



# FOCUS Newsletter

a newsletter for women in difficult relationships, feeling emotionally and spiritually alone

Issue 2 2007

## You are Loved!

*I promise to love, honor, and cherish you . . . for as long as we both shall live.*

Easy words, empty promises!

Does anyone really mean those words anymore?

I'll love you . . . until I don't feel "in love" or attracted to you anymore.

I'll honor you . . . as long as you do what I say when I say it.

I'll cherish you . . . as long as you don't gain any weight, snore, or lose your hair.

It's a painful thing to feel unloved and unappreciated. Without the affirmation of love, people become depressed, hopeless, and suicidal.

Max Lucado writes in his book, *In the Grip of Grace*:

"Your parents may have forgotten you, your teachers may have

neglected you, your siblings may be ashamed of you, but within reach of your prayers is the maker of the oceans. God!

**God is for you . . . today,** as you read this sentence. No need to wait in line or come back tomorrow. **He is with you.** His loyalty won't increase if you are better nor lessen if you are worse. **He is for you!"**

What should that mean to you when you've just been told you're worthless, or when you've just felt the sting of his wrath across your face?

**It means that because God loves you, your value cannot be diminished by harsh words or violence.**

It means that you don't have to keep on trying to please others to gain love because you are already loved by God.

It means that even if you make a mess of your life, God loves you just as

*"I have loved you with an everlasting love.*

*With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.*

*I will rebuild you . . . you will be happy again."*

*Jeremiah 31:3-4 NLT*

much as if you did everything right.

It means you don't have to prove anything because you are already loved!

**And the best truth of all is "His love never quits"** (Psalm 118 *The Message*).

Even when we reject Him and curse His name, "His love never quits."

Isn't that great news?

♥ Love without conditions

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- ♥ Love that isn't diminished or increased by what you do or fail to do
- ♥ Love that is always "for you"
- ♥ Love that never quits
- ♥ Love that is there exactly when we need it

The group, *Point of Grace*, has recorded a song called "Jesus Will Still Be There"

written by Robert Sterling and John Mandeville. The words to this song are worth holding onto:

*“Things change, plans fail.*

*You look for love on a grander scale.*

*Storms rise, hopes fade,*

*And you place your bets on another day.*

*When the going gets tough*

*When the ride’s too rough*

*When you’re just not sure enough . . .*

*Jesus will still be there.*

*His love will never change*

*Sure as a steady rain.*

*Jesus will still be there.*

***When no one else is true,***

***He’ll still be loving you.***

*When it looks like you’ve lost it all,*

*And you haven’t got a prayer,*

*Jesus will still be there.”*

It’s hard to understand how God’s love can last in light of our propensity to fall so short of His goodness. Sometimes our own guilt and failure cause us to doubt that God could still

**. . . because God loves you,  
your value cannot be  
diminished  
by harsh words  
or violence.**

love us.

Max Lucado writes, *“Can anything make me stop loving you?” (God asks.) Watch me speak your language, sleep on your earth, and feel your hurts.*

*You wonder how long my love will last? Find your answer on a splintered cross, on a craggy hill.*

*That’s me you see up there, your maker, your God, nail-stabbed and bleeding. Covered in spit and sin-soaked.*

*That’s your sin I’m feeling. That’s your death I’m dying. That’s your resurrection I’m living. That’s how much I love you.”*

You can stake your future on these words: **GOD IS FOR YOU!**

Repeat these words out loud, each time emphasizing the word that is accented:

**God** is for you!

God **is** for you!

God is **for** you!

God is for **you!**

In case this is the first time you’ve heard about God’s love, let me share with you a special valentine from God himself:

***“For God so loved***

\_\_\_\_\_

*write your name here*

***that He gave His only Son (Jesus)***

***so that if*** \_\_\_\_\_

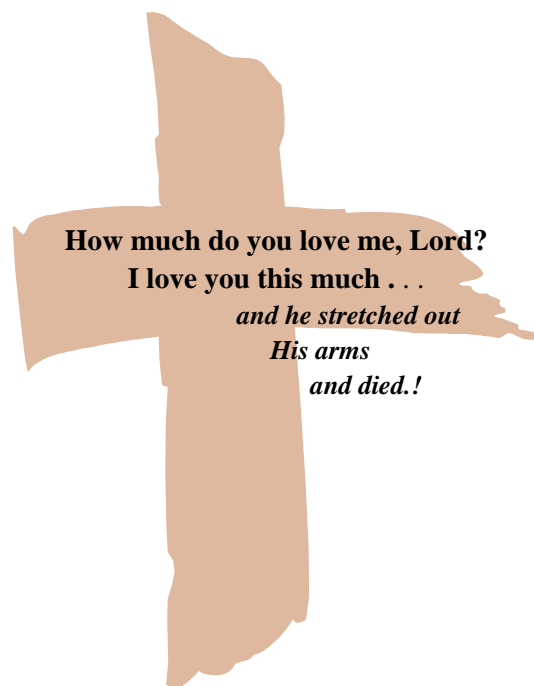
*write your name here*

***believes in Him, she will not perish***

***but will have eternal life.***

*John 3:16*

*Isn’t it great to be loved?*



## Letters/E-Mail



Dear FOCUS,

I don't know if my story is much compared to most but, I have made some big changes this year.

I got married at 18 years old. My husband was a year older than me and had joined the Navy .....

There are so many days I feel unworthy. I pray a lot for my kids and my ex-husband. He moved states away but, still finds ways to try and hurt us with his words. But, I can see what he is doing now and that helps.

I wanted to die and leave this world so many times. But, God and my kids kept me here.

Thank you for doing the job you do to help women who need it!

—Email

## In The News . . .

The National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, a 24-hour national web and telephone helpline for 13- to 18-year-olds who are experiencing dating abuse, launched this month. Teens and parents in the U.S. can call 1-866-331-9474 and TTY 1-866-331-8453 to receive confidential, immediate assistance.

At [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org), teens can log in and get help from trained associates in a one-on-one private chat room. The hotline and web site are operated by the National Domestic Violence Hotline and supported by Liz Claiborne Inc. New research finds that teens in dating relationships are being controlled, threatened and humiliated through cell phones and the internet:

- One in three teens say they are text messaged 10, 20,30 times an hour by a partner inquiring where they are, what they're doing or who they're with;
- One in four teens in a relationship has been called names, harassed or put down by a partner through cell phones and texting and one in five (22 per cent) has been asked to engage in sex by cell phone or the internet when they did not want to.
- Nearly one in four teens in a relationship (24 per cent) has communicated with a partner via cell phone or texting hourly between midnight and 5:00 am
- 57 percent of parents believe that computers and cell phones make abuse in teen dating relationships more likely to occur and 53 percent believe computers and cell phones make abuse easier to conceal.

Reprinted and adapted from "News Flash" (<http://www.fvpf.org/newsflash>),

## FOCUS Support Groups

- Eustis, **FL**—Saturdays 10 a.m. to Noon. Call Sherry at 352-434-9310
- Savannah, **GA**—Saturdays. Call Patty Jean at 912-629-4720
- Aurora, **IL**—Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. Call Brenda at 630-370-0138.
- Tinley Park, **IL**—Wednesday 7 p.m. Call Regina at 708-670-6138.
- Wheaton, **IL**—1st and 3rd Saturday at 9:30 a.m. Call Joan at 630-690-0976.
- Wood Dale, **IL**—2nd Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Call Paula at 630-595-7023.
- Lexington, **KY**—Saturdays at 9 a.m. Call Leslie at 859-224-1619 (x 143).
- Madisonville, **KY**—Thursdays at 6 p.m. Call Brenda at 270-825-2423.
- St. Louis, **MO**—Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. Call Sylva at 314-918-7647
- Akron, **OH**—2nd and 4th Thursdays at 7 p.m. Call Patty at 330-877-2307.
- Olmstead Falls, **OH**—Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Call Sally at 440-234-8430
- Knoxville, **TN**—Tuesday at 7 p.m. Call Roberta at 865-470-2820 (x226).

If you are interested in starting a support group in your area, contact Paula Silva at 630-595-7023.

**FOCUS Newsletter** is published monthly. *Editor/Author:* Brenda Branson (unless otherwise noted). Articles may be emailed to [Brenda@focusministries1.org](mailto:Brenda@focusministries1.org) for consideration to be used in future issues. All articles are considered to be voluntary submissions without remuneration. Copyright © 2007 FOCUS Ministries, Inc. All Rights Reserved

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# God's Mysterious Ways

Who would have thought God would use an old, paint-chipped, rusty red truck to let me know how much He loves me!

I was not a stranger to God's mysterious ways of confirming His love to me and proving Himself faithful. His strength and unfailing love was what got me through a really rough divorce and custody battle a few years ago.

Although the court awarded me sole custody of my son, it did not come with a guarantee that it would be easy to maintain custody and a good relationship with him.

In fact, it was the impact of my son's words about our relationship that had thrown me into a tailspin of fear, rejection, and utter helplessness.

"I want to live with dad because I have a better relationship with him", he said following a week-long visit with his dad over Christmas break.

Every time my son returned from a long visit with his dad he brought home more than a suitcase of dirty laundry. His normally easy-going, sensitive nature was replaced with a defensive attitude and biting, sarcastic words.

I knew my ex-husband used every manipulative tactic in his arsenal of revenge to undermine my son's confidence in me, and to bolster his dependence upon him.

"Don't listen to your mother . . . she's only trying to control you", was one of the many destructive phrases he used to chip away at my son's confidence and respect for me. Another favorite missile

was, "Son, if you mother really loved you she would . . ."

His true intentions were revealed to a counselor when he suggested that our son did not need a mother! Shortly thereafter, whenever he spoke to our son about me, he stopped referring to me as "mom", using just my first name as any other ordinary acquaintance.

Now, it looked like his diabolical scheme was paying off. My son was convinced that he would be happier living with his dad.

My heart was pierced through as my son's words echoed in my ears. It wasn't just the thought of losing my son's effervescent presence in my home that made me sob out loud and weep uncontrollably. It was the image of my son losing moral and spiritual ground by continually being exposed to the deceptive, fraudulent, and immoral lifestyle that his father had embraced.

I had two choices—let him go to live with his father and pray for the best, or continue to fight for him and do everything I can in the short time before he turns 18 to nurture and encourage him to be God's man.

After much prayer and consultation with godly friends, I decided upon a course of action. As my son lay sprawled on his bed with headphones blasting his favorite CD, I interrupted him with a declaration of my own.

"I am going to fight for you! You are too important to me to give you what you think you want. You may not know all the reasons why it would not be good for you to live with your dad, and you don't

have to agree with me, but you do need to trust me. I love you."

The sweetest words I've ever heard weren't muffled by the sounds of my sniffing. They came through loud and clear . . . "Mom, I trust you." Although things are back to normal for the moment, I know it won't be long before the issue will be raised again. But I've decided to make the most of each day and continue faithful in my commitment to my son and God.

So what does any of this have to do with a red truck?

It has to do more with God's timing and how he showed his love for me through the thoughtfulness and concern of other people. Just days previous to this incident, my parents arranged for my truck to be completely overhauled (just in time to prevent irreparable damage to the engine).

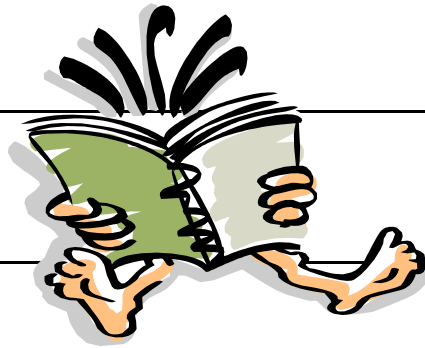
On the Sunday morning my son dropped this bombshell on me, my pastor placed some money into my hand, and told me to use it to help pay for the truck repairs.

The next day at work, my boss and his son (who were both on vacation during Christmas break) unexpectedly offered to wash and wax my truck!

I was blown away by the acts of kindness that occurred when I was so discouraged. None of the people involved knew of the incident with my son until much later. Once again the Lord let me know He loves me, and will take care of me no matter what happens. This time He used a red truck and good friends to get His message across.

*Author wishes to remain anonymous*

# Book Review



## *We Are The Beloved*

by Ken Blanchard

Ken Blanchard co-authored *The One Minute Manager*, an international best-seller in the business world. In 1993 Ken wanted to give his family and friends something very special for Christmas, so he sat down and wrote about the most important think in his life—his journey of faith in God. That writing became the basis for this book.

Ken’s journey began when he came face to face with the simple truth that God loved him. He shares how the acceptance of that truth has affected his daily life, how it has touched his family and business, and how it has sustained him through rough times.

Although this book is very small (under 100 pages), it is packed full of nuggets of encouragement and insight into God’s love:

“ . . . we are valued and loved by God without doing anything to merit it.

*All we need to do is open our hearts and minds to the love that awaits us all.”*

This book is recommended by Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church and Tom Landry, former coach, Dallas Cowboys. I recommend it too! It’s easy and quick to read, and a great gift for your friends.



## *Recipe of the Month*

### **Veronique’s No-Bake Valentine Delight**

- 1 store-bought pound cake or  
    angelfood cake
- 1 can cherry pie filling
- 1 container Cool Whip
- Coconut (optional)
- Chopped nuts (optional)

Cut the cake through the middle lengthwise.

Spread a thin layer of cherry pie filling on the bottom half of the cake, and put the cake halves back together.

Mix remaining pie filling and Cool Whip together. Spread on top of the cake for a delicious pink frosting.

Sprinkle with coconut and/or chopped nuts.

Viola! You have a tasty, no-bake Valentine dessert, ready at a moment’s notice.

# Words That Heal



I love God because He listened to me,  
listened as I begged for mercy.  
He listened so intently  
as I laid out my case before Him.  
Death stared me in the face,  
Hell was hard on my heels.  
Up against it, I didn’t know which way to turn;  
then I called out to God for help.  
“Please, God!”, I cried out.  
“Save my life.”

God is gracious—it is He who makes things right,  
our most compassionate God.  
God takes the side of the helpless;  
when I was at the end of my rope,  
He saved me.

*Psalm 116:1-6 (The Message)*

# Codependency—what causes it?

In the book, *Love Is A Choice*, the authors describe normal love hunger by drawing a heart-shaped love tank.

In a healthy family, the parents would fill the love tanks of their children from their own tanks. Through the generations, love is transmitted from parents to children in a normal, functional family.

In a healthy Christian family, love flows from God to both parents who receive it freely and pass it on to their children.

What happens to break this flow of love?

- parents either do not know how or deliberately refuse to nurture each other
- parents don't accept the idea that they exist for the purpose of giving to the child (not the child for the parents)
- parents have some addiction or compulsion that keeps them from meeting the needs of the family
- one or both parents came from a dysfunctional family with empty love tanks, and nothing to pass on to their children

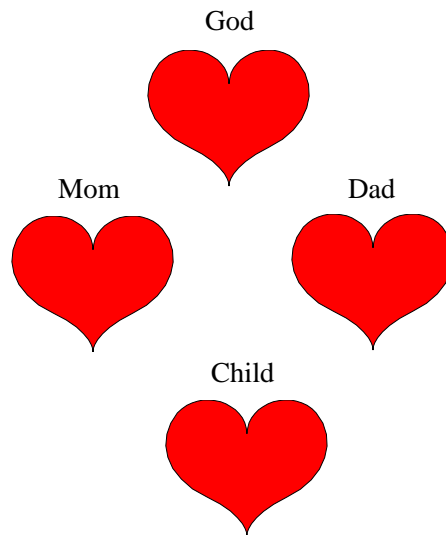
There are many other circumstances that could be listed here (such as death of a parent, divorce, etc.), but the effects on a family are the same—restricted flow of love from parent to child which causes pain and dysfunction.

The authors of *Love Is A Choice* define **abuse** as something in the family system that limits, stops, or distorts the flow of love to a child.

Active abuse is the projection of parental pain or parental need onto the child. This can be demonstrated in the following ways:

## Physical violence

This is the easiest abuse to identify since bruises and injuries are easy to see. Not only does the abuser and the victim see the physical results of beatings, but it also becomes evident to other family members and caregivers of the child.



Fifty to 70 percent of men who abuse their female partners also abuse children in the home. In homes with four or more children, the figure leaps to over 90 percent.

In one study of violent homes, all sons over 14 attempted to protect their mothers. Sixty-two percent were injured in the process.

Even if they do not suffer acts of violence from their parents, more than 3 million children directly witness acts of domestic abuse each year.

## Sexual Abuse

Many abusers deny sexually abusing their children because they have not engaged in intercourse or rape. However, the following activities also qualify as sexual abuse:

- inappropriate touch or fondling of child
- voyeurism (parent secretly watching child bathe or undress) or exhibitionism (nudity or sexual acts in front of child)
- bathing with or sleeping with a child for sexual gratification
- parent inappropriately confides sexual needs or knowledge to child
- parent's over-involvement in child's sexuality

Sexual abuse in the family is harder to identify than physical violence because the child has been misled into believing the activity is normal and has been taught not to tell anyone about what goes on at home.

Even if a child does tell someone, they are not always believed, especially if the abuser is a respected leader of the church community. Some children don't report sexual abuse because they don't want to see their parent go to jail or because they are too ashamed and feel responsible in some way.

Although sexual abuse isn't always evident or admitted to at the time, it often wreaks devastation and pain later when the child becomes an adult.

## Verbal Violence

This type of abuse leaves scars and bruises which cannot be seen on the outside, but may be felt on the inside for a lifetime.

Verbal violence (I like to call it verbal vomit) includes:

- profanity
- sarcasm
- derogatory name-calling
- criticism (Can't you do anything right?)
- shouting; screaming; rage
- demeaning; belittling

If you have never suffered these types of abuse in your family of origin, you may have experienced more subtle, silent abuses (passive abuse) which are every bit as damaging. We will look at those next month.

If you have come from a healthy family of origin, be thankful and continue to let the love flow to your children and partner.

If you are grieving a lost childhood, there is hope for recovery so that you can break the dysfunctional cycle in your relationships.



## Partners In Ministry

- YES! I would like to receive FOCUS Newsletter each month for 1 year at the rate of \$15 per year.
- I want to partner with FOCUS to educate churches and individuals about domestic violence and help families suffering from the trauma of abuse. Here is my faith promise of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month as God provides. Here is my one-time donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to use where most needed.
- I want to support FOCUS Women's Centers and Homes of Refuge and provide salaries for staff. Here is my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ or my monthly pledge of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- Enclosed is my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to provide complimentary copies of FOCUS Newsletter to women and organizations who cannot afford a subscription.
- Count on me to be a prayer warrior for this ministry. Please send me specific requests.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip

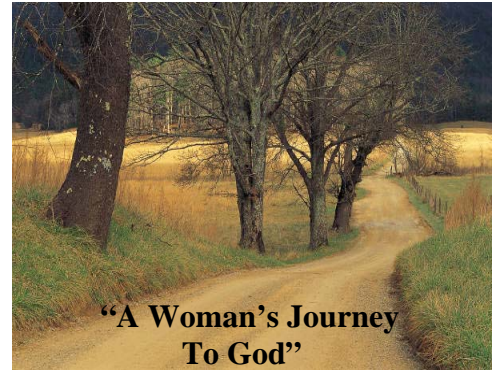
Mail to FOCUS, P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413

## Upcoming Events

- **May 6-12**—Trip to California to attend the **Ultimate Leadership**
- **Aug. 2007**—Release of our book, *Violence Among Us: Ministry to Families in Crisis*
- **Sept. 12-15**— Exhibitors at the **American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference** in Nashville, TN
- **Oct. 20**—Presenting **Domestic Violence Seminar** at **Rockford Rescue Mission** in Rockford, IL

If you would like the FOCUS team to come to your church for a women's retreat ("A Woman's Journey To God"), seminar on domestic violence, or other speaking engagement, please contact us as soon as possible as our calendar for 2006 is quickly filling up!

Contact Brenda at 270-825-2423 or Paula at 630-595-7023 or by email at [contactus@focusministries1.org](mailto:contactus@focusministries1.org).



**"A Woman's Journey To God"**

*A weekend retreat for women in pursuit of God*

If your church would like on-site training to help you minister to families dealing with domestic violence, please contact us by email at:

[contactus@focusministries1.org](mailto:contactus@focusministries1.org)  
or call 270-825-2423.

### NEW: Virtual Office!

Join our free virtual office (forums, Bible search, lots of links and free downloads) by going to our website: [Focusministries1.org](http://Focusministries1.org) and signing up. You can communicate with others and us on lots of interesting topics!



**FOCUS Ministries, Inc.**  
P. O. Box 323  
Hanson, KY 42413

270-825-2423 KY  
630-595-7023 IL  
[Focusministries1.org](http://Focusministries1.org)

**Our mission is to encourage women who are struggling in difficult circumstances to find strength and hope in Jesus Christ. “O Lord, you alone are my hope.” Psalm 71:5 NLT**

**Endorsement:**

“These women are called, prepared, and surrendered to their crucial ministry. The stamp of God is on their lives and work. It’s my prayer that God will use their gifts across the world to draw thousands of women to the hope that Christ provides. This is one ministry I’m sold on.” **Dr. Larry Crabb**, New Way Ministries

**Funding:**

FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization funded by contributions and grants. If you would like to help us minister to hurting women through the distribution of printed materials, support groups, workshops, transitional housing, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413 or donate online at [focusministries1.org](http://focusministries1.org). A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

## Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

**Urgent Needs:**

- **Gravel** for driveway at KY Women’s Center
- **Storm doors and entry doors** with deadbolt on both entrances.
- New **furnace and air conditioner** at KY Women’s Center—approximately \$2,000.
- **Replacement windows** at KY Women’s Center
- **Insulation** for attic
- Professional **grant writer**

**Prayer Requests:**

- Pray for **Brenda’s health** to return after having two surgeries.
- Pray for the editing and publishing of our book, ***Violence Among Us: Ministry to Families in Crisis***.
- Pray for individuals, churches, and businesses to commit to **monthly giving**.
- Pray for all the **FOCUS support group leaders** in the U.S.

- Pray for God to send **people** alongside us who have expertise in development, fundraising, public relations, and grant writing.
- Pray for **property** near Elmhurst, IL to be donated for IL Women’s Center and transitional housing.
- Pray for **property** to be donated for Women’s Retreat Center.
- Pray for **houses** in IL, KY, and MO to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- Pray for funding to provide **scholarships** for women to attend our weekend retreat, “A Woman’s Journey to God,” and our “Train the Trainer” seminar for support group leaders.
- Pray for more **invitations** from churches to train pastors, staff, and congregations about domestic violence.

*O Lord, You Alone Are My Hope! Psalm 71:5 NLT*