

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES & SUPPORT**BOISE****Victim Advocate Training**

Saturday, October 9
Saturday, October 23

Plus two evening classes

Dates and times to be determined by class members.

Saturday Schedule

9:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.
12:00 — 1:00 Box Lunch
or lunch on you own
1:00 — 3:00
Safe Place Ministries Office

FALL 2004 VICTIM ADVOCATE TRAINING

Join us for
Victim Advocate Training

This fifteen-hour training is designed to provide a context in which to think through the issues facing victims of abuse, and to equip participants to become advocates for victims in their communities and congregations.

Topics Include:

Abuse: A Biblical Perspective
PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)
Domestic Violence
Sexual Assault
Childhood Sexual Abuse
Shepherding the Wounded

COST

\$40. per individual,
\$55. per couple sharing the
same VAT Manual.

Includes: Training Manual and 15
hours of training.

BOX LUNCHES

from Heavenly Ham may be
ordered Saturday morning for
\$7.00 per person

**Please call before October 4
to register.**

**UPDATED 2004 ADA COUNTY RESOURCE
DIRECTORIES NOW AVAILABLE!**
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Safe
Place
Ministries

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We want very much for **SAFE PLACE NEWS** to be a helpful resource for many people. With this in mind, permission to duplicate this newsletter for free distribution is granted. Any quotations or references to it should give proper credit to SAFE PLACE MINISTRIES. We encourage input and suggestions. Send correspondence to:
SPM, P. O. Box 4892, Boise, ID 83711, or call 208-323-2169.
An annual tax deductible gift of \$10.00 is welcome to help cover expenses.

SAFE PLACE NEWS

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

Issue 23

September 2004

TAKING AN HONEST LOOK: UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Many of our readers have only recently become acquainted with Safe Place Ministries and have questions about what we do and why. This reprint of our first newsletter is designed to give our new readers an overview of Safe Place Ministries by looking at two problems or needs that led to our formation, and by taking a quick look at the notion of being honest.

"In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the *lusts of deceit*, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of *truth*." (Eph. 4:22-24)

In order to work toward the solution on any difficult problem, it is important to first take an honest look. That is both a very hard thing and a very good thing. In a perfect world,

an honest exploration would be a delight, but in a fallen world, with fallen people, a thoroughly honest look can be truly overwhelming. In a fallen world, dishonesty makes sense. It helps us deflect, deny, and minimize that which we fear we cannot handle. It makes life more manageable and gives us the illusion of control. A lot can be said for dishonesty (deceit) and the strong desire (lust) to practice it is not hard to understand. But the lusts of deceit are energized by our desire to make life work on our own, without God. Deceit is what we use instead of faith. Even as believers, we give in to the temptation to minimize



problems instead of facing them and trusting God.

Honesty on the other hand, produces not only an awareness of the ugliness of sin, but of the necessity for God. The guilt, anger, fear, confusion and grief that threaten to overwhelm us can also show us our need for God and become the threshold through which we come to really know and experience Him. Honesty can be the first step in moving away from a casual faith to an authentic, passionate pursuit of God.

Understanding the need behind the formation of SPM requires taking an honest look. The essence of the problem that SPM seeks to address is twofold. First is the reality that sin destroys, and that a particular sin (abuse) violates the very essence of how

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SPM NEWS & NOTES

Connie Werner, our very first board member has retired from the SPM board. However we will still enjoy her enthusiasm and support, and wonderful quilting talent as she continues to make a new quilt to be raffled off each year as a fundraiser for SPM.

If you have not seen one of Connie's quilts, give us a call,



and we can tell you where it will be on display from now until the February Dessert when its new owner will be chosen.

Nancy Pitts has joined the SPM staff as our Client Care Provider. Nancy brings a real love for women and pastoral care to our staff as well as her expertise in the field of domestic violence. Nancy comes to us from Seattle where she served as a pastor of congregational care.

SHEPHERDING THE WOUNDED



In a culture rich in the tradition of shepherding, God often identified Himself as the Shepherd of His people, boldly proclaiming that He was responsible for the care and well-being of His sheep. Jesus carried on that rich tradition and passed the commission on to His apprentices (disciples). It is still God's design that those who, because of their position, power, or resources have the opportunity to influence for good those who have less power and strength.

Any of us who are stronger or more capable are *potential* shepherds. And to us who are looked to for care and guidance by someone who is more vulnerable than we are, we are shepherds. The role comes to all of us at different times in our lives and in different arenas. As adults, parents,

employers, and spiritual leaders we have the power to build up or tear down: the opportunity to use position to our advantage or to promote others. As shepherds in a fallen world with hurting people we will, by our shepherding, affect the wounded in ways that either promote life or ways that diminish life. We will help them heal and protect them from further injury, or we will neglect and re-injure them. The question then, really isn't whether or not we are shepherds, but what kind of shepherds will we be.

Scripture speaks with incredible insight about both good and bad shepherds. Consider Ezekiel 34:2-4, 11-12, and 15-16. The bad shepherds are described as those who profit from their flocks but ignore their needs. "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought the lost; but with force

EXPERIENCING THE RESURRECTION

If you have been a victim of abuse, the words healing and recovery may seem too good to be true. You may feel the damage is too deep and too extensive. That a *normal, healthy life* is forever out of your reach. You may have resigned yourself to surviving instead of living, or to living for others, but not for yourself. Abuse has been described as "soul murder." How does one recover from murder?

Death is more than the stopping of a heartbeat; it is cutting from our hearts those things that we need to be alive. Our physical hearts need nutrients, chemicals, oxygen. Our souls need unconditional love, acceptance, and to be valued by others. Our spiritual hearts need nothing less than for all of who we are to experience all of who God is. Death, in a fallen world, is a constant part of our lives and as Walter Wangerin puts it in his book, *Mourning Into Dancing*, "**the cause of all our sadness is death.**"

"Almost all our sadness has the same cause, though its forms are various in the actual events we experience. Sometimes the form is outrageous evil, and then we forget, if we do,

only by severe and necessary effort: certain abuses in childhood, the beating humans deliver to those they promised to love. But sometimes its form is that of the natural changes in human life, and so we scarcely recognize the cause at all. Yet all these, the causes of sadness are at the core the same: the leave-taking of the children; the failure of one's soul sustaining dream; betrayal whether grand or gossipy, by a trusted friend; the surgery that took a breast.; marital divorce; the loss of some beloved possession, the loss by fire or invasion of thieves; the loss of human function or a significant role in society; the increasing loss of liberty with advancing age; the loss of my dear one to the casket and grave. The details change, but the cause and the sorrow are always the same. The experience is universal. No one born to human flesh is ever exempt. Not one. The cause of all our sadness is death."

Recognizing the source of our pain as death honors the depth and extent of our pain and also helps us to recognize a radical solution: we need to be brought back to life. No Band-Aids, no Tylenol, not even radical surgery will do—we need to be resurrected from the dead, and that is exactly what God offers to do for us.

and with severity you have dominated them." In contrast, the Good Shepherd declared, "I will search for my sheep and seek them out...I will care for my sheep and will deliver them from all the places they were scattered...I will feed my flock and will lead them to rest...I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick."

At the core of being a bad shepherd is the use of position and power to one's own advantage at the expense of the ones for whom we are caring. Bad shepherds use and neglect their sheep. At the core of being a good shepherd is following the servant leadership example of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve; who uses his power to give life to others; who neither breaks bruised reeds nor extinguishes smoldering wicks (Is. 42:3), but heals the brokenhearted (Ps. 147:3). Good shepherds protect, guide, feed, heal, and encourage.

He knows the problem is death and He sent His son to die in our place so that we could experience newness of life. And just as death is more than the stopping of a heartbeat, the resurrection is more than life after physical death; it is a daily reality, potentially most real to those of us acquainted with death.

Wangerin writes, "*If the Gospel seems irrelevant to our daily lives that is our fault, not the Gospel's. For if death is not a daily reality, then Christ's triumph over death is neither daily or real. Worship and proclamation and even faith itself take on a dream-like, unreal air, and Jesus is reduced to something like a long-term insurance policy, filed and forgotten—unless he can be our necessary ally, an immediate, continuing friend, the Holy Destroyer of Death and the Devil, my own beautiful Savior.*"

The mystery, depth, and implications of God's gift cannot be explored within the space of a newsletter. But we hope that it validates your pain to realize that it is the pain of death. We hope you are encouraged in some small way by the hope of the resurrection, and by the promise that resurrection begins when you trust Jesus, and that can be a daily experience for you.

Taking An Honest Look. (Continued from page 1) God made us, and that people who have been abused need the hope and healing of the gospel: the good news. Second is the reality that the Body of Christ, the place where wounded people should be able to seek hope and healing, often does not know how to effectively address the needs.

An honest look at the sin of abuse is needed. Abuse is a pattern of behavior that embodies the antithesis of what God designed us to be and to experience. Abuse has been aptly described as "soul murder." Abuse happens when someone who is stronger or more powerful chooses to control, use, and abuse a weaker, less powerful person for their own personal gain. Abuse assaults the dignity and beauty of God's image in its victims, leaving gaping heart-wounds that leave its victim feeling confused, afraid, powerless, worthless, and hopeless.

An honest look also tells us that abuse is neither a modern phenomenon or a rarity. Historians have chronicled its existence in every age and culture in epidemic proportions. Throughout Scripture, God exposes abuse as the result of a person's unwillingness to turn to Him for life and pours out His heart of compassion to those who are oppressed by others. He longs to heal their wounds and He promises to bring justice and peace.

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Psalm 9:9

The LORD is near to the broken hearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18

The incidence of abuse is so high and so hard to believe that we are tempted to turn away, explain away, or question the reliability of what we read or hear. Unfortunately, the statistics are not accurate, not because they are not true, but because many incidents are never reported, and yet the reported numbers alone are staggering:

- ♦ The FBI reports that battering is the leading cause of injury to women in this country, resulting in more injuries than auto accidents, muggings and rapes combined.
- ♦ In the U.S. a woman is raped every two to three minutes and battered every seven seconds. In Idaho a woman is sexually assaulted every seven hours.
- ♦ In Idaho, a violent crime against a child is committed every two hours.
- ♦ Approximately one-half of all murders in Idaho are domestic violence related.
- ♦ In an average week, the Boise Police Department responds to over 100 domestic violence related calls.

These statistics represent our friends and neighbors, our spouses and siblings, our own children. They are men and women who get too close because they need so much, and those who won't get close because they have vowed never to trust again. They are children who try to be good because they feel so bad, and children who hurt other children because they hurt so much. They are people all around us who, because of their wounds, have a hard time stopping and starting, feeling and being, resting and trusting. They are people who need the gospel shared in ways that touch and heal their deepest wounds.

Knowing how to reach out in effective ways is a journey and a process in itself, but at SPM we believe it is our birth-right as children of God and our calling to be uniquely *available and able* to companion and help hurting people. *But are we?*

For each individual and community of believers there is a different answer to that question. During the past several years we have discovered that many churches have a strong desire to reach out to the hurting in their congregations

and communities. Some are comfortable meeting the tangible needs (food and financial assistance) for victims of violence. Some refer those with urgent needs to outside counselors or shelters while providing a safe spiritual community. Many, however, have not had a framework for thinking through the complex nature of abuse and ways to deal with family violence when it arises within their congregation. One pastor shared: "*For all the classes I had in family living, counseling, psychology and the like, no one in Bible college had prepared me to help a woman with black eyes, broken ribs and a concussion from her violent husband.*"

Many victims who have sought help find that those they turn to do not understand abuse and therefore cannot provide the help, safety, and support they need. One victim writes: "*I've leaned that the doctors, the police, the clergy and friends will excuse my husband for distorting my face, but won't forgive me for looking bruised and broken.*"

Taking an honest look also means looking honestly at the Body of Christ and how we sometimes contribute to the problem. Secular service providers sometimes identify the Church as part of the problem or as lacking the ability to be part of the solution. Sometimes that is because our faith in spiritual realities and biblical principles is misunderstood. Sometimes it is because abusive individuals claim to be people of faith and do things in the name of Christ or scripture that have absolutely no connection to authentic Christianity or biblical wisdom. And sometimes it is true that we do prolong abuse, ignore or re-injure wounded people, and enable abusers to continue in their sin. Whether this comes from ignorance, immaturity, faithlessness, spiritual pride, or our own woundedness doesn't really matter. We are responsible.

SPM's goal is twofold: to educate and equip the Body of Christ to meet the needs of abuse victims and their families and to provide direct victim services (referrals, social services, education, advocacy, counseling, and mentoring) that promote health, safety, and personal growth.