



# FOCUS Newsletter

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

## Celebration . . . in a Cemetery!

She was carrying a gift, but she didn't expect a party. Mary Magdalene had risen early that Sunday morning while it was still dark to go to the tomb where Jesus' body had been laid following his death on the cross.

Her grief was overwhelming as she hurried to take spices and aloes to place on Jesus' graveclothes. Never before had she felt so alone and helpless.

Oh no! As she approached the tomb, the large stone which sealed the entrance had been moved back. A quick look inside revealed that the tomb was as empty as Mary's hope.

Heart pounding and legs running at olympic speed, Mary ran to Peter's house and awakened him with her hysterical announcement, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put him."

The next few minutes were just a blur to Mary as she tried to keep up with Peter and John as they ran back to the tomb. She was so absorbed in her own grief and disillusionment that she didn't even notice the change in them when they left—full of wonder and urgency to hurry back and tell the the others what the angel inside the tomb confirmed: that Jesus was alive!

As Mary stood outside the tomb crying, she decided to look inside once more. She was so preoccupied with her own grief that she didn't even realize the two "men" inside the tomb were angels. One of them asked why she was crying.

Suddenly someone appeared behind her and asked, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the caretaker of the cemetery, and begged him to tell her where he had taken Jesus' body.

Not until He lovingly

*"Why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive?*

*He isn't here! **He has risen from the dead!***

*Don't you remember what He told you back in Galilee . . . that He would rise again on the third day!"*

*Luke 24:5-7 NLT*

spoke her name did she know it was him. All her grief and doubt was replaced with irrepressible joy and contagious gladness. He was alive!

There were many other places Jesus could have chosen to announce his resurrection, but nowhere better than a tomb to demonstrate His ultimate power over death and hell.

Max Lucado writes in his book *And the Angels Were Silent*:

"God put himself in a dark, tight, claustrophobic

Issue 4 2007

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Support Groups                      | 3 |
| Letters/Emails In The News          | 3 |
| My Life is in God's Hands           | 4 |
| Book Review                         | 5 |
| Recipe of the Month                 | 5 |
| Codependency—Ten Stages of Recovery | 6 |
| Future Events                       | 7 |
| Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs      | 8 |

room and allowed them to seal it shut. The Light of the World was mummied in cloth . . . and the Hope of humanity was shut in a tomb.

Nothing is blacker than a grave, as lifeless as a pit, as permanent as the crypt. But into the crypt He came.

The next time you find yourself entombed in a darkened world of fear, remember that!

The next time pain boxes you in a world of horror, remember the tomb.

The next time a stone seals your exit to peace, think about the empty, musty tomb outside of Jerusalem.”

Think about what Jesus’ resurrection means for all humanity. Phillip Yancy says it best in his book *The Jesus I Never Knew*:

“On the day we call Good Friday, God defeated sin, routed death, triumphed over Satan, and got his family back.

In that act of transformation, God took the worst deed of history and turned it into the greatest victory.

Because of the cross, I have hope. If God can wrest such triumph out of the jaws of apparent defeat, can draw strength from a moment of ultimate weakness, what might God do with the apparent failures and hardships of my own life?

The fatally wounded healer came back on Easter, the day that gives us a sneak preview of how all history will look from the vantage point of eternity, when every scar, every hurt, every disappointment will be seen in a different light.

Our faith begins where it might have seemed to end. Between the cross and the empty tomb hovers the promise of history: hope for the world, and hope for each one of us who live in it.”

What impact does the resurrection have in your life today? Are you skeptical that it even happened, or are you so wrapped up in your own pain that you’re missing out on the celebration?

***Between the cross and the  
empty tomb  
hovers the promise of history:  
hope for the world . . .  
and for each one of us who  
live in it.***

Have you forgotten that Jesus has the power to roll back those “stones” in your life that you can’t budge?

Did you forget that through His death on the cross Jesus has paid the penalty and released you from your sins, or do you continue to allow Satan to keep you bound and gagged in your own grave clothes?

Erwin Lutzer, pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, Illinois, calls the resurrection “the great reversal—the one reality which gives us the assurance that no other realities of our existence need ever permanently discourage us.”

Think of the difference it would make in our lives if we viewed each hurt and tragedy through the lens of eternity!

In his book *Six Hours One Friday*, Max Lucado writes, “God is at His best when our life is at its worst. God has been known to plan a celebration in a cemetery.

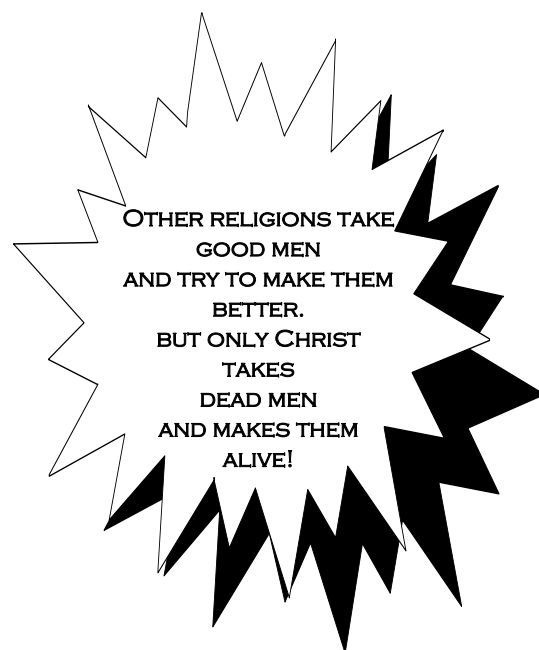
But this celebration is timid in comparison with the one that is being planned for the future. Many more

graves will open . . . many more knees will bow . . . and many more seekers will celebrate.”

This is one party I will not miss! No more unjust judges or lying accusers. No more dirty tricks or dastardly deeds. No more financial struggles or physical pain. No more blah days and lonely nights. No more sin, and no more death.

And as with Mary at the tomb, no more crying—just an eternity of one surprise after another as we celebrate the Lord’s goodness and unflinching love.

Hope to see you at the party!



## Letters/E-Mail



Dear FOCUS,

Before our marriage he did a lot of things that made me lose trust in him, but I married him hoping that he could redeem himself. I want to say that he is trying, but some of the same things he did before we got married he still does now.—like he would disappearing for a long time and refusing to call me.

We argue a whole lot. More than normal. I am trying to put my trust in my husband and show him that I trust him, but I need to know where to start. I am lost when it comes to that.

The issue I am having with myself is my attitude and my temper can get really out of control sometimes. He says I mentally abuse him because I don't talk to him for days after we have an argument. It is hard talking to somebody who thinks they know everything and only wants you to cater to their ego. I would not have a problem with catering to his ego if he would just do some things that please me sometimes. I am having a trust issue also.

I've just started about a week ago trying to work things out, but I need some help. I don't know what to do or where to start.

Can you please help? I am so lost.

—Email

## In The News . . .

**MA** – A long-term study following men who were arraigned on domestic violence charges in Quincy District Court finds that most re-abused an intimate partner within ten years. Researchers said the study was the first to follow a group for so long. “It is basically a warning that this behavior is a lot more intractable and serious than I think we’ve realized in the past,” said co-author and former probation officer Andrew Klein.

The study examined the court and criminal records of 342 men, finding that only one third re-abused within a year – but over the next decade, more than half were arrested again for domestic abuse or for violating restraining orders, or they had new restraining orders taken out against them, the *Boston Globe* reports.

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](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

FOCUS Ministries, Inc. and all individuals affiliated therewith disclaims any personal liability for information presented within this newsletter. Always consult a professional for medical, legal, psychological, financial, or biblical advice.

## My Life is in God's Hands

I found something recently that every woman dreads finding—a lump in my breast. This lump declared its presence boldly one morning as I was getting into the shower. There it was . . . visibly protruding under my skin like a wad of bubblegum in a ballplayer's cheek.

"That wasn't there yesterday!" I said to myself as my mind began whirring with all the information I knew about breast cancer.

The medical books didn't help ease my mind. One book said if the lump was hard it was probably benign. Another book said if it felt like a peeled grape it was probably malignant. Some days it felt hard, and other days it felt just like a peeled grape. I sure hoped my doctor could tell the difference!

After an examination, my doctor's first course of action was to do an aspiration (inserting a needle into the cyst and withdrawing fluid).

I had been very brave up until then. No one could tell by looking that this middle-aged woman was fighting the urge to run out of there and just pretend the cyst didn't exist.

I had heard the horror stories, and it didn't help that one of the nurses had incorrectly informed me the procedure would be done without a local anesthetic. She said it was verrrry painful, and since pain and I don't get along too well, this revelation made my anxiety much worse.

Surprise! It didn't hurt!!! Well, to be honest, it only hurt a little bit when the doctor gave me an injection of lidocaine to numb the surrounding area. "I can do this," I told myself after the first little pinch of the needle was over. "The doctor will just insert the needle *one more time* to draw out the fluid and that will be that!"

Wrong! One more time turned into eight or ten times . . . and I was thanking God for the numbing effect of lidocaine.

The lab results brought good news and bad news. The good news was that the results did not confirm a malignancy, and the bad news was that some abnormal cells had been found.

Abnormal! That was very comforting!! So was the doctor's advice to see a surgeon who would perform a biopsy.

Lump . . . abnormal . . . biopsy . . . these words quickly made their way to the top of my "Words That Produce Stress and High Anxiety" list.

The surgeon promptly scheduled outpatient surgery to remove the suspicious cyst. I don't know about you, but just the thought of surgery sends my imagination into overdrive. My mind zooms from logic to the ridiculous as I envision the anesthesiologist frantically screaming, "BP's dropping, we're losing her!"

It's not that I'm afraid to die—I have assurance of heaven because of my faith in Jesus Christ—it's just that the timing doesn't fit with my plans. I like the old saying, "God put me on earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I am so far behind I will never die."

What is it that makes a hospital such a foreboding place? Surely doctors don't realize what ill-effects their patients suffer just by entering the hospital building. Let me explain:

Following the flurry of paperwork required by an impersonal, impatient clerk, I was directed upstairs to the "Star Centre" to fill out more paperwork and sign waivers to hold the doctors and hospital harmless if *something* happened.

As I waited for directions on where to go next, I wondered why this area was called "Star Centre". Surely it wasn't because patients experiencing complications during surgery were video taped for medical research . . . was it? Not exactly my idea of how to become a "star" on the big screen.

I was strangely comforted by another patient sitting next to me as she described the grotesque procedure awaiting her. I wondered if she knew the Lord and the abundance of strength He provides. Before I could talk with her any further, my name was called and I was directed down another hallway to meet with a nurse. She took my blood pressure and gave me more paperwork to fill out about my physical and mental health (*which was quickly deteriorating as each second passed*).

She then directed me into a small passageway between two offices and instructed me to take off all my clothes (why all my clothes when only the top third of my body is being examined?) and put on a gown with the opening in the back. Being a big woman, I asked her for the largest gown available. Unfortunately, all the extra-large gowns were downstairs so I'd have to make do with this one. This gown didn't just flap open . . . it lacked about 6" of even meeting in the back!

Not only was I mortified at the thought of mooning everyone behind me, but person after person walked in on me from the unlockable doors at each end of the passageway as I was getting undressed. It was a real challenge to take everything off and put on a too-small gown in split-second timing before I could be charged with indecent exposure.

Time to get on the cart where I was wheeled down the corridor, into an elevator, finally crashing into swinging doors that took me into the inner sanctum of the surgical ward. Just my luck to get a cart with a crooked wheel which veered to the right, causing the nurses to remind me to keep my arms inside the rails *just in case we slammed into a wall*.

As I watched the fluorescent lights on the ceiling whiz by in a blur, the thought occurred to me that all this trauma could have been avoided if they had just knocked me out as soon as I entered the door of the hospital, and awakened me right before I was ready to exit.

If you've ever wondered whether surgeons really listen to funky music while they're operating, well it's true! Although I would have preferred listening to WMBI or a Christian CD as a source of comfort during this stressful time, I decided it was more important for the surgeon to be comfortable with the music selection.

Feeling totally helpless, a little claustrophobic (they strapped down my arms and legs, and erected a curtain around my head to prevent me from watching the procedure), and too scared to move an inch (the operating table was too narrow for my wide-bodied frame), I did a lot of praying and recalled in my mind the words to one of my favorite songs:

*"My life is in your hands, my heart is in your keeping. I'm never without hope now that my future is with you."*

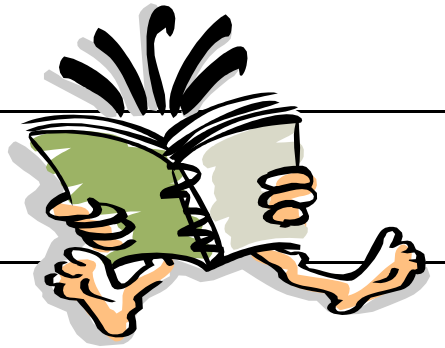
Even though I was awake to hear the whirring noise of the instruments (sounded like a chainsaw to me!), and the voices of the surgeon and nurses as they discussed the local casino while removing the cyst, the Lord provided me with the strength I needed to get through it.

(However, I'll never forget the "oops" from the surgeon as I felt white-hot pinpricks of pain from head to toe as she touched an area that had not been sufficiently numbed by the lidocaine. Next time . . . knock me out please!)

*Submitted by Anonymous*

*Note: The cyst was benign.*

# Book Review



## *The Jesus I Never Knew*

by  
Phillip Yancey

The inside flap liner notes says it best:

*“Yancey offers a new and different perspective on the life of Christ and His work—His teaching, His miracles, His death and resurrection—and ultimately, who He was and why He came.”*

According to Yancy, *“No one who meets Jesus ever stays the same. In the end I found the process of writing this book to be a great act of faith-strengthening. Jesus has rocked my own preconceptions and has made me ask hard questions about why those of us who bear His name don’t do a better job of following Him.”*

I recommend this book because the author presents a vivid picture of a Savior who not only identifies with our suffering and frustrations, but through His own life, death, and resurrection has provided us strength to face our struggles and hope for a better tomorrow.

This is a good book for those who are seeking Jesus, and for those who want to know Him better.



## *Recipe of the Month*

### Nita’s Fabulous Salad

- 1 large head red leaf lettuce
- 2 Granny Smith apples (peeled and chopped)
- 4 oz. grated Swiss cheese
- 4 oz. cashews (whole or chopped)

In individual salad bowls, tear lettuce into bite-size pieces and layer other ingredients.

Drizzle dressing over salad just before serving.

#### **Dressing**

- Mix in blender:
- 1 cup oil
- 1/3 cup wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard
- 1 T. minced onions
- 2 T. poppyseeds

Dressing is better if mixed and refrigerated several hours prior to serving.

Serves 4-6

## Words That Heal



We know that the same God who raised our Lord Jesus

will also raise us . . .

And as God’s grace brings more and more people

to Christ,

there will be great thanksgiving,

and God will receive more and more glory.

That is why we never give up.

Though our bodies are dying,

our spirits are being renewed every day.

So we don’t look at the troubles we can see right now.

Rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen.

For the troubles we see will soon be over,

but the joys to come will last forever.

*2 Corinthians 4:14-16, 18 NLT*

# Codependency—Ten Stages of Recovery

In the book, *Love Is a Choice*, the authors describe recovery as a roller coaster ride with the first five stages plunging you deeper and deeper into pain (hitting bottom), providing the impetus for the uphill healing of the last five stages.

## Stage One: Exploration and Discovery

Besides being honest about your present addictions, obsessions, or compulsions, the first stage to recovery begins in exploring your childhood—relationships with parents and siblings, neighbors and peers, as well as recalling specific instances of what made you happy and what made you sad or afraid.

When you have examined and put together all the pieces of your life, it is very helpful to tell your story to someone you can trust, perhaps a close friend or a support group.

Most importantly, include God in the process of helping you remove the blinders of denial so you can look honestly at your life and discover the truth about yourself.

## Stage Two: Relationship History

“Identify all the persons, past and present, who either left a memorable mark for some reason or who exercised an obvious influence in your life” advises Drs. Hemfelt, Minirth, and Meier.

The goal is to seek and find repeating patterns in your relationships that may provide an insight into the codependency issues you are facing today.

## Stage Three: Addiction Control

Whether you are dealing with an addiction, compulsion, or obsession, stage three involves breaking the cycle, setting new boundaries, and stopping the unhealthy behavior.

Professional help from a trained therapist is definitely recommended.

When physical abuse is present, and a spouse or other family member is endangered, a temporary separation is recommended, not as preparation for a divorce, but in order to break the cycle of abuse and help each partner work through their own issues. “Remember, the addiction cycle must be broken before healing can proceed.”

## Stage Four: Leaving Home and Saying Goodbye

This stage involves making certain we have truly given up our dependency on our family of origin, as well as other false security symbols.

Giving up emotional dependency of our parents does not mean dishonoring or abandoning them. It simply means striving to become the person God intended you to be, and refusing to be hindered in your growth by emotional baggage or self-imposed guilt.

## Stage Five: Grieving Your Loss

According to Drs. Hemfelt, Minirth, and Meier, “grieving is both the very bottom of the curve, the very pits of your emotions and feelings, and also the start upward. It’s almost like your dentist hanging up his drill. You know he’s not done yet, but the worst is over.”

The grieving process involves five steps:

- shock and denial
- anger
- depression
- bargaining and magic
- sadness
- forgiveness, resolution, and acceptance

What does the codependent need to grieve about?

- \* loss in unfulfilled childhood or childhood pain
- \* losses because of addictions, obsessions, or compulsions (job, family, health)
- \* giving up unhealthy behaviors and feelings that once were a significant part of your life
- \* loss of affection or ideal marriage
- \* loss of time and opportunities
- \* saying goodbye to emotional ties with parents

The grieving process takes time and sometimes requires you to go back to one of the steps you’ve already gone through. It is important **not** to jump from step one (shock

and denial) to step five (forgiveness) in one quick leap. You need time to deal with the pain and allow the wound inside to heal.

When we leap too quickly to forgiveness, we set ourselves up for emotional dishonesty where we say we have forgiven, but deep inside we harbor deep anger and resentment.

## Stage Six: New Self-Perceptions

This stage involves replacing all the unhealthy, negative messages about yourself with positive, affirming messages.

You may need to give yourself permission to gain new perceptions about yourself and make new decisions. It will be helpful to gain input from people you trust, as well as learning how to see yourself from God’s perspective.

There is great freedom in knowing that when your self-image comes from God, no one else can diminish your value.

## Stage Seven: New Experiences

Now that you’ve developed a healthy perception of yourself and have made new decisions, it is time to risk experiences that will affirm your new way of thinking.

## Stage Eight: Reparenting

Because you may need a lot of affirmation and guidance in dealing with new experiences, it is helpful to surround yourself with friends or a support group whom you can trust to be objective and will encourage you to keep trying.

## Stage Nine: Relationship Accountability

It is very important to find someone to whom you can be held accountable due to our tendency to self-deception and blindness to our own actions.

## Stage Ten: Maintenance

The best friend and encourager you can have is God. Although other people can provide love and encouragement, God can fulfill your every need and provide strength to become the person He intended you to be.

“It is with maintenance that you most need God’s support and nurturance, for human mentors, however trustworthy and mature, cannot see you all the way to the end.”



## 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

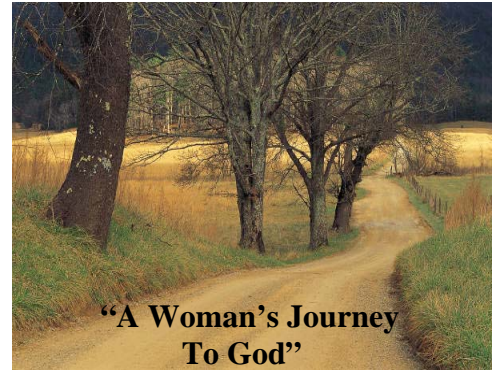
Mail to FOCUS, P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413

## 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](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:**

- **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*