

God, Do You See Me?

Winter 2012

Pamela entered her church as she usually did on a Sunday morning. People were milling around as they sipped their coffee before service began. Greetings from others was a momentary comfort.

A friend approached wondering how she was. Pamela froze in her tracks and began to question whether she should share. She had been vulnerable before but had received unsolicited advice. “Just get over it,” had been her friend’s advice. How do you get over an abusive marriage of eighteen years and abandoned for another woman?

At the last minute, Pamela decided to not engage and answered with “fine.” She could feel herself climbing back into the comfort of her protective shell. Too many times she had been shut down with short Christian answers attached with a Scripture verse. Was there anyone who was willing to see and hear her pain?



At one time she was very active in her church; but when word got out that she left her destructive marriage, friends disappeared and criticisms ensued. She was now a single mom standing alone in the midst of a crowd feeling invisible. Her voice had been silenced yet the longing to be seen and heard had increased.

“If God’s people don’t see me,” she said, “has God seen me?” This was a question that was ever in the forefront of her mind.

Sometimes God’s people are not a good representation of God’s character and attributes. They fear getting involved in the messiness of people’s lives. They may also not understand the circumstances or know how to help.

This leaves many hurting people with longings unfulfilled. Each one of us no matter our circumstances long for:

- Affirmation of our worthiness to be on this earth
- Acknowledgment of our value of who we are inside
- Acceptance of our uniqueness
- Appreciation of our accomplishments and our efforts

- Assurance that we do make a difference
- Connection to our social culture, family, friends, and intimate relationships
- Celebration of us by someone who enjoys being with us
- Being cared for by someone who is willing to meet our needs
- Inclusion in a group that provides social acceptance
- True love that is filled with respect and trust by someone who loves us no matter what our past is

Unfulfilled longings leave us empty inside. We hide within that emptiness fearful to risk connection to those around us, but hiding creates other problems.

In her book, *The God Who See You*, Tammy Maltby writes, “But here’s why hiding becomes a problem. It’s hard to hide without being lonely. It’s hard to hide from God’s light without getting swallowed in darkness. The more we hide the more our in-born need to be seen is thwarted and the more we feel no one

hears us or sees us or cares about us.”

Growing up most of us played the game of hide and seek. We were counted the winner if no one could find us. Eventually we were called out to make an appearance. We were delighted with ourselves that we had fooled our friends.

As an adult though, hiding who we are creates a hunger to be known, seen, and heard. This hunger may drive us to settle for any kind of relationship whether it is healthy or not.

There is a positive aspect of our hunger. It can drive us to the One who not only knows us but sees and hears us. God cares and loves us beyond what we can imagine.

We are reminded in Scripture what God did for Hagar as she fled from an abusive situation that she experienced from her mistress Sarai. Hagar was pregnant and feeling alone not knowing if God saw her. The angel of the Lord reassured her and spoke of the future of her child, Ishmael. The name Ishmael means God hears.

“She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’” Genesis 16:13



Your situation may look bleak and it appears that no one wants to take the time to listen and care without criticism. You may have remained silent not sure if you can reveal your pain, confusion, and uncertainty.

Just like Hagar cry out to God. He is never too busy to listen. You are always in his line of vision. He knows you through and through. Best of all he provides for your needs and knows your longings for he placed them there. God is just asking you to draw near to him trusting that he will not abandon you.

Paula Silva

Real Hope

Within relationships, we develop patterns of interactive behaviors. Over time they become ingrained in us as we automatically react to circumstances that arise out of relationships. A certain dance takes form and becomes the familiar way of relating.

A dance that is relationally unhealthy is fueled by a desire that things will change if we work at it. We hope things will change if certain actions are put in place, but this hope based on past experience is only a “wish” not a “hope” when matched with reality. This false hope can keep us stuck in a relationship cycle that needs to end.

True hope is desire based on objective reasons and requirements for changed behaviors. Consistent change builds hope that the relational pattern will become healthy.

The character of each person in a relationship factors into the possibility of an unhealthy relational cycle being broken. There needs to be a willingness to create a “new past” that is headed in a new direction. New past requires endings so new beginnings can be formulated.

The relationship has to go beyond saying, “I’m sorry” to remorse for past actions and choosing to

change those behaviors that are detrimental to our partner as well as ourselves. It begins with taking ownership of one’s behavior and acknowledging the effect it has on one’s partner. It is called empathy.

When a “new past” is created, a plan and structure needs to be formed. There needs to be:

- ☺ Admission that enough is enough and change is necessary
- ☺ A willingness to change
- ☺ A willingness to see change as a process
- ☺ A willingness to persevere in hard times
- ☺ A distinction between wishing and hoping as reality is faced
- ☺ A listing of specific behaviors that need to change
- ☺ New skills learned and applied
- ☺ New positive experiences relationally and circumstantially
- ☺ An acknowledgment of the problem

- ☺ No more denial
- ☺ Admittance one needs help
- ☺ Surrounded by a support system
- ☺ Accountability
- ☺ Friends that keep one in reality
- ☺ Time spent in God’s word and prayer
- ☺ Individual counseling to sort out issues
- ☺ A focus on God first and one’s relationship with him
- ☺ A letting go of distorted thinking and toxic relationships
- ☺ A moving beyond grieving the past and an excitement for what lies ahead

Hope will take root if the foundation is based on one’s faith in God believing that God only wants what is best for us. We have to be willing to let God mold us and shape us into the creation he designed us to be.

Paula Silva

A Time to Prune

Each new year brings us to the time of reflecting and evaluating our relationships and circumstances. We look into the mirror and say ‘things have to change.’”

Deciding what to let go and what to invest our time in are difficult decisions. Most of us cling on to relationships even when they are not beneficial to our well-being for fear of being alone or facing the unknown.

In Ecclesiastes 3, we are reminded that there is a season for everything.

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.

- A time to be born and a time to die,
- A time to plant and a time to uproot,
- A time to kill and a time to heal,
- A time to tear down and a time to build,
- A time to weep and a time to laugh,
- A time to mourn and a time to dance,
- A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
- A time to embrace and a time to refrain,

- A time to search and a time to give up,
- A time to keep and time to throw away,
- A time to tear and time to mend,
- A time to be silent and a time to speak,
- A time to love and a time to hate,
- A time for war and a time for peace.”

Each person faces these throughout their lifetime. Some endings are normal following a rhythm of life and some are necessary endings. It is the necessary endings that become most challenging. Decisions have to be made to keep the light of our life still burning.

Maybe we have some relationships that are good but do not nourish us or are not reciprocal. Those people may need to be pruned out of our life so that our time and energy can be diverted to ones that provide personal growth.

Other relationships with difficult people also need to go through the pruning process. We have tried everything to make the relationship work, but it is detrimental to our soul. The relationships pull us down into the pit instead of lifting us up.

Then there are relationships that are just dead weight. These may be

relationships that were thriving in the past but connection has been lost through the seasons of our life. Each person in the relationship has gone down a different path and there no longer is any commonality.

Some served a purpose in a particular season, but now the season is over and the purpose is no longer needed. Others become dead as we become mature and move on to other interests. Sometimes we hold onto these relationships because they are familiar to us even though they have long lost their benefit.

If we don’t do some pruning of our relationships from time to time, we may find that we are not growing within ourselves for too much energy and time are going into maintaining all relationships.

When we begin the pruning process, our own fears come to the surface. There are fears of being alone or fears of what the future will look like without the relationship. We may be afraid that we will hurt the other individual if we prune the relationship. We become caught up in wanting everyone to like us which feeds our people pleasing.

In spite of our resistances, necessary endings need to occur for new beginnings to take root.

Paula Silva

Who Are You?

God has created us to be relational beings. He relates to us. We relate to him and to others. Because we live in a fallen world, steering through the relational highways can be as challenging as driving through an unfamiliar large city with highways and exits coming at us from all different directions.

It becomes confusing and often frightening when we do not know where we are going. One highway appears to be correct but it brings us to a dead end. Others may be so full of curves and steep hills that we lose our sense of direction.

Being able to evaluate the character of a person assists us in making better relational choices. In his book, *Necessary Endings*, Dr. Henry Cloud depicts three basic categories of people. Identification of their character traits provides information that is useful as we relate to a particular individual. It is important to note though a person may not be all of the traits in just one category but may have some traits of a subsequent category.

Let's look more closely at the three classification of people.

WISE

- * May or may not have a high IQ
- * Adjust their behavior according to God's truth
- * Own their behavior (good or bad) and willing to change if necessary
- * Grateful when someone gives constructive criticism
- * Willing to talk about issues while seeing the other person's perspective
- * Teachable and willing to use resources provided to them

FOOL

- * May be the most charming, gifted, talented, and intelligent person one knows
- * No adjustment in behavior when truth is revealed to them
- * Don't own their behavior but instead blame and attack
- * Filled with anger and defensiveness
- * Feel that they are not the cause of their behavior
- * Not good listeners
- * Talking to them about the

problem brings no resolution

- * Consequences may bring about change.

EVIL

- * Love to destroy people, organizations, companies, and things
- * Intent to cause as much harm as possible
- * Delight when others fall or fail
- * Out to hurt people
- * Self-centered
- * Narcissistic
- * Protection mode is necessary to deal with an evil person. It may involve lawyers and money.

Each of these three types of people are approached and related to in different ways. It is helpful to know when we can talk about issues and when consequences for inappropriate behavior needs to be given.

Remember:

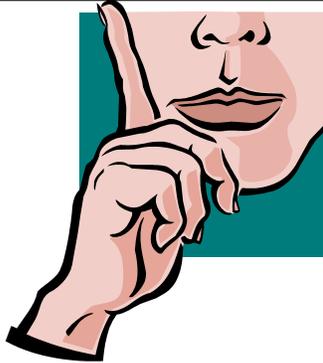
"A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom."
Proverbs 10:23 NIV

Paula Silva

Thoughts to Ponder

Sometimes in toxic relationships we allow the difficult person to remold and reshape us into the person they want us to be. The end result reveals a person we were never intended to be. God, our Creator, is the only one who remolds and reshapes us into the person we were designed to be.

How has God designed you?



Words that Heal

*The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.*

*Those who know your name will trust in you,
for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

Psalm 9:9-10

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
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **Dedicated** support group leaders
- **Development** of TEEN FOCUS relationship workshops

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.
- **Pray for FOCUS** as we plan for 2013.
- **Pray for those** that come to the ministry for help that do not know Jesus.



Upcoming Events

Author, Editor and Publisher: Paula Silva
Copyright © 2012 FOCUS Ministries, Inc.. All Rights Reserved

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.

- **March 15-16, 2013:** Ignite Shout exhibitor and workshop presenter
- **April 12-13, 2013:** Partners in the Journey Training (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **June 21-22, 2013:** Partners in the Journey Training (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **Sept. 11-14, 2013:** AACC World Conference exhibitor, Nashville, TN
- **Oct. 25-26, 2013:** Partners in the Journey Training (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



Please consider making your online purchases from Shaklee through:
www.focusmin.myshaklee.com/us/en/ A portion of your purchase will be credited toward FOCUS Ministries. More on: [Shaklee](#)



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.



Please Choose FOCUS as your favorite charity at iGive.com. You can help FOCUS Ministries when you make online purchases! For more information, please visit <http://www.focusministries1.org/igive.asp>.