *Gates of Repentance*. (High Holy Days Prayer Book). Central Conference of American Rabbis. 1978. 67.

iii. Yad. Ishut. XIV-2. Yale Judaica Series. 87.

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iv. Maimonides was a Jewish philosopher (1135-1204) whose *Mishneh Torah* became a standard work of Jewish law and a major source for all subsequent codification of Jewish law.

v. Yad. Ishut. XIV-8. 89.

vi. Maurice Lamm. *Jewish Way in Love and Marriage*. 157.

vii. Kizzur Shulhan Arukh

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## Bulletin Inserts on Abuse and Family Violence

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*Each of the following documents have been prepared in a four-page format suitable for use as a two-sided, single-fold bulletin insert. Two camera-ready master copies, designed to be copied back-to-back, are provided for each document.*

Seventh-day Adventist Statement on Family Violence

Abuse and Family Violence: A Global Affliction

Protecting Children from Abuse: A Guide for Parents, Teachers and Church Leaders

Family Violence: A Christian Response

# Seventh-day Adventist Statement on Family Violence

Family violence involves an assault of any kind—verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or active or passive neglect—that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family, whether they are married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. Current international research indicates that family violence is a global problem. It occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socioeconomic levels, and in families from all types of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, it may be a physical attack on one's spouse. Emotional assaults such as verbal threats, episodes of rage, deprecation of character, and unrealistic demands for perfection are also abuse. It may take the form of physical coercion and violence within the marital sexual relationship, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behavior. It includes behavior such as incest and the mistreatment or neglect of underage children by a parent or another guardian that results in injury or harm. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material, and medical abuse or neglect.

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or tear one another down. There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, His disciples are called to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept males and females as equals, and to acknowledge that every person has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way violates their personhood and devalues human beings created and redeemed by God.

The apostle Paul refers to the Church as “the household of faith” which functions as an extended family, offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to all, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged. Scripture portrays the Church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as feelings of betrayal, rejection, and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust, and wholeness. The Bible also speaks of the Christian's personal responsibility to protect his or her body temple from desecration because it is the dwelling place of God.

Regrettably, family violence occurs in many Christian homes. It can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long-term distorted perceptions of God, self, and others.

***It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—***

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:
  - a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.
  - b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense

of victims both within the community of faith and in society.

c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling by Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available, or other professional resources in the community.

d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities.

e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships. Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse.

f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together.

g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.

2. To strengthen family life by:

a. Providing family life education which is grace-oriented and includes a biblical understanding of the mutuality, equality, and respect indispensable to Christian relationships.

b. Increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence.

c. Developing ways to prevent abuse and violence and the recurring cycle often observed within families and across generations.

d. Rectifying commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up family violence. For example, while parents are instructed by God to redemptively correct their children, this responsibility does not give license for the use of harsh, punitive disciplinary measures.

3. To accept our moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards. Any indications or reports of abuse must not be minimized but seriously considered. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

If we are to live as children of the light, we must illuminate the darkness where family violence occurs in our midst. We must care for one another, even when it would be easier to remain uninvolved.

(The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Ex 20:12; Matt 7:12; 20:25-28; Mark 9:33-45; John 13:34; Rom 12:10, 13; 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:2, 3, 21-27; 6:1-4; Col 3:12-14; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Tim 5:5-8.)

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# Abuse and Family Violence:

## A Global Affliction

Twenty-five years of scientific data regarding the incidence of abuse and family violence undergirds the reality that abuse and family violence represent a significant threat to the well-being of individuals and societies worldwide. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not immune.

Abuse and family violence are blind to age, social status, color, culture and creed. There is no typical victim of abuse and no typical perpetrator, except insofar as the victim is, overwhelmingly, female and the perpetrator male.

### TOWARD SOME DEFINITIONS

Abuse and violence may be physical, sexual, and/or psychological. In the case of children, it may also take the form of severe neglect. The terms abuse and violence should not be used to describe minor incidents or isolated events that are not without serious consequences. However, consensus among professionals is emerging that the following kinds of behavior are abusive and constitute unacceptable conduct in all relationships.

**Physical abuse** involves aggressive behavior towards the victim's body. It includes behaviors like pushing, pinching, spitting, kicking, biting, pulling hair, slapping, hitting, punching, choking, burning, clubbing, stabbing, limb twisting, and confining. It also includes throwing acid, boiling water, or objects; throwing the victim down, against a wall, or down stairs; mutilating with knives, scissors or other dangerous objects, and the use of guns. The practices of selective amniocentesis and the killing of female newborns, bride burning, and female genital mutilation constitute violent physical abuse.

**Psychological or emotional abuse** includes behaviors like consistent and harsh criticism, degrading, and disparaging name-calling. It can also include verbal threats, episodes of rage, depreciation of character and person, and unrealistic demands for perfection. The regular use of menacing, violent, and obscene language directed at

another person are also included. In addition, excessive possessiveness, isolation, and deprivation of physical and economic resources are psychologically abusive. Such abuse may also involve denial of sexual contact or activity resulting in sexual frustration, self-doubt and guilt about sexual attractiveness. Violent activity which is destructive of property belonging to the victim such as clothing, furniture or pets is also emotionally abusive.

**Sexual abuse** can include inappropriate fondling, touching and verbal remarks. Included in this category are actions such as incest, molestation, rape, and forced prostitution, oral/genital contact, or fondling of genitals or breasts. Even if it is not forced, it is nonetheless abusive when perpetrated against an underage victim, or by a pastor, teacher, or any adult in a position of trust who takes advantage of the vulnerability of the victim or of the trust relationship to meet his own needs or desires.

### WHAT THE STATISTICS SHOW

Statistical evidence indicating the epidemic proportions and global extent of abuse and family violence is growing. The United Kingdom, Papua New Guinea, and the United States have conducted large scale surveys. Many developing countries are to be commended for their beginning efforts to gather information systematically, with Nigeria, Colombia, Bangladesh, and Chile among the first to collect such data. It's clear that one cannot conclude that the problem is not present in a particular region just because statistics are lacking.

**Abuse and Violence Ending in Murder/Suicide.** Criminal statistics in 1982 in **England and Wales** indicated one in four murder victims were women murdered by their husbands. In a study conducted between 1983 and 1985 in **Bangladesh**, 50% of women murdered were victims of domestic violence. The New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in **Australia** indicated that of the homicides solved by police between 1968-1981, 42.5 percent occurred within family relationships. Research suggests that in situations where wives are murdered, there is usually a long history of physical abuse. Studies in **Bangladesh** and **India** indicate that victims of abuse within the family frequently find a solution to their problems in suicide.

**Battering.** An estimated 3 to 4 million women in the **United States** are battered each year by their husbands or partners. One out of every ten women in **Canada** is a battered woman. A **British** study noted husband against wife violence in as many as one in three marriages. Comprehensive studies conducted in **Papua New Guinea** in 1986 indicated that among the representative samples of a number of tribal groups in both rural and urban parts of the country, as many as 67% of wives suffered marital violence. Significant levels of family violence have also been noted in research from **Austria, Kuwait, Kenya, Thailand, Nigeria** and **Uganda**. By 1989, case studies from 24 **United Nations countries** indicated violence in the home. And all respondents to a 1984 survey in **Commonwealth countries** indicated that domestic violence was a problem in the country.

**Assault.** A comprehensive analysis of recorded incidents of assault on women in

two **Scottish** cities in 1974 revealed that wife assault was the second most common form of violent crime. Similar statistics exist for **Poland** and **Vanuatu**. An analysis of cases of bodily injury in hospitals in Bogota, **Columbia** revealed that 20% of the cases were due to conjugal violence, with women being the victims of the assault in 94% of cases (an incident rate that holds consistently across international data). An analysis of emergency room cases in Santiago, **Chile** yielded similar results. A study conducted by the University of British Columbia in **Canada** noted that 40% of wife assaults began during the time of the wife's first pregnancy. In one hospital emergency department, 21% of pregnant women seeking treatment had been battered.

**Violence as Grounds for Divorce.** In a trend noted from data gathered in the **United Kingdom, Canada, Egypt, Greece,** and the **United States,** violence is frequently offered as a ground for divorce. In **Jamaica** in 1980, 16% of divorces were granted on the grounds of cruelty and 25% of women who sought counseling through the court in 1982 complained of violent husbands.

**Rape.** It is estimated that 30% of all rape victims are also battered women. A woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or killed by a male companion than by any other type of assailant.

**Child Abuse.** The Statistical Abstract of the **United States** reports that in 1993 there were 838,232 cases of neglect, 204,404 cases of physical abuse, 129,404 cases of sexual abuse, and 49,123 cases of emotional abuse. Reports indicate that one out of three girls and one out of eleven boys are sexually abused before they reach the age of 18. At least half of the sexual abuse of children is incestuous abuse. Studies in **Jamaica** and **Samoa** show significant levels of sexual abuse of young women within the family circle. There is vast documentation of the "battered child syndrome" from most countries and cultures.

**Elder Abuse.** A 1985 study conducted by the New South Wales Government in **Australia** represents one example of documentation available that elderly women are particularly vulnerable to assault by their grown children.

#### **ABUSE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**

Significant levels of physical, emotional and sexual abuse were reported by the nearly 8,000 randomly selected respondents to the Adventist Family Survey initiated in 1994 by the General Conference Family Ministries office, now completed in parts of seven world divisions. A range of 8-18% of female respondents reported being sexually abused. (The range indicates the lowest and highest percentages reported in the world divisions for which data is currently available.) Reports of physical (15-43%) and emotional abuse (27-69%) among women were considerably higher than for sexual abuse. On average women reported much higher levels of abuse than men. A range of 4-12% of males reported sexual abuse. Again, reports of emotional (6-37%) and physical (16-55%) abuse were considerably higher than for sexual abuse among males.

The *Adventist Review* (August 1994) reported on a study conducted by the Southeastern California Conference Family Ministries Committee in which over 500 randomly selected church members responded. Forty percent answered affirmatively to the question "Were you ever the victim of physical abuse in your home up to age 18?" Fifty-six percent of the respondents said that physical abuse had been directed toward them or their siblings in the homes in which they were reared. Females were three times more likely to suffer physical abuse than males. Verbal and emotional abuse was reported by 43% of respondents.

Clearly the Seventh-day Adventist faith community is not immune to the problems of abuse and family violence. These responses suggest that a significant amount of energy is being consumed by individuals seeking to survive violent family experiences, thus inhibiting their ability to fully enjoy a meaningful life in relationships among family members and friends and in service to their fellows and their Church.

Certainly these wounded individuals and families deserve a compassionate response from the Church. To remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior. To respond with acceptance, understanding, comfort and practical help is our moral responsibility and tangible evidence of the presence of Christ in our midst.

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Global statistics reported in *Violence Against Women in the Family* (United Nations, 1989). Used by permission.

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# Protecting Children from Abuse:

## A Guide for Parents, Teachers and Church Leaders

*Responsible persons seeking to protect children from abuse will:*

### ACKNOWLEDGE ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or a child's welfare.

There are four basic types of child abuse:

**Physical abuse** occurs when an adult injures a child and it is not an accident. It includes behaviors such as:

- Assault
- Shaking or slapping
- Burning or scalding
- Kicking
- Strangling

**Neglect** is any maltreatment or negligence that harms a child's health, welfare or safety. It can include physical, emotional, or educational neglect through such actions as:

- Abandonment
- Refusal to seek treatment for illness
- Inadequate supervision
- Health hazards in the home
- Ignoring the child's need for contact, affirmation and intellectual stimulation
- Providing inadequate emotional nurturance
- Refusal to ensure a child's education

**Emotional abuse** deeply affects a child's self-esteem by submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It does not always involve injuries one can see. It can include situations such as:

- Close confinement, such as being shut in a closet
- Inadequate nurturance
- Extreme discipline
- Knowingly permitting such behavior as drug or alcohol abuse
- Ridiculing

**Sexual abuse** involves sexual contact between a child or teenager and an adult or significantly older, more powerful person. Children are not developmentally capable of understanding or resisting sexual contact and may be psychologically and socially dependent upon the offender.

Sexual abuse encompasses all inappropriate fondling and touching, including behaviors such as incest, molestation, rape, oral-genital contact, and fondling of breasts and genitals. In addition to sexual contact, abuse can include other exploitive behaviors such as inappropriate verbal stimulation of a child or teenager, taking sexually explicit photographs of a child or teenager or showing such pictures to them, or exposing a child or teenager to pornography or adult sexual activity.

### USE APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH CHILDREN

√ No one has the right to touch the private parts of their bodies or make them feel uncomfortable by what they say about their bodies or anyone else's. Children have the right to say a loud, emphatic "NO" even to relatives and close friends who do this.

√ Adults should not ask children to keep secrets about things they do together. If someone asks a child to keep this kind of secret, they should tell their parent(s), teacher or another adult right away. At least one-half of all child sexual abuse occurs within the family.

√ They are not to allow anyone to take pictures of them partially or completely undressed. If anyone suggests doing this or shows them pictures of other children doing this, they are to report the incident to their parent(s), teacher or another adult at once.

√ Children should report to their parent(s), teacher or another adult if someone makes silly remarks about sex, shows dirty pictures, or makes lewd gestures (or any gestures they don't understand).

√ Children should also make such a report if someone offers to give them gifts or money.

√ They should never answer the door when they are home alone.

√ They should never tell anyone calling on the phone that they are home alone. Nor should they answer any questions.

√ They are never to go into anyone's home or car without previous verbal permission from a parent. It is not appropriate or safe for parents to convey such permission through another adult.

√ They are not responsible for helping strange adults look for an address, a pet, etc. It isn't appropriate for adults to come to children for such help.

√ Children should know how to use the telephone in an emergency. They should know their own telephone number and how to use emergency numbers. They should be taught how to reach an operator on a public telephone even if they have no coins.

√ The three "Safety and Survival" rules for the prevention of abuse which all children should know are:

- Say "NO"!
- Get away fast!
- Tell someone!

### **RECOGNIZE THE POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE**

The possible indicators of abuse listed below do not necessarily constitute proof that a child is being abused or neglected. They should serve as warning signs to look further and seek assistance in determining whether or not a child needs help. Trust your instincts if you think a family or individual is in trouble. Some possible indicators are:

#### **Child Indicators**

- Self-destructive and other destructive behavior
- Fractures, lacerations, bruises that cannot be explained or explanations which are improbable given a child's developmental stage
- Depression, passivity
- Hyperactive/disruptive behavior
- Sexualized behavior or precocious knowledge of explicit sexual behavior, pseudo-maturity
- Running away, promiscuous behavior
- Alcohol or drug abuse, other self-destructive behavior, e.g. eating disorders
- Social isolation of child and family
- Unrealistic parental expectations

### **Parent Indicators**

- Parents whose anger at their children appears out of proportion with the child's behavior
- Parents with negative attitudes toward themselves or their children
- Parents who are defensive about their own harsh upbringing

### **LISTEN AND BELIEVE A CHILD**

Children rarely make up stories about abuse. They simply do not have the vocabulary or the experience to make up such tales. A child's report of behavior that makes them uncomfortable is always worthy of careful attention.

### **RESPOND TO SUSPECTED ABUSE**

- Take whatever steps are necessary to protect the child from further abuse. A report to appropriate authorities is an important step in assuring this protection.
- Stop the offender's abuse. Contacting law enforcement is a helpful step in holding abusers accountable and stopping abuse.
- Help to heal the victim's brokenness.
- Restore family relationships where repentance and changed behavior open the way for forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Help the victim mourn the loss of an important relationship when restoration is not possible.

### **INVOLVE PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN HELP**

In many parts of the world, persons in the helping professions—pastors, teachers, doctors, counselors, police officers, social workers, health professionals—are legally mandated to report a suspicion of child abuse or neglect to child abuse authorities.

Involving a wide circle of support when dealing with a suspected case of child abuse often results in effective intervention for the abuser in addition to helping the victim. The abusive behavior of offenders escalates over time if it is not stopped. Abusers need psychological treatment along with spiritual guidance. Repentance, conversion, prayer and spiritual counsel can help the abuser, but outside intervention must also occur in order to hold the perpetrator accountable for his/her actions.

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# Family Violence:

## A Christian Response

Family violence refers to a pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. It may consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Statistics reflect that 95% of the victims of family violence are women, although men may also be victims. But regardless of who is being victimized, family violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by religious communities worldwide.

### FOUR BASIC TYPES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Physical assault** includes such behaviors as shoving, pushing, restraining, hitting or kicking. Physical assaults may occur frequently or infrequently, but in many cases they tend to escalate in severity and frequency over time.

**Sexual assault** occurs any time one partner forces sexual acts which are unwanted or declined by the other partner.

**Psychological assault** includes isolation from family and friends, forced financial dependence, verbal and emotional abuse, threats, intimidation, and control over where the partner can go and what she can do.

**Attacks against property and pets**, which may include the damage or destruction of household objects or treasured objects belonging to the victim, hitting the walls, or abusing or killing beloved pets, also constitute domestic violence.

### PROFILES OF BATTERED WOMEN AND THEIR BATTERERS

Women who are being battered are as different from each other as non-battered women. They come from all walks of life, all races, all educational backgrounds, and all religions. Anyone experiencing any of the patterns of abuse listed above is a victim of domestic violence.

Just as with battered women, men who batter fall into no specific categories. They also come from all class backgrounds, races, religions, and walks of life. They may be

unemployed or highly-paid professionals. The batterer may be a good provider, a sober and upstanding member of the community, and a respected member of his church.

### WHY WOMEN STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

A victim often stays in an abusive relationship because she is terrified that her abuser will become more violent if she leaves, just as he may have threatened. Many are appropriately fearful for their lives. She may believe he will try to take her children away from her. She may fear she cannot support herself and her children alone. Often she is too embarrassed and ashamed to admit that she is a battered wife. She may stay because she needs love and affection, and because she is afraid no one else will want her.

Then perhaps she has reached out for help but has been advised by well-meaning church leaders and friends to try harder to be a good wife, to pray more, and have faith that things will get better. Or maybe she has been told it is her Christian duty to remain in her marriage, for the sake of her children and her responsibility to her husband. Such responses have only led her to believe there is no hope for escape from her problem.

Many need help to understand the deeper issues such as the Christian's understanding of suffering, mutual submission in marriage, the difference between discipline and punishment, repentance which includes a change in behavior and restitution wherever possible, forgiveness as a process, and the discernment which will enable the persons involved to know whether a relationship should be restored or its loss grieved.

Victims of family violence need to understand that the abuse is not their fault. They need assurance that they are not alone and that help is available. They need practical assistance to identify and access the resources available to them. They may need protection and help to process the spiritual questions that arise in their minds.

Perpetrators also need help to take responsibility for the pain they are bringing into the lives of family members who should be able to count on them for love and support. They need to be held accountable for their actions and encouraged to seek the professional intervention necessary to bring about a change in behavior if relationships are to be restored.

### UNDERSTANDING THE ABUSE CYCLE

In some abusive relationships, a cycle reoccurs which often prolongs a woman's tolerance of the situation because she believes the situation will surely improve. The cycle has three phases:

**Phase I.** During this tension building phase, the wife tries very hard to avoid the behaviors she knows will upset her husband. She learns to coax, cater, and defer. She tries to read the signs of building rage, carefully picking her way through daily contacts. The batterer, with mounting tension, watches her and looks for reasons to blame her for his rage.

**Phase II.** This acute stage is predominated by the battering incident. Realizing his rage is out of control, he finds reasons to blame her, to teach her a lesson. The least incident triggers his action. The reign of terror can last for hours or for days. Fear that any effort on her part to seek help will only escalate the violence often keeps her from telling anyone.

**Phase III.** A period of kindness, contrition and loving behavior from the husband usually follows. Often he will beg for forgiveness and make tearful promises. She wants so much to believe he will change. Many times she feels it is her responsibility to hold the family together, to give him another chance to improve. But when she assumes that his kindness or his promises constitute a long-term change in attitude and behavior, she is unrealistically optimistic.

Women, misled by the abuse cycle, need to understand that family violence is a learned behavior. Abusers have seen abuse modeled, often in the families in which they grew up. They have also experienced personally the power and control which abusive behavior offers them. They are not merely the victims of stressful circumstances, they choose to exert power and control over another through abusive behavior, and they pick their victims selectively. Apart from a change in the attitude and behavior of the abuser, the abuse will predictably escalate and relationships cannot safely be restored.

Professional intervention can put an end to some future family violence if the batterer is willing to accept responsibility for his actions and seek treatment. But abuse will not just go away. Intervention is essential. The goals of this intervention are to protect the victim, stop the abuse, hold the abuser accountable and help those involved access the professional services needed.

### **AN APPROPRIATE CHURCH RESPONSE**

The Bible clearly indicates that a distinguishing mark of Christ's followers is the quality of their human relationships. Christian relationships are characterized by love and mutuality rather than tyrannical control or the misuse of power and authority. The New Testament metaphor of the church as the "household of faith," suggests that the church should function as extended family, offering acceptance, understanding, comfort and practical help to everyone, especially those who are hurting or disadvantaged.

The Church can do much to stop the downward spiral of abuse and violence in families, to assist the abused and their abusers in finding help, and to prevent the continuance of violence in families of future generations. The gospel calls the community of faith to:

- Affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.
- Recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long term effects upon the lives of all involved.

- Hold abusers accountable for their actions and highlight the injustices of abuse and speak out in defense of victims.
- Break the silence and create an atmosphere where secrets can be told and help found.
- Guard against ostracism within the family or church community.
- Seek expert assistance and cooperate with other professional services to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.
- Provide a ministry of reconciliation where changed attitudes and behavior open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings.
- Assist families in grieving relationships that cannot be restored.
- Address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons.
- Seek to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and develop better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.
- Strengthen families through education and enrichment opportunities which empower them to relate to one another in more healthy ways.

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# Making Home a Place of Peace & Healing

For too long abuse and family violence have been the unmentionable words, scarcely acknowledged as part of a Seventh-day Adventist vocabulary. Words we'd rather not bring to mind, much less to our lips. But painful victim accounts, heart-rending appeals from medical and mental-health professionals whose days are filled with listening, caring, protecting, and hard research data from Adventist families worldwide compel us to face a frightening reality: incidences of abuse and family violence are present in our midst in proportions not unlike the general population.

Resident within the truth as it is in Jesus is wonderful news: He is our peace (Eph. 2:14). In Him, we are at peace with God. In Him, we know internal peace from the ceaseless unrest and disturbance of the soul that is the legacy of sin. In Him, the walls that divide are broken down and we are at peace with each other. The followers of Jesus, as no others on earth, may live intimately in peace. In no other arena of life is this reality of our faith more desperately needed than within the family circle.

The 1996 Planbook is dedicated to the threefold task of

- raising consciousness regarding the nature and extent of abuse and family violence,
- outlining the elements of an appropriate Church response,
- exploring ways to suppress this scourge by helping individuals and families to discover, or perhaps rediscover, the peace that only Jesus Christ can bring to human hearts.

— From the *Preface*



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