

Stuck in the Desert

September/October 2011

As we begin our journey into the Fall season, we are reminded of the seasons that occur in our lives. Some last longer than others. The journey can be filled with quick curves, bumpy roads, mountainous terrain, deep valleys, and smooth flat surfaces. Each of these aspects brings different kinds of challenges and new areas of growth. Each part of the journey challenges our faith in God.

One of the most difficult seasons is our placement in the arid desert. Life seems to be filled with no purpose or goal and the way is unclear. We are thirsty for something but cannot identify what it is. We seek relief from the scorching of the daylight sun of judgment and the coldness of the night of other's apathy. Many "why's" well up in our soul as we clench our fist heavenward.

Each of our deserts can be similar yet different. Each desert experience serves a purpose.

DESERT of REST

After a grueling experience with the Baal prophets and seeing the awesome power of God, Elijah found himself fleeing to a desert



frightened by Jezebel's threat. His weariness overtook him as he laid down to rest.

"He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am not better than my ancestors.' then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep." I Kings 19:4b-5 NIV

Many of us can resonate with Elijah's words. We are tired of the battle of other's perceptions and opinions. We know we are doing what God asks of us, yet our strength is waning. We just want to give up and get relief.

Even though Elijah acknowledged his true feelings to God,

God did not strike him dead nor rebuke him. Instead the angel of the Lord ministered to him and provided the necessary nourishment to replenish his soul.

Often times in challenging situations we are drained of our resources. In this desert season, God provides rest for our weary soul as he fills us with his love and compassion. He restates our purpose and calling and provides the energy to carry out the task.

DESERT of PROTECTION

"When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine

country, though that was shorter. For God said, 'If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.' So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle."
Exodus 13:17-18 NIV

The oppression the Israelites had been under for years had taken its toll. God knew that they were not ready for battle especially giants of Philistine. To protect them and not place them in a dangerous situation God had them travel a longer route to avoid conflict.

When those who are oppressed by abuse distant themselves from the situation, they do not have the strength to engage in another kind of battle from an enemy. In these times, God directs them to an indirect route to build their strength and faith to fight a greater battle ahead.

DESERT of TESTING

In Matthew 4, Jesus was tempted and tested by Satan. His authority as God's Son was challenged. It was God's power verses worldly power. Christ used Scripture to combat the enticements of Satan.

Difficult circumstances are always a part of life's journey. Our faith in God and our position as a believer in Jesus Christ are challenged. It is so easy in those times to place the importance of resolving our circumstance over our relationship with our Lord.

It is important to come to grips with the character of God and to trust him when we do not see evidence of his faithfulness or presence. Keeping our stones of remembrances of what God has done for us in the past in our view, moves us forward in times of testing.

DESERT of DISOBEDIENCE

After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years. They could have ventured into the Promised Land sooner but fear kept them out. Their trust in God was challenged and they failed the test.

The golden calf instead became their idol and act of worship. They turned their eyes to materialist things and grew increasingly dissatisfied with God's provision. For the Israelites, it was a time of weeding out those who remained faithful to God and those who were disobedient. Exodus 32.

Sometimes deserts are created by our unwise choices. We are sent to the desert for a season of discipline and for self-reflection in hopes that we will return to God and his ways. It is a time of repentance and restoration.

DESERT of GRIEF

Life is not consistently the same from day to day. Letting go is the theme. Pruning those relationships that are detrimental to us is necessary for our wellbeing. Unresolvable situations bring heartache, disappointment and despair. Many

experience the loss of job, home, and other material possessions.

The "I should have's" and "If only's" begin to surface. Guilt intensifies the grief. Shame floats around in our thoughts. Why statements form on our lips. Anger mixed with extreme sadness envelops us. The world looks very dark and uninviting. There seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. Weeping and mourning become an every day occurrence.

During this desert season, our lament is directed to the Lord expressing our complaints and our deepest sorrows. We seek God longing for his presence, but he seems distant and unavailable.

In each desert season, life is still evident. Growth is occurring in our hearts. Attitudes and perspectives are changing and maturing. Our knowledge about God's character has instilled a renewed hope that we do not walk this journey alone. Trust and faith in the Lord is developed and the load of life is lifted.

The Lord is still in control in desert seasons. He sees all and knows all. He deeply cares about each one of us. We can rejoice in his faithfulness!

By Paula Silva

Where Is It Written?

Domestic violence is very complicated and messy. There are many issues compact into one. High on the list are faith issues. Questions arise in the victims minds. "Where is it written," they often ask.

God's Word about violence

- "The Lord examines both the righteous and he wicked. He hates everyone who loves violence." Psalm 11:5
 - "You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because He pays no attention to your offerings, and He doesn't accept them with pleasure. You cry out, 'Why has the Lord abandoned us?' I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows. Malachi 2:13-16
 - "'I hate divorce', says the Lord God of Israel, 'and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment . . .'" Malachi 2:15-16 (NIV)
 - "Thus says the Lord God: Enough, O princes of Israel; Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness." Ezekiel 45:9
- "Their tongues sting like a snake; the poison of a viper drips from their lips." Psalm 140:3
 - "They come at night, snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets. Listen to the filth that comes from their mouths, the piercing swords that fly from their lips. 'Who can hurt us?' they sneer." Psalm 59:6-7
 - "They spit poison like deadly snakes; they are like cobras that refuse to listen." Psalm 58:4
 - "But evil words come from an evil heart and defile the person who says them. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all other sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. These are what defile you." Matthew 15:18-20
 - "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." James 1:26 NIV
 - "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." James 3:6 (NIV)

Profile of an Abuser

Verbal Abuse

- "Their mouths are full of cursing, lies, and threats. Trouble and evil are on the tips of their tongues." Psalm 10:7
- "As for this friend of mine, he betrayed me; he broke his promises. His words are as smooth as cream, but in his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers! Psalm 55:20-21
- "All your dealings are crooked; you hand out violence instead of

justice." Psalm 58:2

- "For they accuse me of things I've never done and breathe out violence against me." Psalm 27:12
- "They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God . . . and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. ***You must stay away from people like that.***" 2 Timothy 3:1-5
- "O Lord, rescue me from evil people. Preserve me from those who are violent, those who plot evil in their hearts and stir up trouble all day long." Psalm 140:1-2
- "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." Proverbs 12:15 (NASB)
- "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man lest you learn his ways and become like him." Proverbs 22:24 (NASB)

All Scriptures are quoted from the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

Can a Christian Woman Leave her Abusive Husband? Ask Jesus.

Most prisoners who are in jail have one advantage that a Christian woman who lives in the prison of an abusive marriage doesn't. Prisoners get to look forward to a parole or release date. A Christian woman is in for *life*. That's what most think anyway. When she inquires about escaping her plight, the only words most religious leaders and well-meaning Christian friends will tell her is, "God hates divorce".

Those words are more effective in keeping her more imprisoned than any security system on Alcatraz or Riker's Island. The biblical context of divorce notwithstanding, a Christian woman who fears the Lord needs to know whether God wants her to remain in an abusive marriage or whether He wants her to go.

That answer cannot be answered by anyone else but God; however it is helpful to gain a balanced and biblical perspective on the matter of her safety (emotional, physical, and otherwise) in a marriage where her spouse is as much a danger to her as the Pharisees were to Jesus...and we know how *that* ended.

Christian women desperately need to know whether they should stay in an abusive or violent marriage or whether it is biblical to leave one's abusive

husband in order to save one's life or sanity and go to a safe and peaceful place.

To find an answer, Christians can look at Jesus' life to see whether Jesus stayed with his enemies and with His abusers who were trying to destroy him. We can also look at others related to Jesus who also had to make decisions of the same nature.

*Jesus did nothing
in fear (God forbid)
but in faith He walked
in the will of God.*

Jesus was a target for violence even while he was in the womb. God told Joseph (Matt 2:13 Matt 2:22-23) and the three wise men (Matt 2:12) to flee to a safe place so that Jesus would not be harmed.

In Jesus' adult years of ministry, we see many circumstances where Jesus himself, lead by the Holy Spirit in all things, did not stay around violent and abusive people who were trying to destroy him. He physically withdrew himself as we see in such places as Matt 12:13 -15, John 10:39, John 8: 59 and John 11:53-54. We see more examples where Jesus physically hid himself in John 7:1, John 7:9 (context John 7:1-10), and John.12:36b. Jesus did nothing in fear (God forbid) but in faith He

walked in the will of God. He recognized hostile situations and in case of danger, he went away to a safe place.

A victim of abuse can learn more safety measures from Jesus. John 8:59 says that after Jesus made the claim of being God ["Before Abraham was, 'I Am'" (vs. 58)], "*they picked up stones to stone him but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.*"

According to this verse, Jesus was cryptic (Kryptō (GK) means to conceal, to be hid as to escape notice or become known, secretive). How exactly did He go about making Himself so that He would not be noticed, is not told to us, but this word implies secretiveness, skill, wisdom, understanding, and faith to execute. Like how Jesus had to "kryptō", the church ought to be an environment where the abused victim can be safely concealed from even those on "the temple grounds" who seek her life.

It also shows a Christian woman that there are times when she has to be cryptic about her plans for safety. Jesus was lead of the Holy Spirit in all that He did. Likewise, a Christian woman is to be lead of the Holy Spirit as well (rather than by fear). She is to look to God's for His directions, His

Cont'd

Can a Christian Woman Leave her Abusive Husband? Ask Jesus.

timing, and His provision.

Looking at Jesus, a victim of abuse can also learn that God has a plan for her beyond her circumstance. John 10:39-42 tells how Jesus escaped *again* from those who sought to do Him harm. *"Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. ...And many believed in him there."*

From this account, we see that *because* He went to another location, blessings followed His arrival – "many believed in him there". Thank God He left; many souls entered the Kingdom of God, as a result. His assignment was not prematurely cut off! He continued His God-assigned task of glorifying the Father, rather than allowing men to shorten His days and deny those who believed, the gift of eternal life.

The biblical references given above show instances where Jesus had to leave or hide for His safety so that He could continue to walk in the will and purposes of His Father.

Many Christian women need to know that God actually gives directions to go, like He did with Joseph, with the Magi, with Jesus, and others. The Church


needs to have a conviction that obedience to God trumps obedience to man, and saving a life is of a higher spiritual and natural order than saving a marriage; especially one in which the husband has broken and smashed the covenant to smithereens with his violence and abuse.

The Church should encourage the Christian woman who is faced with equally life or soul-endangering circumstances, to gain insight from Jesus and duplicate the same objective of staying in the Father's will, walking in obedience to Him, and following His directive, *should* He move her, as He did Jesus, Joseph, and others, in withdrawing from dangerous people.

By Dr. Chloe Cummings

Author of *What Would Jesus Do About Domestic Violence and Abuse Towards Christian Women?*

www.wjtdaboutdomesticviolence.com



The Knots Prayer

Dear God:
Please untie the knots
that are in my mind,
my heart and my life.
Remove the have nots,
the can nots and the do nots
that I have in my mind.

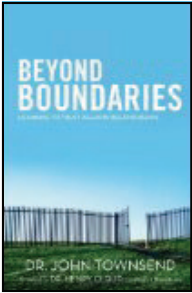
Erase the will nots,
may nots,
might nots that may find
a home in my heart.

Release me from the could nots,
would nots and
should nots that obstruct my life.

And most of all,
Dear God,
I ask that you remove from my mind,
my heart and my life all of the 'am nots'
that I have allowed to hold me back,
especially the thought
that I am not good enough.
Amen

Author Known To God

Book Review



BEYOND BOUNDARIES

By Dr. John Townsend

You have learned how to set boundaries. A relationship has been severed. Pain and hurt resulted. Now what? How do you learn to trust again?

God created us to live in relationship with him and others. Longing to be connected dwells within our hearts. Fears of being hurt again keep us stuck in loneliness and disconnection. This book will help guide you as you move from past hurts to relationships that are healthy and fulfilling.



Words that Heal

“All who rage against you
will surely be ashamed and disgraced;
those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish.

Though you search for your enemies,
you will not find them. . .

For I am the Lord, your God,
who takes hold of your right hand and says to you,
Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid.”

Isaiah 41:11-14 NIV

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
- **Trainers** to assist in our training seminars
- **TEEN FOCUS team** to develop the teen program
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **FOCUS Ministries** was featured on two radio programs

- **CEU Sponsor** for Counselors & Social Workers

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

- **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

Author, Editor and Publisher: Paula Silva
Copyright © 2011 FOCUS Ministries, Inc.. All Rights Reserved

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.

- **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
- **December 2, 2011—Ladies Night Out “Fun”draiser**, Villa Park, IL
- **March 30-31, 2012—Partners in the Journey:** Train the Trainer FOCUS (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **June 29-30, 2012—Partners in the Journey:** Train the Trainer FOCUS (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL

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

Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries



Please consider making your online purchases from Shaklee through:
www.focusmin.myshaklee.com/us/en/ A portion of your purchase will be credited toward FOCUS Ministries. More on: [Shaklee](#)



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.



Please Choose FOCUS as your favorite charity at iGive.com. You can help FOCUS Ministries when you make online purchases! For more information, please visit <http://www.focusministries1.org/igive.asp>.