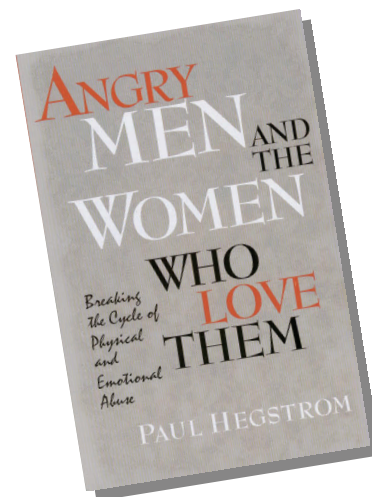


UPCOMING TRAINING - RESOURCES - SUPPORT

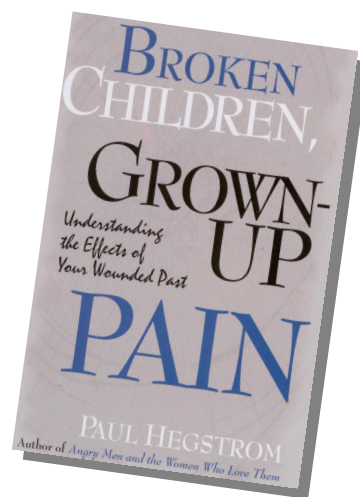


Paul Hegstrom's

wounds from his childhood produced an angry, abusive man until a charge of attempted murder led to a sincere commitment to face himself and begin a lengthy process of healing and recovery.

In his two books Paul shares his story, his recovery and his ministry to those struggling with childhood wounds and abuse. Easy to read, Paul's books provide a treatment of the issues that is consistent with the realities of abuse and biblical principles.

A good resource for men who abuse, women who love them, and people who care about both of them.



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SAFE PLACE NEWS

Promoting safe places, consistent with the character of Christ, for women and their families to heal and grow.

Issue 21

January 2004

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

There was a time when I did not think much, if any, about the word *abuse* or the reality it represents. It's not that I had never experienced it or seen it. I just didn't understand what abuse was. Somewhere along the way, about 20 years ago, I became aware and intrigued. I began to use the word *abuse*, and I began to explore the meaning behind the word.

What is abuse? Why do we hear so much about abuse these days? Is it real? If it's such a big problem, why doesn't the Bible say more about it? Seems like every time you turn around these days, someone is accusing someone else of being abusive. Does using the word *abuse* provide any real insight or direction, or is it more misleading than helpful?

The word *abuse* has no inherent meaning. Words communicate the meanings that we assign to them. That being said, I have come to believe that there is a

meaning; a distinct and identifiable reality that does exist and is best described in this day and age by the word *abuse*. I believe the reality behind the word *abuse* has existed throughout time though the words assigned to it have varied. I believe God addresses the issue of abuse frequently in His word. I also believe that gaining a solid understanding of the realities associated with abuse can give us much insight and direction in dealing with our own relationships and in ministering to others.

In Ecclesiastes 1:9 Solomon states, "That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which shall be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun." A little later in 4:1 he describes one of those things "under the sun" that was not new. "Then I

looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them."

God speaks in His word approximately 150 times (NASB)

about oppression. He speaks frequently, as well, about other topics such as affliction, domination, the weak, the needy, and the crushed. These are the words used in the Bible that relate to our present day words: abuse, abuser, victim, and trauma. Both our modern words and the words used in the scriptures identify a dynamic that goes beyond isolated, unrelated acts of mistreatment. Inherent, not in the word, but in the essence of abuse (oppression) is the dynamic of a power imbalance and the misuse

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The SPM 4th Annual Benefit Dessert is coming up! This year's dessert will be in The Lookout Room at the Boise State University Student Union Building and will again feature tasty desserts, special music, a silent auction, and our quilt raffle drawing. If you have not yet seen our quilt or purchased a raffle ticket this year, you may view



the quilt on our Web Site at www.safeplaceministries.com, and you can purchase tickets through the SPM office. This year's dessert will be on Saturday, February 7th. The silent auction will begin at 7:00 p.m. with dessert at 7:30. Admission is free but tickets are required and are available at the office. We hope to see you there!

FROM LINDA'S DESK

I am a collector at heart, yet you will find few collections in my home or office. Most of my collections are hanging in the gallery of my memory. The best are displayed on the walls of my heart. All of the best come from true stories. Stories of men and women who have faced tremendous challenges and were not overcome by them. Many of those stories come from the lives of the women we work with here at SPM. These are the stories we remember when a new client walks through our doors with what looks like insurmountable challenges. These are the stories that give us hope and encouragement at the end of a tough day. Our commitment to confidentiality does not allow us to share many of these women's stories with you, our readers and supporters. I'd like to tell you one. (Her name and circumstances have been changed in order to protect her identity.)

Three years ago, Monica walked through our doors for the first time. She had recently left a violent marriage. She was working one full-time job and two part-time jobs, which combined did not provide enough income to pay her rent and feed and clothe her two small children. She slept between jobs, a few hours at a time, never getting close to a minimum daily sleep requirement. Like many controlling men, her ex-spouse could not let go of his need to make life chaotic for her, continuing to threaten her and take her to court to fight expensive legal battles which left her emotionally and physically exhausted. Today Monica has finished her degree (with honors) and is working one job which pays her expenses and allows her to begin paying off debts. She has entered a mentoring relationship with a woman at the church where she fellowships. One of her greatest joys is that she now has time

and energy to care for and enjoy her children. She is no longer sleep-deprived. If you had only seen Monica three years ago, you would not recognize the lovely, confident woman she has become. She still faces all the challenges of singleness and single-parenting. Emergencies still threaten to destroy the margin of safety that she has worked so hard to create, but Monica now has a new chapter to her own story, one that has given her confidence to face new challenges and the knowledge that there are people (like you) who care. Many of you have given generously to provide for Monica and her children. Her heart, and ours, overflow with gratitude to each of you. Without you this chapter of Monica's story would not have been written.

*With Thanks,
Linda*

(Continued from page 1)

of power to control and take advantage of vulnerable, less powerful people. God's teachings and admonitions regarding oppression and affliction imply or describe outright this power imbalance and misuse of power. Those with legitimate power (the rich, the strong, the leaders and the shepherds of Israel) are exhorted to protect the weak and needy and to look out for the needs of the widow, the orphan and the alien.

Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. Ecclesiastes 4:1

Those with usurped or illegitimate power (fools, violent men, cheaters and liars) are identified in God's word (especially in Psalms and Proverbs) with stern warnings to avoid the company of such people.

The Hebrew word most often translated oppression ('ashaq) literally means to oppress, get deceitfully or do violence. The editors of TWOT (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Harris, Archer and Waltke) say this about 'ashaq: "The verbal root is concerned with acts of abuse of power or authority, the burdening, trampling, and crushing of those lower in station. Important synonyms in the semantic range include: to deprive, take by force, to be crushed,

to be violent, torment, ill-treat, abuse, and devastate."

Affliction is probably the biblical word most related to the effects of abuse and is also used to describe those who are victims of abuse (the afflicted). The Hebrew word most often translated afflicted ('anâ) has several meanings. It can be used to describe God's humbling of sinners to prompt repentance. It can also be used to describe personal inner pain associated with contrition. It has a third meaning that relates to our

discussion of abuse. This meaning has to do with forcing submission, punishing and inflicting pain. It is recognized in the scriptures and highlighted in TWOT that the afflicted are those who are, for some reason, powerless. They are "financially dependent and socially defenseless." They are the weak, the needy, the poor, the unfortunate.

As one begins to appreciate the realities behind the words, the issue of abuse emerges not as a marginal topic but rather a major theme of the scriptures. It behooves us who desire to have the heart and mind of God to seek to become discerning about this topic that God talks so much about. I challenge you to begin to read the scriptures and be open to

seeing how often there is described an imbalance of power, a misuse of power, powerless victims and the experience of being overpowered. Notice when you read through the Psalms (Psalm 10 for example), the groupings of characteristics of those who oppress (proud, wicked, boastful, greedy, haughty, deceitful and cursing), those who are oppressed (afflicted, innocent, unfortunate, humbled and orphaned), and the experience of being oppressed (caught, killed, terrified). Notice when you read in Proverbs what the scriptures say about fools: that they are proud, violent, selfish, stubborn, blaming, prone to addiction and lacking in empathy.

Does abuse exist? Yes, more than any of us like to admit or think about. Is abuse talked about in the Bible? Yes, a lot. Does the word abuse help us to understand certain realities or does it cause misunderstanding? It helps us to understand a complex but very real and very important reality. It seeks to capture the perversion of power that so contaminates our world that we often don't even recognize it or believe it exists.

There is nothing new under the sun. Those who have power oppress and those who are oppressed need comfort.

Nancy Edwards

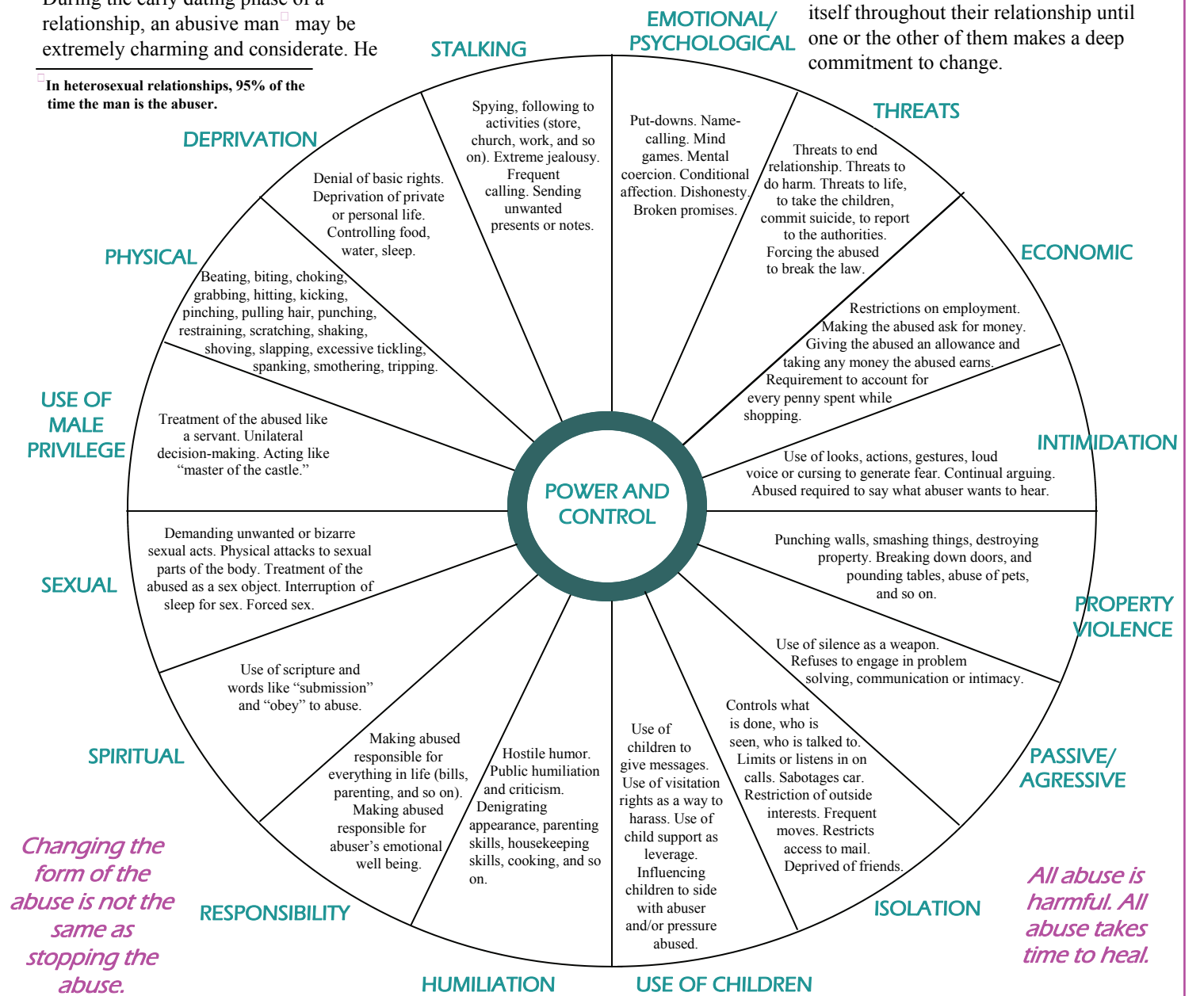
LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE ABUSE

The important thing to understand about identifying abuse is not just learning to watch for particular behaviors, but being aware of *how behavior is functioning*. The core component of abuse is the misuse of power to control another person. This dynamic manifests itself in many ways from the very extreme and obvious to the very sublime. The behaviors vary but the goal remains the same: to gain, maintain or regain *control*. Consider the varieties of abusive behaviors in this "power and control wheel" as well as in the following example.

During the early dating phase of a relationship, an abusive man may be extremely charming and considerate. He

may very well be attentive, generous and appear to be sympathetic and understanding. Unfortunately, these behaviors may be practiced not because they are a part of his true character, but because he has learned that they will help him to accomplish his goal. Once the goal is secured (marriage/moving in together) he no longer needs to control his partner by pretending to please her. He now turns to his sense of ownership and what he believes to be her obligations to him in order to control her and the relationship. He sheds his false self like a snake's skin and reveals his

agenda in new and disarming ways. He keeps few if any of his promises. He begins to insist on his own way. He rarely listens. The only perceptions, beliefs and desires in the home that are valid are his own. One day he viciously attacks his new bride either verbally or physically. She is shocked, numb and confused. He apologizes, but implies in his apology that if she were more attentive and affectionate he wouldn't have acted the way he did. She begins to doubt her own perceptions of what just happened. She wants to believe that it will never happen again, but she has just lived through the first cycle of a pattern that will repeat itself throughout their relationship until one or the other of them makes a deep commitment to change.



Changing the form of the abuse is not the same as stopping the abuse.

All abuse is harmful. All abuse takes time to heal.