

A Bruised Reed . . .

May/June 2011

A Smoldering Wick . . .

Close your eyes for a moment. Can you just picture God giddy with excitement as he was molding and shaping you in your mother's womb. Picture Him with a twinkle in His eyes singing as he worked. And just before you were born He passed that twinkle as a special mark of his perfection on you. Imprinted on you were the words, "God's Precious Daughter".

As you were born, your first cry echoed the room. Although your cry was not in understandable words, it expressed from your heart, **LOVE ME! ACCEPT ME!** What an exciting moment it was. A miracle from the hand of God had occurred. The miracle of life!

Then life happened. As you journeyed through circumstances and relationships, experiences came into your life. Some you could control and others were out of your control. These experiences remolded and reshaped you. Many may have wounded you along the way.

Look closely at Matthew 12:20-21. "*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.*"

Have you ever felt like a bruised reed as you wear the plastic smile upon your face? Did you at one time stand tall, upright, and sturdy rooted in confidence?

Then something happened. You were bruised by the arrows of

- * Broken promises
- * Cruel words
- * Someone's anger
- * A spouse's or friend's betrayal
- * Your own bad decisions
- * Religious legalism

The wounds pierced your heart and the light of your life became dimmer like a candle's smoldering wick. The mark of God's twinkle seemed to be fading and doubts about being God's Precious Daughter entered. You wondered if God made a mistake when he designed you.

To make sure no one would notice, you applied more foundation and makeup to cover up the hurt within. You busied your day with home, church, and other activities to keep from dwelling on the pain. Maybe you dressed yourself with determination or denial as you looked for coping mechanisms.

You garnished your neck with glimmering emblems of royalty to mask the unworthiness you felt. Their brilliance drew attention away from the sadness in your eyes. *Everything is fine* became the proper response to those who asked.

The charade continued day after day. Numbness to feelings replaced the glow that was once visible. The



tapes of what was said or done by others were set on replay.

*"A bruised reed . . .
 and a smoldering wick. . ."*

Does that resonate with you? I know for many years it was a picture of me. Bent over and not able to look anyone in the eye for I bore the shame of my marriage that wasn't working. As a Christian woman, wasn't it my responsibility to fix it?

- If someone knew the secret I kept, what would they think of me?
- Did I deserve the abuse I was experiencing?
- Was God displeased with me?
- Did he take my imprint of God's Precious Daughter from me?

These questions became part of a list that I carried in my mind and heart. It seemed like I added to the list on a daily basis. Slowly I adopted my husband's perceptions of me. It was so subtle. These became labels that formed on top of

God's imprint.

For years I wandered aimlessly mechanically going through the routine of my day. Everything seemed meaningless. What purpose did I have but be subservient to my husband. A doormat. Less than. Not good enough. My self-worth plummeted and despair set in.

*“A bruised reed . . .
and a smoldering wick. . .”*

Yes, I was a bruised reed and a smoldering wick. I became what I term as a nonperson. I had no right to feelings, opinions, thoughts, or ideas. Although I was an elementary school teacher with a master's degree, all that was left was a shell of the person I once was.

It was amazing that in my job I was confident as I taught, yet at home I was afraid and walking on eggshells. I felt that everything was my fault. The man I loved was so well liked as a college professor, a neighbor, and a leader in our church. Something had to be wrong with me.

I spent many hours trying to figure out what the problem was. I am a person who commits and is loyal to that commitment. That can be a good trait, but it can place one in a situation that is not healthy. Instead of focusing first on God, my attention was drawn to the person who was sinning against me.

*“A bruised reed **he will not break,**
and a smoldering wick **he will not snuff out,**”*

I may feel and appear like a bruised reed and a smoldering wick, but I will not be destroyed. God sees who I am, but he will not break me tossing me aside as useless and worthless nor will He blow out my inner light. Instead He will fill and nourish my soul through His Word and others. He will rekindle my flickering candle.

“A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.”

God's part is leading us from justice to victory. Our part is to put our **hope** in Him for He is the only one who can remold us into his creation.

As I travel back in time, I see the fingerprints of God all over my life. He lifted me out of the miry pit (a destructive marriage) to freedom to be who He created me to be, *His Precious Beautiful Daughter*. Although I rejoiced, I was scared to death. My earthly security was gone and the future was uncertain.

The transformation in me took time and the Lord's patience. What was my purpose? I often asked. Quite honestly I was a mess. I was no longer young. My energy and strength were depleted.

God's answer to me was to find others who were a mess and pray and encourage each other. I did not have to look far. We gathered together like quivering chicks huddling out of life's storms. Slowly God purposed in me a ministry to help others to find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

FOCUS Ministries was birthed when I was turning 50. Life wasn't over. It was just beginning. The Lord was leading me from justice to victory. I had not been snuffed out or broken off. Instead I had been **LOVED AND ACCEPTED**. The cry we all came into this world claiming.

During the beginning of the ministry, God had to do a makeover in me. There were many layers of protection He had to peel off. He had to reveal to me that His twinkle, a mark of his perfection, was still on me. His love for me would never cease.

As I learned about boundaries and people pleasing, one by one the labels that covered the imprint of God's Precious Daughter began to peel off. It was

painful. He had to clean out the wounds I had incurred. That meant the band-aids I had placed on my heart had to be removed.

I felt like I walked through the valley of the shadow of death as Psalm 23 states. I had to die to my self-power and rely on His power within me.

This was my first step in putting my hope and trust in the Lord.

When we first decided on the name, FOCUS Ministries, we put the word FOCUS in capital letters. It is important to discover where our focus is. Is it on us and our circumstances or is it on the Lord. FOCUS also stands for Focus On Christ For Ultimate Satisfaction.

When we put our focus on the Lord, there will be an **EXTREME MAKE-OVER**. The Lord only wants his best for us. What better hands to be in! The Lord must be our foundation from which we build our lives. If we do it without him, our lives will be a mess. We may look good on the outside, but inside our spirit is dying.

God can lead you to victory as he purifies your heart and reveals his purpose for you. The question is **WILL YOU LET HIM?** The choice is yours.

He has not removed the twinkle, the mark of his perfection on you. His imprint, God's Precious Daughter, is still there. It has been covered up from the things you have experienced. The layers can come off with God's help.

Remember: God is who He says He is. And He will do what He says He will do.

TRUST HIM!

By Paula Silva

(No longer a smoldering wick!)



NO FISHING



In preparation for Resurrection Day, in the March/April newsletter, I described a process of asking for forgiveness from God and giving forgiveness to others. You may have used the tools shown in the article, but still don't feel free. One of the verses on God's Pardon in the newsletter states, "you will tread our sins under foot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea," Micah 7:19. God has posted a 'NO FISHING' sign over these sins, not just for himself, but for us too.

All too often we beat ourselves up with our past offenses that we have already confessed to the Lord. Why aren't you as forgiving of yourself as our Lord? Perhaps you grew up in a church that didn't teach this. "He is faithful and just and will forgive us and purify us," 1 John 1:9 NIV. Perhaps you grew up in a home where you were continually reminded of past offenses. Perhaps you are in a relationship where this occurs. Perhaps you do this to people in your life.

"NO FISHING" is the power of letting go for yourself and others. "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed," John 8:36 NIV. Do you really feel free? Do you free others or still hold grudges and hold them and yourself prisoner? Christ paid the price so you don't have to, and your offenders, once forgiven, don't have to either.

Following is a poem that has been out for many years. I first saw it in 1995 as part of a Divorce Recovery teaching at my church. I later saw it in a book by Chuck Swindoll.

LETTING GO

To let go doesn't mean to stop caring; it means I can't do it for someone else.

To let go is not to cut myself off... it's the realization that I can't control another.

To let go is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.

To let go is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.

To let go is not to try and change or blame another. I can only change myself.

To let go is not to care for, but to care about.

To let go is not to fix, but to be supportive.

To let go is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being

To let go is not to be in the middle arranging all of the outcomes, but

to allow offers to affect their own outcomes.

To let go is not to be protective, it is to permit another to face reality.

To let go is not to deny, but to accept.

To let go is not to nag, scold or argue, but to search out my own short comings and correct them.

To let go is not to adjust everything to my desire, but to take each day as it comes and cherish the moment.

To let go is not to criticize and regulate anyone, but to try to become what dream I can be.

To let go is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.

To let go is to fear less and love more.

Author Unknown

As long as we continue to beat ourselves and others up we won't be free. As long as we try to control outcomes we will never be free. Will you do as the poem says and let go? Examine your past to find the root of your inability to let go.

Read books on giving and receiving grace. In all of the "Boundaries" books by Townsend and Cloud they talk about limits with grace that is a great place to start. It is what the Letting Go poem describes.

By Karen Ferguson

Repentance. . . Change. . . Reconciliation. . . ?

When a victim of domestic violence first approaches her church, she is looking for someone to affirm and believe her experiences. Instead she is told to forgive and forget and pressured into reconciliation. Reconciliation needs to be defined and appropriate signs of change need to be in place.

Reconciliation is . . .

- * **Resolving** conflict by exploring possible solutions that are mutually agreed upon.
- * **Reestablishing** friendly relations where there is communication, forgiveness, peace, and harmony
- * **Restoring** trust and respect

Before reconciliation can occur, there needs to be three evidences of sincerity.

1. **Regret**—feels sorry
2. **Remorse**—moral **anguish** over past misdeeds
3. **Repentance**—*He has had a change of mind about his behavior and shows it by changing direction. He turns around and does things differently.* Dr. Henry Cloud

The evidence of repentance requires a period of time in which there is **consistent** change for a year or more. Signs of change occur in five basic areas. It is essential to look for these areas

of change before reconciliation is even considered.

Responsibility

- ◆ **Admits** to his abusive behavior and stops trying to blame or cover up
- ◆ **Acknowledges** that all forms of abuse are wrong
- ◆ **Identifies** the ways he justified his abusive behavior
- ◆ **Acknowledges** that his abusive behavior was not a loss of control but a choice on his part
- ◆ **Admits** his mistake when he fails and changes his abusive behavior accordingly
- ◆ **Does not blame** his partner for his bad behavior

Accountability

- ◆ **Remains** in individual counseling for as long as it takes identifying the root of the problem, working through past experiences, and learning new patterns of behavior
- ◆ **Accountable** to church leadership for past, present, and future behavior
- ◆ **Enters** a batterer's treatment program and completes the program
- ◆ **Permits** the counselor, church leadership, and treatment programs to check with his partner on a regular basis to hear her

explanation of what is going on

Self-Monitoring

- ◆ **Recognizes triggers** that begin explosive episodes
- ◆ **Chooses** appropriate learned responses when frustrated or angered and does not inflict harm on his partner or children
- ◆ **Identifies** attitudes of entitlement or superiority and replaces his distorted thinking with a more positive and empathic view
- ◆ **Chooses** not to say or do things that threaten or frighten his partner or children
- ◆ **Committed** to not repeating his past behaviors and realizes it is a lifelong process
- ◆ **Willingness** to hear feedback and criticism, to be honest, humble, and accountable without retaliation

Respectful

- ◆ **Listens and respects** his partners opinions even if he disagrees
- ◆ **Let's** his partner express her anger or frustration toward him without being punished or abused

Repentance. . . Change. . . Reconciliation. . . ?

- ◆ **Respects** her “no” in all situations including physical contact
- ◆ **Respects her time** with friends and family without jealousy and does not punish her later
- ◆ **Respects her need for time** to rebuild trust and does not pressure her to forgive or reconcile until she is ready

Empathetic

- ◆ **Recognizes** the effects of his behavior on his partner and children and is able to verbalize it to them
- ◆ **Seeks** to make amends for the harm he has caused
- ◆ **Consistently displays** respectful behavior towards his partner and children
- ◆ **Expresses** kindness and attentiveness in words and actions instead of being controlling and demanding
- ◆ **Recognizes and affirms** his partner’s feelings without becoming defensive

To begin a path of reconciliation, there needs to be significant change in all five areas. If the abuser is truly sincere in his repentance, he will persevere in the process of change. As Scripture states, these needs to be a “renewing of the mind”.

Taking a step back from the abusive relationship and becoming a close observer is crucial. Recognition that he has not changed can be found in three basic areas.

Blame

- ◆ Blame her or others for his behavior
- ◆ Uses guilt to manipulate her into dropping charges or keeping her silent
- ◆ Uses her behavior as an excuse to treat her badly
- ◆ Convinces other that she is either abusive or crazy
- ◆ Blames her for the consequences he incurs because of his actions

Attitude

- ◆ Will not admit he was abusive
- ◆ Demands to know where his partner is and whom she is with (jealousy)
- ◆ Does not respond well to complaints or criticism of his behavior when he slips back into abusive behavior
- ◆ Does not faithfully attend his treatment program and/or counseling
- ◆ Feels entitled to his partner fulfilling his needs always even if it is at her expense

- ◆ Demands to have full authority over his partner’s life and the household

Disrespect

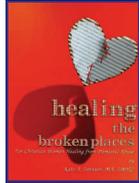
- ◆ Continues to undermine his partner’s authority as a parent, and her credibility as a person
- ◆ Criticizes his partner for not realizing how much he has changed
- ◆ Pressures his partner to let him move back in before she is ready
- ◆ Continues to use sarcasm or verbal abuse expressing his position of superiority
- ◆ Continues to belittle his partner’s feelings, opinions, and beliefs
- ◆ Does not hear or want to hear his partner’s “no”

In Galatians 5 Scripture states if we belong to Christ, we are to live by the Spirit not our sinful desires. Living by the Spirit will produce fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Change can be measured by the fruit. When these are evident, then and only then can the process of reconciliation begin.

Seek discernment and wisdom from the Lord to know truth.

By Paula Silva

Book Review



Healing the Broken Places

For Christian Women Healing from Domestic Abuse

By Kate A. Johnson, MA, LMHC

“Women who are abused have many questions. . . ‘Why is this happening to me?’ ‘What did I do wrong?’ ‘What else could I have done?’ ‘I feel so alone.’ ‘Am I the only one?’ . . . These and other questions affect every woman who has suffered domestic abuse. . . You will begin your journey through these pages. With prayer, questions, and weekly exercises, this book will help you find the healing and wholeness that can only be found in our Lord.”

Order at www.CCADA.org



Words that Heal

*And do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of
your mind, so that you may prove what
the will of God is, that which is good and
acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12:2

NAS

The Other ProLife Movement

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
- **Part time** development coordinator
- **TEEN FOCUS team** to develop the teen program
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **Donated laptop** for our bookkeeping

- **New support groups** in IL: Eureka, Peoria, Huntley
- **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 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 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.
- **Pray for churches** to understand the gravity of domestic violence and will develop appropriate responses.



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.

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.

- **June 24-25, 2011— Train the Trainer** (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2011— Exhibitor** at AACC World Conference, Nashville, TN
- **October 21-22, 2011—Train the Trainer** Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **October 7-8, 2011—To Heal the Heart Conference** , Moody Church, Chicago, IL

The FOCUS team is available to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars, DV training or other speaking engagements.

contactus@focusministries1.org

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

Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries



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.



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