

Lord, Are You Still There?

With her dreams in her hand and hope for the future, Pat walked down the long aisle of her church to marry a Christian man who was well liked. As she gazed into his eyes, a moment of doubt flashed before her. Dismissing it as wedding jitters, she spoke her vows with a smile on her face. After all she was older and much wiser now.

She headed for her new life leaving an excellent job, friends, family, and church to move to another state foreign to her. As they drove up the long driveway, she noted the remoteness of the area. The promise of a house on the lake slowly slipped away.

As she moved her things into his house, she realized how damp, cold and dreary it was. She determined to make it a cheery place. She soon learned there were limitations placed on her by her new spouse. The words, "there's no money" rang in her ears. When she offered to get a job, she was told that a *submissive* wife does not work outside the home.

She put her creative ability together and used items she had brought with to decorate her new home. This was difficult to do for she was not allowed to turn on lights whether it was day or night. The gloominess of the home began to

match the dreariness of the outside. It seemed there were endless days of no sunlight.

Noticing her demeanor had changed and her depression had increased, she sought to find others to build a relationship. There was no one around for miles. No place to walk to. No car to drive. Her husband would take her to a grocery store or to church once in a while. She was instructed not to interact with anyone unless he was present.

Phone calls were restricted and mail was limited. Isolation became intense and loneliness set in. If she mustered enough courage to state how she felt, he would rage and attack her. Fear became a constant companion.

More and more she realized she had made a huge mistake by marrying. She began to feel that God was punishing her by letting her suffer the consequences of her decision for the rest of her life. She felt God had withdrawn His love for her and inside her spirit was dying.

Realizing her husband had become the enemy of her soul, she felt trapped and caged like an animal. Although the windows had no bars, Pat felt like a prisoner in her own home. She needed help.



By candlelight, she began to read Scripture almost fearing that God would point His finger at her like a scolding father. Yet something was drawing her to the Bible that she held in her hands. The same hands that had once held her dreams.

The passage in Isaiah 61 caught her eye. "*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, ("That's me," she thought.) to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,*" ("I have been in darkness. Are you really going to release me. Lord, what do I do?" Pat stated out loud.)

"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those

who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.”
 (“Could I possibly be redeemed and restored?”)

As the candlelight flickered, Pat pondered the passage of Scripture. She did not see a way out of the captivity, but she chose to pray for release and direction. She did not know that it would come in just a couple of weeks when she received permission to visit her son in another area of the world.

During her flight, she began to feel the heaviness of the darkness lifting. Doubts, though, began to permeate her mind. Had she done the right thing by leaving? Did God actually still love her?

As she journeyed to see her son, she made one stop along the way. There she met a godly woman who could understand her experiences. Slowly Pat began to reveal her story. The woman listened intently without judgment. As the story unfolded, Pat began to express her doubts regarding God’s love for her.

The godly woman began to share Romans 8 in which God declares there is nothing that can separate us from His love. With eyes closed, a mental picture of climbing up in God’s lap came into view as He gently, drew her close to His chest, and whispered, “I love you!” Tears began to flow from her eyes as God’s presence enveloped her. Pat whispered, “He does love me.” Moments turned into minutes as she basked in God’s love finding refuge in the safety of His arms. God was in the process of restoring her by releasing her from the prison of domestic violence by providing a safe



place where she could become the woman God intended her to be.

Pat rejoiced at her new found freedom and hope when she turned her focus on the Lord instead of her circumstances. “I am truly safe,” she thought.

“:He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. . . Surely He will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge. . .”
 Psalm 91:1, 3-4 NIV

“Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.” Psalm 16:1 NIV

Women and families experiencing domestic violence are looking for a **safe place**.

- Safe place to tell the secret of the oppression they are experiencing
- Safe place to live and thrive with renewed hope
- A Safe church where they will be believed and helped
- Safe people who will love and support them

Is the Christian community providing a safe place?

"Safe Place"

She grew numb to the pain, she got good at excuses

From all the years living with pain, trying to cover up the bruises

She wanted to run, she wanted to hide

Looking for a place he'd never find her

Ghosts from her past, running through her mind

She hoped to leave them all behind her

All she ever wanted was to find a safe place.

She ran into the arms, of someone who'd never judge her

He wiped away all her tears, she knew that He would always love her

Now she knows where to run, she knows where to hide

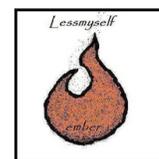
And she's staying right where he can find her

Ghosts from her past, never cross her mind

She left them all behind her

She found all she wanted, when she found a safe place

In the arms of Jesus



Song: Safe Place
Artist: Lessmyself
Album: Ember
Label: TMG

Writers: David Trippe,
Mike Edmonds, Josh Cooper

Article based on a true story
 by Paula Silva



Letters/E-Mail

Dear FOCUS:

I have such a messy story. I wish I would have documented things. It's so long to write about. I let him beat me down emotionally to the point I didn't think clearly at the time of the divorce and agreed to some things I wouldn't have agreed to if I'd have the clarity of mind and finances.

Now I live at the poverty level and am isolated. I work a job that barely pays and don't see a bright cloud anywhere.

—Email

Editor's note: Often women in destructive relationships have minds that have been traumatized by the abuse they have suffered. Lack of clarity and focus can become evidence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which is common for those who have experienced domestic violence.

For this woman to move forward, she has to let go of the "I should have" one by one. Grieve the loss and find something that is positive in her life like having a job and being safe. It is a difficult process that will release the despair within. You can't change the past, but you can make a choice to change the present and future.



Words That Heal

"One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord.
All the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple

For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling;

He will hide me in the shelter of the tabernacle and set me high upon a rock

Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me;

At His tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;

I will sing and make music to the Lord."

Psalms 27:4-6

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**
Thursday evenings 7-8 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. - 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.



Behind the Mask

The theme of FOCUS Ministries' First Fundraiser was *Behind the Mask*. I think that is fitting in the area of domestic abuse because so many women spend most of their lives there - *Behind the Mask*.

As a survivor, we sometimes forget what it was like going to work, caring for children, sitting in class, singing in the choir, teaching in children's church, being a neighbor, a daughter, a sister, or a friend. We forget what wearing a mask through life in all those roles felt like. Looking back, I wonder, did people really know us? Did we even know ourselves?

The word *mask* means: a) a cover or partial cover for the face used for a disguise, b) to conceal from view, c) to make indistinct or imperceptible, and d) to cover for protection. Victims of abuse and violence learn to cover their faces with smiles, sometimes constant humor, criticism toward others (not the abuser), religion, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, and silence. They wear the mask so well many people actually think they know them. These victims blend into families, companies, organizations, schools, and churches. Their disguise allows them to survive day after day in secret.

Victims conceal from view the many emotional, psychological, and spiritual wounds in much the same way they conceal from view their physical wounds, scars, and bruises. The mask of a victim conceals abuse - both seen and unseen by the natural eye. How many times have we looked at a woman we know and for some reason, we just do not understand and feel that something strange is going on with her? How many times have we thought there maybe abuse in that woman's life? There just was not enough to distinguish whether it was actually abuse or not. You perceive there is a problem with her, but you

just cannot pinpoint the problem as being domestic abuse. Maybe she wears a partial mask; always involved on some committee, overly involved in the lives of others, fights for causes, a wonderful neighbor or friend.

Sadly, victims of abuse hide behind the mask for protection. They do not hide behind the mask for protection from the abuser, but protection from others who may learn of the abuse. Why is this? We do not know. However, we do know that the longer she stays behind the mask, the longer it is before help can find its way to her door.

Always looking for just one person they can truly trust, victims of abuse may take years to open up their lives to someone. Trust is very difficult for the abused woman. Imagine what it feels like to finally get the courage to share that part of your world to someone only to find out they have shared it with someone else. Also, imagine how you would feel if you finally shared with someone who did not take your dilemma serious or they somehow reworded what you shared and made you feel the situation was all your fault and not that of the abuser. I have seen this time and time again. It is no wonder many women in abusive situations continue to keep the secret and stay behind the mask.

Paraphrased in Luke 4:18, Jesus declared that He was sent to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and to release the oppressed. When a woman has been in an abusive relationship for a long time she may begin to feel and act like a prisoner, someone bound and cannot get free. Oftentimes, after many years of abuse, the things that happen in

the mind of a victim seem to add to her bondage making it very difficult to help her move forward. For this reason, it is very important to be an educated helper. If you have not been properly trained to assist someone experiencing domestic abuse, help them find someone who is.

By Brenda Spivey

Brenda Spivey FOCUS Support Group Coordinator

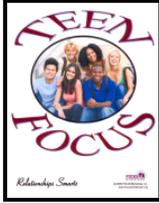


- ★ **BA in Communication and Women's Issues from DePaul University**
- ★ **Domestic Violence Presenter at Workshops/Seminars/Classrooms**
- ★ **Trainer at FOCUS Train the Trainer Seminar for Support Group Leaders**
- ★ **FOCUS Support Group Leader with 40 hours of DV Training**
- ★ **Coauthor of TEEN FOCUS Curriculum**

Brenda remarks:

"I believe I am sent to mend the brokenhearted and to help people discover their God-given Assignments. After years of abuse and bondage, God freed me. If He never does another thing for me, I am eternally grateful for that freedom. In Christ, I am free to live the life I always dreamed about. Nothing is impossible with God!"

Book Review



TEEN FOCUS Relationships Smarts

By Paula Silva and Brenda Spivey

Section 1: Who Am I?

Developing the teen's self-concept by evaluating themselves through their eyes, other's eyes, and God's eyes.

Section 2: Healthy Relationships

Defining healthy relationships, comparing relationships within the life of a teen, and applying this knowledge to dating relationships

Section 3: Who's Behind the Wheel?

Identifying abusive relationships, applying boundaries, and practical steps to stop abusive relationships

Each section includes activities and handouts. Permission to copy is given. TEEN FOCUS manual may be purchased at www.focusministries1.org.

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



Warning Signs for Teen Relationships

Teens are bombarded by violent media. The subtle introduction of disrespect and berating verbal language has occurred causing our teens to be insensitive to the violent nature of what is being presented.

Enticing commercials and cultural norms develop an attitude of entitlement. Self-absorption is reinforced. These attitudes permeate relationships that can ultimately destroy a teen's self image and spirit. This is becoming evident in the statistics now published.

- 1 in 4 teen relationships are abusive.
- 1 in 3 teenagers report knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, choked or physically hurt by their partner.
- Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend had threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a break-up.
- 13% of teenage girls who said they have been in a relationship report being physically hurt or hit.
- More than 1 in 4 teenage girls in a relationship (26%) report enduring repeated verbal abuse.
- Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser.

We find evidence of abuse occurring not only in boy/girl relationships, but girls are bullying other girls and boys are being violent with other boys. Patterns of behavior are being established which will affect relationships into their adulthood years.

It is important for teens to learn how to choose their traveling companions wisely and be aware of signs that point to abusive behavior that seeks to control another.

Teens look forward to driving. The person behind the steering wheel is in control of the car. The passenger is at the mercy of the driver and safety can become an issue. Knowing the signs of unhealthy relationships are essential.

Warning Signs

Does he/she . . .

- ⊗ Become jealous of your other relationships?
- ⊗ Call, text, or email numerous times during a day?
- ⊗ Expect an immediate phone call or text back?
- ⊗ Often make the decisions of where to go, what to do, and when?
- ⊗ Demand that you spend most of your time with them?
- ⊗ Call you names or threaten you?
- ⊗ Often criticize your appearance?
- ⊗ Hit, kick, punch, shove, or physically hurt you when they are angry?
- ⊗ Often have angry outbursts?
- ⊗ Blame you for their problems and behavior?
- ⊗ Treat you nicely in public, but demean and hurt you in private?
- ⊗ Become easily angered or irritated?
- ⊗ Disrespect your parents?

- ⊗ Demand an exclusive relationship?
- ⊗ Criticize your friends and family?
- ⊗ Make you do things you are not comfortable doing?
- ⊗ Stalk you?
- ⊗ Attack or make fun of your beliefs and opinions?
- ⊗ Demean or joke about you in the presence of others?
- ⊗ Require sex in any form from you?

Do you . . .

- ⊗ Feel the need to always defend yourself?
- ⊗ Have to give an accounting of your time when you are away from him/her?
- ⊗ Need to ask permission to do something that does not include him/her?
- ⊗ Feel afraid of him/her?
- ⊗ Feel that you cannot do some of the activities you once did because he/she does not want you to?
- ⊗ Feel your thoughts, opinions, and feelings are not being considered?
- ⊗ Make excuses for his/her behavior?

Recognizing these warning signs is the first step in removing oneself from a destructive relationship. Tell a trustworthy person, seek help and resources, and take the next step to be completely safe. No one can do it alone. It is a matter of choice.

By Paula Silva

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**— Speaking at Evangel Baptist Church, Wheaton, IL
- **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

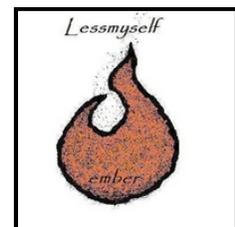
As you explore the story of your life, you'll get a glimpse of God's heart and the great romance He initiated before the dawn of time.

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.

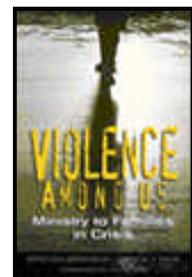
Release

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



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

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