

"Pit Living"

July/August 2010

There are days when we seem to be caught in the fog of life. Dreariness shadows our every move. Directional signals telling us which way to turn in our present situations allude us. So we wander aimlessly and fall head first into the darkness of the pit, the pit of despair.

Walls seem to close in on us. We grope around trying to get our bearings. The surface of the walls feel rough and jagged. One false move and we scrape ourselves. Fear and anxiety begin to engulf us. A beam of light shining from above is the only thing visible. The only way out is to make it to the top. But how?

Have you ever been one of those "pit people". Maybe you have fallen into that pit so many times that now it has become the norm, a familiar place to dwell. We begin decorating the walls with pictures throwing a bit of color here and there. We decide to move in furniture just to make it cozy. We rename our circumstances as "pit living".

We become accustomed to the shame we feel as we allow others to define who we are. "Pit person" becomes our label, the label that keeps us trapped in a situation that is detrimental to our well-being?

Joseph in Scripture did not fall into the pit but was actually tossed in by family members. "So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped

him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it."
 Genesis 37:23-24

According to Scripture, the brothers then sat down and ate. Joseph was probably crying out for help while standing in a cold, damp cistern alone. He had no robe to protect him from the elements.

Thoughts must have mounted up in him. A sense of betrayal must have been high on his list as he recalls their mocking words. "Here comes the dreamer!" (Genesis 37:39)

How was he going to get out without help? Would a ferocious animal jump into the pit and attack him? Would he eventually die for lack of water and food? How dare his brothers plot to kill him? Despair and anger must have filled his mind.

There must have been a sense of relief when he was eventually lifted out. The relief did not last long when he was sold to foreigners and taken to a land where he did not know the language.

In Egypt Joseph made the best of his circumstances, remained faithful to God, and rose to a position in Potiphar's house. In spite of his integrity, false accusations arose from Potiphar's wife and once

again Joseph was ordered into a pit of sorts for a longer period of time. This time others tried to place shame on him by blaming him for false charges.



While in prison, he served faithfully those that were there. He did not allow his circumstances to bring him to despair. There must have been moments of doubt as Joseph thought about the betrayals and false accusations. There must have been grief over the loss of home and family. Although it was out of Joseph's control to physically get out of the pit, he mentally chose not to accept "pit living". He chose to move into "victorious living" praising God in the midst of trouble. God provided a way out and raised Joseph to a high position in the kingdom.

Each one of us has the same choice. Is it going to be "pit living" full of shame and despair or "victorious living" praising our faithful God who never forsakes us.

The choice is yours!

By Paula Silva

Healing Shame

Just mentioning the word “shame” can bring on feelings of shame. It can make us want to crawl into the cushions of the furniture where we are sitting or blend into the walls. You don’t discuss shame at social events, but you can feel it while attending them.

Shame is the feeling that there is something intrinsically wrong with us. Not because of our actions, but because of our mere existence. Shame says “you are wrong” not “you did something wrong”. Shame is like mold. It permeates our relationships in all areas of our lives: home, work, church or hobby.

Our feeling that we lack value can be implied from our treatment from others. Sometimes parents use shame as a way to manipulate their children into behaving. Later in life teachers, coaches or bosses might use shame to motivate.

Shame isn’t just what we are feeling it’s also about our thinking. Shame comes from the filter you use as you experience daily life. If there is trauma in your past, your filter might look like the old, soiled one you take out of your furnace. The filter must be cleaned of the lies you are believing. “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” Romans 12:2.



- Read the truth of God’s Word.
- Read the book “Released From Shame” by Sandra Wilson, it will start the journey of finding out what is behind the lies.
- Go to Christian counseling and begin discovering what is behind the shame.
- Find a support group. A support group will let you know you are not alone and you will learn from hearing other’s stories.

All of these steps in the renewal process will give you a new, pristine filter.

Have you ever wondered how someone could give their testimony without appearing to feel any shame, especially if it includes things most people feel shame about such as: addictions, abuse or jail time. By discovering their true source of value, the God who created them in His image, lasting healing occurred.

Healing shame is so much more than having good self-esteem. It is discovering God as your true source of value and deciding you will only care what He says about you. You are so valuable that God

the Father sent his only son, Jesus, to die on the cross for all of your sins.

No human deserves the right to determine your value, only Him, your Creator and Savior. Who are you allowing to determine your value? Who have you made your idol?

Here are a few scriptures on how God values you:

- You are loved with an everlasting love – Jer. 31:3
- You are a Saint – Beginning of Paul’s letters – Rom.; 1Cor.; Eph; Phil.; Col.
- You are part of a royal priesthood – 1 Peter 2:9,10
- You are holy, blameless and covered with God’s love – Eph. 1:4
- You are a daughter/son of God and a sister/brother of Christ – Gal. 3:26-29

Study other scriptures on God’s love. Personalize them as you read them. Copy and post them in places you see daily. Have someone read them to you. Personalize and read them to your children.

Healing from shame takes time, but you will end up closer to God and the people in your life.

By Karen Ferguson

What's in Your Grip?

When life is chaotic and out of control, we have a tendency to hold on to areas of our life that are detrimental to our well-being. We hold onto:

LABELS

Labels become badges of negativity: ugly, fat, dumb, too sensitive, uncooperative, no talent or abilities, unlovable, reject, etc.

ANXIETY AND WORRY

Racing thoughts compounded by the "what if's" increases anxiety and worry. We become so accustomed to the chaos and trouble that peace and rest are absent.

Scripture reassures us. *"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*" Matthew 6:31-34 NIV

ANGER

Holding on to anger leads to bitterness and unforgiveness. This keeps us in bondage to our circumstances and can lead to vengeance. Since anger is a feeling, learning constructive ways to release it is critical.

SHAME

We compare ourselves to others who seem to have it altogether pointing out our failures and judging ourselves harshly. We long to be all that God created us to be and to experience His grace, but we have become stagnant in our perceptions telling ourselves we are not worthy of anything.

REGRETS

Have you ever played the game of "I should have", "If only", or "I could have?" We call these regrets. We keep ourselves in the pit of despair and self-condemnation playing the movie of "What might have been". We call this fiction. It never existed. Past actions and words can't be changed. They are history, yet we hold onto them as if our very lives depended on them creating our own fantasy world. .

OFFENSES

The wrongs that have been done to us keeps its grip on us as we replay the incidents in our mind seeing the lack of fairness and justice. Those offenses begin to control our lives and become a filtering system for future situations. Revenge may become our mode of reaction and anger rules our feelings.

FEAR

- Fear of making the wrong decision
- Fear of the future
- Fear of failing
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of learning something new

PAIN and HURTS

We play the victim role drawing others in to get attention. Most of us hold onto pain and hurts because it is so difficult to face realities about ourselves and our circumstances.

When we face these realities, it requires us to make necessary changes. Sometimes these changes are difficult because our lives become a whole lot worse before it gets better. It is much like having surgery to get rid of something that is harmful for your body. There is pain because of the surgery, yet in the future the pain will go away and the result will be the saving of your life.

TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

These are relationships that destroy who we are. It keeps us in constant turmoil trying to figure out how to fix the problem so there will be peace. It could be a spouse, dating relationship, a parent, our own child, a sibling, or a friend. There are questions we need to ask ourselves when we cling to toxic relationships.

- Ask yourself why you are holding on to them?
- Are you getting your identity from them?
- If you let them go, would your lifestyle that you are used to change?
- What is the need within you that drives you to continue to try to have a relationship with them?
- Are there fears of failure?

Everything we hold onto becomes our filtering system for our perceptions of current relationships and situations. We assume and judge people's actions according to our experiences. It may be difficult to maintain relationships because we put on a mask to hide what is inside. This prevents others from getting to know the true you. Authenticity is difficult.

Are we willing to let go and move forward on the healing journey? In letting go, we leave room in our heart to hold onto Jesus, our healer and hope.

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." Psalm 91:14-16

By Paula Silva

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:

- **Churches** that are just beginning to understand the dynamics of domestic violence
- **Development of webinars**
- **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. 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

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The mission of FOCUS Ministries is to provide a safe place for teens, women, and families who experience domestic violence and abusive relationships to find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

Funding: FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501 c3 organization funded by contributions and grants. **If you would like to help us minister to hurting people through our educational materials, support groups, counseling, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or online at www.focusministries1.org.** A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

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- **Sept. 10-11, 2010 —Train the Trainer** (training for support group leaders), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **Oct. 2, 2010**—Hidden Treasure, Second Annual Fundraiser, Calvary Church, Naperville, IL
- **Oct. 9, 2010**—**DV Training Seminar**, Emmanuel Bible Church, Berwyn, IL
- **Oct. 14-16, 2010**—**Gracious Women's Advance Conference**, Wheeling, IL
- **Nov. 21, 2010**—**Purple Event**, Calvary Church, Naperville, IL

If you would like the FOCUS team to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars or other speaking engagement.

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