

A Time of Testing

July/August 2011

When someone has sinned against us, we must choose our response carefully. We may hear various voices from church leadership claiming to know what we should do. Forgive and forget are often the words they choose to say followed by a forceful push toward reconciliation.

This approach places a heavy weight of guilt on the victim of abuse if she does not comply. Shunning occurs and support is lost. In Scripture, we are told to guard our heart, yet the victim is put in a position of vulnerability without seeing evidence of change by the perpetrator.

In Scripture, Joseph experienced being sinned against by his own brothers. Sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver by his brothers, Joseph was taken to Egypt. Joseph experienced many transitions in his life from being in Potiphar's house, to prison, and then to governor of Egypt.

As a famine permeated the land, Joseph was given an opportunity to meet face to face with those that betrayed him. He recognized them, but they did not realize who he was. He did not immediately

embrace them with forgiving words nor invite them into his house to start on the road of reconciliation. Instead he tested them to see if there had been a heart change.

In Genesis 37–45, the story unfolds. He speaks to his brothers through an interpreter although he did understand their words. Private conversations between the brothers revealed the intent in their hearts.

Joseph first accuses them of being spies. The brothers deny the accusation. When questioned about their family, they speak of their youngest brother, Benjamin. Joseph then administers the first of a series of tests.

“You will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother, the rest will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth.” Genesis 42:15-16 NIV
Then Joseph places them in custody for three days.

He then ordered one of the brothers (Simeon) to stay behind in custody while the others

returned home to bring the youngest brother back. **Joseph observed their reaction and listened to their response as they talked among themselves for he understood their language.**

Joseph not only sent the brothers on their way with grain but returned their own silver. When the brothers discovered the silver in their sacks, they were afraid.

Since the famine continued, there arose a need for the brothers to return to Egypt. Their father, Jacob, reluctantly let Benjamin go with them. Reuben offered to sacrifice his own sons if anything happened to Benjamin.

As the brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin, they not



only brought back the silver that had been returned to them plus more. Meeting the steward first, they divulged the truth regarding the silver.

After being reunited with Simeon, the brothers were invited to Joseph's house for a meal. The brothers were seated according to chronological age and then served the meal. Benjamin's portion was five times greater than his brothers.

In the morning all the brothers were sent back home with sacks of grain. Joseph's silver cup was placed in Benjamin's sack as Joseph had instructed. When the brothers had not gone far, Joseph sent his steward with specific instructions to retrieve the cup.

In answer to Joseph's accusations of stealing, the brothers stated, *"If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves."* Genesis 44:9 NIV. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. All the brothers returned to Joseph.

Upon seeing Joseph, Judah makes a plea noting the grief this will bring to their father. After dismissing his attendants, Joseph reveals who he is and reconciliation begins. Joseph's actions were not in retaliation to his brothers' actions long ago.

Joseph tested their:

Honesty

- The brothers told the truth about their whole family.

- The brothers told the truth about the silver being returned to the steward

He was testing them for:

Jealousy

- When Benjamin was given a larger portion at the meal
- When Benjamin was given three hundred shekels of silver and five set of clothes

He was testing them to see if they were willing to:

Sacrifice

- Reuben was willing to sacrifice his sons if something happened to Benjamin.
- All brothers were willing to return to Egypt as servants when the cup was only found in Benjamin's sack.

Throughout the testing, Joseph had compassion on his brothers as he provided for their needs as well as their families. Often times Joseph would remove himself to weep. Reconciliation was only initiated after a period of testing.

There is much to learn from Joseph's story. There must have been many emotions, discouragement, anger, and fear of the unknown as he was cast into another culture in a foreign land with no family in the midst of strangers. He could have been a very bitter man, but we see no evidence of this in Scripture.

Joseph wisely assessed his brothers. He desired relationship, but

one in which there would be honesty and no mistreatment. The testing revealed that selfishness had been replaced with empathy for others.

During the years of separation from family, healing from the pain of betrayal had occurred. The timing was right for Joseph to move into forgiveness. He saw God's purpose in what had happened to him.

The events were all part of a larger picture for he states, *"And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."* Genesis 45:5 NIV

Key points to remember:

- Don't let your desire for relationship blind you to evidence of a heart change in the offender.
- Test the evidence for a long period of time to see consistency.
- Don't let the offender or others pressure you into reconciliation.
- Ask for God's discernment to determine if repentance is real or manipulation.

By Paula Silva

What Would Jesus Do About Domestic Violence: He Would Relate

Hebrews 4:15 *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin.*

“I can relate.”, “I feel ya.”, “I know what you mean.” These are all colloquialisms which we use to communicate to someone that we understand what they are saying or what they are going through. But, when it comes to domestic violence and abuse in the Christian home, Christian women who are victims seldom hear those words from other Believers.

However, Jesus *can* relate. “Yeah, Yeah” We give verbal consent because we know Hebrews 4:15 says “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin”. However, sometimes we believe these things in theory alone. We question, “What does Jesus know about domestic violence and abuse?” We say some practical and factual things. “Jesus was never married” and “Jesus was not a wife or a woman who was subject to violence and mistreatments by a husband.” But, is it being woman or a wife that Jesus has to relate to, or is it the *experience*? And, experience is the thing which Jesus had plenty of!

In the Bible, we read the many encounters that Jesus had with the religious leaders of His day. From these accounts, we can see that Jesus *was* a victim of abuse (in the public arena). In addition, Jesus’ ministry involved ministering to others who were victims (Luke 4:18). . . When we compare those types of abusive behaviors that

Jesus encountered with the types of abusive behaviors that the Christian woman encounters within the home, it can be determined that they are both the same.

We are mindful however that though Jesus Himself was not a victim of *domestic* violence and abuse, He did have experience with the same *types* of sin that constitute domestic violence and abuse. Violence is violence and abuse is abuse, regardless of the context. Jesus’ experience was in the public domain and the Christian woman’s experience is within a private domain, her home.

What *types* of abuse did Jesus experience? Jesus experienced many types of abuse and the parallel between what Jesus experienced are strikingly similar to the experiences of the victim of domestic violence and abuse.

Here are some of the types of abuses that *Jesus* experienced on a personal level alone. Jesus had to deal with control and power issues (John 12:19). He also dealt with jealousy (John 7:32). There was mistreatment (John 10:31) and verbal abuse where He was scorned, insulted, despised and berated (John 9:28; John 8:48, Luke 11:53). He was falsely accused (Mark 14:56-59; Luke 11:54, 23:2, 14; John 18:29-30), dishonored by slander (John 8:49), and mocked (Mark 15:20). He was rejected and despised, He was “a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief” (John 10:19; Isaiah 53:3).

There is more. Jesus also experienced religious abuse (John 9:34, Matthew 23:5-7) in the form of religious criticism (John 10:19), scripture-twisting (John 7:21-24, 8:5), scripture misapplication (John 7:21-24), using

scripture for one’s own gain (John 7:50-52), and various expressions of religiosity (John 9:34; 12:42; Luke 11:53).

Jesus was stalked as well (John 7:32, John 6:11; Mark 3:2) and He was a victim of anger (John 8: 12-59), rage (John 7:30, 10:31), and hate (John 15:18, John 5:42).

We also know that violence was perpetrated against Him. He was slapped *and* punched in the face repeatedly (Mark 14:65, John 18:22; Luke 22:63). He was spat on (Mark 13:65, 15:19) and He suffered the shame of nakedness (Mark 15:20).

People plotted to do Him harm (John 12:10-11; Mark 4:6) and multiple attempts were made to murder him (Luke 4:28-29; John 10:31, 39). Ultimately, He was killed.

Can Jesus relate? Not only can Jesus relate to being a victim of violence and abuse, He is a great model from whom we can learn how to deal with a variety of aspects having to do with domestic violence and abuse.

We can gain insight from Jesus into the heart of the abuser and we can learn what Jesus would do with the abuser as well. We can determine whether Jesus would stay with a professed Christian husband who would victimize him. Also, victims can access help from Jesus on how to deal with an abuser. In future articles, we will look at some of the things which we can learn from Jesus about dealing with issues regarding domestic violence and abuse.

Can Jesus relate? You betcha!

By Dr. Chloe Cummings author of *What Would Jesus Do about Domestic Violence and Abuse towards Christian Women?*

Church Response to Domestic Violence

Thus says the Lord God:
Enough, O princes of Israel;
**Put away violence and
oppression, and execute justice
and righteousness.**
Ezekiel 45:9

In our churches today, there is some question as to whether we are following this passage of Scripture. Those within the Christian community who are suffering domestic abuse are experiencing oppression. The relationship though in the eyes of the church is minimized to a conflict resolution issue or a lack of communication skills.

In actuality though it is forms of violence that are eating away God's design for relationships. Individuals are being held captive within their own homes living in fear. Our responsibility within the Christian community is to execute justice and righteousness not individuals' entitlement to power and control.

But what can the church do to address abusive relationships? The involvement of the church lies in four basic categories.

DV Education for:

- Pastors/Youth Pastors
- Elders/Deacons
- Women's Ministry Leaders
- Counselors
- Youth/Children's Leaders
- Small Group Leaders
- Sunday School Leaders
- Recovery Group Leaders
- Congregation

DV Awareness

- Pastoral sermons on domestic violence
- Testimonies by Survivors
- Domestic violence brochures and posters
- Bulletin inserts that define domestic violence indicating the different forms plus statistics
- Church newsletters with articles regarding the dynamics of abuse, effects on children, and how to help a victim
- Church website in which domestic violence information is given with helpful links
- Books and resources for church library
- Domestic violence pocket cards for the women's restrooms indicating where help can be found
- Age appropriate curriculum addressing abusive relationships for small groups, Sunday School, and youth groups
- Workshops and seminars for teens and parents of teens that provide helpful information regarding abusive teen dating violence

Advocacy

- Develop a domestic violence support team who are trained to help those in domestic violence and then appoint a contact person
- Develop a crisis flow chart to establish policies and procedures in DV cases

- Develop a referral list of resources within the church and community
- Refer women and families to shelters, support groups, and counselors
- Learn about legal options for victims and have individuals that go with them to court

Support

- Help victim to develop a personal safety plan
- Develop guidelines for meeting victim's and family's needs
- Provide housing, shelter, food, transportation, etc.
- Provide support groups for victims and children
- Provide accountability for abusers in forming male teams that stay in communication with the abuser
- Provide counseling for the abuser with a counselor that is knowledgeable about domestic violence

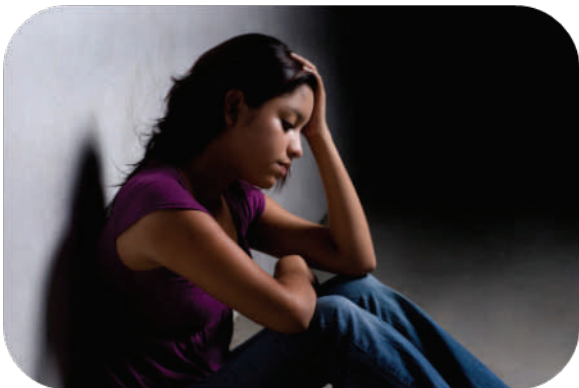
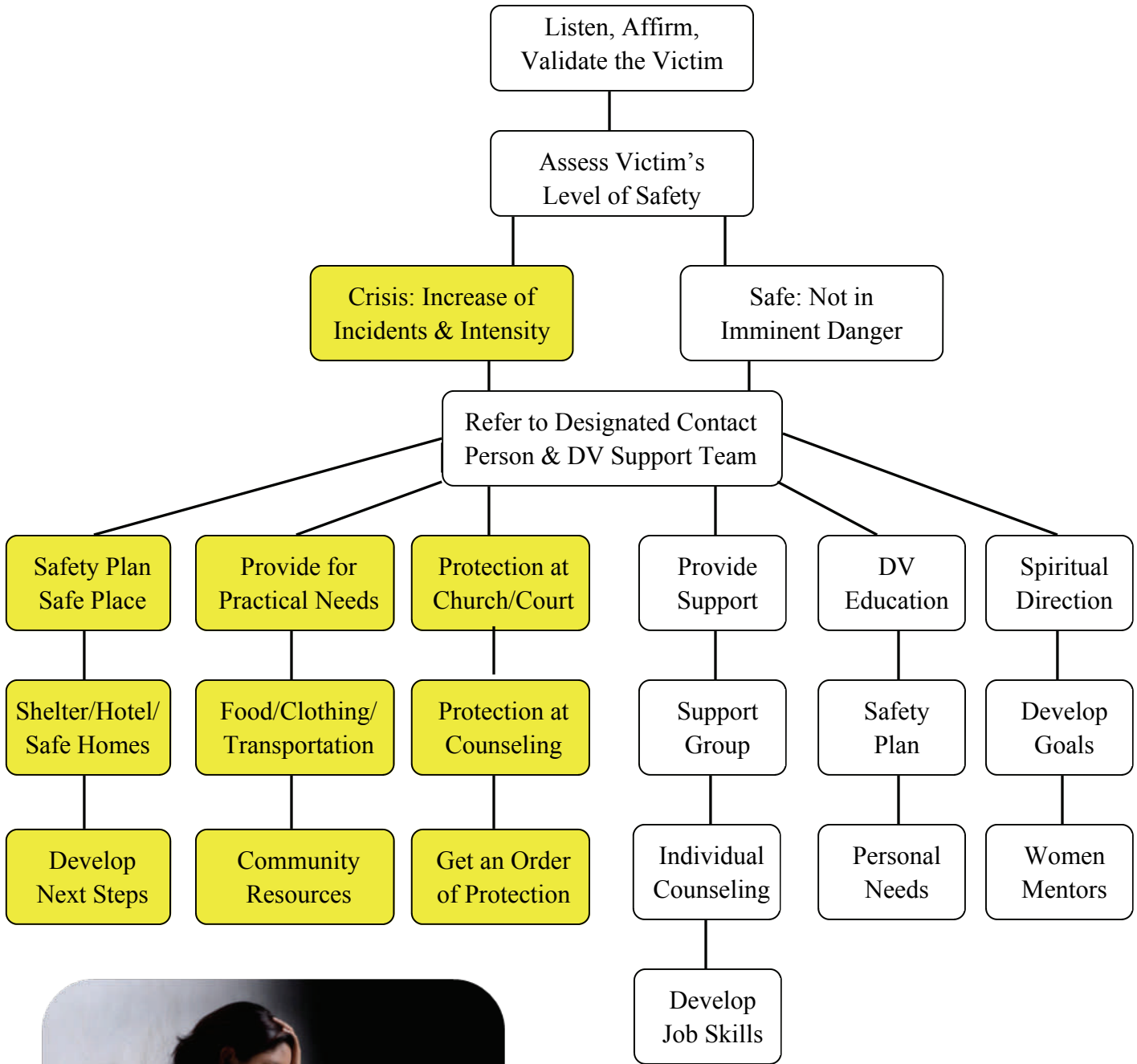
Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to death; don't stand back and let them die. Don't try to avoid responsibility by saying you didn't know about it.

For God knows all, hears, and he sees you. He keeps watch over your soul, and he knows you knew! And he will judge all people according to what they have done. Proverbs 24:11-12, NLT

What will you do?

By Paula Silva

DV Crisis Assessment Flow Chart for Churches



“He (the Lord) upholds **the cause** of the **oppressed** and gives food to the hungry. **The Lord sets prisoners free. . .**”

Psalm 146:7 NIV

Book Review



What Would Jesus Do About Domestic Violence and Abuse Toward Christian Women
By Dr. Chloe Cummings

“The author shows that the same sins which constitute violence and abuse on the home front are the same sins which Jesus dealt with in the public arena. Because of the religious overtones in the emotional, spiritual, verbal, psychological, and other abuses which Jesus experienced, the model Jesus presents in dealing with domestic violence and abuse is especially relevant to victims who have a Christian or a strong religious background.”

FAILURE—Author Unknown

Failure doesn't mean that you are a failure; it *does* mean you haven't yet succeeded.

Failure doesn't mean that you have accomplished nothing; it *does* mean you have learned something.

Failure doesn't mean that you have been a fool; it *does* mean you have a lot of faith.

Failure doesn't mean that you have been disgraced; it *does* mean you were willing to try.

Failure doesn't mean you don't have it; it *does* mean you have to do something in a different way.

Failure doesn't mean you are inferior; it *does* mean you are not perfect.

Failure doesn't mean you've wasted your life; it *does* mean you have a reason to start afresh.

Failure doesn't mean you should give up; it *does* mean you must try harder.

Failure doesn't mean you will never make it; it *does* mean it will take a little longer.

Failure doesn't mean God has abandoned you; it *does* mean God has a better way.

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:

- **New board members** that share the vision of FOCUS Ministries
- **Part time** development coordinator
- **TEEN FOCUS team** to develop the teen program
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **FOCUS Ministries** is being featured as Ministry of the Month on Moody Radio

- **New support groups** in TN and KY
- **TEEN FOCUS team** has been formed.

Prayer Requests:

- **Pray for our TEEN FOCUS team** as they develop our teen program
- **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** as they make critical decisions regarding the direction of the ministry

- **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 businesses** 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.

- **Pray for churches** to understand the gravity of domestic violence and will develop appropriate responses.



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.** 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.

- **Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2011—Exhibitor** at AACC World Conference, Nashville, TN
- **October 7-8, 2011—To Heal the Heart Conference**, Moody Church, Chicago, IL
- **October 21-22, 2011—Train the Trainer Support Group Leaders Training**, Oakbrook Terrace, IL

The FOCUS team is available to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars, DV training or other speaking engagements.

contactus@focusministries1.org

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

Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries



Go to 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.

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.



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