Childhood Sexual Abuse



*“My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.”*

Psalm 55:4-5

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Musical, athletic, beautiful-yet with the winsome appeal of “the girl next door”-Marilyn Van Derber walked down the Atlantic City runway as the newly crowned Miss America. After reigning for a year with whirlwind spotlight appearances, she embarked on a highly visible speaking career. As the epitome of self-confidence and composure, this host of 23 television specials served for 16 years as the only female guest lecturer of a major corporation. Then, 33 years later, Marilyn stepped up to a very different podium, this time to deliver a very different message: “*Tonight, I break my silence…It means speaking the unspeakable word.” She revealed, “From the time I was 5 until I was 18 and moved away to college, my father sexually violated me.”*

As a motivational speaker. Marilyn had a new motivation-a passion to help other victims break their silence, salvage their lives and be made whole. Describing her hidden horror has helped other victims reveal their terror and survive their shame. Still there are many victims in the midst of their own secret storm who inwardly cry.”

*“My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.”*

Psalm 55:4-5

**What is Childhood Sexual Abuse?**

**.** Childhood sexual abuse is any physical, visual or verbal interaction with a minor by an older person whose purpose is sexual stimulation or sexual satisfaction

**.** Abuse means mistreatment of someone in an ***inappropriate*** manner.

**.** Abuse is intentional, not accidental.

**.** Abuse results in emotional, mental, and/or physical harm.

**.** Sexual abuse of a child is almost always committed by someone the child knows or with whom the child has frequent contact, such as.

-family member

-neighbor

-coach

-babysitter

-church leader

-older friend

-teacher

-doctor

-playmate’s older siblings

-institutional worker

-daycare worker

-mother’s boyfriend

***The Bible is not silent about inappropriate sexual interaction:***

*“He lies in wait like a lion in cover; he lies in wait to catch the helpless; he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net.”*

*Psalm 10:9*

**What is Incest?**

Marilyn would lie stiff as a board, but night after night her father would overpower her, force himself upon her…violate her body…manipulate her mind, lacerate her soul and spirit. Nothing would dissuade him…Marilyn would open wide the windows of her room to plummet the temperature-but still came in. She took a sign off a train that read “Please go ‘way and let me sleep” and hung it on her doorknob-he still came in. She pretended to be having her period-he still came in. She wouldn’t bathe –he still came in.

Like Job, Marilyn found no safe haven from the terrors she experienced…

*“Terrors overwhelm me; my dignity is driven away as by the wind; my safety vanishes like a cloud.”*

*Job 30:15*

**.** Incest is sexual interaction with a child or an adolescent by a person who is a member of the child’s family: blood relative, an adoptive relative or someone related by marriage and remarriage.

**.** Incest often progresses from subtle touching then to more extensive sexual activity.

**.** Incestuous relationships usually continue over a long period of time.

*“No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the Lord.”*

*Leviticus 18:6*

**Read Leviticus 18:6-18**

**What is the difference between Molestation and Rape?**

Even though children have a natural inclination to trust their parents, Marilyn knows that what is happening to her has nothing to do with “fatherly love.” In fact, it is rape. All the heinous acts committed against her are “about control and winning.”

Whether I was awake with intense alertness, or awakened by his hands touching me, my body was as electrified as if a huge, growling bear were standing over my bed just ready to pounce on me. Just the waiting brought on feelings of inexpressible dread, of the need to be hyperalert, ready for battle, ready for the bear, the warriors with huge knives, my father.” Marilyn could have echoed the words of Job…

*“When I think about this, I am terrified; trembling seizes my body”*

*Job 21:6*

**Checklist for Childhood Sexual abuse**

***Indirect sexual abuse***

**. As a Child, were you…?**

□ Stared at while undressing, bathing or urinating?

□ Intentionally exposed to the nudity of or made to bathe with someone older?

□ Made to listen to sexual talk?

□ Shown sexual pictures, magazines, video’s?

□ Made to sexually stimulate yourself with another person watching?

***Direct Sexual Abuse***

**. As a child, were you…?**

□ Touched in sexually sensitive areas?

□ Kissed in a sexual way?

□ Made to touch sexual parts of another person?

□ Manipulated into unwanted sexual intercourse or anal sex?

*“What the wicked dreads will overtake him; what the righteous desire will be granted. When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.”*

*Proverbs 10:24-25*

**Who Is the Victim of Childhood Sexual Abuse?**

The secret is so shaming…the savagery of childhood sexual abuse so crippling…that you tell no one, according to Marilyn. And the family dynamic in the Van Derbur household only fuels the frenzied hush. “Telling on other” is taboo among the sisters, since the one reporting a misdeed receives harsher punishment than the one who does something wrong.

And then Marilyn pieces together the fact that her oldest sister has been sent off to boarding school for being defiant and rebellious. The same could happen to Marilyn if she tells…therefore, the trauma of the sexual abuse causes Marilyn to dissociate. She “splits” and becomes two different people-to repress what goes on night after night. A “day child” emerges…”happy, sparkly”…highly moral. But then there is the “night child,” often found curled up on her bed in a fetal position…waiting…only to have her perpetrator pry her arms and legs apart. Together, the day child and the night child exemplify the truth of this Proverb…

*“Even in laughter the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief.”*

*Proverbs 14:13*

**.** A child victim of sexual abuse is any child under the age of eighteen who has suffered a ***single experience*** or many experiences of sexual abuse.

**.** A child victim of sexual abuse is overwhelmed with a sense of powerlessness.

* A child has no choice abut being abused.
* A child does not have the ability to stop the abuse.
* A child is defenseless against the emotional pain.
* A child feels helpless and totally alone.

***The Bible is not silent about God’s concern for victim:***

*“You, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless…You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.”*

*Psalm 10:14, 17*

**Perpetrators**

**. *Adult Seducers of Children***

**Family Members**

* The most frequent victimizers of children in their own families are fathers and stepfathers.
* Prefer sex with children who are merely available and vulnerable-for example their own children

**Pedophiles**

* Considerably older than their victims, demonstrate a preference for children primarily victimize nonfamily members. Pedophiles who abuse nonfamily members average 90 victims,

**Predators**

* Do not have a true preference for children but will have sex with a child just because the child is available.

**. *Adult Rapist of Children***

The most dangerous of child abusers is the rapist, who is usually a person significantly older than the child it usually a onetime incident.

**. *Child Perpetrators of Children***

The child perpetrator is a minor who sexually violates a younger child. Typically, these victimizers have been abused as children and, as a result, have learned to abuse other children in the same way.

***The Bible reveals the intent of the victimizers:***

*“A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart, he harbors deceit. Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.”*

*Proverbs 26:24-26*

**Who are Non-Protective Parents?**

Typically, non-protective parents can be divided into four categories. Those within the first three categories reject the most basic parental role: to protect their offspring. Not only do they permit their children to be abused, but also, they appear to favor the guilty over the innocent…the abuser over the abused. Surprisingly, abused children feel more anger toward the “non-offending parent” for failing to protect them than toward the abuser for abusing them.

Where was Marilyn’s mother when all of this was happening? “Silence is the voice of complicity”…the saying goes. And her silence was cloaked in a pretense she would protect-no matter the cost.

Marilyn’s mother wanted to believe she had the “prefect family,” and from the outside, they appeared to be just that-attractive, wealthy, and accomplished. She herself was the picture of charm, always optimistic and active in the civic theater and other organizations. Raised in a highly regarded Denver family, she was determined to forever remain esteemed by other millionaire socialites.

So desperate was Marilyn’s mother to disguise the family dysfunction that once when she was in the hospitalized, she ordered flowers from the gift shop, so she could tell everyone that they were from Van. He, on the other hand, had flatly told her years before that if she were ever incapacitated, he wouldn’t care for her.

**. *Passive Parent***

Usually a mother, the passive parent gives silent consent to sexual abuse by ignoring it. Most often she feels powerless to protect their children. She victimizes her child by withholding physical protection and doubly victimizes her child by withholding emotional support.

**. *Preoccupied Parent***

Preoccupied parents are so absorbed in their own personal lives or their own emotional problems that they fail to protect their children. They lack the sensitivity and discernment needed to see the signs of a child in distress.

**. *Prideful Parent***

Prideful parent cannot or will not believe that sexual abuse could exist within their “picture perfect” home. Their self-centered pride prevents them from taking their own child’s word that such a travesty has happened.

***The Bible chastises protectors of the guilty, those who fail to protect the innocent:***

*“It is not good to be partial to the wicked or to deprive the innocent of justice.” Proverbs 18:5*

**. Positive Parents**

Having a positive influence on their children but cannot see signs of abuse.

Look for and guard against other dangers to their children, but fully trust those closest to them.

Do protect if made aware of the abuse, no matter who the abuser might be.

These positive parents need to pray diligently for wisdom because Yeshua (Jesus) said…

*“Wisdom is proved right by all her children.”*

*Luke 7:35*

**What Is the Typical Course of Childhood Sexual Abuse?**

**. *Seduction***

The perpetrator emotionally seduces the child by developing intimacy, progressively building trust and giving pleasure. This accomplished by becoming an attentive friend, showing preferential treatment, giving money, gifts, bribes or rewards.

**. *Stimulation***

Affirming and warm (playful wrestling and tender touching such as hugs and gentle back rubs). Over time the child becomes desensitized and vulnerable to a progression of more advanced sexual activity. By God’s design, the body naturally responds to sexual stimulation.

**. *Silence***

The perpetrator moves to ensure the victim’s silence through intimidation and fear-inducing threats. A warped sense of loyalty has already been cultivated within the child through special attention, gifts and privileges. The destructive secret remains imbedded for years in a quagmire of ambivalent feelings such as love and hate, pleasure and shame, tenderness and terror.

**. *Suppression***

When know one rescues the child from the abusive relationship, the child feels doubly betrayed. Any hope of ever being “saved” by anyone, including God, is destroyed. The child, feeling no choice but to bow to the supreme power of the perpetrator, slips quietly into enslavement. Then, when hopelessness reigns, the soul is suppressed and the light within the spirit is snuffed out.

***The Bible describes men of deception:***

*“There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. Even on his bed he plots evil; he commits himself to a sinful course and does not reject what is wrong.”*

*Psalm 36:1-4*

**Question: “I feel guilty for the sexual acts with my father over the years. Why didn’t I stop it?**

**Answer:** Victims of sexual sin are typically plagued with feelings of guilt…even when those acts were initiated by the perpetrator-not the victim. You didn’t “cause” the abuse to occur! When someone’s sin spills acid onto you, you cannot escape the impact…and you can feel contaminated. The fact is, however you did not seduce your father. Obviously, you weren’t trained to stop a sexual perpetrator, especially not your father. Take to heart these key points:

Your father initiated the sexual acts upon you-you had no choice. As a child, you were not physically, mentally, or emotionally strong enough to overpower or stop him.

Because he was the adult, he knew exactly what he was doing, and bears full responsiliblty for his perversion.

Although grown children typically feel guilty, you need to discern false guilt from true guilt.

Perpetrators are experts at making their victims feel like willing participants-feeling guilty for the other person’s wrong. Since this is clearly false guilt, seek to discover what lies you were manipulated into believing and begin replacing those lies with biblical truth…

*“…let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance…”*

*Proverbs 1:5*

**What Common Challenge Faces Survivors of Child Abuse?**

The most reprehensible part of her mother’s role…was turning a “blind eye” to what occurred in Marilyn’s bedroom virtually every night. Marilyn recalls the time she first realized her mother “knew.” It began with the clicking of her mother’s dressy slippers on the hard-surfaced steps outside Marilyn’s closed bedroom door. There they lay…Marilyn and her father…in her bed. At the sound of her mother’s heels, he immediately stopped-unable to continue his assault.

Her rescuer was no more than six feet away, now bountiful hope of blessed help filled her little girl’s heart. Finally, it would end! Like a fearless mamma bear, her protective mother would reach in and snatch her cub from the sinister wolf. In silence…perfectly still…she and her father…waited. Then the clicking of the heels reversed course…Her mother walked back into her prefect “make-believe” world.

There was never any doubt in my mind, after that night, that she knew. She walked away from me, back into her prefect world-a world in which she was admired, respected, and charming. I knew she would never come back and for the hundreds and hundreds of nights to come she never did….

Children like Marilyn cannot change their parents, they can change their powerless responses in adulthood.-choosing not to stay powerless. If you were abused as a child, your challenge-along with that of every victim-is to move from victim to victor…from sufferer to survivor…from emotional cripple to overcomer.

*“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

*John 16:33*

If you were abused as a child, your challenge-along with every victim-is to move from victim to victor, form survivor to conqueror through the indwelling power of Christ.

**. *Victim***

The victim who continues to feel like a victim into adulthood is living with a “victim mentality”-still feeling powerless and therefore acting powerless. Typically moving from one abusive relationship to another, this victim lives in denial, refuses to face the secret of the past and posses no knowledge of how to receive help and healing.

**. *Survivor***

The survivor is aware of the need for facing the past. With complete honesty, the survivor takes action to deal with debilitating issues such as false guilt and shame, anger and unforgiveness, loneliness and grief, personal sin and repentance.

**. *Conqueror***

The conqueror is victorious over the past and no longer in bondage to the memories of the abuser or of the abuse. Through an intimate relationship with Christ, giving Him full control, the conqueror grows in self-worth, vulnerability and the capacity to experience authentic love and intimacy with others. Ultimately the desire to reach out and minister to others become reality.

**The bible reveals our hope for victory:**

*“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Romans 8:37*

**Characteristics of Childhood Sexual Abuse**

*In order to survive, I split into a day child, who giggled and smiled, and a night child, who lay awake in a fetal position only to be pried apart by my father. Until I was 24, the day child had no conscious knowledge of the night of the night child. During the day, no embarrassing or angry glances ever passed between my father and me. I had no rage toward him at all, because I had no conscious knowledge f what he was doing to me. Anyone who knew me would say I was the happiest child, I believed I was happy…Still incest colored every aspect of my life.”*

Though the sexual experience may differ from victim to victim, these words from Marilyn Van Derber mirror the emotional experience of many young victims. Early they learn to disconnect from their feelings in order to survive. Memory loss may be God’s way of protecting their young hearts from this paralyzing fact: Those who should have been their protectors were their perpetrators! Ultimately, the Lord our God is Jehovah Rapha, “the God who heals.” He knows when each person is ready to receive his emotional healing.

*“For I am the Lord, who heals you.”*

*Exodus 15:26*

**What Are Emotional Signs of Abuse?**

Typically, a victim develops some of the following symptoms:

**.** Anxiety or panic attacks. Confused sexual identity **.** Depression

**.** Excessive need for love and attention **.** Emotional withdrawal

**.** False guilt **.** Fear of authority figures **.** Fear going to bed, nightmares

**.** Fear of intimacy **.** Inability to concentrate in school **.** Low self-worth

**.** Mistrust **.** Hysteria, phobias, obsessions, compulsions **.** Shame

**.** Regression to an earlier phase of development. Unexplained mood changes

**.** Self-consciousness and insecurity **.** Splitting off into different personalities **.** Unpredictable anger, aggression, rage

**Question: “If a child is abused at a very early age, won’t time erase any memory of what happened?”**

**Answer:** Emotional damage to the soul of a child can last a lifetime. Even when there is no memory of the event and without understanding why, victims of sexual abuse can carry a crippling loss of self-worth, an overwhelming amount of shame and fear-based outlook on life and relationships.

*“Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name.” Psalm 142:6-7*

**What are Physical Signs of Abuse?**

One recognizable sign of abuse came when Marilyn was in 5th grade, through an embarrassing incident during gym class. The gym teacher asked everyone to bend over and touch their toes. Marilyn couldn’t even reach to the middle of her calves-her body was so tight and ridged. Humiliated, she was then singled out as the teacher began pushing on her back, forcing a meeting between fingers and toes.” I could never allow my body to “let go” because that would mean to submit, to feel, to respond, to lose, to be wholly and reprehensibly bad.”

Marilyn also suffered from chronic constipation since childhood due to tightening her buttocks so hard nothing from the outside could get in, and to keep everything on the inside from getting out. Signs of sexual abuse can appear much later in life. Accompanying bouts of sobbing after her daughter turned 5 were bouts of paralysis, for which doctors had no physical explanation…because none existed. Marilyn’s paralysis did not originate in her body, but in her anguished soul. These Scriptures reflect such agonizing anguish…

*“My soul is in anguish…my pain is not relieved…it does not go away.”*

*Psalm 6:3; Job 16:6*

Most victims display some of the following more obvious signs of abuse:

**.** Abdominal pain

**.** Bedwetting, change in toilet habits

**.** Memory loss

**.** Complaints of sickness or frequent headaches

**.** Failure to complete tasks

**.** Genital itching, yeast or bladder infections

**.** Habit disorders

**.** Masturbation, excessive or in public

**.** Obsessive washing and cleaning

**.** Pain when urinating

**.** Premarital pregnancy. Self-mutilation (a cutter)

**.** Sitting or walking difficulties

**.** Suicidal gestures

**.** Undernourished appearance

**.** Torn, stained or blood-spotted underpants

**.** Vaginal or rectal pain, swelling, bruises, bleeding

**.** Vaginal/penile discharge

**.** Venereal disease

Every child abuse victim can identify with the painful words of suffering Job…

*“Night pierces my bones; my gnawing pains never rest.”*

*Job 30:17*

**What Are Social Signs of Childhood Sexual Abuse?**

Victims usually have difficulty developing healthy habits and relationships, struggling in several of the following areas:

**.** Abnormal expression of sexuality

**.** Alcohol and drug abuse

**.** Antisocial behavior, defiance, problems with authority and rules

**.** Arriving early, staying late at school or another safe place

**.** Avoidance of specific people or situations

**.** Deep fear of saying ***no*** to adults

**.** Dependent, clinging behavior

**.** Eating disorders

**.** Exclusive relationship with an older person

**.** Extreme modesty, reluctance to change clothes in front of others

**.** Fear of sleepovers

**.** Poor peer relationships

**.** Premature sexual behavior

**.** Promiscuity or seductive behavior with older males

**.** Sexually abusing a child

**.** Sudden drop in school performance or activities

**.** Taking on a parental role

All child victims struggle with not understanding their needs…and not knowing how to meet those needs. When wounded “children” of all ages become aware of these God-given needs, they may be drawn to the Elohim (Lord). Regardless of the past, He is the One who will satisfy their needs and strengthen their lives…

*“The Elohim (Lord) will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”*

*Isaiah 5811*

**Question: “Will a child who fell victim to early sexual abuse have problems with promiscuity?”**

**Answer:** Early sexual experiences can sometimes produce sexually promiscuous adolescents. Not all children respond to abuse this way. But once sexual desires have been aroused, sexual boundaries may be destroyed. Longing to feel loved, many victims harden their hearts to God and turn to sexual promiscuity. With a distrust in the Lord, they can “look for love in all the wrong places.”

*“I have strayed like a lost sheep.”*

*Psalm 119:176*

**What Are Spiritual Signs of Abuse?**

Marilyn’s mother read her Bible every night and kneeled beside her bed to pray to a “heavenly father.” Yet, she allowed her daughter’s earthly father to commit sexual abuse night…after night…after night. Understandably, Marilyn never prayed as a child or young adult-she believed the “Our Father” to whom her mother always prayed wasn’t protecting her anyway. “It would be many years before I understood why I didn’t want another father-certainly not a more powerful one.

It is not unusual for victims to be angry at Yahweh (God) for allowing the abuse. Like so many other victims of incest, Marilyn’s knowledge of a heavenly Father was skewed. Since the characteristics of her earthly father were transferred to the heavenly Father her mother prayed to, the image of Yahweh (God) was severely distorted in Marilyn’s mind.

However, Yeshua (Jesus) came to show us what the heavenly Father is really like. And His tender care and compassion for children were so significant that He gave this stern warning…

*“Whoever cause the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in Me-it would be better if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!*

*Matthew 18:6*

Children who are victimized generally struggle with some of the following obstacles to their spiritual growth:

**.** A warped negative perception of God **.** Anger at God because He did not stop the abuse **.** Distrusting God for allowing the abuse **.** Feeling rejected by God and unworthy **.** Fearing God’s anger and displeasure **.** Projecting the attributes of the abuser onto God **.** Possessing a knowledge of God buthave little personal experience of God’s love and grace  **.** Difficulty forming an intimate relationship with God

This though is too often true: Children live out in adulthood what they experience in their childhood. That is why abused children need to experience Yahweh’s (God’s) love through godly people. Children learn more from what is shown to them than from what is told to them. Without intervention, children who grow up lacking true and accurate knowledge of Yahweh (God) are headed for destruction as adults. The Elohim (Lord) says it plainly…

*“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”  
Isaiah 43:2*

**Question: “Why is it difficult for many abused children to trust God?”**

**Answer:** Children tend to see their earthly father as a reflection of the heavenly Father. If their earthly father is untrustworthy and abusive, they assume the heavenly Father is abusive and cannot be trusted.

*“The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.” Nahum 1:7*

**What Characterizes the Male Victim of Childhood Sexual Abuse?**

Daughters like Marilyn are not the only ones who fall prey to predatory fathers…Sons are also vulnerable to the sin of sexual abuse. Evil is not a respecter of persons, no matter their gender or age. All children are at risk of being abused by those who practice sexual perversion.

Likewise, all children-both male and female- are at risk of becoming an abuser of other, weaker, more vulnerable children. Sadly, sin produces sin, causing the transfer of abuse from victim to victim to victim. The book of Proverbs frequently addresses “my son,” warning him of a perverse man…

*…“who goes about with a corrupt mouth, who winks maliciously with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, who plots evil with deceit in his heart-he always stirs up conflict.”*

*Proverbs 6:12-14*

A male child victim of sexual abuse is generally between the ages 4 and 11 and is more likely than a female victim…

* To be victimized by someone outside of the family who is a stranger or authority figure such as a camp counselor, church leader, school teacher, or sports coach
* To be victimized in conjunction with other children
* To come from impoverished and single –parent families
* To be a victim of physical abuse

**What Is the Profile of a Perpetrator?**

The vast majority of abusers were themselves victims of abuse. This fact reveals that certain sins can be generational. That which is modeled before children is too often repeated years later. This does not excuse abuse. Regardless of how evil penetrates our lives, God eventually holds us all accountable for our behavior. But be assured, God’s redemptive power can break any family stronghold. This general principle is seen in the Bible regarding a son (Amon) who succeeds his evil father as king.

*“He walked in all the ways of his father.”*

*2 Kings 21:21*

**Why Do They Abuse Children?**

Perpetrators are master manipulators of their own minds. They rationalize their perverted reasoning and justify their sexual advances. But the Bible says:

*“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death.”*

*Proverbs 14:12*

**.** They feel like victims in desperate need to control someone

**.** They see their sexual actions as a solution to their problems

**.** They use children to bolster their sense of significance

**.** They use sex to feel love

**.** They have difficulty forming healthy adult relationships

**.** They rationalize and justify:

* “My wife is cold and indifferent-it’s her fault”
* “It’s my duty to provide se education for her”
* “I view sex as loving and gentle”
* “It’s better for me to prepare her than someone else”
* “It’s only play-not intercourse”
* “I can’t control my impulses”
* “I need something to relieve my stress”
* “She is seducing me”

*“All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord.” Proverbs 16:2*

**What Is the Profile of a Victim?**

Abusers typically look for specific things in their potential victims that indicate susceptibility to being abused. In this sense, victims don’t become victims by chance but by choice of the victimizer.

*“He (the victimizer) lies in wait near the villages; from ambush he murders the innocent, watching in secret for his victims*

*Psalm 10:8*

**Typical Characteristics of Victims**

**V-Vulnerable:** open to attack, susceptible to injury, defenseless, helpless

**I-Insecure:** anxious, timid, lacking confidence, self-doubting, apprehensive

**C-Compliant:** obedient, submissive, accommodating, yielding

**T-Trusting:** gullible, naïve, susceptible

**I-Intimidated:** frightened, scared, unsettled, nervous, worried

**M-Manipulated:** influenced, controlled, used, persuaded

**S-Suppressed:** contained, concealed, held back, restrained, bottled-up

**The Guilt Game**

Most games are fun, and most games require some level of strategy. In the case of child abuse, perpetrators use one of the most powerful strategies in existence-guilt. In fact, most perpetrators possess an expertise at playing the guilt game…a game of deceit. For victims, this game is not fun-it is evil.

*“Deceit (is) in the hearts of those who plot evil.”*

*Proverbs 12:20*

“If you share our secret”….

**. “**It will break my heart”

**.** “Mother’s feelings will be so hurt”

**. “**They won’t let me see you again”

. “Mommy won’t understand and leave”

**.** “Your mother will divorce me”

**.** “Our family will be destroyed”

**.** “I’ll tell them you wanted it”

**.** “I won’t love you anymore”

**.** “I’ll kill you...I’ll kill myself”

**Why Don’t Children Tell?**

For a number of reasons, most abused children never share “the secret” of their abuse. And when they do…it’s usually many years later! They protect their perpetrators because.

**.** They feel guilty (false guilt), assuming the sexual encounter is their fault.

**.** The feel love and loyalty for the abuser.

**.** They fear the one they tell may respond with disbelief and denial.

**.** They feel no need to tell because the trauma caused dissociation.

**.** They fear the abuser’s authority and power.

**.** They feel threaten by the abuser0

**.** They fear what will happen to the abuser.

**.** They feel obligated to the abuser.

**.** They feel no one cares because no one asks!

*“The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.” Proverbs 18:15*

**Do’s and Don’ts of Awareness**

Don’t be like an ostrich, hiding your head in the sands of denial. Although it is terribly hard to do, facing the truth that child abuse is taking place is the first step to healing.

*“When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.”*

*Proverbs 21:5*

**Do be aware…**

**.** Child abuse is illegal, a crime, and must be reported.

**.** children usually abused by people they know.

**.** children seldom lie about abuse.

**.** most often, physical abuse is violent, but sexual abuse may not be.

**.** children may deny or change their stories because of fear.

**.** sexual abuse is progressive and will get worse, if not stopped.

**Don’t…**

**.** be in denial, no matter how difficult it is to believe.

**.** assume that if it happened only once, it is not serious.

**.** minimize the abuse.

**.** let the offender go without confrontation.

**.** blame other family members.

**.** keep abuse a “family secret.”

**How to Respond to Child Sexual Abuse**

Nothing destroys the core of a child’s inner being like sexual abuse. Its long tentacles reach deep within the child…wrapping around the young heart…choking and killing innocence and trust. For many, the terror is so overwhelming that no part of the child’s soul is able to escape its evil presence.

The impact of Marilyn Van Derbur’s abuse continued to corrode her personal dignity and pervert her perception of others, even after the abuse ended. She, as well as other victims, can truly identify with the heart cry of Proverbs 25:20…”*Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on a wound, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.”*

If You ***Suspect*** Child Abuse

* Contact Child Protective Services
* Contact a family attorney
* Contact a shelter for women and children
* Contact a pastor or spiritual leader
* Contact local police
* Contact the local district attorney’s office

The bible says…

*”The wise prevail through great power, and those who have knowledge muster their strength. Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers.”*

*Proverbs 24:5-6*

If a Child ***Discloses*** abuse…

* Stay calm
* Take time to sensitively answer any questions from the child
* Be available to the child at all times
* Remain with the child-only leave with another adult that you can trust
* Respect the privacy of the child from those who have no need to know the story
* Make no promises you can’t keep
* Explain that law enforcement must be informed

*“…encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”*

*1 Thessalonians 5:14*

If you see ***Questionable*** Marks on a Child’s Body

* Take the child to a doctor
* Relate why you think abuse has taken place
* Ask for a copy of the medical report
* Keep a paper trail of all contacts you make
* Follow up with caseworkers

Follow the biblical mandate to…

*“Submit yourselves for the Elohim’s (Lord’s) sake to every human authority…who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.”*

*1 Peter 2:13-14*

**Dismantle the Damage**

**For Survivors of Childhood Abuse**

Former Miss America, Marilyn Van Derber, had no memory of her father’s incestuous relationship with her. Like many victims of trauma, she buried her painful memories under layers of disbelief and denial! Later, when her daughter reached the same age as when her abuse began, Marilyn began to experience anxiety attacks and chest pains. Seeing her young daughter at that age triggered memories of her abuse. This experience is common for many incest survivors. Trust in God’s timing. He knows when and how-to bring truth to the surface and healing to a wounded heart.

*“’I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,’ declare the Lord.”*

*Jeremiah 30:17*

**How to Deal with Denial**

**.** Desire complete honesty with yourself and with others.

**.** Choose to believe the truth; you were not responsible for the abuse.

**.** Through journaling each day, face the personal damage to your heart.

**.** Identify any unresolved anger.

**.** Allow yourself to grieve over your loss of innocence.

*“Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth.”*

*Psalm 86:11*

**How to Have a Pure Heart**

**.** Acknowledge your desire to change.

**.** Admit your excessive desire to be in control and your strategies for self-protection.

**.** Recognize that living in fear and shame means that you are not fully trusting God.

**.** Experience genuine sorrow over any known sin in your life.

**.** See your need for the Savior and rely on Him alone.

*“I acknowledge my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’-and you forgave the guilt of my sin.” Psalm 32:5*

* Material taken from Childhood Sexual Abuse by June Hunt Hope for The Heart

**Sexual Abuse Workbook**

* **1. How many years was Marilyn sexual abused?**
* **2. At what age did it start and when did it stop?**
* **3. What does Psalm 55:4-5 say about how the abused feels?**
* **4. What is sexual abuse?**
* **5. Is sexual abuse accidental? Why or why not?**
* **6. Who usually commits sexual abuse?**
* **7. What are some things that Marilyn would do to try to dissuade her father? What was some things that you would do?**

* **8. What is incest?**
* **9. Was it molestation or rape what her father was doing? Why? Why is it important what you call it?**
* **10. Name the five different ways that indirect sexual abuse occurs.**
* **11. Name the four types of direct sexual abuse.**
* **12. After so many years, Marilyn should have been able to stop the abuse. Why yes or no?**
* **13. After the sexual abuse has stopped there are no long term emotional effects? Why or Why not?**
* **14. Who is the Victim of Childhood Sexual Abuse?**
* **15. Name the four different categories of perpetrators. What category would you put your abuser?**
* **16. Name the three groups of adult seducers of children?**
* **17. According to Proverbs 26: 24, 26 what is the intent of the victimizer?**
* **18. How many categories of non-protective parents are there?**
* **19. Name each one and why they fail to protect?**
* **20. What is the typical course of childhood sexual abuse? How is each step accomplished? Was yours different?**
* **21. Will a victim sometimes feel guilty? Should they? What type of guilt is it?**
* **22. What is a victim? Do you feel that you are still a victim? Why?**
* **23. What is a survivor? Do you feel like a survivor? Are you ok with just surviving?**

* **24. What is a conqueror? Are you a conqueror? If not is that where you want to be?**
* **25. Name the four characteristics of Sexual Abuse.**
* **26. Name the emotional signs of abuse. What emotional signs do you have?**
* **28. Name the physical signs of abuse. Do you exhibit any signs? If, so which ones?**
* **29. Name the social signs of abuse. Do you have any social signs?**
* **30. Name the spiritual signs of abuse. Has your abuse affected you spiritual?**
* **31. If a child is abused at an early age won’t time erase any memory of what happened? Why yes or no?**
* **32. What we learn in childhood does not continue to affect us as adults. True or False? What affects have you seen?**
* **33. What characterizes the male victim of sexual abuse?**
* **35. Name the seven characteristics of victims?**
* **36. Why is it difficult for many children to trust God?**
* **37. Why don’t children tell? Have you ever told? When did you tell? Who was you able to tell?**
* **38. Why should victims tell?**
* **39. A lot of times as victims we act like an ostrich sticking our head in the sand. Should we ignore the abuse?**
* **40. Name the Do’s of awareness?**
* **41. Name the Don’ts of awareness.**
* **42. What should you do if you suspect abuse?**
* **43. What should you do if a child discloses abuse?**
* **44. What should you do if you see questionable marks?**