

FOCUS Newsletter

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

No Way Out

January/February 2009

If you've spent any time at all on this planet, you know what it's like to be between a rock and a hard place. You can't move to the left or the right, forward or backward; you're just plain stuck because one choice is just as bad as the next. Welcome to the desolate world of "No Way Out."

Abraham spent some serious time there. And in spite of his love for God and his trust in Him, there were times when he went through periods of doubt and misbelief. Can you picture 100 year old Abraham and his 90 year old wife Sarah when God told them they would conceive and have a son? They must have found the news pretty funny because they laughed. I would have left home.

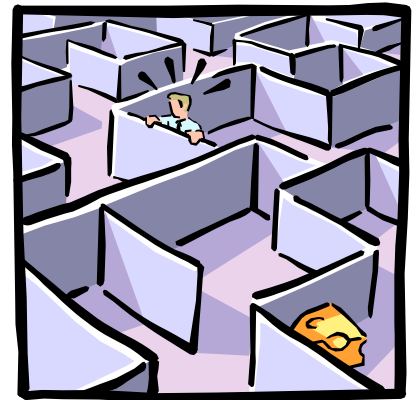
After some disbelief and interference on the part of the parents, their son Isaac was born. Isn't it great how God can bring things to pass in spite of the way we mess everything up by doing things our way?

Isaac was no ordinary child. In Genesis chapter 12, God

promised that from this son, Abraham's seed, would come forth a great nation; as numerous as the stars in the Heavens. And from this nation One would be born who would bring blessing to the entire world (Genesis 12:1-3). The entire Jewish Nation was to come forth through Isaac, as well as the Messiah. What a promise! What joy when this promised son was born. All was well in the household of Abraham and Sarah. At least for a little while.

After some years, while Isaac was still a young lad, God decided to test Abraham. In Genesis 22, we read that God told Abraham to take his son Isaac and go to the land of Moriah to offer Isaac there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains. There is no record in the Bible telling us how Abraham felt. But surely he was aware of the glaring conflict between God's promise of a great nation through Isaac, and God's command to destroy him.

In the January 2008 issue of Zion's Fire, Marvin Rosenthal gives us insight into Abraham's dilemma:



- *On the one hand, God promised Abraham, 'I will make of thee a great nation.' On the other hand, God said, 'Kill the seed from which the nation will spring.'*
- *On the one hand, God promised Abraham, 'In thy seed all nations will be blessed.' On the other hand, He commanded, 'Kill the seed from whom the blessing flows.'*
- *On the one hand, God promised Abraham, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' On the other hand, God said, 'Kill Isaac.'*
- *On the one hand, God promised Abraham, 'Your seed will be like the sand of the sea and the stars of the*

heaven.' On the other hand, God said, 'Kill your son who is to father this great multitude.'

- In basic terms, the test was this: 'Abraham, am I a covenant-keeping God? Can I be trusted? Will My right arm of power do what My mouth has spoken? Am I different than the fickle deities of the heathen? Do I have the power and will I be faithful to My promise?'

You can read the details of Abraham's test results in Genesis 22. Abraham, with two of his servants and his son, Isaac made a three-day journey from Beersheba to Mount Moriah. At the foot of the mount, Abraham asked his servants to remain behind while he and Isaac continued up to the top. While they climbed, Isaac asked his father, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together." Genesis 22:4-8

When they reached the summit, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. He bound Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood and then he picked up the knife.

Marvin Rosenthal continues, *Abraham had no reason to assume that God would stay His hand at the last possible moment. There had been no hint of such action. Therefore, Abraham had to believe that if he sacrificed his son,*

God, in order to be true to His promises and covenant, had to raise Isaac from the dead!

Abraham's valley of "**No Way Out**" was on top of a mountain and he discovered that there was, in fact, a most beautiful way out of that valley. All he had to do is look up! Not left nor right, not forward nor backward, but up! Abraham believed God, even to the point of killing his own son and trusting God to raise him from the dead. God would have to bring Isaac back to life, or His Word would not be true. Then at the last possible moment God called out to Abraham to not harm the lad, and Isaac was spared. God indeed did keep his Word.

Do we trust the One who gave His all to us or do we turn to our own "fickle deities" - yes, we have them too. Some of us throw ourselves into more church work in hopes of being blessed by God. Heck, if we're more active in church, God will have to bless us, right? So we read the Bible more, join the choir, clean the fellowship hall, and discover ... that nothing has changed, including ourselves. We turn to our jobs, to our substance addictions and to other people and still find no relief. And when we've reached the point where we're ready to jump off the bridge, we finally pray and hope that He can help us.

Question: Does God give us trials so He can find out how we will react in certain circumstances? Nope. He already knows, and has known before the

foundation of the earth. We are the ones who need to discover how we will handle those trials that become the litmus test of our faith.

"Two thousand years later, on that very same mount, the Son of God would offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sin. On that occasion, no voice from heaven stayed the hands of the executioners and no ram was caught by its horns as a substitute sacrifice. It was for the purpose of dying on Calvary that Jesus came into the world. He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."

He was slain for you, every drop of blood he shed was for you. He was tortured and whipped and bloodied to the point of non recognition, and then he went to hell. He did that because he didn't want to go to heaven without you. Whatever you are facing, you can take this to the bank: God loves you perfectly, just the way you are, and he will be your help and comforter and guide in whatever circumstance you find yourself. Next time you're headed for "No Way Out," just remember to look up. He'll be there, I promise you.

Endnote: Marvin J. Rosenthal, "Insight Into Abraham," Zion's Fire (January 2008) pp 7-13

Sherry Brown



Letters/E-Mail

Dear FOCUS:

My printer died, and it's also my scanner, copier and fax machine. No way can I afford to replace it, no matter how cheap. So I've been praying most of this week, asking God for direction, what to do, help!!!! Well, this morning when my friend went down to the laundry room, she saw a printer sitting in a box with a neat note on top that said: Black and white printer, free. All parts are in the box.

She ran upstairs to tell me about it. Now there are at least a dozen different brands of printers, like Epson, HP, Canon, Apple, etc., and I know that Epson and HP work best w/my computer. Plus my computer is a Mac and no one ever gives stuff away that is Mac-related. So I figured, well, maybe one chance in 100 that this printer would work for me. Well I sent a note down to the maintenance guy who was holding the machine until I could get a look at it. Told him I needed either an Epson or HP for Macintosh. Well, guess what. He sent up the instruction booklet for the give-away printer, and it is a HP all-in-one, the model that came out a year before my HP 4-in-one. And it is color, not just black and white. And it is for the Mac. And it has all the parts, including the software installation disk. And the frosting on top of all the other frosting, it uses the exact same cartridges as the ones I've been using in this one!

Can you believe it? I went down to see it and it looks like new. The fellow even included the sales slip from when he purchased the machine at Staples, \$150/plus tax. Even that receipt was neat and clean! All the way back upstairs I had tears in my eyes and all I could say was "Thank you Papa, Thank you Papa." Our maintenance guy brought everything up to the apt, and I have been dancing around ever since then. I am in awe and am humbled before my Abba, he is so kind.
—Email

God can make a way when there seems to be no way.



Words That Heal

*I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry,*

*He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire,
he set my feet on a rock and gave me a
firm place to stand.*

*He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the Lord.*

Psalm 40:1-3 NIV

FOCUS Support Groups

- **Brandon, FL**
The second and fourth Saturday of each month
- **Eustis, FL**
Saturdays 10 a.m. to Noon.
- **Glen Ellyn, IL**
Third Monday of every month
- **Wheaton, IL**
The first and third Saturday at 9:30 a.m.
- **Wood Dale, IL**
Second Thursday at 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.
- **Lexington, KY**
Saturdays at 9 a.m.
- **Akron, OH**
The second and fourth Thursday of every month at 6:30 p.m.
- **Findlay, OH** The second Thursday of every month 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
- **Olmsted Falls, OH**
Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
- **Felton, PA** The second Thursday of each month 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
- **Knoxville, TN**
Tuesday at 7 p.m.
- **Lynnwood, WA**
Wednesdays 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- **Weston, WI**
Thursdays 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

If you are interested in information about a particular support group or would like to start a support group in your area, contact Paula Silva at 630-595-7023 or paula@focusministries1.org..

What Color Is Your Elephant?

By Paula Silva

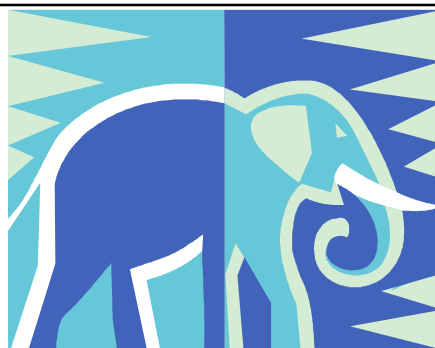
Wherever I go, I see evidence of God's most beautiful and unique design in creation in the women I meet. With just words, each woman was designed by God. Actually if you think about it, God was and still is the first HGTV program (House and Garden TV). HGTV is one of my favorite TV programs. It is amazing to me with just a dash of color and certain arrangements something is created from basically nothing.

I admire people who have the gift of seeing the potential in a room or house. I can view the beautiful results but cannot create it myself. The decorators remove the blemishes, cover up flaws, and add flair from their own design.

Each one of us can do the same in our personal lives. We have learned techniques to deny or ignore the existence of an issue that keeps us from growing in our lives and in our personal relationship with God. I call these "elephants".

Did you know that the elephant is the largest land animal on earth? At birth, it can weigh 260 pounds. An adult can weigh up to 26,000 pounds. No wonder we are so weighted down when these elephants exist in our lives. As you can see, elephants would be hard to get rid of but not impossible.

You have heard the old adage that *there is an elephant in the room, but no one addresses it*. We think if we ignore it, it will just go away. We try to keep it hidden. We decorate the elephant to match our personal décor so it will go unnoticed by us and others. What color is your elephant? Have you added accessories? Have you tried covering it with patterns of behavior that mask its appearance?



The elephant does not fit into our definition of a "perfect" Christian. It is a blemish that brings shame especially if you are in ministry. Most elephants have to do with relational issues. So what do we do? We cover it up by the mask we wear on our face and claim everything is fine when asked, but down deep inside the elephant is growing and destroying us piece by piece. Fear of it being exposed keeps us enslaved to this secret. No one has escaped an "elephant".

For more than 28 years, Pam dealt with an "elephant" that crippled her relationship with the Lord and devalued her as an image bearer of God. She did not realize that this elephant was becoming an idol in her life. It pushed away things that would enrich her soul and develop the potential God had placed within her. The elephant became her focal point no matter how hard Pam tried to deny its existence. It was a relational issue that quenched her spirit.

She was young, naïve, and uninformed. She believed in the myth that if you marry a Christian man, you would always have a Christian home filled with joy in the service of the Lord. The elephant in its infant stages was present, but the charm of the young man overshadowed its presence. There were little indicators, the authoritative tone that led her to question her parents' wisdom and guidance, the

aggressive behavior Pam interpreted as confidence. It was so subtle. What little she saw she determined to fix it by her love.

The baby elephant began to grow within the first week of marriage. An outburst of rage from her husband began a pattern of questioning her perceptions and overanalyzing the situation.

Her husband was well liked at work and church. He would often make sacrifices to others but not his family. Behind closed doors at home, he claimed his headship and demanded submission. Verbal criticism chiseled away her self-concept. His denial of his actions or gifts he would bring left her confused about how she perceived an incident. Scripture taken out of context or misinterpreted kept her in her place. Walking on eggshells whenever he was present became a norm in her life.

One day as she looked into the mirror she noticed how much her physical appearance was being affected. Her eyes were sad. Her posture slumped and eye contact with others had become difficult. Putting on makeup was left for another day. She felt no confidence in her abilities. Depression and despair were her constant companions. It was through counseling by a godly woman that Pam was guided into labeling her elephant. The label was domestic violence.

She learned a new term, *Boundaries*. She had the responsibility to guard her heart by only allowing in what would build her up and develop her relationship with God instead of what would destroy. Pam's lack of boundaries only enabled the abuse to continue.

(Continued on page 6)

Book Review



God Will Make A Way

By Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

Sometimes in the mist of our troubles our vision becomes unclear. We wander through life in a dense fog not seeing God's hand working, yet God is there. In examining our journey with God, there are eight principles to recognize God's presence and purpose.

Begin Your Journey with God
 Choose Your Traveling Companions Wisely
 Place High Value on Wisdom
 Own Your Faults and Weaknesses
 Embrace Problems As Gifts
 Take Life As It Comes
 Love God with All You Are

Author, Editor and Publisher: Paula Silva
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The mission of FOCUS Newsletter
 is to encourage women
 who are struggling in difficult circumstances
 to find strength and hope in Jesus Christ.

Funding: FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit organization. This ministry is 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, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126.** A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

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The MIGHTY WARRIOR

By Gail DeBackere

God delivers in our darkest night!
 His power proves great—
 When comes the fight!!

He CRUSHES the enemy—
 He CLEARS the WAY
 He drowns out the darkness
 With the light of day.

No might have we...
 To stand our ground
 No strength or hope
 By us is found.

But comes the DAY—
 The MIGHTY WARRIOR
 Fierce, yet gentle
 Comes He.

Steps in before us
 Shielding our souls
 And CRUSHES OUR ENEMY!

For during the night—
 In our darkest of fears
 Our agonized hearts
 Pour out unending tears...

Not knowing our Father—
 Who fights the Good Fight
 Is tearing down strongholds
 Dissolving our night!!

Not knowing that SOON—
 In His timing – In His way—
 We'll break through our darkness
 As He leads the Way!

(Continued from page 4)

What Color Is Your Elephant?

By Paula Silva

She realized that she had tried to fix everything under her own power, her abilities, and her actions. Pam did not allow the power of the Holy Spirit within her to work. She did not understand that she needed to give up control of the life she was losing. By letting God be Sovereign in everything, she would actually gain life.

No matter what your elephant is God is there to guide and direct you. Can you release it to God and trust that God is only going to do what is best for you? Who else can you trust and know that their promise is true?

There are specific key steps in addressing an elephant.

1. **Come out of denial. The elephant will grow and weigh you down more.**
2. **Identify, define, and label your elephant and then educate yourself about your elephant.**
3. **Don't ignore it. Remember the weight of the elephant at birth and the weight as an adult.**
4. **Begin to ask yourself the following questions.**
 - How have I disguised my elephant?
 - Has it been covered with a pattern of behavior?
 - Has the elephant become an idol in my life? Is it my focal point rather than God?
 - Why do I ignore it?

The answer to the last question can contain many reasons that reflect past and present experiences in our life. Let's examine some possible reasons.

Shame

Shame takes a strong grip on us as we look at other women who seem to

have it all together. We compare ourselves to them pointing out our failures and judging ourselves harshly. We long to be all that God created us to be and to experience His grace, but we have become stagnant in our perceptions telling ourselves we are not worthy of anything. Shame becomes part of what we experience in difficult relationships.

- Shame that we can't fix it
- Shame that people will view us as being the cause of the problem
- Shame that we don't measure up to the standards of the Christian community

Fear

- Fear that we don't meet people's expectations of us
- Fear of not meeting God's expectation
- Fear of a sin being revealed
- Fear of repercussions from the abusive person
- Fear that we won't be heard and understood
- Fear of being blamed for the problem.

Rejection

If people know what your elephant is, they may reject you, abandon you or withdraw their love. That is a possibility, but God will not reject you, abandon you, or not love you.

Guilt

Maybe there is guilt for something you did to enable this elephant to grow, guilt that you didn't do something sooner about the issue or you didn't handle it in an appropriate way. *Should of, could of, would of*, and the *If only's* don't exist so don't dwell on them.

Condemnation

There is a possibility that others will condemn you and persecute you when your elephant is revealed. but rest in God's Word.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2 NIV

Sometimes we ignore the elephant because of the **labels** we wear. ***I am not good enough. I'll never measure up. I am unlovable.***

Think about where these messages came from. What hurts have created these wounds that placed these labels on you?

The next step is

5. **Take off the mask. Reach out to someone you trust and tell the secret.**
6. **Find resources to help you deal with your elephant.**
7. **Most important—seek God first. Let him be your focus, your strength, and power to deal with the elephant.**

There is **HOPE** in removing your elephant even though it may seem too overwhelming and difficult. Turn your focus to the Lord for He is your hope and strength.

Hope is:

Holding onto Jesus

Opening your heart and seeking God's guidance and wisdom

Preparing to take a stand against evil and sin

Experiencing God's faithfulness and unconditional love

Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- Professional **grant writer and fundraiser**
- Selling of KY house
- Donations have dropped severely because of the economy, but contacts have increased. Presently we cannot meet all the needs because of lack of funds.

Praises:

- Women are growing in their relationship with the Lord through the help they have received from our ministry.
- FOCUS Ministries had the opportunity to present

the ministry and address the issue of domestic violence at a Wellspring meeting.

- We continue to partner with Marie Barlow Martin, Christian songwriter/singer, to address the issue of domestic violence.

Prayer Requests:

- Pray for Marie Barlow Martin as she ministers in music and speaks about domestic violence.
- Pray for the development of our teen/tween program and curriculum

- Pray for woman and families who contact our FOCUS Women's Center. We have had to turn away women who have come to us with physical needs because of the lack of funds.
- Pray for a time of transition of facilitators for our Wheaton support group.
- 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 **property** near

Elmhurst, IL to be donated for our FOCUS Women's Center. We have out grown our facility.

- Pray for **houses** in IL, to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- Pray for more **invitations** from churches to train pastors, staff, and congregations about domestic violence.



Upcoming Events

- **January 7, 2009**—FOCUS Ministries presentation to Guardian of Life, Hinsdale, IL
- **February 25, 2009**—Rockford Rescue Missions' Pastors Seminar, Rockford, IL
- **March, 2009**—Train the Trainer, Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **Sept. 16-19, 2009**—Exhibitor at the American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference, Nashville, TN
- **★Oct. 17, 2009**—Restoring the Hope Fundraising Luncheon, Diplomat West, Elmhurst, IL, Guest speaker, **Leslie Vernick**, Singer, **Marie Barlow Martin**, **Anita Lustrea**, host of Midday Connection, and **Rachel Mohn**, www.panicdots.net

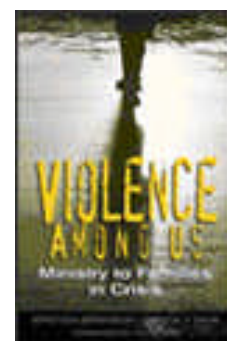
- Visit Marie Barlow Martin's website, www.mariebarlow.com, to view her concert schedule.

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 2009 is quickly filling up!

Contact Paula at 630-595-7023 or contactus@focusministries1.org.



www.MarieBarlow.com



Paula Silva, Coauthor



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Endorsements:

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

"I commend FOCUS Ministries for helping the church in its battle against domestic abuse. After seeing the response to a message I preached on this topic, I've come to realize that domestic abuse is much more common in our churches than we would like to admit. The materials and interaction I've had with FOCUS Ministries was helpful and very much needed. I pray that God will use FOCUS to awaken all of us to the reality of abuse as well as bring hope and healing to the victims.

Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer
Senior Pastor, The Moody Church, Chicago, IL



Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries

- ★ Join with us in ministering to women and families who experience domestic violence by participating in our Exercise-a-thon. Choose any exercise (run, bike, walk, skip, jump rope, swim, play tennis, baseball, football, lift weights, etc.), set your own goal, raise pledges, and take action against domestic violence! Just print off the [FOCUS Exercise-a-thon form](#) on our website, fill in your name and address by the participant's name, raise support, exercise, and then send in the completed form with the funds raised by November 15. Checks are to be made out to FOCUS Ministries and sent to P.O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126. A tax deductible receipt will be given. If you have questions, please email at contactus@focusministries1.org. We want to thank you for your support of this ministry.
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O Lord, You Alone Are My Hope! Psalm 71:5 NLT