

In the Hands of God

Have you ever experienced an unbelievable storm in your life? You have been plummeted by hurricane force winds that send you spinning in all directions unable to get your footing. Days turn into weeks and weeks into months and months into years. You struggle wondering if you will survive. You cry out. "Help! Why, God, why?"

Yet one day your world stops spinning. The storm diminishes. There is a calmness in the air. You feel like you are in a battered boat alone in the ocean. Your directional instruments have been shattered.

You look to the sky for direction, but all you see are gray clouds. The sun is hidden by day and the moon and stars at night are not visible. All sense of direction is lost.

You know land is out there somewhere filled with people who could help, food and water to feed the hunger, and hope for the future. But where?

It occurs to you that the anchor is in the ocean holding you steady. You don't remember

throwing the anchor overboard though.

Puzzled you search for answers.

- What made the storm stop?
- Who threw the anchor into the ocean?
- What kept you and the boat in tacked through the raging storm?
- Who will point the way to land?

The calmness of the outer world begins to permeate your heart. Fear is replaced with a sense of peace that is beyond understanding. Tears fill your eyes when you realize the storm is over.

You hear a still small voice. "*Be still and know that I am God. I will guide you and lead you just like I did for those who believed in me in Scripture. Trust Me.*"

"Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. **He stilled the storm to a whisper;** the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and **He guided**



them to their desired haven."

Psalm 107:28-30 (NIV)

Haven is defined as place of safety or a harbor where shelter may be found from the weather. The Lord is our haven. He is the one who anchors our soul and protects us from the storm's destruction that rages in our life. He calms our escalating anxieties and fears. It is there in God's hands that we find rest for our battered, weary souls, but we must give up control of our "fixing" ability and humble ourselves before Him.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."
 I Peter 5:6-7 NIV

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

You long for the haven for your discouraged spirit, yet your trust level is practically at the bottom of the pit. Your mind begins to fill with questions. If you reach out for help, will you be betrayed, viciously hurt, and condemned again? Will the intense storm return with a vengeance?

Trust begins with the One

- Who delivered you from the storm
- Who never left your side
- Whose character has been proven in Scripture
- Who cares and loves you with an everlasting love.

The Lord reveals His power through our trials and sufferings. These mold us into the vessels God created us to be. In our desperation, we draw closer to God and faith and hope is built. We come to the realization that we can actually rejoice as we reflect on God’s glory and power as it was revealed in the storm.

“And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and



character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.” Romans 5:2b-5 NIV

In the safe harbor of the Lord, we come face to face with the war within our own soul, things we could not see because we were in survival mode. As these come to the surface, the Lord gently makes us aware of our own shortcomings which enabled or contributed to the strife we experienced.

- Were we looking for someone’s approval?
- Were we afraid to set consistent boundaries?
- Were consequences given when boundaries were broken?
- Did our anger take control when injustices were inflicted?
- Did we adopt someone else’s view of us as our identity?
- Did we try to fix the problem at all cost?

- Did we put all our focus on the problem and the person and not on God first?
- Did we notice God’s fingerprints throughout the nightmarish journey or were we blinded to God’s presence?

In spite of our part in the storm, God does not give up on us. He does not tell us that we will never measure up. He does not withdraw His love from us and say we are a lost cause.

He desires for us to discover what can be learned from our experiences. The Lord is our cheering squad rooting for us as we run the race of life. He knows we can do it **with Him**.

In the words of the song, *The Words I would Say*, by Sidewalk Prophets,

“Be strong in the Lord and, Never give up hope,
You're going to do great things,
I already know,

**God's got His hand on you so,
Don't live life in fear,**
Forgive and forget,
But don't forget why you're here,

Take your time and pray,
Thank God for each day,
His love will find a way,
These are the words I would say.”

These Simple Truths Album

By Paula Silva

THE WILL OF GOD

From the Pastor's Pen (Rodney Stortz)

The will of God will never take you

Where the Grace of God cannot keep you...
Where the Arms of God cannot support you...
Where the Riches of God cannot supply your needs...
Or where the Power of God cannot endow you.

The Will of God will never take you

Where the Spirit of God cannot work through you...
Where the Wisdom of God cannot teach you...
Where the Army of God cannot protect you...
Or where the Hands of God cannot mold you.

The Will of God will never take you

Where the Love of God cannot enfold you...
Where the Mercies of God cannot sustain you...
Where the Peace of God cannot calm your fears...
Or where the Authority of God cannot overrule for you.

The Will of God will never take you

Where the Comfort of God cannot dry your tears...
Where the Word of God cannot feed you...
Where the Miracles of God cannot be done for you...
Or where the Presence of God cannot find you.



Words That Heal

*My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.*

*I give them eternal life,
and they shall never perish;*

No one can snatch them out of my hand.

I and the Father are one.

John 10:27-30 NIV

*If the Lord delights in a man's way,
He makes his steps firm;*

Though he stumble, he will not fall,

For the Lord upholds him with his hand.

Psalm 37:23-24 NIV

*The salvation of the righteous
comes from the Lord;*

He is their stronghold in time of trouble.

Psalm 37:39 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.
- Hazel Crest, **IL**
Third Saturday of each month
- 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.



Symptoms of PTSD from Domestic Violence

Helen wanders through her day wondering why she feels the way she does. It has been months since she left her abusive relationship. Although she is no longer dealing with the abuse 24/7, she still feels like she is losing her mind. Triggers happen throwing her back into fearful remembrances. She asks why this is happening to her.

She begins to have panic attacks in random places like the grocery store. She notices a couple having a disagreement. Consciously she quickens her steps and heads for the checkout line trembling. Sometimes the panic attacks are so severe she ends up in the emergency room thinking she is having a heart attack.

She notices fear rises when she spots a particular model and color of car. She remembers the times she has been left on the side of the road abandoned by her partner. Filled with anxiety, she refuses to drive on a highway and chooses back roads. Panic sets in whenever she is a passenger in a car that is traveling on an expressway.

Helen like many others who experience domestic abuse or abusive relationships suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This can last years. Sometimes the severity diminishes over time. Being unfamiliar with PTSD, women can think that they are going crazy.

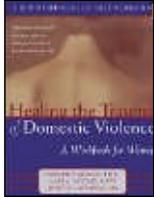
It is important to be aware of the effects of trauma whether it is physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual abuse. The identification of symptoms is crucial. Those with PTSD may exhibit a number of the symptoms but not all.

- Nightmares about an past or possible incidences of abuse
- Sleeplessness, disruptive sleep patterns, difficulty in falling asleep or staying asleep
- Waking up drench in sweat
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Nervousness, jumpy
- Memory flashbacks of past incidences that occur without warning
- Inability to relax and feel safe
- Confusion
- Unsolicited thoughts that are not attached to present life
- Isolating from others: friends, family, coworkers, etc
- Guilt over the abuse, (should have and what if's) especially when children are involved
- Lack of concentration
- Difficulty making decisions even over the smallest things
- Emotionally shutting down and feeling detached
- Crying all of a sudden
- Crying frequently
- Having suicidal thoughts
- Not comprehending what one is reading even when read over and over again
- Depression
- Sleeping a lot
- No motivation and lack of interest in life, job, children, hobbies, etc.
- Feeling helpless and hopeless
- Dwelling on an event and having a hard time letting go
- Clinging to people and things
- Easily angered
- Uncomfortable in crowds
- Feelings of insecurity
- Difficulty in trusting others even if there has been a good relationship in the past
- Feeling like they are going crazy
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Out of control emotions
- Recollection of abusive incidences when no triggers are present
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Avoidance of feelings and thoughts that remind one of the abuse
- Always watchful and hyper alert
- Experience grief as related to the abuse
- Experience panic attacks
- Fearful of being out of the home/development of phobias
- Physical reactions: tension, heart palpitations, upset stomach, etc.

Being aware of PTSD is the first step in healing from the trauma of domestic violence. Drawing close to the Lord and putting Him first is crucial. Counseling is a helpful. A useful tool would be the book, *Healing the Trauma of Domestic Violence: A Workbook for Women* by Edward S. Kubany, Mari A. McCaig and Janet R. Laconsay.

Article by Paula Silva

Book Review



Healing the Trauma of Domestic Violence: A Workbook for Women

by Edward S. Kubany, Mari A. McCaig
and Janet R. Laconsay.

This is an extensive workbook that walks a survivor of domestic violence step by step through the process of healing from the trauma. Exercises, questionnaires, and questions to ponder help the reader to evaluate their process of healing. These assist in determining one's emotional barometer and thinking processes.

Helpful information is provided to clearly define PTSD as it relates to abuse. Further instructions are given to learn to let go, confront fears, and make necessary changes.

The workbook is not a quick fix but an avenue to point one in the right direction. There is a purposeful, sequential order to the book. Diligently working through each page can be beneficial.

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

Island of Misfit Wives

First item on the agenda: we have a problem in the church. We need to have a fundraiser immediately (perhaps a bake-sale or a car wash) to raise enough money to purchase a small island. It would be the perfect solution for all those broken wives. They get in the way of really big projects, they are too easy to trip over (really a safety hazard), they die before our eyes and cause us too much stress, but, most important, they make us look less successful.

Why are these women broken?

Well, of course, we know they are relentlessly abused by their husbands. But we don't want to be lacking in compassion for men even though their wives have tried for so long to keep forgiving and hoping and to keep sticking with the marriage. Yes, these wives may be a shining example of the fruit of the Spirit. Yes, their patience and lack of selfishness may shame us all.

Yes, they may know spiritual warfare by heart, but they continue to break at last. Yes some have returned to a weeping, repentant husband only to be met at last with more severe attacks or death, but, you never know. One of those men could really be able to conquer his addiction. Choosing to be married to a man is risky and danger is just part of what a woman must accept. I mean, isn't a crime to abuse your own property, is it? They must keep risking for the sake of the larger principle of experimental reconciliation.

These misfit women often come to an end of their ability to survive with their husbands, and if we do as we know we should and severely discipline them for not reconciling

quickly and certainly, they make the whole church look like it lacks compassion or something. Obviously if God meant for them to live He would not let this happen. This is not our responsibility. However, perhaps, as I have suggested, we can purchase a small island for these misfits. We could take these problematic women there and wipe them from our list of problems.

The husbands would be free from these unfaithful women and could take new wives. Those new wives may live long enough so that they do not break so quickly, you see. We can not have the men deprived, you understand. It will be much easier to figure a doctrine to support this than to excuse a woman who thinks she should be loved and healed in her home and church. What do you mean that abuse and assault are very unfaithful? We will discuss that another time.



I wonder, though, what that island will be like after a time. It would be a place full of women who hung on faithfully, ahem, I mean dutifully, (...er...never mind) for so many years under crushing circumstances because of their intensely rich personal relationship with the Lord. They would need their Bibles because they live by them for every breathing moment. They have lost the ability to put them-

selves first, so they will be serving each other. They have learned to love the least loveable, so they will have strong friendships. They have worshiped the Lord even when they could not move or speak, so their worship will be different, but very real. They will perhaps begin to heal in such an atmosphere of peace. They will perhaps become strong to some extent once more. Hmm... This might be a real investment. We could turn it into the best resort haven in the world and the women could be required to provide free labor for their room and board. What if the men want the wives back? Well, I'm sure there will always be more to replace those who cannot recover as well as those who can no longer function. This could really work out well for us.

Well, yes, I do hope in Christ. Yes, we are His body to do God's ministry for His children. I suppose Psalm 146 is a good picture of how He responds to His people, but aren't the oppressed really only found in other countries and other times? I mean, this is the USA and we have a right to a dynamic and bright church experience. Those who get in the way of that are obviously out-of-sync cast-offs.

So, do you think the deaconesses will be willing to arrange the bake-sale?

We've gone overtime and my stomach is growling. Where's the pot-luck?

*By CLR
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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:

- **New support group** in

Hazel Crest, IL

- **Churches** that are just beginning to understand the dynamics of domestic violence
- **Women** who are coming to the support groups who are growing, learning, and making the necessary changes

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..
- Pray for 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

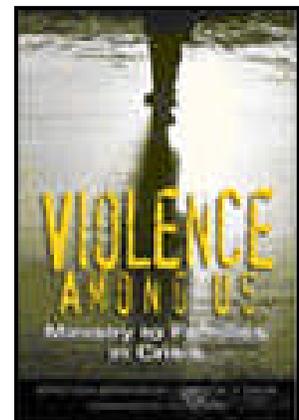
As you explore the story of your life, you'll get a glimpse of God's heart and the great romance He initiated before the dawn of time.

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!



Paula Silva, Coauthor

FOCUS DVD Promo -Safe Place

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGalZ8aBIMA>



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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 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



- ★ 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