

Summer 2012

Hope in Despair

"Where's God in all of this," Julie cried out. Sobs were heard on the other end of the phone as FOCUS received her call. Julie believed in God, but the strain of each day was taking a toll.

The kids were upset and sometimes rebellious. Maintaining the home was becoming an added stress. Verbal bullets penetrated her heart both from the children and her spouse.

She read her Bible but had no clue what she read. Her prayers were a constant plea for help. She had turned to the legal system seeking relief yet none came. She thought that it would end the control. No relief came.

Discouraged, weary, and tired of trying to make it on her own with finances running low, she reluctantly went back into the relationship she once fled. Her spouse's grip became tighter and freedom was slipping away.

All four walls of the home she loved seemed to be closing in on her each day. she felt like she was in a cage just longing to be free,



free from the chaos and mental torture.

No access to money became the norm. She was required to turn-over her paycheck to be deposited into her husband's bank account. Her spouse bought the groceries, limited her phone access, and filled her car gas tank just enough to drive in a 10 mile radius to work.

Each day her spouse would determine whether he would allow her to drive her car. There was no place to walk to and no public transportation to take. She felt trapped in her own place of residence isolated from friends and family.

As each day rolled by, she was constantly blamed for anything. There was nothing she did that was right in her controller's eyes. Soon the children participated in the blame game. She was the blame for their bad grades. She was the blame for their lack of friends and social activities, and on and on it went. Her spouse had set up the game and the children were doing well in playing it out.

Julie felt boxed in. She was losing a sense of who she was. Feeling more like a slave than a mom and partner, she wondered if this was just to be her lot in life. Was she just supposed to settle for being beaten down each day?

It is so difficult to see God's presence in destructive circumstances. *Where's God* is a legitimate question. It's in moments like this that we have to trust that God will reveal a way where there seems to be no way.

In Julie's situation, God provided a time where she could

make a phone call. She used that time to reach out for help. In spite of her many limitations, we were able to assist her in developing options and a safety plan. She just needed to have the courage to carry the plan out.

As we ended the conversation, Julie began to realize the answer to her original question. God was there all the time. She was so consumed by her circumstances that she did not notice the signs of His presence.

Her demeanor had lifted. The tears had stopped and a renewed hope was evident. I ended the call by saying, *“Julie, you are a courageous woman who believes in the God of the Impossible.”*

The tears began to flow again. All Julie could say was “thank you, thank you.”

God never expects us to just settle for anything. He knows He has a purpose and plan for our present and future. He wants the best for us, but it requires us

- To look to God for direction
- To see our value and worth through God’s eyes (Psalm 139)
- To know that God sings over us
- To know that God delights in us

- To know that Jesus identifies with our suffering and pain
- To be observant of God’s faithfulness to us
- To trust God to make a way where we see no way
- To realize we can gain strength, wisdom, and courage from the Lord to do what is right
- To keep watch for doors that God is opening no matter how small the crack
- To understand there are boundaries that can be set no matter how small they seem
- To see that there are options that may require hard decisions
- To have eyes that are willing to see reality and possibilities
- To have ears to hear truth and to turn from the lies
- To know that God is for us not against us

When we get to the end of ourselves, we begin to ask important questions. We have tried harder in our own strength and found it lacking. *“Where’s God in all this”* is the start of a new beginning. We look up instead of within. We begin to seek God first instead of a fix for our situation.

There is not one of us who doesn’t want life to work especially with our plan. We are never promised that life will be easy with no problems or troubles. But there is a place where there will be no more sorrow and no more pain. That’s called Heaven.

But here on earth we will reap what others sow in their selfishness as well as our own selfishness. We can be comforted though that Jesus sent us a comforter and counselor, the Holy Spirit.

“Where’s God?” He’s been there all along sitting with each one of us as we experience trials and joys. We need to trust in God’s character and promises. It is a walk of faith. Do we truly believe that God is who he says he is and that he will do what he said he will do? What is your answer?

Paula Silva



Transformed

The first time he hit me was one month after we were married. He didn't hit me again for a year, but he did hit again, and then it got worse.

He was always sorry and would promise to never do it again. But the apologies always felt insincere and there was an obvious lack of remorse. In time, the abusive behavior always returned.

I learned to walk on eggshells; a hand slammed on the table, a fist through the wall, the car wheel yanked out of my hands at 70 mph. Life was unpredictable. We never made plans. I grew further and further away from my family and friends.

Imprisoned by all the things I was scared to say and scared to do, I was afforded none of the same respect. I had no expectation of privacy. A closed door was unacceptable and a locked door was knocked down.

I made excuses for him. I felt sorry for myself. I never left and never even seriously tried to leave. Where would I go? I remember the rage. I would shake with anger and lash out. I would fantasize of beating him back. I remember the shame. How had I let this happen to me? Who would believe me? He wasn't like one of those monsters on TV, so what was I complaining about?



Then came the numbness. Any love I had once felt for him had disappeared. But I had chosen my lot in life. Instead I would encourage him to leave me. I clearly was not the girl for him. Another girl could obviously make him so much happier. I daydreamed about life after he died.

In one moment, if someone would have just asked the right question, I would have spilled everything. In the next, I would flat out lie to my mother that he had never hit me. I became so beaten down I was diagnosed as severely depressed and put on medication.

I felt like a failure. I knew there was no life for me aside from him. I dreaded that I was as bad as he was. If I could just be what he wanted everything would be ok. Severely depressed and medicated, living with physical abuse, he convinced me they would take my children away.

But I found an amazing psychologist. She never told me I was abused. She never told me to leave. She gave me articles to read; she suggested books. She taught me coping skills and helped me create a safety plan. I discov-

ered he was out of my control. I could not fix him. No magic change in me, nothing I could do was ever going to make him stop. He wasn't mentally ill; he wasn't sick. He honestly believed he was entitled to act the way he did.

A tremendous weight was lifted. Some semblance of the girl I had once been slowly came back to life. I left work in the middle of the day, packed mine and the children's bags, picked them up from school and drove to a women's shelter. It was probably the hardest night of my life. Thinking about it can still bring a tightening in my throat. But I didn't turn around. I kept driving through the rain and the fear and the guilt.

I have never looked back since that night. The guilt and the feeling of loss lasted a week or two. But then life became filled with endless possibilities. I make plans; I lock the bathroom door; and there is dancing and horseback riding and camouflage. I have an amazing network of friends. My family is indispensable, and I am once again present.

The wounds are still deep and will take time to heal. But they will heal. I am starting to open up to the idea of forgiveness. It will take time, but I will forgive him. In the meantime, I will continue to share my story.

Alice

Desires of the Heart

When new relationships begin to form, we are excited to enter into a new adventure dreaming about all the possibilities. A haze begins to cover our sight as we dismiss behaviors that we should question. Our heart becomes invested as we seek our desires to be fulfilled from the other person.

In Mark and Debra Lasser's book, *The Seven Desires of Every Heart*, the basic desires "are so deep in our soul we don't always consciously understand that they are there. We feel them in our hearts, and we ache for them to be fulfilled, but we don't know the source of that ache."

"Instead of accepting the fact that we have pain and loneliness because our desires are unfulfilled, we lead lives of quiet loneliness and frustration, lives laced with anger and bitterness. We hurt and we long for something more, but we often don't even know what that 'something more' is."

What are these deep desires that long to be fulfilled?

1. To Be Heard and Understood

None of us likes to be ignored especially from those that are supposed to love us. Sometimes these feelings of not being heard and understood start to bloom in our childhood. We try to explain our actions and are shut down. We stuff our feelings and don't

venture an opinion.

Other times we think if we speak louder, faster, or repeat over and over again, we will be heard. Argumentation may become a pattern of behavior as we build our case for the right to be heard. This can often lead to child or adult tantrums.

2. To Be Affirmed

Sensing someone's approval of us encourages our spirit making us feel more confident in who we are. Our whole mannerism changes. We are upbeat and our self-esteem is boosted.

"People in our lives provide the feedback we need to develop our self-awareness about how we are doing in the world. Affirmation tells us that we are doing well and to keep it up." ~ Mark and Debra Laaser

Lack of affirmation leads us into relationships in which we are seeking acceptance and will do anything to get it. This destructive path leads to great pain and heartache for that what we seek will be unattainable.

3. To Be Blessed

A blessing denotes the value of a person. "Someone thinks I am special." Love is revealed for we are accepted just as we are.

Mark and Debra Laaser state, "When we don't receive blessings, we can feel shameful about who we are. . . Shame is a powerful and destructive force in people's lives. It tells us that we are bad and worthless, that no one loves us as we are, and that no one will take care of our needs."

When we miss out on blessings, we can develop a victim mentality in which we feel we have no choices in life nor do we feel we deserve to have choices.

4. To Be Safe

Being free from fear and anxiety creates an environment of safety. Our world is safe to explore, venture out, and take risks. When fear comes from someone or something, we seek a hiding place to protect usually withdrawing within ourselves. Anxieties grow and isolation and depression set in.

"When we are controlled by our anxieties, we rarely say what we really feel. Our radar is out continually for what someone's reaction is going to be, and we are always anticipating what we need to say or do to have the safest effect." ~ Mark and Debra Laaser

5. To Be Touched

Within each of us there is a de-

Desires of the Heart

sire to be sexually touched appropriately and to receive nonsexual touch from appropriate people. To be hugged correctly creates feelings of acceptance and caring. A pat on the shoulder with kind words can affirm us and indicate that someone understands.

6. To Be Chosen

Each of us delights when someone selects us to form a relationship. We feel special, wanted, and valued. In healthy relationships being chosen affirms God's truth that we are beautiful, worthy, and lovable.

When we are not chosen, we create distorted beliefs and perceptions about ourselves that are not consistent with who God has created us to be. Our thoughts become; I am not enough, I am unlovable, and I will never measure up to others.

Our self-esteem is gravely affected. We may choose to hide from those that could love us if we give them a chance. This could lead us into a pattern of behavior in which we settle for any kind of relationships even if it is to our detriment.

7. To Be Included

Longing to belong becomes the key in this desire. We want to be part of a community in which we are accepted. This desire goes hand in hand with the needing to

be chosen. We were created to be in relationship with God and others.

If we are excluded from a community, feelings of loneliness can take root which often leads to depression. Our security in who we are is lost.

If we are not careful, we can seek any kind of group that will include us. These groups could lead us far from God and create distorted thinking. Gangs and cults would be a perfect example.

8. To Be Loved

When long to have true intimacy with someone who deeply cares about us. We seek a relationship in which we can love and be loved.

Sometimes though we confuse love with infatuation, an attraction that clouds over the character flaws of the other person. We get caught up in the idea of love but not the reality of godly love.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)

Love is **patient**,

Love is **kind**.

It does **not** envy,

It does **not** boast,

It is **not** self-seeking,

It is **not** easily angered,

It keeps **no** record of wrongs.

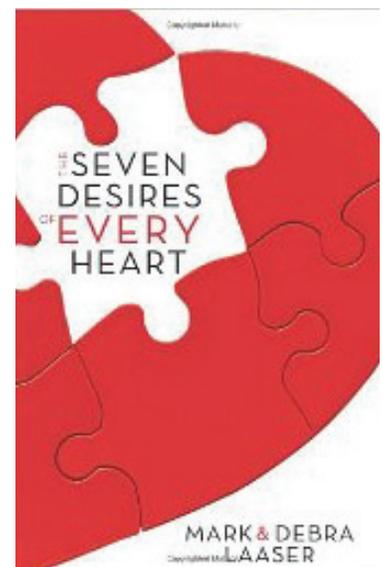
Love does **not** delight in evil but **rejoices with the truth**.

It always **protects**, always **trusts**, always **hopes**, always **perseveres**.

Take a mental walk through your relationships over your lifetime. Which desires were filled by the people that have been on your journey? Look at the relationships that met most of your desires. What were they like and how did you feel when in those relationships? Which individuals met none of your desires? What was the result of that connection?

In pondering these questions, you may have noted a pattern that has formed in your relationships. Some could be healthy and some destructive. The lack of these desires being filled by appropriate people may give insight to our actions and responses as we reach out to try to connect to others.

Paula Silva



Thoughts to Ponder

Often times we are not aware of the things we have stuffed inside as we deal with our difficult person.

As God works within us, He slowly reveals truth and gives the grace to make changes in our responses.

We learn to set healthy boundaries to protect our heart.

***Our new boundaries may hurt our difficult person,
but it does not harm them.***



Words that Heal

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

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** with expertise in fund-raising, marketing, and the law
- **TEEN FOCUS team** to develop the teen program
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **15 Attendees** at our Partners in the Journey June training
- **Pastors' wives** who are being abused are finding

hope.

- **Development** of TEEN FOCUS workshops
- **Exhibitor** at Ignite Youth

Prayer Requests:

- **Pray for our TEEN FOCUS team** as they develop our teen program
- **Pray for a facility** for our FOCUS Women's Center. It would enable us to expand our services
- **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

- **Pray for houses** in IL, to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- **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 29-30, 2012—Partners in the Journey:** Train the Trainer FOCUS (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **September 10, 2012—DV Training,** ECFA, Wheaton, IL
- **September 28-29, 2012—Partners in the Journey:** Train the Trainer FOCUS (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL

The FOCUS team is available to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars, workshops, 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



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