

Hope for the Hurting

The Power of Abuse

Two old men in an isolated Native community came forward with a confession of having abused ninety children over a long period of time. The names of these children were given. Seventeen of these victims could be traced. Of the seventeen it was found that over half had committed suicide.

A young girl was sexually abused by her own peers and a cousin. After this public humiliation she left the community. Twenty years have passed, but she still has not set foot in her hometown. Doesn't she long to see her family? She knows that the moment people in her hometown see her again, they will remind her of what happened twenty years ago.

How powerful abuse is in her life! It keeps her away from where she longs most to be, home with her loved ones.

The last testimony is found in the Bible in 2 Samuel 13:1-20. This is the story of a prince and a princess.

First let's meet the prince. His name is Amnon. He was King David's son, heir to the throne. Anything he wanted was at his feet, except the thing he wanted most. The Bible says he burned in his lust for Tamar. She was his half-sister. His desire vexed him. He could not leave it alone. It took away the joy of everything else he had. So, he created a situation in which he could take advantage of her.

He pretended to be sick and lay in bed all day. His father came to him while he was "sick" in bed. Amnon's father asked him if there was anything he desired. Amnon asked his father to send his sister

Tamar to come and cook for him at his bedside while he lay in bed “sick.” His wish was granted.

It is important for us to note how clear a picture the Bible gives of this plot. Victims need to realize that abusers try to lure innocent children into a place where they can abuse them with no hope of escape.

Now let’s look at the princess Tamar. She was beautiful. (probably all little girls dream of being a beautiful princess and meeting a handsome prince). She had a lovely dress of many colors, and she wore it proudly. It showed that she was a virgin. How the men must have desired her as they saw her walking through town. She was a girl who would not trade places with anyone. But something terrible happened that changed her future forever.

Amnon got his wish. The king sent Tamar to cook for Amnon while he lay

in his bed “sick.” Tamar came to Amnon’s quarters and cooked food in front of him as he lay in bed. When she was done cooking, she told him it was ready. Amnon refused to eat until all the servants left the room and just he and Tamar were in the room alone. So all the servants left the room. When they were alone, Tamar brought the food to him at his bedside. As soon as she was near, he grabbed her arm and said, “Come lie with me, my sister.” She struggled with him, refusing to lie with him. Her words were, “No! my brother, do not force me.” But he, being stronger than she, forced her to lie with him. He had sexual intercourse with her against her will. Then he commanded that she be put out from his presence.

Note the power of abuse in Tamar’s life. Immediately after the abuse, she tore to pieces the beautiful dress she had worn displaying her virginity. She no longer felt pure and clean. She did not feel worthy to wear such a beautiful dress.

She felt ugly and dirty and ashamed. Tamar covered herself with sackcloth and ashes. This showed that she was in tremendous sorrow from the internal pain of the abuse. What a quick turn of events! In just a moment she went from joy to sorrow, from laughter to gloom, from life to death.

The Bible goes on to say that Tamar covered her head with her hand as she ran. To me, this shows her screaming in tears, “Do not look at me, I’m so dirty, so filthy, so ugly. Do not look at me.” Once she had displayed herself proudly. Now she would like to crawl into a little hole to hide her shame.

The Bible shows another way that sexual abuse affected Tamar. It says, “She remained desolate.” She shut the door of her life. She didn’t want anyone to see her. She went into her house and never came out again. What a sad and lonely state in which to live! This is what the abused do. They shut the door of their

lives. They do this by presenting someone on the outside that is different from the real person locked up inside. When you try to open the door of their lives, they shut you out. They can be very cruel in their resistance. That is one area of their lives that makes life seem hopeless. If they would allow God to shine into that area of their lives, He could help them overcome the pain, shame and contempt from abuse.

God has put this true story into His Word for important reasons. One reason is that He is in touch with our feelings. I believe abuse victims can truly relate to Tamar's pain and sympathize with her. Are you in touch Tamar's pain? God is in touch with you. As you see God as One Who has a heart of compassion, you will be more ready to accept Him into your life.

I have two children. It brings tears to my eyes when they hurt. When they fall and hurt themselves, it pains me and I cry

with them at times. I want to do all I can to ease the pain. If I, being evil, can do that for my children, how much more will my perfect Heavenly Father do that for me (Matthew 7:11)?

Abuse has great power in our lives, but God is even more powerful. He can give us victory over the hold past abusive experiences have on our lives.

Next let us look at the impact of abuse as we unfold the road to recovery.