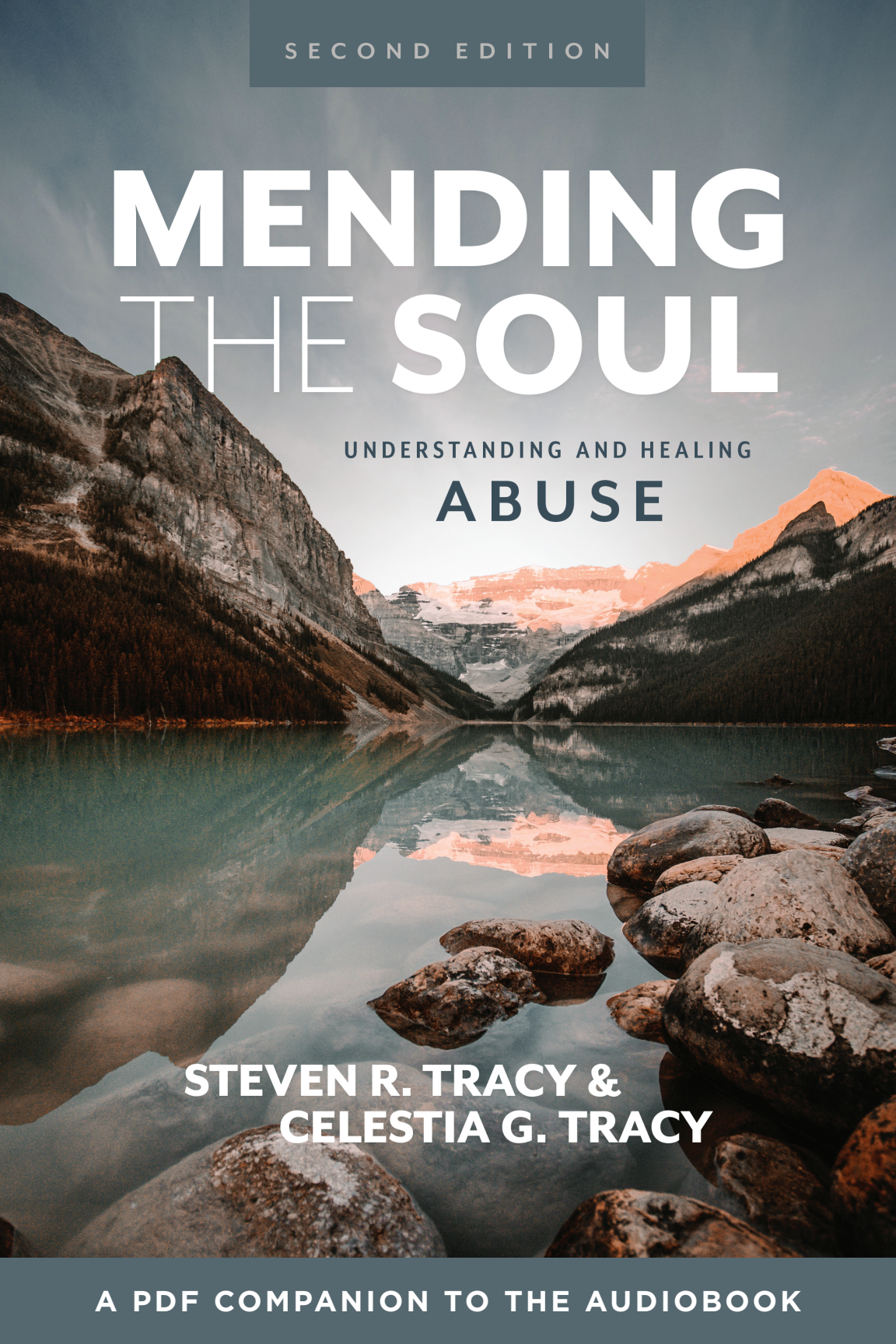




SECOND EDITION

MENDING THE SOUL

UNDERSTANDING AND HEALING
ABUSE

**STEVEN R. TRACY &
CELESTIA G. TRACY**

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

Mending the Soul

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CHAPTER 2

Abuse as a Perversion of the Image of God



Figure 1



Figure 2

CHAPTER 6

The Traumatized Brain

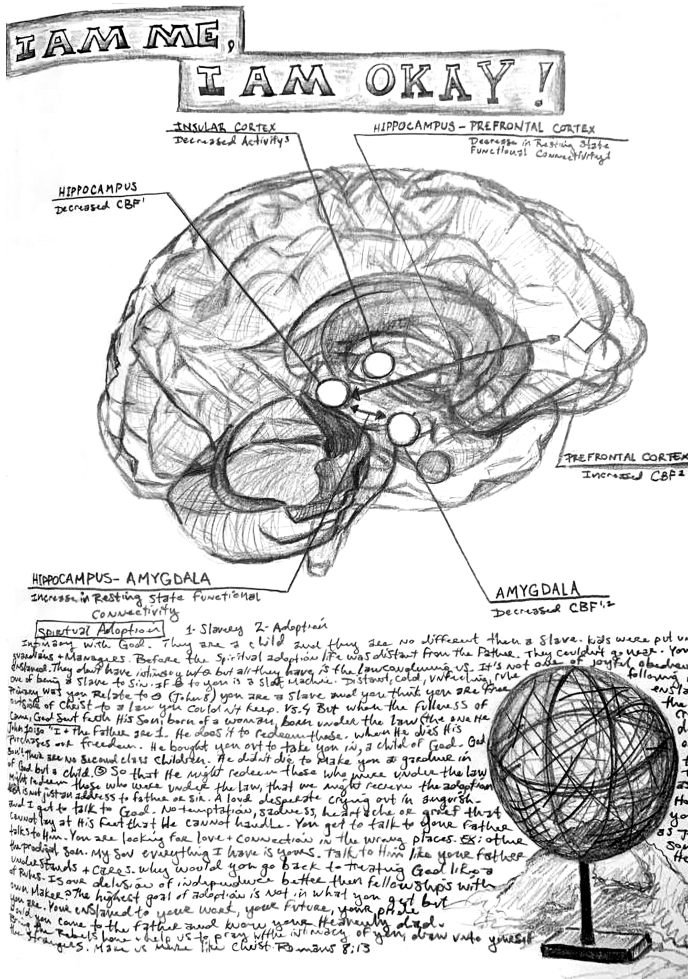


Figure 3

Nicole Boyette. Used with permission.



Figure 4: Terror



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7: This is me on the outside

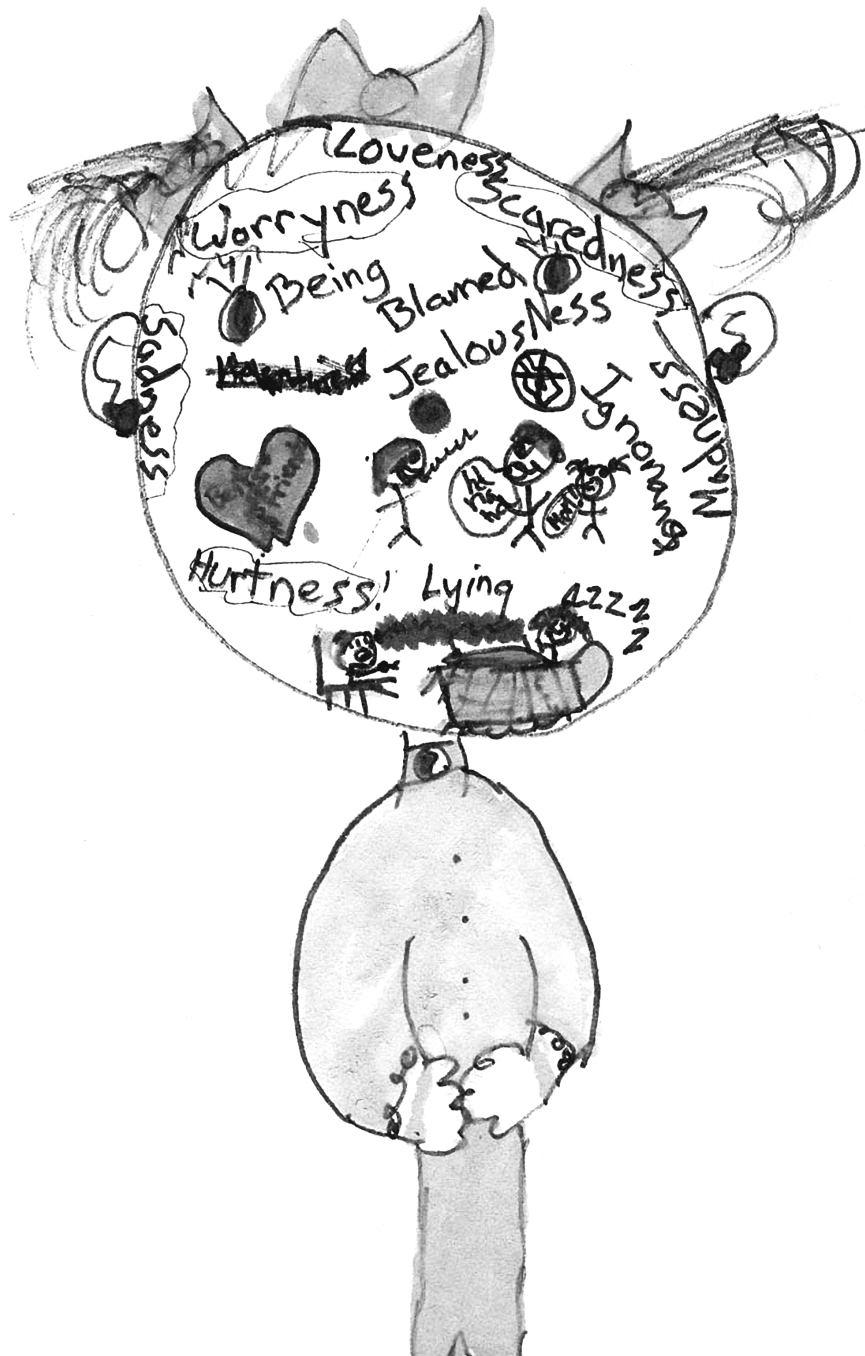


Figure 8: This is me on the inside

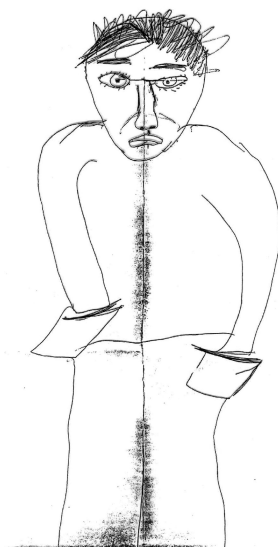


Figure 9

CHAPTER 7

Disconnection



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

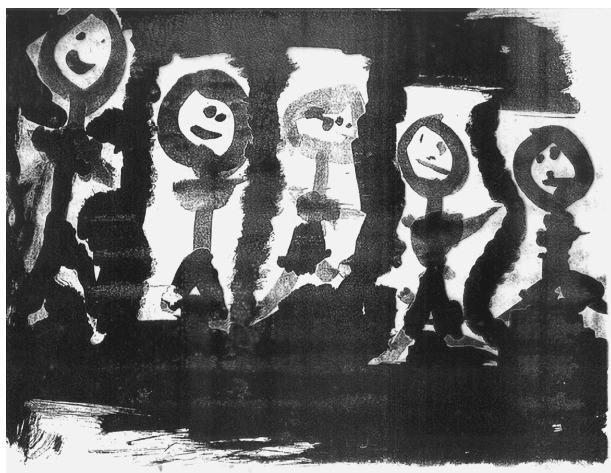


Figure 13

PART 3

The Healing Path



Figure 14

iStock.com/Marco Montalti



Figure 15: In the Potter's Hands
Nicole Boyette. Used with permission.

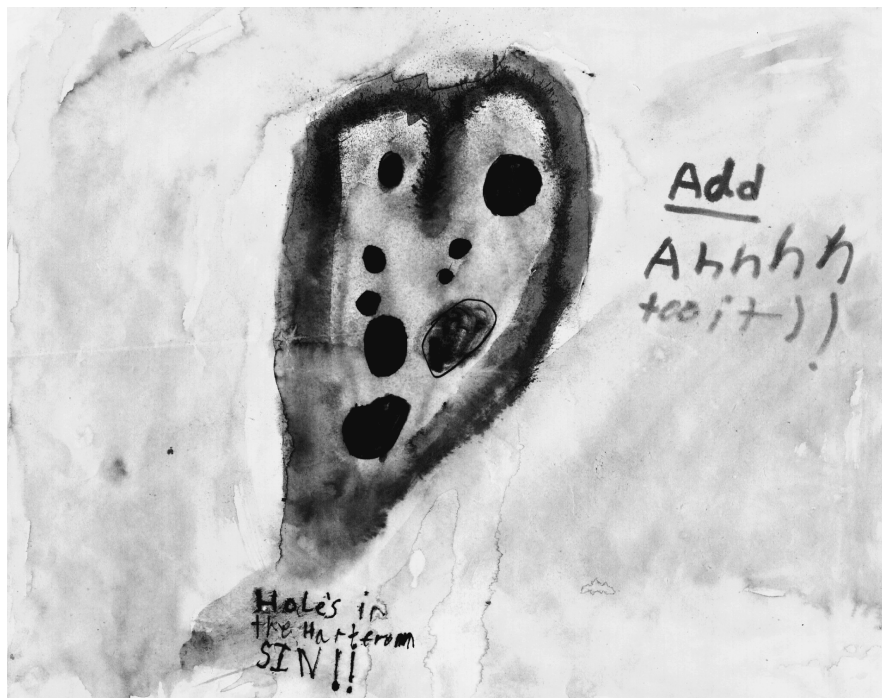


Figure 16

CHAPTER 8

MTS Healing Model

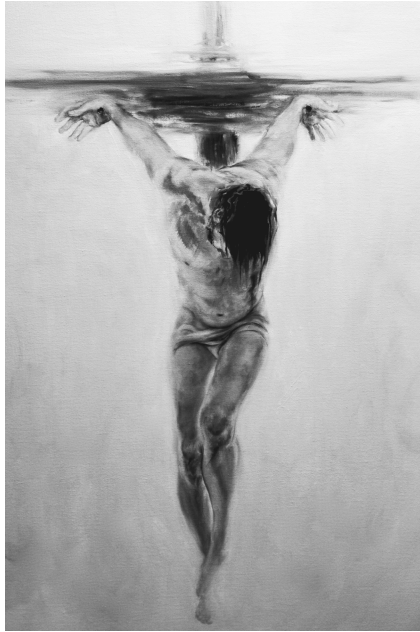
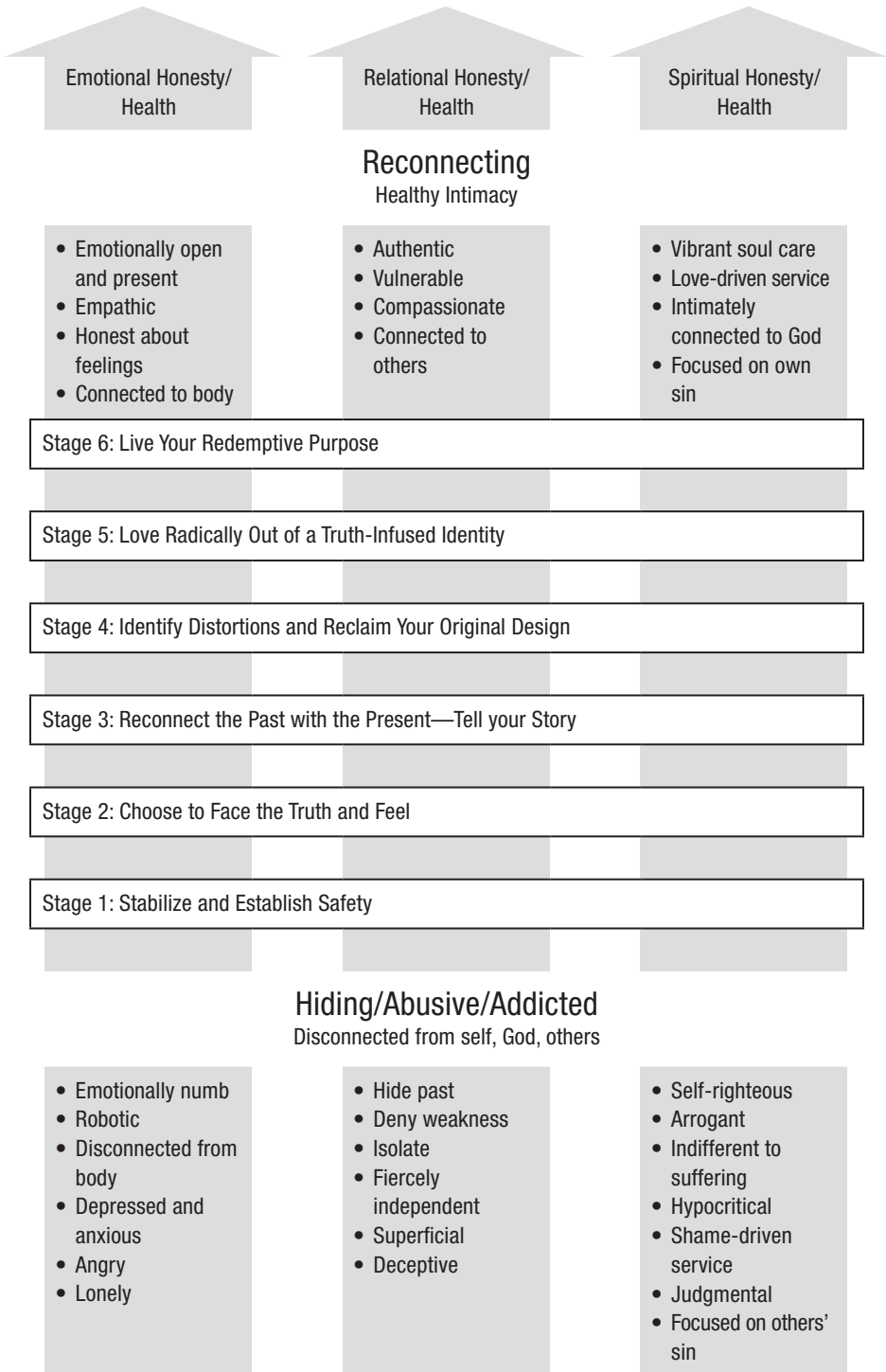


Figure 17: By His Wounds, oil on canvas
James Van Fossan. Used with permission.

The MTS Healing Model



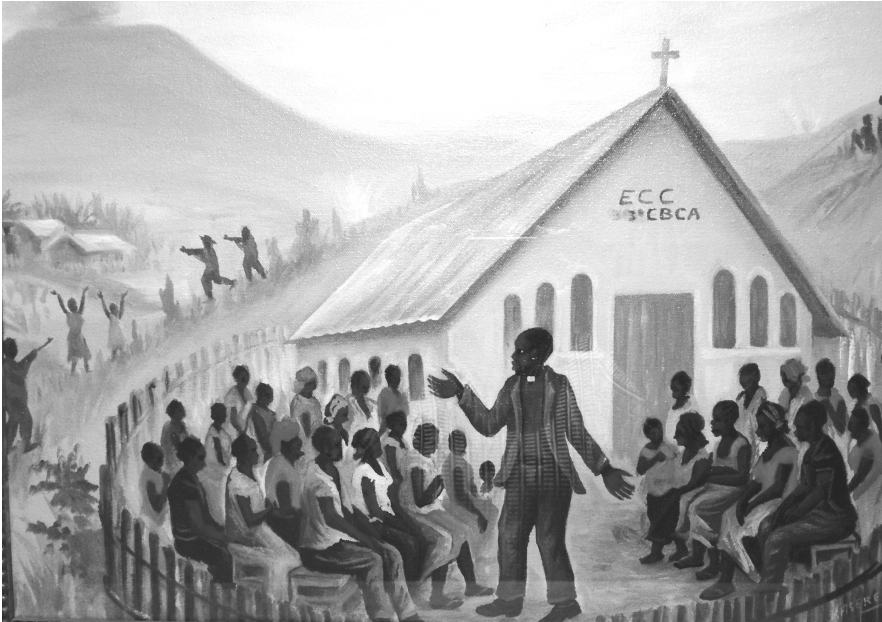
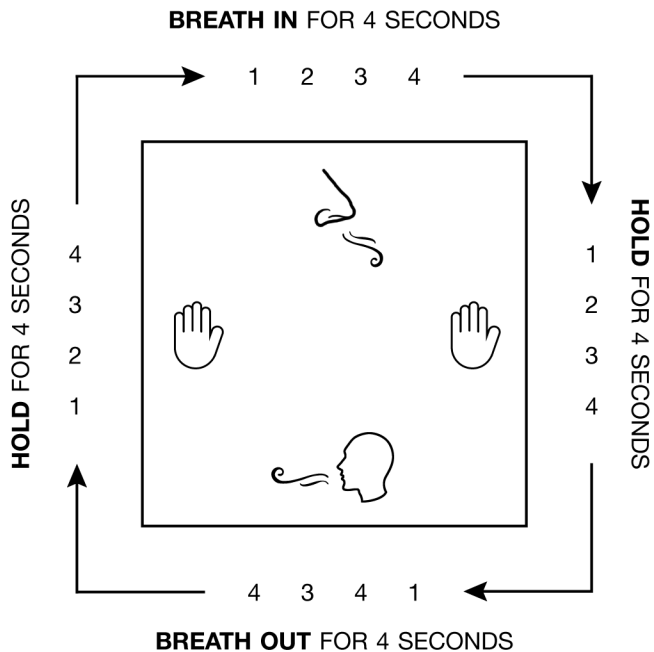


Figure 18: “Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:15).

Unknown artist, given as a gift by the Community of Baptist Churches in Central Africa (CBCA leaders) in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo



REPEAT THIS BREATH FIVE TIMES OR UNTIL YOU FEEL CALMER

Figure 19: Square Breathing, also known as Box Breathing

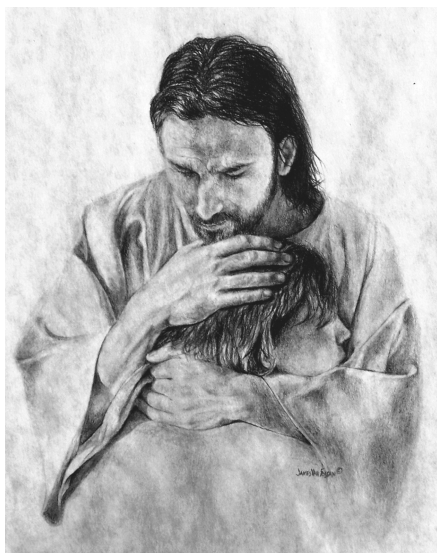


Figure 20: “I Will Heal Your Wounds”

James Van Fossan. Used with permission.

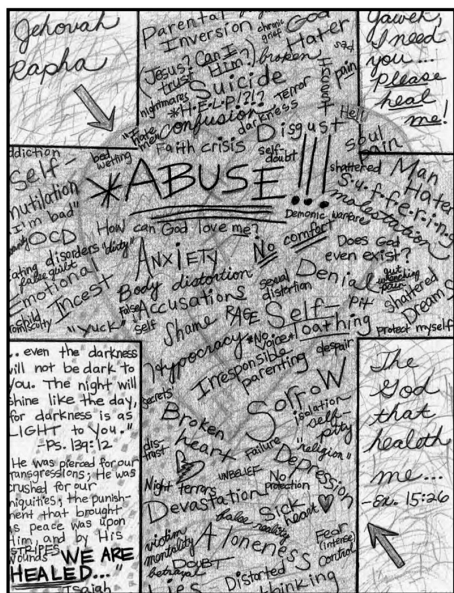


Figure 21

I created this cross...

during a desperate time in my healing journey, when I was truly making the transition of giving every bit of my pain to Him. I was suicidal and desperate for more of the Lord. I was desperately crying out to Him for whatever I needed. I drew a picture of the cross and put all my pain on it. Everything my abuse caused I heaved onto the Cross, as a heavy burden now off of my shoulders and safe with Jesus.

I look at this cross to remember that He died on the cross to carry these effects for me. I have many slash marks all across it to represent the stripes on Jesus' back, by which I AM BEING HEALED! As I made this picture, I almost broke the colored pencil by slash-slash-slash the thing so much. I was healing as I did that, envisioning His healing stripes. I was brutally honest about all I had experienced and all I was feeling. This picture is very important for me to use as an...

anchor for my heart.

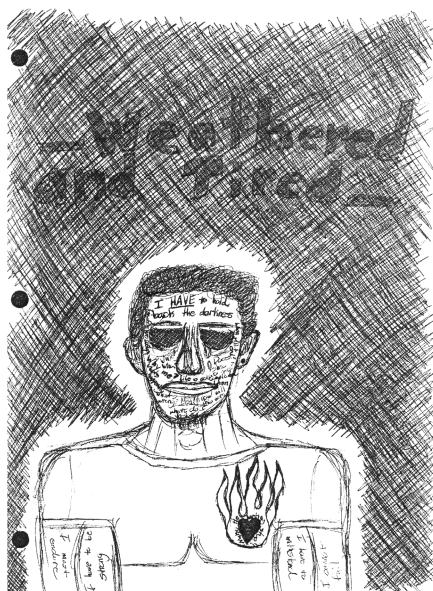


Figure 22

CHAPTER 9

Rebuilding Intimacy with God



"Jesus wept."

Figure 23

Scripture for the Healing Path

Attribute	Definition/Description	Biblical support	Common distortions created by abuse	Truth about this attribute
Love	God's love is the sum total of his goodness toward his creation. It includes his compassion—mercy shown to those who are suffering.	Exodus 3:7; Deuteronomy 7:7–8; Psalm 136; 145:8–9, 14–17; Hosea 11:9; Matthew 9:36; Romans 5:8; 8:31–39; 1 John 4:8–10	God loves other people but he couldn't love me. God's love must be earned. God's love is fickle and ephemeral. If I don't perform and measure up, God will no longer love me. God does not care about human suffering.	God loves his children unconditionally and eternally. Sinners are not loved by God because they are beautiful; they are beautiful because they are loved. * God is deeply grieved by human suffering.
Omniscience/ Wisdom	God knows all things actual or possible—past, present, and future.	1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 37:18; 139:1–6; Isaiah 40:12–14, 27; 42:9; Jeremiah 1:5; Ephesians 3:9–11	I can't be honest with God or his people. God is disgusted with me because he knows all of my secret sins. My abuser will never answer for their evil. No one believes my story; the truth will never come out.	God loves me in spite of knowing everything about me. God knows and cares about all of my hidden struggles. No abuse is ever hidden from God's sight or escapes his justice.
Sovereignty/ Omnipotence	God has absolute, unhindered rule over all of creation. His sovereignty is governed only by his good character.	Genesis 50:20; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 40:26; Jeremiah 29:11; 32:27; Romans 8:28; Revelation 19:11–21	God is a heavenly despot who cannot be trusted. God is just waiting to smash me. God isn't good because he didn't prevent my abuse.	God can and will bring good out of human and satanic evil. I can trust God's work in my life. God is bigger than my abusers and the damage they created; he can heal me. God will ultimately triumph over all evil.
Holiness	God is distinct and separate from the created world. He is morally pure (separate from sin).	Leviticus 20:23, 26; Isaiah 6:1–7; 40:18–22; Habakkuk 1:13; 2 Corinthians 6:16–17; 1 Peter 1:15–16; Revelation 4:8	God is too pure to ever want someone like me as his child. I'm just a slut. God is like my abusive earthly father and cannot be trusted.	God is different from and greater than anything in creation. God has nothing in common with an abusive earthly father. God is loving and pure. God is far too pure to allow unrepentant abusers to go unpunished.

* Martin Luther, cited in Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 151–52.

Attribute	Definition/Description	Biblical support	Common distortions created by abuse	Truth about this attribute
Righteousness/ Justice	God is morally perfect. He always conforms to what is right (based on his perfect character).	Psalms 58:10–11; 119:137; 145:17; Romans 2:9; 8:32–34; Hebrews 10:1–18; Revelation 16:5	There is no justice in the universe. Look what my abusers got away with. Those with the most power always win by crushing the weak. God will eventually crush me. I deserve to burn in hell, and probably will.	No one can ever condemn God's children because Christ's perfect sacrifice satisfied the justice of God. God is a just judge; he will never allow unrepentant evil to go unpunished.
Faithfulness	God is absolutely loyal and dependable. He fulfills 100 percent of his promises.	Psalms 25:10; 119:89–91; Hosea 11:8–9; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 24; 2 Thessalonians 3:2–3; Hebrews 10:23	No one can be trusted, not even God. Everyone lies. The Bible works for some people, but not for me. God won't keep being patient with me. He will eventually give up on me like everyone else has.	God will <i>never</i> give up on his children. No matter how many people betray me, abuse me, or don't believe me, I can and will trust God; he <i>always</i> does what he says; I can trust his promises.
Eternality	God is free from all succession of time. He sees everything past, present, and future with perfect clarity. He has no beginning or end.	Exodus 3:14; Psalm 90:2; 102:12; Isaiah 46:10; 2 Peter 3:8; Revelation 4:8; 22:13	There is no hope; I could never have anticipated this horrible abuse, and I can't deal with it. I will never heal. I can't trust God's promises; they haven't worked yet, and they never will.	I can trust God because he is not bound by time as I am and sees the whole of my life when I can only see today. I can trust God to fulfill his promises according to his timetable, not mine. God experiences with me every trial I face and is always present: he knows, he sees, he hears, and he feels all that I am experiencing. He is writing my story and has a perfect plan for my future and healing.



Figure 24: Christ as the Man of Sorrows
Artist: Jan Mostaert. Public Domain.



Figure 25: My Good Shepherd
James Van Fossan. Used with permission.

APPENDIX 1

Bible Passages That Address Abuse

Jesus' View of Children and Those Who Harm Children

Jeremiah 32:31–32, 35—“From the day it was built until now, this city has so aroused my anger and wrath that I must remove it from my sight. The people of Israel and Judah have provoked me by all the evil they have done . . . They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molek, though I never commanded—nor did it enter my mind—that they should do such a detestable sin and so make Judah sin.”

Matthew 18:5–6—“And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

Matthew 19:13–14—“Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”

Condemnation of Physical Abuse

Psalms 11:5—“The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion.”

Proverbs 1:15–19—“My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into evil, they are swift to shed blood. How useless to spread a net where every bird can see it! These men [abusers]

lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush only themselves! Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the life of those who get it.”

Proverbs 6:16–19—“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to run into evil, a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.”

Ezekiel 9:9–10—“The sin of the people of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see!’ So I [God] will not look on them [abusers] with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own heads what they have done.”

Ezekiel 18:10–13—“Suppose he has a violent son who sheds blood or does any of these other things . . . He defiles his neighbor’s wife. He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery . . . Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death.”

Romans 3:15–18—“Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Condemnation of Sexual Abuse

Deuteronomy 22:25–26—“But if out in the country a man happens to meet a young woman pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. Do nothing to the woman; she has committed no sin deserving death.”

Judges 19:25—“But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go.”

Lamentations 5:11—“Women have been violated in Zion, and virgins in the towns of Judah.”

Ezekiel 22:11, 21—“One man commits a detestable offense with his neighbor’s wife, another shamefully defiles his daughter-in-law, and another violates his sister, his own father’s daughter . . . I will gather you and blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her.”

Effects of Sexual Abuse

2 Samuel 13:19–20—“Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went . . . And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman.”

Condemnation of Neglect

1 Timothy 5:8—“Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

Condemnation and Effect of Verbal Abuse

Proverbs 12:18—“The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Proverbs 15:4—“The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.”

Proverbs 18:21—“The tongue has the power of life and death.”

Romans 3:13–14—“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

James 3:5–6, 8–9—“Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell . . . But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness.”

Condemnation of Spiritual Abuse

Ezekiel 22:25–26, 28—“There is a conspiracy of her princes within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her. Her priests do violence to my law . . . Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says’—when the LORD has not spoken.”

Matthew 23:1–5, 11–13—“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ‘The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for people to see . . . The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces.’”

Mark 7:5–8—“So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, ‘Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?’ He replied, ‘Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.” You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.’”

Responsibility of Leaders to Aid and Protect the Vulnerable

Proverbs 24:11–12—“Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it?”

Isaiah 1:17—“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”

Jeremiah 22:3—“This is what the LORD says: ‘Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.’”

Jeremiah 22:15–17—“‘Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is not that what it means to know me?’ declares the LORD. But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion.”

Responsibility of Leaders to Confront Abuse and Other Types of Evil

1 Samuel 3:13—“For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them.” (Eli was judged for failing to confront and stop his sons from physical and sexual abuse—see 1 Samuel 2:16, 22.)

1 Timothy 5:20—“Those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.”

Titus 3:10–11—“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.”

God’s Righteous Judgment on Abusers

2 Kings 17:17–18—“They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire [burned them alive]. They practiced divination and sought omens and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left.”

Joel 3:19—“Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood.”

Nahum 3:1, 3, 5, 7—“Woe to the city of blood [Nineveh, the capital of the abusive, ruthless Assyrians], full of lies, full of plunder, never without

victims! . . . Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number [of her murder victims] . . . ‘I am against you,’ declares the LORD Almighty . . . All who see you will flee from you and say, ‘Nineveh is in ruins—who will mourn for her?’”

Philippians 1:27–28—“I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit . . . without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.”

Revelation 21:8—“The vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Condemnation of Abusive Leaders

Ezekiel 22:6–7, 13, 15—“See how each of the princes of Israel who are in you uses his power to shed blood . . . In you they have oppressed the foreigner and mistreated the fatherless and the widow . . . I will surely strike my hands together at the unjust gain you have made and at the blood you have shed in your midst . . . I will disperse you among the nations and scatter you through the countries, and I will put an end to your uncleanness.”

Micah 3:1–4, 9–10, 12—“Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel. Should you not embrace justice, you who hate good and love evil; who tear the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones; who eat my people’s flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot? Then they [the abusive leaders] will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done . . . Hear this, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness . . . Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble.”

True Nature of Godly Leadership

Deuteronomy 24:5—“If a man has recently married, he must not be sent out to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.”

Luke 22:25–26—“Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.’”

Ephesians 5:25, 28—“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . . In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as [they love] their own bodies.”

Colossians 3:19, 21—“Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them . . . Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.”

1 Peter 3:7—“Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”

1 Peter 5:2–3—“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care . . . not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

God’s Redemption of Abuse

Genesis 50:20—“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Isaiah 53:5—“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

1 Corinthians 1:18—“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

2 Corinthians 4:8–10—“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”

APPENDIX 2

Warning Signs of Potential Abusers

- Symptom:** Are extremely possessive, jealous
- Description:** Insecure people may interpret this behavior as love (and an abuser will defend it this way), but healthy people do not endlessly scrutinize who their girlfriends, boyfriends, or spouses spend time with, call multiple times a day to check up on what they are doing and with whom, and so forth.
- Symptom:** Display smothering, controlling behavior
- Description:** Abusive people often seek to control virtually every aspect of another's life. They don't allow their loved ones to have their own views, their own lives, their own schedules, or their own possessions. Abusive husbands may not even allow their wives to buy the groceries on their own. Some don't even allow their wives to drive. Often every single purchase is scrutinized and controlled.
- Symptom:** Have unpredictable, extreme mood changes
- Description:** Some have described this as a "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" pattern that is very confusing and often makes victims doubt their own judgment. The abuser can be very sweet one minute but explode in anger the next. Abusers' bad moods are unpredictable, causing family members to "walk on eggshells" so that they don't set them off.
- Symptom:** Are unable or unwilling to acknowledge personal fault or responsibility
- Description:** This is a nearly universal characteristic of abusers. They simply will not take full responsibility for their behavior; it's always

someone else's fault. Abusers have an uncanny knack for finding unhealthy partners who struggle with low self-esteem and can be easily bullied and shamed into believing they (the non-abusers) are always the problem.

Symptom: Are hypercritical

Description: One of the ways abusers avoid taking responsibility for their unhealthy and sinful behavior is to be hypercritical of others, which is largely the result of their own deep-seated shame. Furthermore, abusers tend to be hypersensitive, so that any little thing upsets them. Family members of abusers can never "get it right" and constantly find themselves being scolded and shamed for their mistakes.

Symptom: Abuse alcohol

Description: Roughly 50 percent of domestic physical abusers have a serious drinking problem. They may blame their abusive behavior on the alcohol, but it's nothing but blame shifting. Alcohol and/or drug abuse is often their sinful way of numbing past trauma.

Symptom: Have unresolved family of origin trauma

Description: The most predictable trait of physical abusers (particularly men) is that they experienced physical abuse in their own childhood homes. They learned early in life that violence is an acceptable way to solve frustrations. Childhood trauma, especially physical or sexual abuse and neglect, can create deep-seated soul damage that may lead to abusive behavior in adulthood unless the wounds are dealt with. One warning sign for potential abuse is seen in an adult who, in spite of having grown up in a dysfunctional or abusive family, denies or minimizes the abuse and its impact.

Symptom: Isolate the victims from family and friends

Description: Abusers cut off their victims from all other social resources. They accuse others of causing trouble. They may try to pull the victim away from family members by saying the victim is too dependent on their family or that the family is not supportive. They'll accuse the victim of having an affair if they have any opposite-sex friendships or even casual relationships.

Sometimes abusers will even make victims quit their jobs to cut them off from other relationships (and to make them more dependent on the abusers).

Symptom: Insult and ridicule victims' family and friends

Description: Abusers justify isolating their partners from family and friends and promote their own superiority by insulting and ridiculing these individuals.

Symptom: Prevent victims from leaving

Description: Because an abuser likes to control all behavior and has no sense of appropriate boundaries, he will often refuse to allow a wife or girlfriend to leave, especially during an argument. He may do this by physically stopping her, by verbally harassing her, or by verbally manipulating her.

Symptom: Employ a rigid model of gender roles

Description: Abusers typically have a rigid, extremely conservative understanding of male-female roles. They often place great emphasis on male headship and on the need for women and children to be submissive. They typically ignore the fact that the Bible never teaches that the husband is to be "the boss" who demands obedience from his wife; rather, the Bible calls men to be loving servant-leaders. Females are often viewed and treated as inferior to men. Thus, female opinions and feelings can be readily discounted. Abusers often believe they must make their wives and children submit completely to them, even if they have to use physical force to do so. Ironically, while abusers demand unqualified submission from others, they tenaciously resist submitting to civic or ecclesiastical authorities (child protective services workers, the police, court-appointed counselors, their pastors, and so forth).

Symptom: Threaten to harm themselves

Description: Abusers often successfully manipulate their partners into remaining in an abusive relationship by threatening to harm themselves if the partner breaks off the relationship.

Symptom: Threaten to hurt victims or their families

Description: This is another common way abusers manipulate their partners to stay in the relationship and to passively accept abusive behaviors.

Symptom: Insult and degrade victims in private

Description: Often abusers are charming to their partners (and others) in public but are demeaning and degrading in private.

Symptom: Ignore or ridicule victims' feelings and wishes

Description: Abusers' inappropriate domination, control, and sense of superiority is evidenced by the way they constantly ignore, reject, and even ridicule their partners' feelings and wishes.

Symptom: Have a volatile history of broken romantic relationships and friendships

Description: Abusers often have extensive histories of broken relationships, and in these cases, it was always the other person's fault. Often abusers were physically and/or verbally abusive in these previous relationships.

Symptom: Always posture themselves as victims

Description: Everyone is out to get them; everyone mistreats them; their boss is unfair; they are never given a fair shake; and so forth.

Symptom: Cause victims to fear confronting or even disagreeing with them

Description: Abusers systematically and chronically erode their partners' self-confidence, sense of safety, and emotional well-being through manipulation, violent outbursts, and verbal intimidation. This makes partners of abusers fearful of ever disagreeing with or confronting them, even over trivial issues.

Symptom: Blame the victims for their feelings

Description: Abusers blame others for "making them mad," for "making them feel bad about themselves," and so forth.

Symptom: Have intense, quick development of romantic relationships

Description: Abusers are often very intense in the early stages of dating relationships. They smother and overwhelm the other person

with attention and demonstrations of affection. They often press for quick commitment and even marriage before the other person has a chance to really get to know them. Victims of abusers often report they had many nagging doubts when dating them, but they felt so pressured that they ignored their feelings and proceeded to get married and found themselves being abused.

Symptom: Place impossible demands on family members

Description: Abusers are very insecure and have quite distorted views of what others can and should do for them. Family members, girlfriends, or boyfriends are made out to be 100 percent responsible for their happiness. In a very strange and sick way, abusers need to physically, emotionally, and verbally control family members because they have transferred responsibility for their emotional well-being to their spouses or children. Abusive mothers also tend to do this with their children.

APPENDIX 3

Recommendations to Parents for Reducing the Risk and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse¹

Reducing the Risk²

1. Above all, make your relationship with your children a top priority. Children who have a close relationship with their parents, know they are loved unconditionally, and are able to talk freely with their parents are much less likely to be sexually abused. Abusers prey on children's vulnerabilities. For instance, I know of one child molester who would take baseball equipment to the park to identify boys whose fathers did not play catch with them.
2. Address your own wounds, especially those that have resulted from abuse. Unhealed abuse wounds create toxic shame, cognitive distortions, emotional numbing, unhealthy coping strategies, and relational disconnection. This helps explain why children of mothers who experienced childhood sexual abuse are much more likely than their peers whose mothers didn't experience CSA to experience sexual abuse themselves (not abuse from their mother but from someone else, often a boyfriend or a husband). Mending the Soul created a workbook (*Mending the Soul Workbook for Men and Women*) that many have found helpful for addressing their own wounds. It is designed as a twelve-week curriculum

1. A similar document for church leaders can be found on the Mending the Soul website (www.mendingthesoul.org). It is titled "Recommendations to Churches for Reducing the Risk and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse."

2. An excellent supplemental resource created by Darkness to Light is "5 Steps to Protecting Our Children: A Guide for Responsible Adults," www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/FINAL_D2L_5-STEPS-BOOKLET.pdf.

for small groups directed by two trained facilitators (MTS has online facilitator trainings).

3. Empower your children. Teach in word and deed that your child's opinions and feelings matter, that just because they are a child doesn't mean they aren't a human being who should be treated with respect and dignity. Teach in word and deed that your child has a right to (respectfully) say no to things done to them they don't feel good about. For instance, a child should be able to say "please, no" to tickling, teasing, or roughhousing that they don't like. Appropriate empowerment is a concept many Christian parents in their (appropriate) zeal to teach children to respect and obey adults minimize or deny. Child abusers look for passive, compliant children whose emotional and physical boundaries can be easily violated. An excellent Christian resource is Rachael Denhollander's book *How Much Is a Little Girl Worth?*³ It is intended to empower girls to recognize and experience their own worth before God, thus making them less vulnerable to the manipulations and lies of abusers.
4. Be vigilant about protecting your children from others. Historically, parents have focused on "stranger danger" with their children. While some perpetrators do molest children they don't know, this is actually quite rare. Research shows that 90 percent of child sexual abuse victims know their abuser.⁴ Be very careful about allowing children to go on sleepovers; be very cautious about leaving children with coaches; be very careful about using male babysitters; don't ignore nagging suspicions or concerns; don't put anyone on a pedestal and assume they could never hurt a child—including relatives and pastors. Darkness to Light (www.d2l.org) has some excellent tip sheets, such as "Checklist for Safer Sleepovers," "Safety at Summer Camp," and "Tips for Youth Serving Organizations."⁵
5. Carefully monitor your child's computer, cell phones, and social media accounts. Even though many parents strongly criticize other parents

3. Rachel Denhollander, *How Much Is a Little Girl Worth?* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Kids, 2019).

4. David Finkelhor, "Characteristics of Crimes against Juveniles" (Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center, 2012); see also "10 Common Myths of Child Abuse," National Children's Advocacy Center, <https://nationalcac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/FINAL-10-Common-Myths-with-References.pdf>.

5. See Darkness to Light's resource page, www.d2l.org/resources. "Checklist for Safer Sleepovers" (www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/One-Sheet_Safer-Sleepovers_-JTM.pdf); "Safety at Summer Camp" (www.d2l.org/camp); "Tips for Youth Serving Organizations" (www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SAMPLE-CODE-OF-CONDUCT.pdf); www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/D2L-Training-One-Pager-2020-Partner-in-Prevention.pdf.

who monitor their child's technology use, it's important to realize that God has given parents a primary responsibility to protect their children. Modern technology has as much power for evil as for good. Satan knows that far better than we do. Darkness to Light has an excellent tip sheet titled "Talking to Children about Digital Safety."⁶ The FBI has also produced a great resource called "A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety."⁷

6. Stay involved in your children's world and get to know the adults who have significant access to them, particularly schoolteachers, church workers, youth pastors, music teachers, and coaches. If you have concerns about any of these people, don't ignore it. Be cautious about leaving your child alone with these individuals. If any of these people don't respect your child's boundaries or don't treat them appropriately, step in and advocate for your child as vigorously as is needed.
7. Have ongoing age-appropriate discussions of sexuality, healthy relationships, and abuse. Specifically discuss possible dangerous situations and advise them on how they should respond. While educating our children on "good touch / bad touch" and abuse dangers, be careful, particularly with younger children, not to provide information they may not be emotionally prepared for and that may cause undue emotional distress and distrust of others.⁸ This step (abuse education) is deliberately listed as the last of the seven risk reduction steps. Historically, parents and society have placed the burden on minors to protect themselves and report concerns, which has proven to be a highly ineffective primary strategy for sexual abuse risk reduction, in large part because this strategy is based on several faulty assumptions related to the ability of minors.⁹ These flawed assumptions are that:

- i. Minors are able to recognize and properly interpret the nuances of an exploitive encounter, touch, relationship, or situation.
- ii. Minors are able to successfully counter the manipulations or threats of an abuser.
- iii. Minors are able to successfully challenge an adult's authority.
- iv. Minors are able to forgo affection, attention, and/or material incentives given by the abuser.

6. "Talking to Children about Digital Safety," Darkness to Life, www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Talking-to-Kids-About-Digital-Safety-2020.pdf.

7. "A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety," U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, www2.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm.

8. See Julia Rudolph et al., "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Opportunities: Parenting, Programs, and the Reduction of Risk," *Child Maltreatment* 23, no. 1 (2018): 97–98.

9. Adapted from Rudolph, "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention," 97.

- v. Minors are able and willing to report abuse perpetrated by someone they like.
- vi. Minors are able and willing to report abuse that has caused them to feel conflicted, confused, foolish, guilty, or shameful.

While recognizing we must not put the primary responsibility on children to protect themselves, it is essential that we properly educate them on sexuality, relationships, and abuse. Darkness to Light has compiled an extensive list of helpful educational resources.¹⁰ RAINN has a useful tip sheet on talking to your children about sexual abuse.¹¹ Searching “Sexual Abuse Prevention” on Amazon will yield a plethora of resources.¹²

Responding to Abuse Disclosures¹³

1. Prayerfully gather your thoughts. Sexual abuse is one of the most disturbing disclosures a parent can receive, but panic will inevitably precipitate harmful responses. Keep reminding yourself that God’s presence, power, and love does not change in the midst of suffering and evil (Psalm 46:1–2). Ask him to give you wisdom and courage as you face this stressful trial (Psalms 23:4; 34:4–8).
2. Calmly and gently talk to the child. Sexually abused children have experienced great trauma. They feel great shame that is often coupled with fear. So the parents’ calm, loving response is vitally important and helpful.
3. Calmly yet honestly share your own sorrow over the abuse. Let the child know how sorry you are that this was done to them. Let them know that God grieves over what was done to them; it hurts God when his children suffer (Hosea 11:8; John 11:35). He hates abuse and is grieved and angry when his children are hurt by abusers (Psalm 5:6).
4. Assure the child that it wasn’t their fault. Shame causes abused children to instinctively feel they are responsible for the abuse. Additionally, sexual abuse perpetrators often tell the child it is their fault. It may take a very long time for the child to truly believe the abuse wasn’t their fault, so repeated verbal assurances from parents are very important.

10. See Darkness to Light’s resource page (www.d2l.org/resources).

11. “Talking to Your Kids about Sexual Assault,” RAINN, www.rainn.org/articles/talking-your-kids-about-sexual-assault.

12. See “Sexual Abuse Prevention” search results, www.amazon.com/s?k=sexual+abuse+prevention&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss_2.

13. A helpful, concise resource for parents or children’s workers is “Reporting Child Sexual Abuse,” Darkness to Light, January 2017, www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Reporting_Child_Sexual_Abuse-Small-File.pdf.

5. Assure the child that you will get them help. Abused children don't expect parents to have all the answers or to fix every problem. They just need to know that parents will boldly pursue getting the necessary help.
6. Contact law enforcement and report the abuse immediately. If the perpetrator is a family member, Child Protective Services should also be contacted.
7. Do not immediately confront the perpetrator. While this is often the first thing parents attempt to do, it can easily backfire. First of all, for the sake of the legal investigation, it is important for law enforcement to be the first ones to interview the perpetrator. Second, parents need time to work through the complex issues and intense feelings. Otherwise, they might act and speak rashly in ways that are counterproductive and even destructive.
8. Protect the child from the perpetrator and, if necessary, the extended family and the community. It is the parents' responsibility to protect the child from the perpetrator. Abusers should have no contact with or access to the child. Parents must establish all necessary boundaries with the extended family or community to protect the child. Furthermore, if family, church, or community doesn't accept these boundaries or seeks to minimize or deny the abuse, then parents need to protect the child from those individuals as well. Their denial can be highly damaging to the child. Denial and victim blame are some of the most common responses to sexual abuse—responses that are strongly condemned by God (Proverbs 17:15).
9. Seek professional help. Sexual abuse is confusing, complex, and deeply damaging. Hence, it is advisable to find a licensed Christian counselor experienced in dealing with sexual abuse to work with the child and your family.
10. Consider utilizing Mending the Soul's *Caring for the Vulnerable Child* four-book curricula designed for preadolescent children who have experienced any type of trauma. It was also created for the parents or caregivers of traumatized children. It has a book for parents and caregivers explaining from Scripture and social science the world of a traumatized child and how parents can best respond to these children's unique needs. It also has a workbook for parents and a workbook for children. Finally, it has a teacher's guide so this material can be taught in a church or other setting as a class for parents of traumatized children.¹⁴

14. See "Caring for the Vulnerable Child," Mending the Soul, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://mendingthesoul.org/vulnerable-child>.

11. Be careful who you tell about the abuse. Scripture tells us there is a time to speak and also a time to be silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Sexual abuse is one of the most shameful things that can happen to someone. Furthermore, people often don't know how to respond to an abuse report. Therefore, be careful and selective in speaking about the abuse to other people, especially if the child is present. It is important that you respect your child's privacy.
12. Be patient. Sexual abuse creates soul damage that takes considerable time to heal. Remember that God is infinitely committed to the well-being and healing of his children (Romans 8:28, 31–37; Philippians 1:6). Prayerfully commit to God the pain caused by the abuse and entrust healing to him (Psalm 18:1–6; 1 Peter 5:7). Trust that he is working in his wise way on his timetable.