

January/February 2011

## How Long, Lord?

There are many places that contain specially decorated rooms set aside where people sit and wait for some kind of assistance. Usually within these waiting rooms are chairs which are not always comfortable, information on various subjects and diseases, and special interests magazines. The décor is typically calming for a restless soul. A system of who's first has been established and obedience to that system is understood. Whether we like the system or not we abide by its rules.

Waiting rooms can also exist by phone. Often times we are placed on hold sometimes listening to music that is supposed to keep us calm as we relentlessly wait. Many of us multitask while waiting trying to have a feeling of accomplishment in the moment and trying to keep our patience intact.

By the time our turn comes to leave the waiting room, our nerves are frazzled and our "calmness" has turned to impatience and irritability. "Why did this take so long?," runs through our head.

In our walk with the Lord, we often find ourselves in the waiting room. Sometimes it is for days and weeks which may extend into years. We have brought our complaints to the Lord pointing out truths from our perspective.

The truths are filled with "why's", "how come", "where's justice", and "how long". In our cries, we boldly want answers to our complaints. We cry out much like Habakkuk did in Habakkuk 1:2-4 NIV.

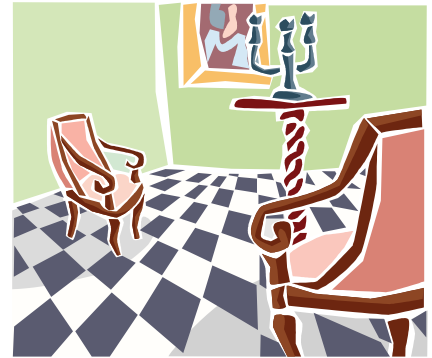
*How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?*

*Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?*

*Why do you make me look at injustice?*

*Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?*

*Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.*



All of us from time to time can identify with Habakkuk. We not only see sin and oppression around us, but it is also evident in our own relationships and situations. We don't understand why God has not acted and intervened. Does He not see what is going on?

In answer to our complaints, God directs us to the "waiting room" and sits us down telling us to wait for His answer. When the answer does not come immediately, we begin to question God's character. Is God who He says He is? Will God do what He says He will do? Doubts may begin to fill our mind and faith wanes.

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## How Long, Lord?

After time lapses, we become indignant of the silence and restless to take control. We ponder whether to stay or leave the waiting room.

Suddenly God begins to speak relating answers to our complaints. As they fall on our ears, we absorb the words and begin to realize these were not the answers we were anticipating. Further complaints come from our mouth.

The Lord is forthright but patient. We begin to realize that His ways are not our ways. He is God and we are not. In the words of Habakkuk:

*LORD, I have heard of your fame;*

*I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD.*

*Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.*

*I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled.*

*Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.*

*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD,*

*I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.*

Habakkuk 3:2, 16-19 NIV

Not only does the Lord become our strength in difficult struggles where injustice and oppression abound, but He assists us to go above the situation, peer from a new height, and reveals a different perspective, His perspective.

“Where are you God? can be both a protest against a problem and a search for understanding and perspective.” (*Where is God?* by Dr. John Townsend)

There is a lightness in the movement of the feet of a deer. It gives us a picture of God lightening our burden as we view our struggles through His eyes. He sends others to carry the burden, give encouragement and support, yet it is He who lifts the load from us. Our job is to remain in relationship with God drawing closer and closer to Him and listening for His voice.

Dr. John Townsend states in his book, *Where is God?*, “God goes another step in how He suffers with you in difficulty. He not only empathizes, but He also identifies. That is, *God feels what is happening to you as if it is happening to Him.* He is not only on the outside, being with you (which is helpful in itself), but He is also on the inside, suffering as you suffer. Not just for you, but with you.”

Are we willing to be still and wait in God’s waiting room for His answers or run away grasping control of our situation?

**Which is the best choice?**

*By Paula Silva*



## Powering Up?

Survivors of abuse of any kind certainly know the feeling of powerlessness. Along with it comes helplessness and hopelessness. We think the opposite of powerlessness is to power up or control others, but in actuality it's self-control. Les Parrott wrote a book entitled *Control Freak*. When I read it, I thought he was writing about me. I am a recovering *control freak*.

I grew up with an angry father. We moved 13 times because he lost jobs due to his anger. A neighborhood high school boy sexually abused me when I was 12 years old. I felt powerless and out of control in all of these situations. I thought I needed to control relationships to feel safe.

I began controlling by alternating submission, acting helpless and powering up, controlling in dating relationships and eventually my first marriage. I was married at the age of 19. I thought it was the man's responsibility to meet my every need, want and desire and make me feel good about me. Needless to say, this did not work well in my marriage.

As I grew older, I became the stronger personality, my husband seemed to become weaker, and I lost respect for him. We both became involved in our own worlds and lived like roommates in the same house until we divorced.

When I began dating again, I went back to controlling alternating between submitting and powering up. I was in several harmful relationships over a 4-year period until I finally came to know the Lord. My perspective was changed as I grew in faith and knowledge. I learned about submission to the Lord and self-control verses other-control. I was happy to turn control of my life over to the Lord because I was certainly messing up life on my own.

I learned that self-control was of a fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:23). I also learned that I was sinning by remaining in relationships where others were harming me. By doing so, I was "causing another to stumble" (1Cor. 10:32).

I had the God ordained freedom to remove myself from these situations, which I did. I was able to repair some relationships. Some I could not because the other party would not stop their harmful ways. I felt if I remained I would be enabling them to continue sinning against me. The "Boundaries" book by Townsend and Cloud

really helped me in this area.

If you find yourself in this type of circumstance, you too have the God ordained freedom to leave. You can say, "What you are doing is abusive, and I will not remain here and allow you to continue sinning against me." You have a choice then to either leave the room or leave the building. If the situation appears dangerous, take innocent bystanders with you i.e. children or pets. Preplan a safe place to go and develop a safety plan <http://www.focusministries1.org/SafetyPlan.pdf>.

There are several steps that can be taken to heal the relationship.

- Both of you should seek individual counseling.
- If there is a marriage support group ministry in your area, attend it with or without the your partner.
- Involve your church in the accountability process. If they are unfamiliar with how to handle abusive situations, advise them to purchase "Violence Among Us".



*By Karen Ferguson*

## *Broken . . . Lost . . . Deceived*



*Domestic Strongholds* are more prevalent today than many care to consider, however, many have suffered the hand of abuse from someone that ideally should have been a tower of protection and support. From days of old such behaviors have been staged in the lives of some of our most virtuous women of noble character, consider Tamar.

Tamar was the beautiful daughter of King David. Amnon, her brother, son of King David; fell in love with her. Because of Amnon's desire for his sister, he tricked her into coming to his house to take care of him by pretending to be ill.

*"So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight so I may eat from her hand." (2 Samuel 13:6)*

According to scripture, Tamar came to her brother's house and made his bread, because she was loyal to him and loved him but as she attempted to feed him the bread Amnon refused and dismissed all his servants. He asked Tamar to bring the food to his bedroom. While in his bedroom, Amnon asked Tamar to lay with him, and when she refused he raped her.

*"But he refused to listen to her and since he was stronger than her, he raped her." After raping Tamar Amnon put Tamar out of his house. Because Tamar was no longer a virgin, she could not marry another man so she lived in her brother's house a desolate woman. While*

*living with her brother Amnon, he never said a word either good or bad to Tamar.*

Tamar was broken, lost, and deceived by someone she knew, loved and trusted. To compound the hurt, everyone around her decided to keep it a secret. Imagine being stripped of everything you possess in such a violent violation of your virtue and femininity. Tamar must have been critically wounded both emotionally and spiritually.

Most families protect their loved ones but for her brother to abuse her, only to discover further abuse from her immediate family, mother, father and others, imagine how alone and isolated her days and nights, must have become. Tamar lived life lonely and desolate. Many women today have experiences exactly like Tamar's living through physical, mental and emotional abuse by the people we know and love.

Today violations no matter where they come from or who is responsible for the assault it is all defined as "Domestic Violence" however in Tamar's culture seemingly the victim was the villain, reversing the shame and the penalty on the innocent victims. This type of violence occurs when people we love and trust seek power and control over our mind, body and spirit through intimidating behaviors, isolation and belittling

thwarts, all of which can be detrimentally hurtful. *Domestic violence* is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault or other abusive behavior perpetuated by an intimate partner against another ("NCADV"). One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. 85 % of *domestic violence* victims are women. One in six women, have experienced an attempted or completed rape. Nearly 7.8 million women have been raped by an intimate partner ("NCADV").

Tamar was a *domestic violence* victim as well as a statistic. In Tamar's scripture being under her father's rule she had no rights to retribution. Consider how at a point and time women had little to no rights. Husbands were granted the right to chastise their wives in moderation, in other words, beat them.

We did not have the right to vote, to own property or to hold professional positions in corporations that were held by men, let alone be vindicated for the crimes that suffered our equality as the redeemed of the Lord. Evolution has done wonders in us, through us and for us. It has even reshaped the law of the land demolishing such hateful systems that support cruelty and discrimination toward women. Today we celebrate our liberation! Break the silence for yourself and others. . .

*By Nicole Sturdivant, MSW*

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE'S LIFE**  
**REGISTER NOW!**

## **Train the Trainer**

**March 25-26, 2011**

**Oakbrook Terrace, IL**

**Are you or your church sensing a desire to reach out and lend support to those in abusive relationships but don't know how? Join us at our training for support group leaders on March 25-26, 2011.**

Registration and information is provided on our website, [www.focusministries1.org/trainthetrainer.asp](http://www.focusministries1.org/trainthetrainer.asp).

**Register by March 15, 2011.**

### **Session 1: Starting the Journey**

**Which way do I go?** (*How to start a support group; advertising; structure of a support group*)

**Reading the road map** (*Dynamics of the support group; team approach; curriculum; resources*)

**Barriers in the journey** (*Identifying and handling conflict and difficult people*)

### **Session 2: What's in the Knapsack?**

**What's dysfunctional about relationships?** (*Dynamics of domestic violence; effects of DV on children; why does she stay?; teen dating violence; why does he do that?*)

**How can I help?** (*Being an anchor in their life storms, setting boundaries with members of the group, self-care*)

### **Session 3: Spiritual Direction on the Journey**

**Companions on the journey** (*Reaching hearts/ touching souls; choosing companions wisely*)

**Journeying to know God** (*looking at your personal journey and walking the journey with hurting women*)

**FOCUS Ministries offers a certificate program for support group leaders in our Train the Trainer Seminars. Our training goes beyond the seminars.**

**Under the direction of our National Support Group Coordinator, our FOCUS support group leaders become part of a Christian community of leaders worldwide and a member of an established organization that has proven itself since 1995.**

FOCUS Ministries is dedicated to serving our leaders by:

- Making them aware of pertinent resources, conferences, and seminars
- Providing free or discounted resources
- Providing a platform of communication with other leaders worldwide
- Offering confidential one-on-one leader consultation regarding areas of concern and problematic issues
- Ongoing training through our webinars
- Support group leaders retreats
- Providing encouragement, support, and spiritual direction
- Providing prayer support

## Book Review



### Where is God?

*Finding His Presence, Purpose,  
and Power in Difficult Times*



When problems arise in life's journey, we begin crying out to God wanting him to fix everything quickly. Where are you, God? Sometimes the answers are slow in coming. The problems grow larger in scope. It truly becomes a walk of faith.

"When we see what He is doing during our struggles and how to respond in tough times, we can experience the simple but game-changing reality that with God on our side, we can handle whatever happens. No matter what."



### *Words That Heal*

"Ah, Lord God!  
Behold, You have made  
the heavens and the earth  
by Your great power  
and outstretched arm.

**There is nothing too hard for You."**

Jeremiah 32:17 NKJV

### The Other Pro-life Movement

*Domestic Violence Training for  
Churches/Groups/Organizations*

#### Topics:

- What is Domestic Violence?—A Closer Look at Verbal, Emotional, Sexual, Physical, and Spiritual Abuse
- Characteristics of an Abuser/Why Does He Do That?
- Recognizing a Victim of Domestic Violence
- Why Women Stay or Leave/Developing a Safety Plan
- How Does Domestic Violence Affect the Family Especially Children
- Teen Dating Violence
- What Can the Church Do?
- Do's and Don'ts of Counseling
- Signs that the Abuser Has Changed
- Church Safety Plan/Risks
- Becoming an Anchor in the Storm/How to Help Someone in an Abusive Relationship

#### Development of Domestic Violence Program in Churches

- Do's and Don'ts of Counseling Victims and Abusers
- Development of Domestic Violence Policies and Procedures for Churches
- Step By Step Approach for Churches to Address the Issue of Domestic Violence
- Training for support group leaders

## Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

### Urgent Needs:

- **Wal-Mart gift cards** to meet the physical needs of women and children
- **New board members** that share the vision of FOCUS Ministries
- **Part time** professional grant writer and fundraiser
- **Part time** administrative assistant.
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

### Praises:

- **Moody intern** that's developing a Bible study
- **Development of webinars**
- **Women** who are coming to the support groups who are growing, learning, and making the necessary changes

### Prayer Requests:

- **Pray for our intern**
- **Pray for a facility** for our FOCUS Women's Center. It would enable

us to expand our services and provide more trainings, seminars, and conferences.

- **Pray for funds** to hire much needed staff
- **Pray for board members** to serve on the FOCUS board
- **Pray for women and families** who contact our FOCUS Women's Center.
- **Pray for pastors' wives** that are being abused.
- **Pray for individuals,** churches, and busi-

nesses to commit to **monthly giving.**

- Pray for all the **FOCUS support group leaders** in the U.S
- 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

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The mission of FOCUS Ministries is to provide a safe place for teens, women, and families who experience domestic violence and abusive relationships to find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

**Funding:** FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501 c3 organization funded by contributions and grants. **If you would like to help us minister to hurting people through our educational materials, support groups, counseling, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or online at [www.focusministries1.org](http://www.focusministries1.org).** A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

FOCUS Ministries (and all individuals affiliated therewith) disclaims any personal liability for information presented within this newsletter or in seminars, workshops, and support group meetings. You should always consult a professional for medical, psychological, legal, financial, or biblical advice.

- **March 25-26, 2011— Train the Trainer** (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **May 14, 2011— Extraordinary You-2, Extreme Makeover,** Orland Park, IL
- **Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2011— Exhibitor** at AACC World Conference, Nashville, TN

*If you would like the FOCUS team to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars or other speaking engagement.*

**Contact Paula Silva at 630-595-7023 or [contactus@focusministries1.org](mailto:contactus@focusministries1.org)**

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

## Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries



Go to [GoodSearch.com](http://GoodSearch.com). Enter FOCUS Ministries as your favorite charity in the box provided, verify and search. The search engine is powered by Yahoo! and each time you search, designate FOCUS Ministries as your charity, verify and search. GoodSearch will then make a donation to FOCUS.



Go to [GoodShop.com](http://GoodShop.com). Enter FOCUS Ministries as your favorite charity in the box provided, verify and browse the online mall.. Choose from over 500 popular online merchants from Best Buy to Wal Mart. A portion of your online purchase will be donated to FOCUS Ministries and the shopping experience through GoodShop is exactly the same as going to the online retailer's websites directly.



When purchasing anything from Amazon.com, go to our website first, [www.focusministries1.org](http://www.focusministries1.org), click on the Amazon.com icon, and Amazon will donate a percentage of your purchased amount. This does not cost you anything.



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