

Grace Bible Church
2018 Biblical Counseling Conference
Track Two



Session #10

Helping Those Who Were Sexually Abused

Introduction: Kris's story

I. Initial Considerations

A. Prevalence of Sexual Abuse

27% of women and 16% of men report history. Gov't est.: 180,000 new cases / yr.

B. Features of the Problem

1. Children: Lowest rate in families with two married biological parents.
The highest rate: single parent home with live-in partner.
2. 87% of children abused by a male; 11% by a female.
~ 70% of all victims knew the perpetrator.
3. Victims of sexual assault are:
 - 3 times more likely to suffer from depression
 - 4 times more likely to contemplate suicide
 - 6 times more likely to suffer from PTSD type symptoms: flashbacks, nightmares, numbing affect, sense of estrangement, sleep problems
 - 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol
 - 26 times more likely to abuse drugs
 - 95% of teenage prostitutes have been sexually abused in the past
 - 31% of women in prison state they were abused as children

II. Understand the Potential Struggles

- A. Suffering: the trials of living in a fallen world can lead to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and depression. Can God be trusted?
- B. Shame and Guilt: feelings of being exposed.
- C. Fear: many possible expressions.
- D. Anger: toward the abuser, toward those who should have helped but didn't, or even toward God.
- E. Relationship difficulties: many struggle with loving & trusting others.
- F. Sexual difficulties: may struggle to think about sex in a godly way.

III. Understand the Counseling Process

A. Offer Biblical Comfort

1. Your response: be angry, yet do not sin. Seek justice, not vengeance.
2. Call the abuse sin, but not her fault. Yet she may sin in her response.
3. Reassure her that she is not alone and is loved.
4. If recent or when appropriate, encourage a sexual assault victim to seek medical attention and police intervention. If a minor is involved, find out from your state officials if you are legally mandated to report.
5. Don't deny or question what happened, unless there is good evidence to the contrary.
6. Weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15).
"Shared sorrow is endurable sorrow." Robert Kelleman
7. Listen with compassion. Give her time to tell her story. Be patient because it could take some time. Ask her where God is in all this.
8. Gather information to determine how she is personally struggling:
 - the impact of the counselee's daily life (are they functioning?)
 - the counselee's thinking and attitude about the abuse
 - the response of relatives and friends

B. Offer Truth

1. According to God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit.
2. We will not always understand God's ways and thoughts.
(See Isa. 55:8-12; Isa. 45:5-7; Lamentations 3:19-33; Romans 11:33-36)

"We must see our circumstances through God's love instead of, as we are prone to do, seeing God's love through our circumstances."

"And because His love cannot fail, He will allow into our lives only the pain and heartache that is for our ultimate good."

Jerry Bridges, *Is God Really in Control?* p. 105

C. Help Her Develop an Understanding of Suffering

1. Sin is the cause of all suffering. We live in a fallen world.

2. God is sovereign over all things, including suffering.
3. God has a purpose in all our suffering.
4. In every trial we have an opportunity to glorify God.

D. Help Her Understand and Deal with Shame

1. Definition: a feeling of deep personal humiliation and disgrace.
2. A sexually abused person often describe themselves dirty, used, worthless, damaged goods, disgusting, forgotten, deserted, betrayed, and unlovable.
3. Survivors often carry a heavy load of shame because of being defiled at the hands of someone evil.
4. She feels shame because the sin of someone else has been smeared on her, and now she lives with the repercussions of this sin.

How can we help with Shame? Heb.12:2-3 “ ...fixing our eyes on Jesus.

- Jesus experienced shame:
In birth, in life.
And in death, Christ on the cross experienced greatest shame imaginable, due to no sin on His part.
- Christ understands shame.
- Jesus met people in their shame: touched the leper (Luke 5); chose a tax collector (Luke 5); let women ‘sinner’ touch him (Luke 7); Did not condemn woman caught in adultery (John 8).
- By His blood we are clean, 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” Isaiah 50:7

E. Help Her Understand and Deal with Guilt

1. Guilt is being liable before God for doing something wrong, something that violates God’s Word, and because of this, being liable to punishment.
2. A victim of sexual abuse is NOT guilty of what was done to her.
Clarify responsibility
3. The perpetrator is guilty and responsible for this heinous violation.
4. A survivor of sexual abuse is responsible for her response(s).
5. Help her learn and apply God’s solution for guilt (1 John 1:9; Jer. 31:31-34; Zeph. 3:17).

6. Help her learn to forgive biblically. We forgive like God does.

Consequences may remain: legal, relational restrictions, etc. Forgiveness is a decision, and continuing to follow through on that decision by letting go of malice or bitterness when memories arise. God commands us to forgive as we have been forgiven. Forgiveness is not deserved by anyone and it's not dependent on feelings.

F. Teach Her the Difference Between Right Fear and Sinful Fear

1. Right fear is fear of God (Eccl. 12:13).
 - awe and reverence for Who God is.
 - Make righteous choices, avoid obvious danger when possible Pro 22:3
 - Concern for others (2 Cor 11:28)
2. Right fear leads to joyful obedience.
3. Sinful fear distracts us of our goal to love God, please Him, and love others.
4. Sinful fear focuses on things that have not happened and will not happen.
5. Sinful fear wants us to run from God rather than to God.

How can we help someone caught in sinful fear?

Help them Put off Sinful Fear by repentance. Run to God! Isaiah 41:10

Repent of fearing man more than God, of being distracted from our primary goal, of allowing fear to control us, of focusing on this life rather than eternity, or of dwelling on thoughts that are not true.

Help them Grow in fear of the Lord.

Help them grow in love for others (1 John 4:18) instead of fearing them.

G. Teach Her to Distinguish Between Righteous Anger and Sinful Anger

1. It is right to feel angry about the abuse because God is angry about how your abuser treated you (Deut. 22:25-26; Jer. 30:23-24; Rom. 1:18).
2. Sinful anger: self-centered, sinfully expressed, not against true sin, against God

How can we help someone who is angry about abuse?

Teach them 3 key principles about anger:

1. It is right to feel angry about the abuse (Deut. 22:25-26; Jer. 30:23-24; Rom. 1:18). God's anger is a Righteous anger. (Matt. 18:5-6; Eph. 4:26)

2. People can experience immense hurt and not respond in sinful anger.
(2 Cor. 4: 7-12; 1 Peter 2:19-25)
3. Encourage her to leave vengeance to God (Romans 12:19-21).

H. Help Her Develop Godly Relationships

1. Help her seek the Lord as her primary relationship (Ps. 27).
2. Ask about patterns of relationship struggles to find any potential idols:

--crave acceptance?	--fear of rejection?
--loneliness/isolation?	--struggle with trust?
--feel "different" from everyone?	--insecure/jealous?
--self-abusive?	--desiring escape?
--fear conflict?	--desire to control others?
--staying in harmful relationship?	--others?

Common idols:

Fear of man
Control

How can we help someone caught in relationally destructive idolatry?

- Encourage involvement in Christian community:
 - a. Confess our sins (James 5:16).
 - b. Are honest about our joys and sorrows (Romans 12:15).
 - c. Love one another (Romans 16:16).
 - d. Help each other grow (Galatians 6:1-2).
 - e. Serve one another (Acts 2:45).
- 4. Community can help us recognize shame-based lies and embrace truth.
 - a. Teach her about trust in relationships.
 - b. Teach her about biblical communication.
 - c. Teach her problem solving skills.
 - d. Encourage her to learn about the biblical model for marriage and parenting.
 - e. Teach her about true biblical love.
 - f. Help her build relationships with others in her church.
- 5. Help her decide whether to, and /or how to, confront the abuser.
 - a. The primary purpose of confrontation is to give the perpetrator an opportunity to repent and be reconciled to God and others (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1).
 - b. Prepare her that the perpetrator may become angry and continue in denial and the results of her obedience are to be left up to God.

I. Help Her Develop a Godly Understanding about Sex

1. If married
 - Are there struggles with flashbacks?
 - Is there an understanding of God's principles and purposes for sex in marriage?
 - Is there avoidance?

2. If single
 - What are temptations like?
 - Is she acting out sexually or struggling with self-control?

IV. Final Thoughts

A biblical response involves honest expression of pain while remembering and acting on truth rather than believing or acting on lies or feelings.

Be renewed in her mind and thinking. Put off lies and undisciplined thinking and put on disciplined and controlled thinking (2 Cor. 10:5; Phil. 4:8-9; Eph. 4:22-24).

- change from hopeless thoughts (Lam 3:17-18) to thoughts of hope (Lam 3: 21-25) They may be holding gloomy interpretations rather than Christ-centered interpretations.
- change from thoughts all about self or circumstances to thoughts of God and His truth.
- change from thoughts of self-pity to thoughts of thanksgiving.

Suggestion: Lamentations 3 homework.

Specifically:

- a. Her identity is no longer a sufferer/victim.
- b. She is responsible for her own guilt and not the guilt of the perpetrator. Any guilt on her part that is confessed is forgiven.
- c. Jesus took all of her shame and she is now clothed in His righteousness
- d. She is free to grow in the fear of the Lord and put off fear of man.
- e. She is free to be angry at what angers God and can do so without sin.
- f. She is free to love and serve others with God's love.
- g. She is free to enjoy sex as God intended.

Free! (John 8:31, 36)

Initial Homework Ideas:

She needs Hope: Victory IS Possible in the Situation (2 Cor. 4, especially 4:16-18).

God intends for the believer to have victory in the struggles engendered by the sins of others (Romans 8:35-37; Psalms).

Struggles can be useful and fruitful (2 Peter 1:2-9).

Victory is being controlled by the desire to please God by growing in maturity.

Remind Her of the Goodness of God & Resources in Christ in the Midst of Evil.

Her Father chose her and is for her (Eph. 1; Rom. 5-8; John 15:17; 2 Cor. 5:17).
Jesus empathizes with her as her faithful High Priest and is able to help (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16).

God is her ever-present comfort and refuge (Psalm 46; 2 Cor. 1:3-11).
God's grace is sufficient for every trial (2 Cor. 12:9; Jude 24; Heb. 4:16).
God is gracious to strengthen her (Isa. 41:10; 1 Peter 5:10).
There will be future glory (Rom. 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 4)!