

7 Questions to Help Your Church Protect the Wounded and Care for the Abused

By Dr. Shawn Foster, author of [Unmasking the Monster in Our Midst](#)

Our world is breaking in more ways than one. Addiction. Fatherlessness. Deception. Gender confusion. Bitterness. Violence. These heartaches walk through church doors every week. **And Jesus still welcomes all those who struggle with things to come to Him.**

But one heartbreak is often hidden in silence: abuse.

Sexual abuse. Physical abuse. Emotional abuse. Spiritual abuse. Sometimes it happens in the world. Sometimes in the home. And tragically—sometimes in the church.

When it does, the most vulnerable soul in the room is the one who's been hurt. As pastors and churches, we must be ready to meet them with clarity, truth, and compassion.

1. Would someone who's been abused feel safe enough to speak up in our church?

Not because we're perfect, but because we've spoken clearly. Victims listen for signals: "Will I be believed?" "Will I be blamed?" "Will I be silenced?" If we've never publicly acknowledged that abuse can happen—even in good churches—victims may assume it's safer to stay quiet.

2. Do we have a clear, compassionate process to respond when someone says, "I've been hurt by someone"?

A crisis is the worst time to write a plan. Having one already in place ensures the victim is not brushed aside or unintentionally re-traumatized by confusion or delay. Even a simple, biblical protocol shows we're ready to listen and act.

3. Have we taught our leadership and staff how to listen to a victim without judgment, interruption, or interrogation?

The first few minutes of a disclosure shape everything that follows. Knowing how to respond with calm, compassion, and clarity can determine whether a victim begins to heal—or withdraws in deeper fear.

4. Are we more concerned with the reputation of our ministry—or with the restoration of the one who was wounded?

Protecting the name of the church at the expense of a soul Christ died for is not biblical leadership. A heart that beats for the vulnerable will trust God to defend His name when we do what's right—even if it's hard.

5. Are victims guided toward long-term care—not just temporary crisis response?

Many churches offer a moment of help... but not a season of healing. Abuse leaves deep wounds that require Scripture-saturated, grace-filled discipleship. We must be prepared to walk the long road with the broken.

6. Do we speak clearly about abuse from the pulpit—not to shock, but to shelter?

Silence on abuse doesn't protect the innocent. It protects the abuser. When we speak the truth in love, victims hear: "This is a safe place. I'm not alone. God sees me."

7. Have we built a culture where protecting the vulnerable is part of our identity—not just our policy?

Policies are essential. Training is critical. But culture—what we praise, what we tolerate, what we emphasize—ultimately determines whether victims feel safe and abusers feel exposed. A Christlike church creates a culture of safety before a policy is ever tested.

There are many spiritual battles facing the church today. But if we fail to protect the vulnerable in our own flock, we've already lost one of the most vital ones.

The question isn't whether abuse is the only threat. The question is: When it happens, are we ready to respond like Jesus would?

If you'd like help preparing your church—practically and biblically—I have written:

Unmasking the Monster in Our Midst

A biblical resource to help churches protect the wounded, respond wisely, and walk with survivors—without compromising the truth.

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