



FOCUS Newsletter

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

When caring isn't enough . . .

She intruded upon my day with the same effect as having a bucket of cold water suddenly thrown in my face.

The scene took my breath away, awakened my senses, and left me frantically scrambling for what to do next.

It was not surprising to see someone standing on a curb at a busy intersection selling flowers or soliciting contributions for a worthy cause. But it was alarming to see this particular young woman who was holding a cardboard sign which read:

I'm a single parent. I need money for food, clothing, and shelter for my children. Can you help?

As I pulled alongside the woman at the curb to wait at the red light, my mind was racing to think of something to do or say. I knew she did not need mere words. Even the

most compassionate words would not feed her children.

I quickly searched for money, but to my dismay only found \$2. I gave her \$1 and I kept \$1. I rationalized that I was a single parent too, and I would need something for myself.

She bent down to look at me as I offered her the money. Her face was chapped and weathered, and her eyes were full of pain and hopelessness.

She politely said, "thank you," and returned to face the traffic behind me.

As the light turned green, I drove away from her presence, but she did not leave my thoughts.

I felt guilty for not giving her both dollars, but guilt quickly gave way to skepticism, questioning whether she was really a single parent with children to feed. Maybe she was an alcoholic or a drug

***You must be
compassionate
just as your Father is
compassionate.***

***Do you think you
deserve credit merely
for loving those
who love you?
Even sinners do
that much!***

Luke 6:32,36 NLT

addict needing money for her addiction. Maybe she was just a panderer who did a good job of conning me.

Just as soon as those thoughts crossed my mind, reason and compassion erased them. Even if this young woman was not who she claimed to be, she still needed help and encouragement.

But who could help her? I was on my way to work at a well-known Christian organization. I was struggling to provide for my own family, and I

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couldn't afford to take time off work and receive a cut in my paycheck in order to help her!

Okay, if I can't help her (continuing my futile attempts to relieve myself of guilt and responsibility), maybe I can think of someone else to call.

No, I can't call Pastor Bob because he would just give the same excuse he gave me when I asked for assistance a

few years back—he doesn't think the church should get involved in issues that could result in lawsuits or cause trouble for the congregation.

No, I can't call my friend Sara because she is probably already at work, and I must not call Julie because she is always busy with her family and church activities.

I could call some new friends I met at another church which seems to be reaching out to the neighborhood, but they might think I'm being too pushy and presumptuous.

I could call a pastor in another town who is very compassionate, but by the time he gets here, she might be gone already.

I could call the police, but I don't want to risk getting the woman in more trouble.

So . . . I did nothing. Nothing but pray that the Lord would send someone to meet her needs, whatever they were.

I felt ashamed and angry—at both myself and all the other people who claim to be representatives of Christ to a lost and broken world, yet who withdraw and shrink back from actually doing anything more than offering a quick prayer or giving an extra dollar.

How different God responds to people who are suffering. He looks beyond the physical and emotional pain to a person's most basic need for forgiveness of sin.

God did not respond with mere words

*God did not respond
with mere words
or a temporary handout,
but with a
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flesh-and-blood form
of Jesus Christ.*

or a temporary handout, but with a personal visit in the flesh-and-blood form of Jesus Christ who spent His life identifying with and responding to the needs of suffering people. Author Phillip Yancey says it well in his book, *"Disappointment With God"*:

"If all of us . . . would spend our lives as He did—ministering to the sick, feeding the hungry, resisting the powers of evil, comforting those who mourn, and bringing the Good News of love and forgiveness—then perhaps the question, 'Is God unfair?' would not be asked with such urgency today."

Perhaps you can identify with the woman on the street corner. You don't know where to turn for help, and your next desperate act is to stand on a busy highway begging mercy from anyone who will respond.

Precious one, please don't blame God for the actions (or lack of action) of those of us who claim to be His representatives of love and compassion. Frederick Buechner expressed his amazement that God would "choose for his holy work in the world . . . lamebrains and misfits and

nitpickers and holier-than-thous and stuffed shirts and odd ducks and egomaniacs . . ." But He did.

So those of us flawed, ordinary people who pass you by and offer little, if any, help and fail to show you a personal glimpse of God's love. . . **we beg your forgiveness**, and ask that you look beyond our failures to a God who is sufficient to meet your needs.

Shame on the body of Christ for not providing a safe haven for hurting people in crisis so they won't be forced to beg on the streets or seek refuge with strangers.

Blessings on those of you who have opened your hearts and homes to people in need. May God bless your efforts and give you strength to continue in this overwhelming task.

How would you have responded . . . if I had called you?



Letters/E-Mail



Dear FOCUS,

As I look back, I grieve that the church could not have helped me when they knew for 5 years I struggled in my marriage. I sought out counsel within the church I was attending at the time. No one seems to want to get involved, nor have they the understanding of how to help couples who are in abusive relationships. If I had had the information I now know back then, I believe things could have been dealt with in a much better and godly way.

I want to help others, but I need to get your materials first. I would like to take the principles you have based on God's Word and bring true healing into marriages before having to consider DIVORCE as their final option. I also want to make certain that women are not KILLED by their spouses or that women turn on the man and kill him because they can see no other way of escape from the pain and torment of the abuser. Sometimes, women are the abusers. I would be grateful for any resources that are biblically based that you are aware of. . . Any suggestions you have in regards to domestic abuse issues is appreciated. Thank you.

—Email

In The News . . .

Advocates are speaking out against t-shirts being sold at Kmart stores nationwide which show a male stick figure pushing a female stick figure out of a box to a steep fall. The children's t-shirt was removed after customers in the Augusta, Maine area complained in mid-December, but returned to store shelves a few days later. A statement from the Kmart parent company, Sears Holdings Corporation, said, "We respect the opinions of our customers. However, we believe these attitude Ts are meant to be light-hearted in nature," the *Kennebec Journal* reports.

Two Maine area advocacy groups, Hardy Girls Healthy Women and Boys to Men, held a news conference in late December to protest the t-shirts, again asking that they be pulled from store shelves. Nine-year-old David Mallow designed an alternative. Mallow's t-shirt shows the stick figures talking through their problem and holding hands in the last panel. Underneath the graphic it reads, "Problem solved. Hurting someone (sic.) just makes the conflict worse."

Reprinted and adapted from "News Flash" (<http://www.fvpf.org/newsflash>), an online newsletter of the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

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 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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Does God Know I'm Here?

During a chapel service with guest speaker, Cliff Barrows (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association), I was encouraged by a true story which Cliff related to us:

"Sometimes we think God has forgotten us, and we wonder . . . does He really care? Does He really know? Is He aware that I'm here? He is!"

The following true story was published in Christian Readers Digest a few years ago:

Ken Gire was a young minister on the west coast. He was driving with his family to the east coast. He pulled into a fast food store in Dayton, Ohio.

He told the kids to go and get something to eat while he took a walk. All day long while driving, he had been discouraged because things weren't happening in the ministry.

He felt God had really forgotten him, so he walked down the street while his wife and children got something to eat.

As he approached the corner of the street, a pay phone started to ring. There wasn't anyone else around. As he got a little closer, out of curiosity he reached in and grabbed the phone.

Now this is a pay phone in Dayton, Ohio! When he picked up the phone and said, "hello", the operator said, "Long Distance calling for Ken Gire."

He said, "Who?"

She repeated, "Long Distance is calling for Ken Gire. Is he there?"

He said, "Well, I'm not sure!" He wondered what had happened, and began backing out of the phone booth to see if it was Candid Camera.

He was looking around, but there wasn't anyone else there. The operator was getting a little impatient, asking again, "Is Ken Gire there?"

Then a voice on the phone spoke up, "That's him, Operator. I recognize his voice."

Then Ken said, "Yes, this is Ken Gire."

The caller on the phone said, "Mr. Gire, my name is Millie. I'm in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and I'm about to take my life. I don't know anybody, but I've seen you on television here in the area. I don't want to die, but I want to know if you can help me.

Does God really care about me? I asked God that, and asked Him who

I could talk to. I just prayed, 'Oh God, help me get in touch with Mr. Gire.'

As numbers came to my mind, I wrote them down. I just dialed the number and here you are."

Ken talked to her, prayed with her on the phone, and led her to Christ. He got her address and followed up with her later.

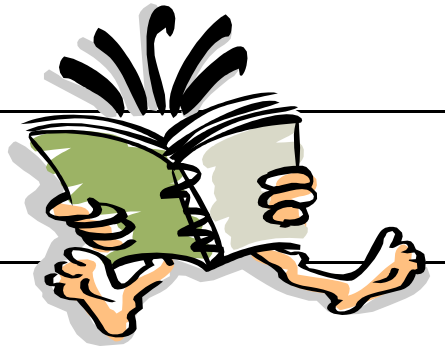
He walked back down the street to the car just as his family was coming out of the restaurant. He said, "Come on gang, let's go. God's got my number, and He knows where I am!"

At the end of this story, Cliff quoted a passage from Zephaniah 3:17 and gave the following encouragement:

"God has our number! He knows. He takes great delight in us. He will quiet us with His love. He will rejoice over us with singing . . . May He do it today as He beholds us!"



Book Review



What Works When Life Doesn't

by
Stuart Briscoe

In his study of 12 selected Psalms, Stuart Briscoe prescribes solutions to many of life's problems such as:

- When happiness eludes you (Psalm 1)
- When the world is falling apart (Psalm 2)
- When all you know is discouragement (Psalm 11)
- When you wonder where to get answers (Psalm 19)
- When fear calls and won't go away (Psalm 27)
- When you need a lot of forgiveness (Psalm 32)
- When depression blankets like a cloud (Psalm 42)
- When you feel like a total failure (Psalm 51)

This book offers hope and help from the Psalms for tough times and dark days.



Recipe of the Month

Marge's "Kentucky Fried" Chicken Fingers

(This southern cook does not follow a recipe—so you're on your own to determine exact amounts of the ingredients.)

- Boneless chicken breast
- Bisquick (or other bisquit mix)
- Garlic salt if desired.
- Oil for frying
- Large heavy skillet

Slice chicken breast into 1" strips.

Pour bisquit mix into large mixing bowl.

Dip chicken strips into bisquit mix until both sides are thoroughly coated.

Fry strips in hot oil until golden.

Tip: Place on paper towel-lined plate so excess oil will be absorbed.

Serve with honey mustard.

Words That Heal



Cheer up . . . Don't be afraid!

For the Lord your God has arrived

to live among you.

He is a mighty savior.

He will rejoice over you with great gladness.

With His love, He will calm all your fears.

He will exult over you by singing a happy song!

Zephaniah 3:16-17 NLT

Codependency—what causes it? (Part 2)

In the book, *Love Is A Choice*, Drs. Hemfelt, Minirth, and Meier describe a healthy family as one where love flows from God to both parents who receive it freely, and pass it on to their children.

A restricted flow of love in an unhealthy family causes pain and dysfunction. One of the ways the loving process may have failed is through abuse. 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.

In the February 2007 issue of FOCUS, we looked at active abuse such as physical violence, sexual abuse, and verbal violence.

In this issue, we will examine passive abuse, emotional incest, unfinished business, and negative messages.

Passive abuse is the failure of the parent to adequately satisfy a child's physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs.

A child may feel abandoned due to divorce or death of a parent. Although the abandonment may be unintentional, the child still suffers.

Other passive abuses include:

- neglecting to spend time with child
- nonemotional responses-frozen emotions
- absence of warm, encouraging dialogue with child
- lack of appropriate contact such as hugs, roughhousing, etc.
- lack of love between parents
- failure to model appropriate physical affection between parents
- parental addictions such as alcoholism, workaholism, perfectionism, eating disorders
- excessive religious legalism

Emotional incest has nothing to do with sexual abuse, although in some cases it could lead to that. Rather it is a role reversal where the child is asked to fill the void for the parent, or become a parent to the parent.

If there is trouble in the marriage, one parent may think that even though their spouse is not providing them with the love they need, they still have the love of their child.

Parents may even place heavy guilt onto the child by saying, "Don't ever leave me. I couldn't live without you."

Sometimes children are asked to assume parental duties such as:

- Extensive housekeeping and cooking responsibilities
- Become the confidant of parent
- Provide spiritual leadership
- Become a social partner

This drains the child's love tanks, and places on them enormous false responsibility for the welfare of their parents.

Unfinished business is the emotional legacy passed from generation to generation. If a parent is unable to achieve their dreams, they may force those onto their children in an attempt to live their lives again through them.

Healthy families pass a general sense of well-being from generation to generation while unhealthy families hand over their disappointments, frustrations, and unmet needs to be worked on by the next generation.

If one parent is bitter toward the other, the child unconsciously picks up on it, and carries the unfinished anger into future relationships.

Unfinished business may be consciously passed on to the child with verbal messages such as "Men in this family always . . ." or with strict parental demands that says, "You will do . . ."

It may also be unconsciously passed on to the child by establishing rigid criteria for handling money, establishing traditions, work ethics, etc.

Negative existential messages ("I" messages) are negative messages about a child's worth, performance, and character that form the foundation of later adult personality.

Negative messages come from four sources:

- Hearing parents speak the words directly (You'll never amount to anything!)
- Sensing the emotional tone in the family which implies certain things
- Experiencing them by being treated a certain way
- Witnessing them by how family members treat each other and the outside world

Negative messages impart damaging results to children who are looking to their parents for approval and self-esteem.

When you tell a child he is lazy, uncoordinated, ugly, overweight, or other negative attributes, it is very likely the child will meet those negative expectations.

However, if you nurture a child with encouragement and a desire for excellence, it is likely that child will accomplish his/her personal best.

It is vital for children to know they will be accepted and unconditionally loved by their family even if they fail or disappoint their parents.

It is easy to see how codependency in adult relationships is directly related to the health of the family of origin. However, the cycle of unhealthy behavior does not have to be passed onto the next generation if a person is willing to identify the dysfunctional behavior and seek help to make healthy changes.



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

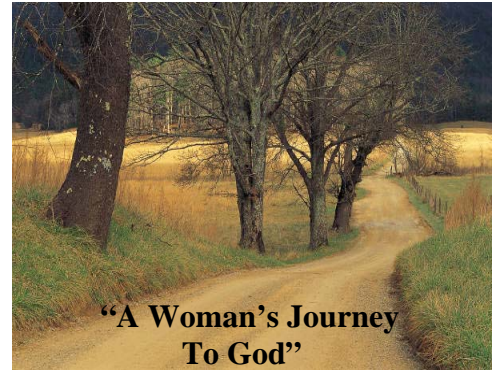
Mail to FOCUS, P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413

Upcoming Events

- **April 20-21**—Exhibitor at the **Midwest Ministry Wives' Conference** in Wichita, KS
- **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 2007 is quickly filling up!

Contact Brenda at 270-825-2423 or Paula at 630-595-7023 or by email at 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
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 and signing up. You can communicate with others and us on lots of interesting topics!



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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. A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- **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 three 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