

Fear . . . Deliverance . . . Hope . . .

As I sit gazing out of my window, I am fascinated by the glistening snow that is falling. Each snowflake is covering the deadness of nature bringing a sparkling beauty that radiates in the moonlight. It gives a sense of purity where there was once ugliness and dirtiness. The brisk, cold wind thrashes the snow in all directions exhibiting its mighty power keeping the snowy covering intact. Yet just one warm, sunny day diminishes the covering and reveals the deadness of the life that once was.

When the harsh, chilling wind of life encompasses us, we long for the blanket of snow to cover the ugly wounds we carry inside.

We present a sense of purity on the outside, but our heart reveals another truth, a deadness within. Doubts lurk; doubts about God and doubts about ourselves. Engulfing these doubts are anxiety and fear. Panic is around the corner.

Racing thoughts burst forth from the pit in which we dwell.

- How can God love me when I have failed so many times?

- Will God really protect and provide for my children and me when the world doesn't seem to care and the church has turned its back?
- What if people truly see the real me?
- Can I really trust God, His word, and promises?

The shattered pieces of life are held together with our makeshift glue. We delude ourselves into thinking that no one can see the cracks from the outside. We long to have a covering like snow to project an image that everything is fine and under control. Yet our mounting fears and anxiety begin to ooze from between the cracks.

The Israelites fleeing Egypt also had many fears. Their lives had been shattered by slavery and captivity. The dominance and unrealistic expectations of the Egyptians had so demoralized and abused the Israelite nation.

Many thoughts must have been rushing through their mind as they fled for their very lives not knowing where they were headed.



- What would the Egyptians do to them if they captured them?
- Would God provide for their needs?
- Would God truly make a way of escape when all they could see was the Red Sea before them and the Egyptians behind?
- Why did we leave the familiar and go to the unknown?

Reassurance of God's presence was given them in Exodus 14:15 (NIV).

“Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see

today you will never see again. ***The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.***”

As we face our difficult circumstances, inner fears can begin to surface.

- Are we willing to give up control to God and be still in His presence alert to His answers?
- Do we trust that God is working things out for our best in His time frame?
- Do we allow our thoughts to become negative filled with anxiety?
- Do we believe that God is for us not against us?

To fight these fears, we only need to turn to Scripture where God’s character is evident. In Exodus 14:19-20 (NIV), God was leading the Israelites out of Egypt protecting them with the angel of the Lord. He guided them by a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. When the Egyptians were close behind, the Lord proved once again His faithfulness.

“Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.”



God not only provided protection in front, but He had their back. When daylight came, the Israelites experienced further miraculous signs that God was with them.

- Can you imagine their faces when the Red Sea parted?
- Can you envision their thoughts while crossing on dry land with the Egyptians in pursuit?
- Can you hear the Israelites gasp when the waters poured over the Egyptians killing them?
- Can you visualize the relief they felt when they knew they were safe?

God covered the Israelites’ doubts, anxiety, and fears not with snow that melts but with His very presence. He was their shield, shelter, and refuge.

In Psalm 91, we find these reassuring words. *“He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings your will find refuge; His faithful-*

ness will be your shield and rampart.”

Feathers are soft, gentle, and comforting. They provide warmth for the soul, protection from the cold, dark times of life, rest for the weary and peace for the troubled heart.

This is the covering that we have access to as believers in Jesus Christ. The covering is not to mask our sin but to protect us from Satan's attacks and temptations.

Whatever crisis we are facing, relational difficulties, financial losses, or uncertainty, God is there. We need to position ourselves under His covering acknowledging that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. Protection, guidance, peace, and joy will follow. Healing is at hand.

Where is your focus? Is it on fixing the problem so life works and fears disappear or is it trusting the One who fights for you?

Stand firm

for your deliverance

is coming.

Be still before the Lord.

By Paula Silva



Letters/E-Mail

Dear FOCUS:

Breaking free began inside of me. I know many women whose healing begins when they leave their abuser. For me, I had to heal quite a bit in order to leave my abuser. I believed him when he abused me. Because I viewed myself the same way he did, I didn't see it as abuse. When he would tell me if I were any kind of mother, my kids wouldn't misbehave, it rang true with the deep wounds in my soul. . .

God had to redefine me before I could realize I was being abused. God had to strengthen me before I could stand, somewhat wobbly at first, and say, "No more abuse. I exist. I count. This is my life too and I will never be abused again." That process of standing is something I am profoundly thankful for. I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death. I know that He is faithful. I know that nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.

—Email



Words That Heal

If you make the Most High
your dwelling—
Even the Lord, who is my refuge—
Then no harm will befall you ,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For He will command His angels
concerning you to guard you
in all your ways; they will lift you up in
their hands, so that you will not strike
your foot against a stone."

Psalm 91:9-12
NIV

FOCUS Support Groups

- Conway, **AR**
Sundays 3 p.m.
- Brandon, **FL**
The second or third Saturday
of each month
- Eustis, **FL**
Saturdays 10 a.m. to Noon.
- Bolingbrook, **IL**
Monday - 5:30-7:00 p.m.
Saturday - 2:00-3:30 p.m.
- Lyons, **IL**
Last Friday of every month
6:30-9 p.m.
- Naperville, **IL**
Second Thursday of every
month 7 p.m.
- Wood Dale, **IL**
Second Thursday at 7:00 -
9:30 p.m.
- Hartville, **OH**
The second and fourth
Thursday of every month at
6:30 p.m.
- Lynnwood, **WA**
Wednesdays 6:30 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.



Train the Trainer

FOCUS Support Group Leaders Training Weekend

April 16-17, 2010

Does this describe you?

Do you have . . .

- * A personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- * A growing relationship with Christ (2 Peter 3:18) in which you strive to become more and more like Him in your actions and attitudes
- * Concern for hurting people—reaching out to listen, comfort, support, and help in practical ways
- * A desire to serve others—leading with a servant-like, non-judgmental attitude instead of a know-it-all superiority
- * The determination to set aside adequate time to prepare for meetings

Are you . . .

- * A trustworthy person who can maintain confidentiality
- * Willing to learn—committed to educating yourself by reading books and articles, listening to radio and television programs, attending seminars, etc. on applicable subjects
- * Faithful to God and willing to be faithful to a support group in following through with what you

have committed to

- * Feeling inadequate to lead a group, but aware of God's leading into this ministry, and secure in His strength to overcome your weakness
- * Aware of the need for a support group in your church or community

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*)

*Join us at our
Train the Trainer
Comfort Inn
Oakbrook Terrace, IL*

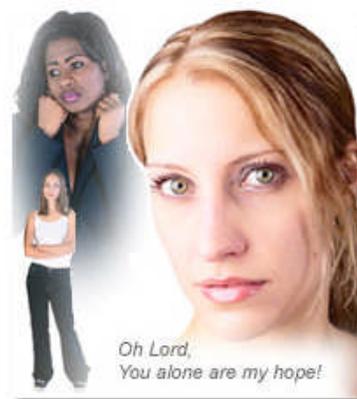
Session 1: Starting the Journey

- **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*)

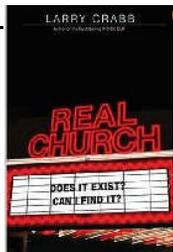
Session 2: What's in the Knapsack?

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

*Register online at
www.focusministries1.org or
download the Train the
Trainer brochure and register
by mail.*



Book Review



Real Church Does It Exist? Can I Find It? By Larry Crabb

During these uncertain times, people are reaching out to anything that appears religious. Some are even going to as many religious places as they can to cover themselves.

What is the hunger within our souls that drives us to find a community in which our heart resonates? How will we know when we have found the “real church”?

Larry Crabb states, “A gathering becomes a church when people meet for the supreme purpose, not to enjoy life, not to help others enjoy life, not to persuade others to find life in Jesus, but to become like Jesus in their motives, thoughts, and attitudes—all for the pleasure of the Father.”

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.

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.

FOCUS Ministries 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

Other Topics:

- Behind Closed Doors: Hope for Women in Difficult Relationships
- Unmasking Relationships
- What Color is Your Elephant?
- Shhhh...Don't Tell

Learning to Laugh Again

A friend asked me once who my favorite storybook character was and I told her that I am Belle, in the story of the Beauty and the Beast, living in a castle full of books, trapped in an unhappy and abusive relationship. I have always wanted to have a storybook life, but mine turned out to be more like Jekyll and Hyde, horror and tragedy instead of romance.

For 17 years, I projected the image of a happily married successful career woman. In reality, I was a battered wife married to a drug dependent. On the 2nd year of our marriage he got hooked on drugs, but the abuse started earlier, on the 3rd month. It was a cycle of abuse, peace, violence and repentance.

During these years, there would be times that I would be so bitter and angry with God. I questioned God why a decent woman like me had to end up with a life of drugs and violence. I couldn't understand why God would not grant me the only thing I ever wished for, my storybook family. There was a time I stopped praying and did not go to church. How can God watch all of this and be silent?

Sometime in July 2003, my husband and I had a fight about his drug use. He accused me of having an affair. The story became so real in his mind that he started to hit me. It was a beating episode too painful to recall. After the beating, he sent all of us, my four kids and I, out of the house in the rain. That night I was feverish. The doctor said my body was suffering from trauma and shock. Up to now, my kids could not forget that memory of my swollen, discolored and bruised face. I separated from him.

In an effort to find answers, I attended a weekend retreat. Here, they talked about the unconditional love of God, a father who would love me without expectations, who would not condemn my mistakes and who knows my darkest secrets. I have been a Christian

since 1988, but it was only in this retreat that I really surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. His death on the cross had a personal meaning to me. Jesus showed me how brutally he was abused on the cross, how he was beaten, kicked, slapped. I decided to entrust my life to the only person who knew exactly what I went through. After this retreat, I decided to give my husband another chance. My new relationship with God gave me strength. God also led me to a discipler with whom I developed a relationship of trust and confidence. She guided me to the biblical principles that were more applicable to my situation and it gave me courage.

But the drugs and abuse got worse. I tried my best to save my marriage, but it became a cycle of mistakes. After much prayer and counseling, I decided to separate.

In my journey to recovery, God taught me valuable lessons in life: (1) I should have obeyed my parents. They didn't feel right about him, but they couldn't tell me why. On hindsight, I realize that was parental wisdom from God. (2) I lived a life of denial. I should have been honest and asked for help from my parents. (3) God taught me the lesson of trusting Him. He showed me how in the absence of a husband and father for my children, He will take care of us. When I look back, I realized that it was pride that kept me imprisoned in that nightmare. The thought that I would end up with a broken marriage was unbearably shameful.

I joined Glorious Hope Ministry, a Recovery Program that deals with various life issues. Counselors helped me process the anger that my children and I felt. I listened to people talk about their past and how drugs messed up their lives. The small group discussions where I met people like me became a venue for me to understand my past and maybe even my husband. As

I got to know the people and witnessed their small victories of actual days that they have been sober. I realized how real the struggle was and I saw the other end of dependency. It was a step to be healed from my past, this time God's way, not mine.

It has been a long and lonely journey from darkness into the light, one which I told God that if I survived I would tell my story. I am filled with excitement on how God will use my broken life in His master plan. Last year, I was asked to give my testimony to a group of abused women in Haven, Center for Women. The Directress saw how the women related to me and allowed us to conduct Bible studies and the Purpose Driven Life Series. I am now in the midst of an exciting opportunity to share the word of God to these abused women. All my pain is now beginning to make sense. My life may turn out to be a beautiful story after all. This time, my worth will be defined by God not by what my marriage turns out to be.

In Isaiah 61 God said: He will release me and restore me and give me back my heart and set me free. I used to be so scared that people will find out my dark secret and judge me. When Jesus entered my life, I was set free from the pretense and that abusive relationship.

As for the father of my children, I have taken small steps in forgiving him. I am beginning to be a whole person again. I am learning to laugh again. In an abusive marriage, it is easy to lose oneself. The love of Jesus made me realize I am a daughter of God. I am a woman worthy of an irreplaceable part in God's story. God, the real author of life, is rewriting my story and may just give me my storybook ending, after all. To God be all the glory.

Author—L.F.
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Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- **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:

- Guest on WMBI (Moody Radio) Prime Time America
- FOCUS Ministries was

featured in the *Just Between Us Magazine*, Fall 2009

- **TEEN FOCUS** manual has been completed and released
- Rachel Mohn as part time Marketing/Public Relations Coordinator
- Brenda Spivey as part time National Support Group Coordinator

Prayer Requests:

- 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 be able to hire Brenda Spivey as vice president of FOCUS Ministries..
- Board members to serve on the FOCUS board
- 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 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.



Upcoming Events

- **Feb. 28 & March 7, 2010**— The Other ProLife Movement at Evangel Baptist Church, Wheaton, IL
- **March 6, 2010**—Presentation at Wheaton Christian Center, Wheaton, IL
- **March 12, 2010**—Church Insider Talk Radio
- **April 16 & 17, 2010** —**Train the Trainer** (training for support group leaders), Oakbrook Terrace, 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 2010 is quickly filling up!

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

A Woman's Journey to God Retreat

Divine Romance

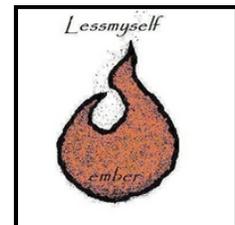
As you explore the story of your life, you'll get a glimpse of God's heart and the great romance He initiated before the dawn of time.

Redemption

Every person's story is pierced by wounds with powerful messages like "You'll never be good enough." From the pain of every day living to attacks from the enemy who fears who you are and what you might become, each person struggles to find truth, hope, and redemption.

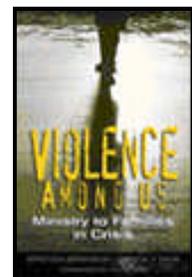
Release

If lies, fear, and doubt did not stalk and paralyze your heart, what kind of woman would you be? What does God think of you? See yourself through God's eyes and learn how to celebrate and release the woman God had in mind when He made you!



Lessmyself
Album: Ember
Song: *Safe Place*

<http://www.myspace.com/lessmyself>



Paula Silva, Coauthor



P.O. Box 2014
Elmhurst, IL 60126

Phone: 630-595-7023
www.focusministries1.org

Endorsements:

"The church has long been blind to a serious problem and has missed many opportunities to minister to women who are being oppressed, battered, and emotionally abused through the misuse of power and scripture within the covenant of marriage. Focus Ministries seeks to remedy this through education, counseling, practical resources, small groups, and emotional support. Focus Ministries provide a godly lifeline to those who have lost all hope. The church needs Focus Ministries to help them learn how to wisely help these troubled families. I enthusiastically recommend their ministry."

**Leslie Vernick LCSW, Christian counselor, speaker,
author of *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship: Seeing It! Stopping It! Surviving It!***

"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

- ★ Make GoodSearch your search engine for the internet. Choose FOCUS Ministries as the ministry you support. FOCUS Ministries receives a penny for every search you do. It does not cost you anything.
- ★ When purchasing anything from Amazon.com, go to our website first, www.focusministries1.org, click on the Amazon.com icon, and Amazon will donate a small percentage of your purchased amount. This does not cost you anything.
- ★ Please Choose FOCUS as your favorite charity at iGive.com. You can help FOCUS Ministries when you make online purchases! For more information, please see: [Help FOCUS at iGive.com](http://www.focusministries1.org) on our website, www.focusministries1.org.
- ★ You can help FOCUS Ministries when you make online purchases! For more information, please see: [Help FOCUS at iGive.com](http://www.focusministries1.org)



- ★ The Hope Pendant from the Truth Collection and other jewelry can be purchased from Compelling Creations by website, www.focusministries1.org. FOCUS Ministries will receive a portion of each purchase. Referral Code: 1068502

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