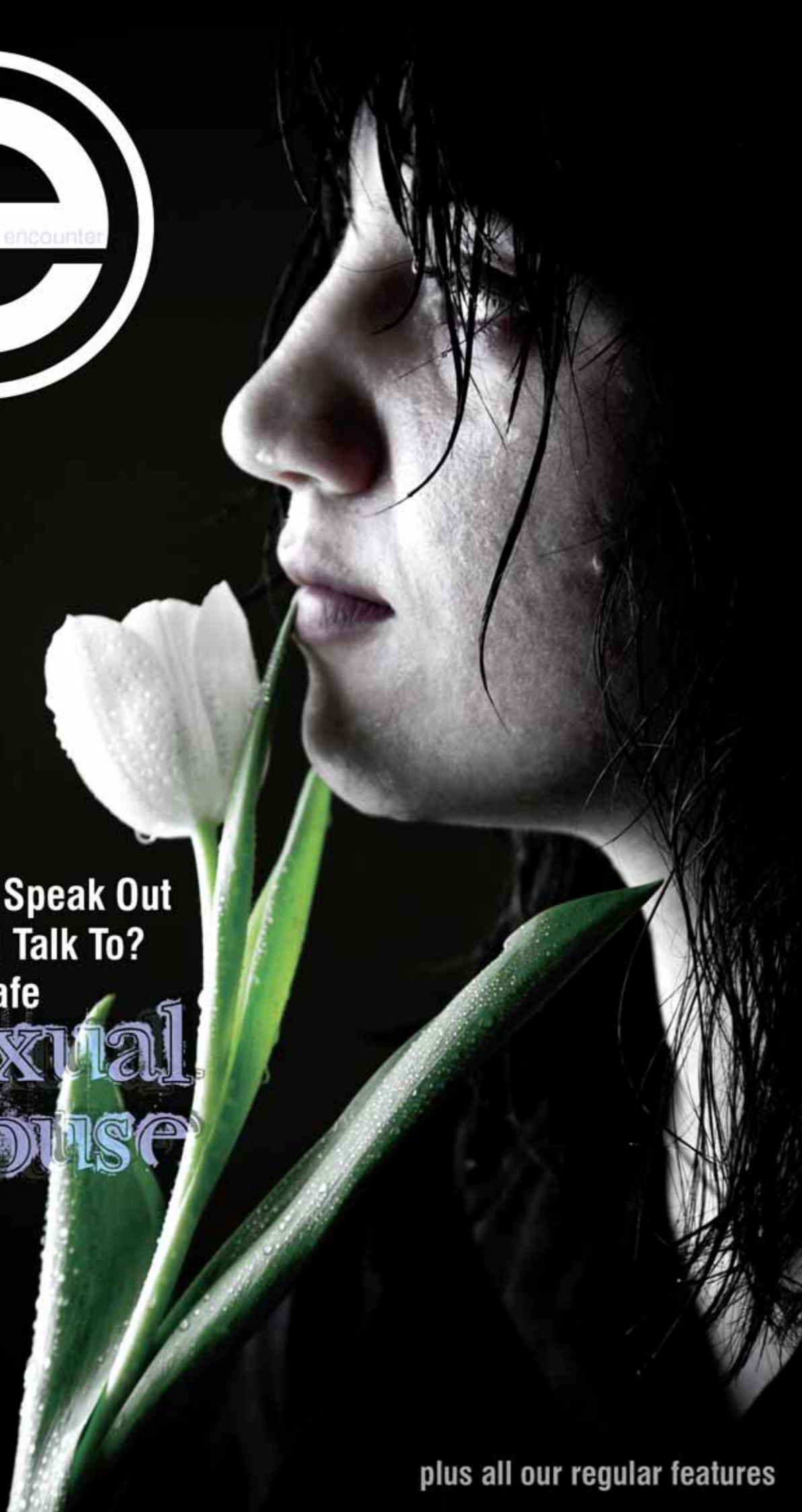




Vol. 4
Issue 2
June 2008

- Ⓢ Survivors Speak Out
- Ⓢ Who Can I Talk To?
- Ⓢ Staying Safe

Sexual Abuse



plus all our regular features



| | |
|---|-----------|
| Guest Editorial | 3 |
| This We Believe | 4 |
| AVS Feature – Manny Nelson Interviewed | 6 |
| Outside the Box | 7 |
| Young, Healthy & Happy | 8 |
| On the Plus Side | 10 |
| People To Talk To | 11 |
| My Living Hell | 12 |
| What To Do if You are being Abused | 13 |
| Staying Safe From Abuse | 14 |
| He Took Away the Colour From the Flowers | 15 |
| Male Perspective on Sexual Abuse | 16 |
| Culture, Abuse and Church | 18 |
| Women as Abusers | 19 |
| Fragrance of Brokenness | 20 |
| How to Study the Bible for All It's Worth | 22 |

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coming up in

The next edition of (published in October) will include feedback which we have received as a result of the subject matter tackled in this edition. If you would like to comment on something you have read here, or perhaps would like to tell your own story, then please write in, using the addresses above/below. Please note that we are happy to withhold your name from being printed in order to ensure your privacy.

This next edition will also feature a round-up of all the summer activities, so please send us your summer camp snapshots and tell us all about the camps, meetings, sports events, and so on, that you attended.

Deadline date: 30 August.

The December version of will look at the question of 'Why marry?'

Address and email for you to send in your thoughts and suggestions are above.

Deadline date: 14 October

Welcome to Jeremy Tremeer, the new Welsh Mission sponsor. He joined the BUC Youth team in April and will look after Youth and Pathfinder activities for Wales. We posed Jeremy a few questions so that we could all get to know him.

If you have anything you would like to ask Jeremy, please email him using the address on the left.

Name: Jeremy Tremeer

Age: 39

Job title: Pastor

Family: Single, two older brothers

Home town: Senghenydd, near Caerphilly, near Cardiff, South Wales!

How do you see the job of youth sponsor: Following in Ed's footsteps, I want to share the love and excitement and hope we find in a relationship with Jesus, and how much better that is than anything else this world has to offer

Plans for rest of year: Brecon Camp! And two trips this year. 1. Mission trip to Romania to work at the ICC orphanage. 2. A trip with the youth leaders in Wales to Youth Specialities in Sacramento, California.

We went last year and everyone loved it

Sporting hero: Steven Gerrard, the best all-round inspiring player there is

Bible hero: Joseph



Guest editorial Catherine Anthony Boldeau

The day my daughter Arianne was born was the day that they found the bodies of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in Soham. Both girls were murdered by Ian Huntley in August 2002. Lying half-drugged on the bed, glimpsing the television between surveying my newly-born, I was overcome with an overwhelming sense of dread. I had just brought a helpless little life into the world and I was responsible for her care and nurture.

It then dawned on me that, with the help of God, I would need to protect her and not be apathetic about her welfare. I vowed to God that day that I would do my best for her.

I was in a church one day, and a man who is a known abuser came and spoke to my child and took her hand and wanted to walk away with her. If God has ever held me and stopped the internal rage that often spills over, it was that day. I grabbed my child's hand firmly and told him in no uncertain terms, looking him in straight in the eye, 'She's my child and she is staying with me'. He slunk away.

Sexual abuse in church incenses me greatly. So many lives have been and continue to be damaged by it. It is time for it to stop. It is time for us as Christians not simply to worry about the reputation of the Church, but to be more concerned about the souls of those who are hurt by sexual abuse.

As a young person, if you are experiencing sexual abuse by a member of your family, a member of your congregation or anybody, don't be silent. Tell someone. If there is no one you think you can trust who is near to you, then contact one of the organisations listed on page 11.

If you know of another young person who is being abused, encourage them to speak to someone about what is going on. If you are a parent or carer and your child tells you that they are being abused, or exhibit some of the symptoms listed in the articles, then you need to seek advice from the appropriate practitioners. Please don't use the information contained in this issue to judge and make assumptions about someone else. You may be wrong, so act with sensitivity and care.

However, **don't just sit there and do nothing! Don't be part of the apathy!**

Sexual abuse exists in the Church and is often tolerated because all the good people in the congregation who know do nothing about it! The perpetrators are then given a strong message . . . you can get away with it and you can do it again and again.

When you read the articles in this edition, you will be touched by the openness and honesty of the writers. The names of all the contributors have been changed to protect their identities. For many, just the putting down of words on paper has been a feat in itself. I would like to say 'thanks' to them for sharing their stories in order to help others. All the stories in this edition are real.

This edition of encounter should not be read lightly. Maybe you may pick it up and not be able to read it at all. Maybe you will still live in denial about the reality of abuse in the Church. Before you read, **pray**. Ask God to free your mind of all prejudices and find a blessing in the articles here. Then pray for others who are victims of this horrendous action against others.

God bless,

Cathy

This edition has been made possible by the help and support of WOMAASH – Women and Men against Abuse and Sexual Harassment – for which we thank them.

'The world's biggest killers . . . malaria, dysentery, apathy'
 (Oxfam 2008)

A word from our President

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," are some of the most beautiful and comforting words spoken by Jesus in the Gospels. These words, in many respects, describe what the church, the body of Christ, should be – a place of refuge, peace, solace and salvation. In a world that is characterised by divisions, hostilities and abuse people are earnestly seeking a sanctuary from the turbulent experiences in life. That sanctuary ought to be the church. Through the church Jesus should be able to fulfil in practical and meaningful ways His promise in Matthew 11:18.

If the church is to be a sanctuary for all, it cannot tolerate abuse of any kind. Eight years ago the British Union introduced a policy, "Keeping the Church family Safe," for the protection of children and vulnerable adults in our churches. This has worked well where church leaders have made the effort to implement it. Whilst no church organisation can guarantee that its paid leaders, lay leaders and members will not be abusive, "Keeping the Church Family Safe" signifies our intent to do what is possible on our part to protect our children and to give a clear message that abuse of Jesus' precious lambs will not be tolerated.

Not only do our children need protection from abuse in the church, but more senior members of the church community also have a similar need. Consequently, the British Union recently introduced a new policy on domestic violence and sexual abuse. Work is still being done on the policy but the document as it has been developed so far can be found on the BUC website. The primary purpose of this new policy is to ensure that leaders in our church, both paid and lay, do not exploit their position of privilege and 'power' to abuse others in the church. In addition, the policy also addresses domestic violence by paid and lay leaders that may occur away from the church scene. Of course, this policy can only be effective if each pastor, elder and local church takes it seriously and implements it.

We encourage all who are aware of abuse being perpetrated by leaders, both paid and lay, to report the matter to leadership in the local church or leadership at the Conference or Union level, as appropriate. Anyone being abused is encouraged to follow the guidelines on page 13.

It is a matter of regret that seeming lack of sensitivity at various levels of church leadership in the past may have given the impression that the church was less than caring for its community. However, there must be no confusion about the fact that we do not tolerate abuse of any kind. We place great importance upon family life, affirm the dignity and worth of each human being, and decry all forms of physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Abuse of any kind is one of the sad consequences of sin and an expression of human brokenness. The good news is that Jesus came into the world to save us from sin and transform our brokenness into wholeness. To the abused He offers healing, hope and the capacity to forgive. To the abuser he offers forgiveness, upon repentance and the power to live victoriously.

Don W McFarlane
 British Union Conference President

PASTOR LES ACKIE

THIS WE BELIEVE

There are those who teach that the Ten-commandment law was done away with when Christ died on Calvary. Does the Bible teach this, and, if so, why do we as Adventists still teach obedience to this law?

The primary Bible passage used to support the view that the Ten Commandments have been done away with is found in Colossians 2:14, in which Paul, speaking of Jesus, states, '... having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.' The question we need to clarify is, 'What law was abolished at the Cross?'

For the purpose of this question, there are two laws to which we must give attention, the Moral Law (the Commandments) and the Ceremonial Law. The Moral Law existed before sin, the Ceremonial law came into effect after sin.

John states that, '... sin is the transgression of the law' (1 John 3:4, KJV). Paul informs us that, '... where there is no law there is no transgression' (Romans 4:15). Logic, then, dictates that if Adam and Eve sinned, there had to be a law in existence for them to transgress. I cannot be convicted of theft unless there is a law identifying theft as a crime.

At the time that Adam and Eve sinned, the ceremonial law did not exist. Paul refers to the ceremonial law which '... was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made' (Galatians 3:19).

God's answer to the sin of Adam and Eve was to choose to die on man's behalf through Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary. In Genesis 3:15, addressing the Serpent, God stated: 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.' This represented a promise that Jesus' death would provide for the salvation of mankind.

Not only did God give them assurance for the future, but he also 'made coats of skins and clothed them' (Genesis 3:21). Though not explicitly stated in the text, it is obvious that in order for the skins of animals to be used there had to be the death of those animals. Implied here is the concept of the sacrifice. We believe that this was the beginning of the sacrificial system which was passed down from generation to generation to keep the promise of a Redeemer fresh in the minds of the people. The sacrificial system was formalised when God asked Moses to build him a sanctuary in the wilderness (Exodus 25:8) and was designed to continue until Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross.

When Jesus began his ministry on Earth, John described him as '... the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' When Jesus died on the Cross, the Bible says, 'Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom' (Matthew 27:51). The sacrificial system in the earthly sanctuary was no longer necessary, thereby abolishing the ceremonial laws. Thus, the 'handwriting of requirements' which Paul refers to here, does

not relate to the Ten Commandments, which were written by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18) and which cannot be changed (see Exodus 20:1-17).

To argue that the Cross abolished the Ten Commandments contradicts Jesus' own words in Matthew 5:17. He states, 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.' Paul supports this view when he asks the question, 'Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.' Romans 3:31.

The argument that the Ten Commandments were done away with at the Cross is, in fact, an attack upon the seventh-day Sabbath. No Christian would seriously suggest that because of the Cross we are now free to have other gods, take God's name in vain, dishonour our parents, kill, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness and covet our neighbour's goods. Supporters of the abolishment argument assert that God did away with the Ten Commandments and then brought back nine under the New Covenant, leaving out the Sabbath.

Those who claim that the Ten Commandments have been abolished fail to understand the true nature of the law. Ellen White describes the law as, 'a transcript of his [God's] character' (*Healthful Living*, 17). The Moral Law is as eternal as God himself, because it is a reflection of who he is.

The Bible states that 'God is love' (1 John 4:8). A transcript is simply a written record. A written account of a person's character can only give a faint indication of who that person is. Similarly, the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 20 give us a limited view of who God is. We can only know him by talking to him, listening to him, spending time with him, observing him, and so on. The only way to understand God is to see him in action through the revelation of his Word, and through our personal experience of him.

The Ten Commandments are not simply a set of rules and regulations. They represent the principle of love upon which the universe was designed to exist. Our motivation in keeping the law should not be to avoid punishment or out of a sense of duty, but should come from a desire to please the God we love and a desire to experience his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Jesus said to his disciples, 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15).

Hebrews 8:10 states, 'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'

God has never and will never abolish the Ten Commandments, because they flow out of his eternal character of love.



Emmanuel 'Manny' Nelson is currently serving as a Youth Pastor at the Invercargill Seventh-day Adventist church in New Zealand.

Why did you decide to become an Adventist Volunteer?

Simply to do something that makes a positive impact on someone else's life. Doing it within the Adventist framework is important to me, as I want my efforts to be connected to the work of Jesus, whether subtly or overtly. Another reason is the opportunity it gives me to travel.

How is this experience changing your life?

It is helping me finally to understand why it is better to give than to receive.

What prompted you to choose NZ as a location to spend your time in service?

Strangely enough, an exam. I first came across NZ while preparing a case study on a NZ-based company for one of my degree finals. As I went through the AVS website, I saw a youth leader/pastor role in NZ. I felt that my gifts and my Kennington church experience were well-suited to that role. I also knew that NZ had a reputation for beautiful scenery. (I can happily say that I have not been disappointed.) Those two factors combined made NZ the perfect place for me to volunteer.

Can you tell us about an experience in which God's leading was made clear to you during your time away?

I had been here six weeks when I was invited to speak at a youth rally in Auckland. I had never preached before, so I decided to 'propa' pray and fast to see what God had to say. I prayed and fasted all day without a word from God. Before coming out here, I had a feeling I would preach my first sermon out here, so I decided to hang on in there and wait, but still no word from God. By now I was starving and weak. In true Jesus style, just as I was about to pray and close the fast, there was a knock at the door. Some random guy (now my mate Murray) had come from Dunedin, two hours away, to search me out. It turns out he had randomly heard about me and wanted me to speak at his church's youth retreat. I can't describe how overwhelmed I was that God had paused just to speak to little old me in Invercargill. By God's grace I spoke in Dunedin and, God be praised, lives were touched.

As I think about my time here so far, the needs of the job, my character (the good, the bad 'n' the ugly) and the development opportunities, not to mention the tons of blessings, I know without a doubt that this is the exact place God intends for me to be right now in my life. I'm still to speak in Auckland in June, so please keep me in your prayers.

What would you say to encourage others to volunteer?

There are so many people hurting out there who could do with your help in many different ways. Irrespective of how little you might feel you have to offer, offer it anyway. The blessings you will get for coming out of your comfort zone will far outweigh anything you ever imagined.

The guys from Ponsonby church. I met them at camp meeting in the North Island.



Fellas from Big Camp, North Island



Lake Rotaroa, North Island



Sabbath afternoon stroll by Lake Rotaroa



Lake Rotaroa, North Island



Val and Lata, some guys from the Dunedin retreat.



My first youth retreat with my Invercargill lot in Queenstown



Lake Wakatipi, Queenstown



Invercargill Youth Retreat, Queenstown



Seyi is a rising star who shines out of the Angel Town Housing Estate in Brixton, South London. A relative newcomer to the life of faith, he represents all that is vibrant and non-compromising about postmoderns who are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

His passion is basketball, and when it comes to the game of basketball Seyi plays ball well . . . very, very, very, well. He heads up a basketball ministry at his local church, Kennington Community Fellowship, and is the founder of a street-ball team called 'The Chronicles'. I caught up with Seyi at his basketball run, 'The Ballerz Club', in South London.

The first thing you notice when you attend The Ballerz Club is that Seyi is a prince among his peers and respected by all. His word is final, and the camaraderie he fosters with those around him is inspiring. He sits in his work clothes – white headband, long, white T-shirt, basketball shorts and black Nike shoes – and as soon as the game playing is over, he'll get on the court and go to work.

He speaks of basketball and street-ball with the same authority a preacher does of the Bible, and refers to the men and women who attend the basketball run with the passion of an urban pastor. He explains the founding of The Ballerz Club. 'Ryan Hastings came to me and suggested that we get together and start a basketball run, seeing that we both loved and played ball. We wanted to create a Christian run we could invite our friends and anyone else who wanted to play ball to.' It is a value-based run and Seyi is as clear about that as he is forthright about its importance; 'Yeah, we make it clear that this is a Christian run, so we don't allow swearing here, or fighting or any negative vibes like that.' I wondered whether or not that would cramp the free expression that street-ball and basketball foster. 'Not at all,' he shoots back. I can tell he's answered this question before. 'Most, if not all the people who come here, love the fact that they can come to a run that's just about ball and not any of the normal drama that you have to go through, just to get a game. We've come to the place where if guys who are new start cussing those who've been coming a long time, they tell them that it's a Christian run and they have to respect the rules.'

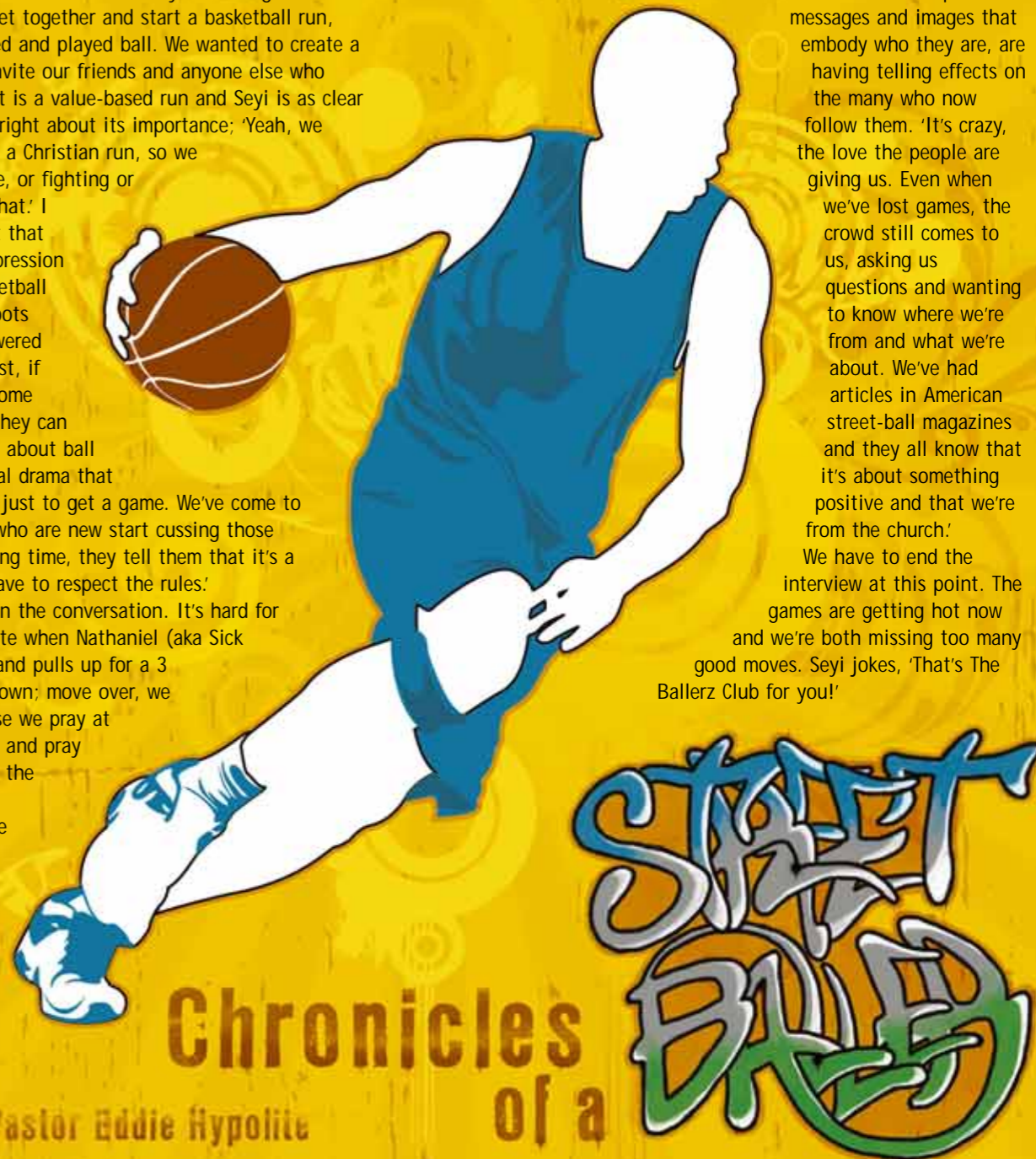
There's a brief pause in the conversation. It's hard for either of us to concentrate when Nathaniel (aka Sick Quick) crosses someone and pulls up for a 3 pointer from way down town; move over, we continue. 'It's great 'cause we pray at the beginning of the run and pray at the end; and if any of the guys have any problems, they'll come to us and we can pray and talk them through it; and what's more, they come faithfully every week.' 'It's almost like church!' I joke flippantly. 'For a lot of them it is church.'

is Seyi's very serious reply. I questioned Seyi about the place of importance The Ballerz Club has in his life, 'it's very important to my life. I never dreamed that I could have used basketball to influence people for Jesus Christ. It's crazy! I get to have my cake and eat it, too. I mean, I get to play the game I love while leading people to the God I love!'

Seyi shows just how far he's willing go against the flow for Christ when he talks about The Chronicles, a street-ball team that he founded as a result of The Ballerz Club. The Chronicles as a team is a dynamic fusion of street-ball and fundamental basketball players, an unlikely combination of Christian, Hindu, Muslim and agnostic, gelled together by a common purpose and love of the game. Their main aim, among the many they have, is to raise money through the games they run to do something positive in a more needy part of the world and to challenge the negative aspects of youth and street culture here at home. The effect on the guys who play for The Chronicles has been phenomenal, transforming them into a mission-directed and purpose-oriented *tour de force*. Their games have

attracted crowds in their hundreds, and the positive messages and images that embody who they are, are having telling effects on the many who now follow them. 'It's crazy, the love the people are giving us. Even when we've lost games, the crowd still comes to us, asking us questions and wanting to know where we're from and what we're about. We've had articles in American street-ball magazines and they all know that it's about something positive and that we're from the church.'

We have to end the interview at this point. The games are getting hot now and we're both missing too many good moves. Seyi jokes, 'That's The Ballerz Club for you!'



Pastor Eddie Hypolite

Young, Healthy & Happy

by Sharon Platt-McDonald, BUC Health Ministries director

So, exam time is looming and you need to get down to some serious studying.

Want some extra tips on exam preparation to boost attention span and enhance your memory? Then here is some food for thought.

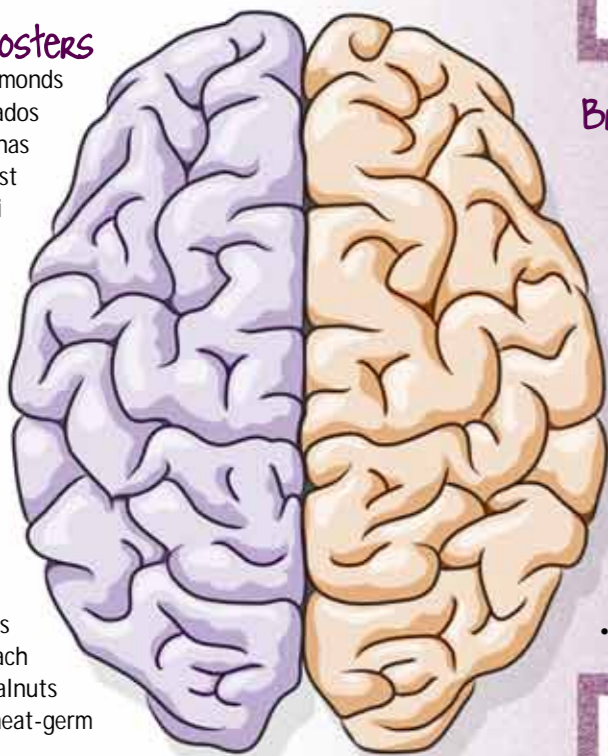
Quick tips for good brain health

Feed Your Brain!

Research has shown that adequate nutrition can actually enhance brain function. In fact, there is a list of foods that boost the brain and foods that drain the brain. Study the chart below to see how well you are treating your brain.

Brain Boosters

- Almonds
- Avocados
- Bananas
- Brewer's yeast
- Broccoli
- Brown rice
- Brussels sprouts
- Cantaloupe
- Flaxseed oil
- Greens
- Legumes
- Oatmeal
- Oranges
- Peas
- Pine nuts
- Potatoes
- Romaine lettuce
- Soybeans
- Spinach
- Walnuts
- Wheat-germ



Brain Drainers

- Alcohol
- Artificial food colourings
- Artificial sweeteners
- Colas
- Corn syrup
- Frostings
- High-sugar 'drinks'
- Hydrogenated fats
- Junk sugars
- Nicotine
- Overeating
- White bread

Drink sufficient water!

- Your brain needs to be fully hydrated to enable it to function at its optimum level. Water is essential for concentration and mental alertness.
- Studies have shown that when individuals are dehydrated the brain works considerably below its capacity and potential.
- In a report cited by 'Power Up Your Mind', Bill Lucas highlights a study by Trevor Brocklebank at Leeds University in the UK. The study discovered that schoolchildren who demonstrated the best results in class were those who drank up to eight glasses of water a day.
- Two litres of water a day is the suggested required amount for good brain function.

Eat 'Good' fats

- Omega-3 fatty acids are the 'good' fats which are essential to the optimum performance of your brain. Lack of omega-3 fats in your diet can lead to depression, poor memory, low IQ, learning disabilities, dyslexia, ADD and many more mental disorders.
- This is because the brain cells are covered by the myelin sheath which is composed of approximately 75% fat, so a depletion in good fats can negatively affect the brain.
- Fats also play a crucial role as messengers. They regulate key aspects of the immune system, blood circulation, inflammation, memory and mood.

Maintain Adequate oxygen

- Following a big meal, your stomach and digestive system use most of your body's oxygen in order to digest the food you have just eaten.
- When this happens, less oxygen goes to the brain as it is dealing primarily with the organs of digestion, and, therefore, your ability to stay mentally alert can be affected. This is why you tend to feel sleepy after a big meal.

Increase Your Exercise

- Regular physical activity enhances the blood flow to the brain, thereby increasing oxygen uptake.
- Exam time can be very stressful. Research shows that adequate exercise reduces stress levels in the brain.
- Exercising releases chemicals in the brain, like serotonin, that have a strong effect on mood, helping reduce anxiety, stress and depression. (The Mental Health Foundation)
- Recommended level of physical activity is at least 30 minutes of moderate activity, most days of the week.
- Moderate activity includes brisk walking, jogging or aerobics. This encourages good blood flow – enough to make you feel warmer and increase heartbeat. Other activities like strenuous gardening or washing the car are also good. Offer to help your parents or older siblings with these tasks.
- Build up gradually if you're not used to being active. Sessions of 10-15 minutes 2-3 times a day is a good start and still produces results.
- Get your friends to join you to make it more interesting and to give you moral support.
- Do activities that you enjoy.
- Exercising to music is a fun way of making the exercise enjoyable.
- Go for regular walks.
- Instead of taking the car, walk or cycle, especially for short journeys.
- Get off the bus a stop or two earlier.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift when possible.
- Try something new like joining a gym, swimming or even dancing – at home!

Spiritual Support

- Having a prayer partner (someone who prays with you regularly about any issue you are comfortable to share with them) is also a great support and helps to build emotional well-being.
- Asking your prayer group or local church to present your exam needs before God in prayer is another powerful tool to enable you to be successful in your exams. In this way you are requesting Divine help to bring back your power of recall for the areas of study that you have diligently covered.

- So, get moving after a meal by going for a walk to aid digestion. Get more fresh air to increase your level of oxygen in order to keep you mentally alert.
- Ensure your bedroom has adequate ventilation at night by slightly opening the window, even in the winter.
- Adequate oxygen enables good brain function and aids memory.

Be Disciplined

- If you do all of the above and have not put in the adequate hours of study that are required to learn the exam subjects sufficiently, then there will be little forthcoming information to draw on.
- Set a time of day when you are most alert to do the bulk of study – this enables you to retain more, if you study at a time when you are most alert. Immediately after a large meal may not be best, but just after an outdoor walk or exercise might prove more beneficial.
- Ensure the room is comfortable, with adequate lighting, ventilation and heat, and that you are seated with comfortable furniture.
- Try to minimise any internal or external distractions, if possible. Some people find that they study better with music, as it helps to relax them and obscures unwanted interruptions, enabling them to focus more on the task at hand. Other individuals find music distracting and prefer to study in silence, as they are able to focus more intently on one thing at a time.
- Repetition is the mother of learning. Keep going over the subject until you see it in your sleep!

With the implementation of the above tips, I have every confidence that you will do well in your exams and have the successful outcome that you desire. I'll be praying for you!
Abundant blessings!

The London Youth Federation
SPORTS DAY
Sunday 20th July 2008

Crystal Palace Athletics Stadium
Ledington Road
LONDON
SE19 2BB

Time: 9:30am

DOWNLOAD YOUR REGISTRATION FORM NOW!!! WWW.LONDONYOUTHFED.ORG.UK
LYFSports@googlemail.com



On the Plus Side

I was abused by Thomas*. Being a family member meant he was free to roam through the house at family get-togethers . . . and, believe me, he very rarely missed an opportunity!

I remember not being able to breathe . . . the hot breath against my ear. I remember the day I stopped struggling, because no matter how much I tried I would not be able to move an inch under his body weight. I soon learnt that the less I struggled, the quicker he would be gone . . . for that moment. I had to wait for opportune times – while he was talking to someone or doing something else – to run to the bathroom so I could lock the door. Until I saw the hand in the doorway . . .

I spent over ten years dealing with the anger in my own way. I isolated myself from others and refused to get emotionally involved with anyone

after a certain point. I lived in a black hole . . . a complete void. I hated myself when I looked in the mirror. I felt sick, unloved and dirty. My self-esteem was completely gone. I attempted suicide and habitually self-harmed.

Abuse caused me great pain and heartache, more than I cared to acknowledge. It affected my hopes, dreams, ideologies – my whole world. During, and for years after, I did not confide fully in one single person. I kept every fear and all my insecurities to myself; I bottled them up and buried them in the securest part of my subconscious, so deep inside me I had to struggle to remember . . . and left them there. Every day I found a way to push them a little deeper.

I told myself for years:

- 'Yeah, it happened, and OK it was wrong, but there is always someone in the world somewhere who has had it worse than me';
- 'At least he didn't actually rape me';
- 'You can do whatever you want to my body, but you can't get my mind unless I let you and I won't let you';

• 'Who would even believe me if I ever found the words to unburden my soul?' He had such a sycophantic way about him, always smiling that fake smile, which physically turned my stomach. I was sure he would just easily convince people that I had problems or was confused and was just trying to get him into trouble.

After about seven years the abuse stopped being physical. He began approaching me at church events, speaking inappropriately and attempting to intimidate me. There were adults in church who knew what had happened . . . 'responsible' adults. Regrettably the matter was not addressed adequately. Which left me wondering, when does the church really step in to minister to the needs of those who have been broken in its congregations?

I felt alone for many years, even when surrounded by others. I kept myself so busy, I physically burnt out. I spent weeks in bed, depressed, in complete darkness, only moving to drink water and use the bathroom. I felt isolated from my family and friends and let down by the Adventist church I was raised in from birth. I made many bad choices in vain attempts to make the pain and anger disappear. I thought I

*Names have been changed to protect identity

was doing the right thing. I was doing the only thing I knew how to do . . . survive.

My image of God was completely shattered . . . he became like a myth to me. I never doubted he was all-powerful, but I just couldn't connect with such a surreal and brilliant concept in the dark and lonely world where I lived.

I felt unwelcome at church. Like an outsider, I had constant comments about my clothes, the fact I wore jewellery, and so on. People who had known me all my life commented on how 'wild' I was and how much I did things just to 'wind up the leaders'. They could not have been any further from the truth!

After many years I decided I didn't want to be a prisoner of my past anymore. I had displaced my anger. Instead of hating the predator, I hated myself for being a 'victim', but I refused to adopt the defeatist mentality and let this man rob me of meaningful relationships in my future. I wanted to experience real love, not a cheap imitation.

I hit rock bottom. I was unemployed for a year and did not care. It was then I began to realise that God was there all the time and I decided to find God for myself. I had no-one else to carry me. I realised that through it all he had carried me when I couldn't carry myself. I didn't feel like praying. I felt as if I had no words to say because I was too far gone. I began praying this simple prayer, every morning:

'Dear Lord,
I thank you that you have been with me. Forgive me for not acknowledging you at the time. I need you to help me because I cannot do it. I have no more strength. Please show me myself through your eyes so I can love myself and others as you do.
Amen'

At first I felt no different. I sometimes became frustrated with God, because I didn't feel him in the ways I always expected to, but I never doubted he was still holding on to me and was not about to let go.

One day I started reading *The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White. In the first few pages I read one sentence and it changed my life. 'Only by love is love awakened'. God revealed to me that I would never love like I wanted to unless I accept his love: the type of unconditional and amazing love that washes away the dirt that a shower can't remove. This is the perfect love that casteth out fear.

I am not yet where I want to be, but I am definitely on the way to becoming the woman God designed me to be. I praise him continuously; words cannot express how much he means to me. I know God for myself. I praise him every day for seeing the end from the beginning. I praise him for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Most of all, I praise him for breaking the chains that held me captive for so long; he did that simply by touching me and awakening the capacity to love I have within me.

Love is the most amazing feeling one could ever, ever experience. Love can make a miserable day also be brilliant and bright. It can give you strength, even when you are physically, spiritually and mentally exhausted. Love can bring you a surreal feeling of peace in the middle of a personal storm. Love has empowered me to fulfil some of my dreams and filled me with the determination to accomplish many more.

On the plus side [of abuse], love has set me free.

People to Talk to

Organisations that can help are listed below. All telephone numbers in **bold** are Freephone. Or contact an NSPCC Helpline adviser on 0808 800 5000 who can tell you about help available in your area.

NSPCC Helpline • 0808 800 5000 • Helpline@nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC Asian Helpline • Bengali 0800 096 7714

Gujarati 0800 096 7715 • Hindi 0800 096 7716

Punjabi 0800 096 7717 • Urdu 0800 096 7718

Asian/English 0800 096 7719

Cymru/Wales Child Protection Helpline

0808 100 2524 in English or Welsh • helplinecymru@nspcc.org.uk

• 0808 100 1033 for people with hearing difficulties. • Fax: 01248 361085

MOSAC • 0808 980 1958 • www.mosac.org.uk

Telephone advice, information and support for mothers and female carers of children who have been sexually abused.

Family Matters • 01474 537 392

Helpline and counselling for children, adolescents and adults who have been victims of abuse. Services for non-abusing family members.

Fire in Ice • 0151 707 2614 – Monday only 5pm-9pm

www.fireinice.co.uk

Self-help project run by and for adult men who have experienced childhood abuse, especially while in care institutions. Provides telephone support via helpline.

NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood)

0800 085 3330 Monday – Friday: 12 noon - 8pm

Saturday – 9am - 12 noon • www.napac.org.uk

Information line supporting adults who were abused in childhood.

Survivors on the Net • www.survivors.org.uk

Online resource for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Facilitated online support group, online resource list, monthly newsletter and quarterly newsletter.

The Samaritans • 08457 909090 • www.samaritans.org.uk

North England Conference: **Rainbow Counselling Services**

01617403602 • Mon & Thu, 6-8pm

South England Conference: **Cornerstone Counselling Service**

02077238050 • Mon 6:30-9pm, Tues 9am-12noon or leave your details and you will be called back.



I was abused. No two ways about it.

Most nights, a man my parents had welcomed into our home would sneak into my room when they were asleep and violate me. I would scream at him to leave, and he would feign innocence and make apologetic excuses . . . until the next time.

In the waking hours, he would intimately brush past me in the passageway, make me sit on his lap and reveal himself to me when I was

least expecting it. I was a sickly child, but these incidents just opened the floodgates of my fragile mental state and I began to feel sick all the time and imagine that I was going to die. A normal 11-year-old might fear death but I welcomed it and looked forward to my demise. However, I never considered taking my own life or placing myself in harm's way, for I had been brought up to think of others before myself. What if I failed? Who would pay then?

The sexual abuse by this perpetrator was bad, but the mental abuse I caused myself by asking over and over again what I could do to change things or to stop it was worse. I relived each moment over, wondering how best to erase it. I repeatedly asked myself, 'Why didn't my mum care enough about me to change my situation?' I had a plethora of friends and my family was huge, but still no one saw my pain. My grades failed, my self-esteem failed, my life failed.

So, I did the only thing I felt I could do at that stage: I dealt with it. I lived my pain daily, hoping for some kind of reprieve. I told no one.

Well, why would I? Who would believe me? He was the beloved family friend and father figure; and as for me – I was 'just a moody pre-teen'. I felt enclosed, unsafe and unloved.

I struggled to overcome the feelings that would engulf me. I wanted to disappear, be anyone but the person I was. I hated everyone who loved him, but most of all, I hated him. On many occasions I was told to be grateful for what he was giving me, that I must not treat with hatred one who cared for me like he did – that was the nail in the coffin of my mistrust. I knew that my word was just a teardrop in the ocean of lies this man had conceived.

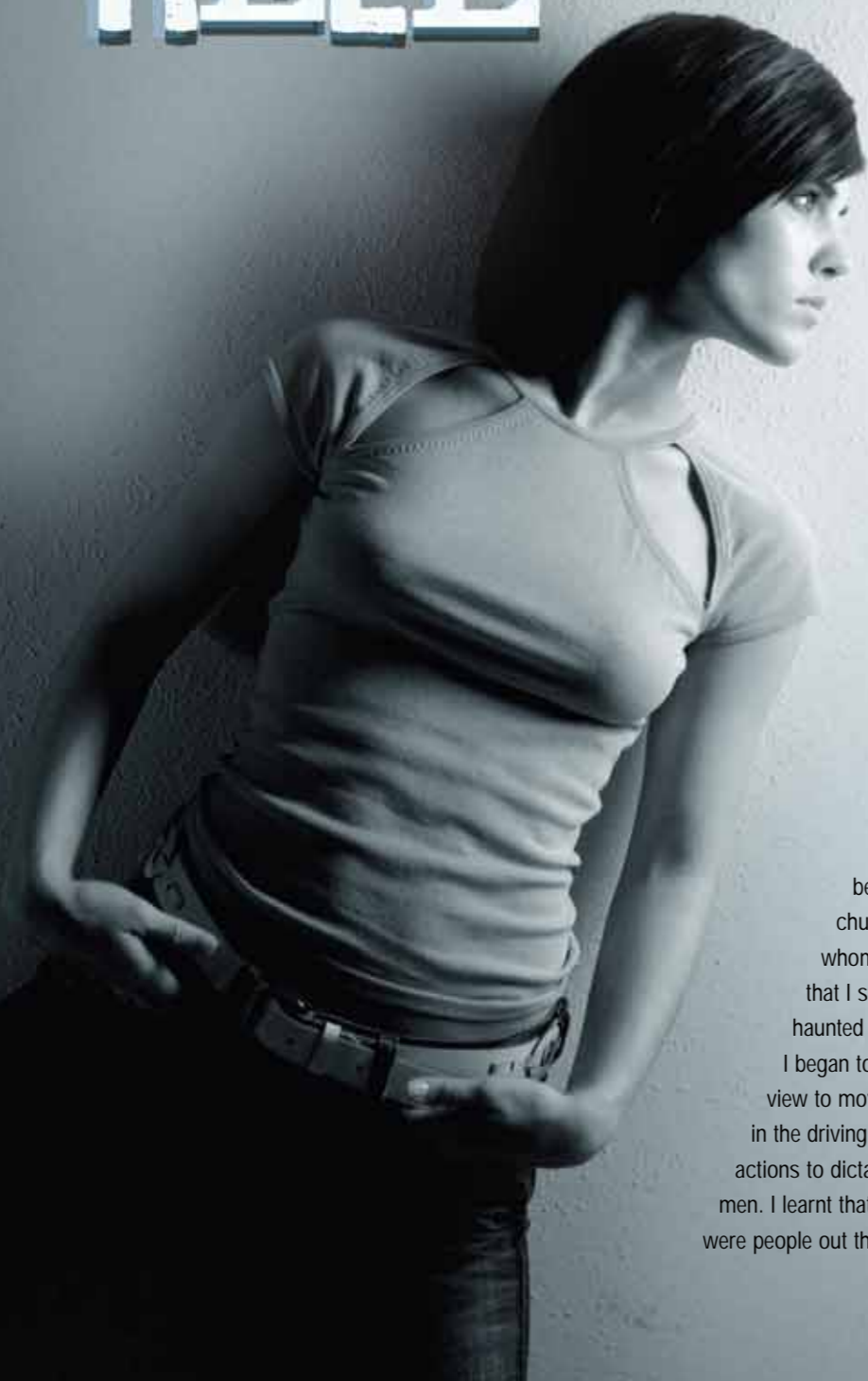
So, I created a façade. I locked my feelings behind a wall so thick that it could not be penetrated by anyone or anything. I interacted with the man and with my family. I had to protect my secret at all costs. It would kill my family if they knew.

The abuse stopped somewhere around my 14th birthday. I forget when, I never did know the exact time period. But by then the damage was done. I was to remain scarred for the rest of my life, living in the fairy tale that my family needed to believe to go on.

He continued to remain close to the family although he moved out of our house, and I felt the need to watch his every move in order to protect those who might be in danger of his roaming hands, but I could only do so much. The pressure became a burden and I moved away at 18, becoming involved in church and making bonds and building friendships with people whom I learnt to trust. The help and support given to me was such that I started to heal. I was able to start shifting the demons that had haunted me for so long.

I began to access the hidden memories in order to deal with them with a view to moving on. The monster was still in my life, but now, I was the one in the driving seat. I was in control of my destiny and I no longer allowed his actions to dictate what I wore, how I covered up, or even how I perceived all men. I learnt that the majority of men were not perverts and that, in fact, there were people out there with a genuine interest in my life.

MY LIVING HELL



I realised that I would never really overcome what had happened, but that I could use it to grow and to help others who had been through my hell or were living through it. I started to tell my story.

I am still haunted by the abuse I endured. The fact that he is still a part of my life is probably part of the reason that I constantly re-live the memories; but what has changed is that I no longer believe that I am the root cause of what happened to me. I believe that I can do whatever I put my mind to and that God can and will enable my life, even though my abuser killed my childhood.

Every now and again I have nightmares. I worry for the safety of the children he may come into contact with, but I have learnt to take life one day at a time and not to let bitterness consume me. After all, how would I feel if he reached Heaven after being forgiven and I stayed here because I couldn't let go of my hatred?

If I could come face to face with my demon right now, I would say:

Estimates now state that at least 1 in 4 males and 1 in 3 females will have survived some form of sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18! In the UK, that accounts for almost 21% of the population!

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BEING ABUSED

Eulalee Marshall-Wiggan RDN, CQSW, MSc social work

The area of abuse is something that we as Christians would like to say does not happen. But if you believe that it does not happen, then you will be in for a shock. If you believe that it has happened and could happen, then you are in a better position to protect yourself and those around you. Many children and young people are exposed to abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. Understanding abuse and what to do to protect yourself from risk is important. In order to clarify what it is that I am talking about, I have decided to break it down.

What is abuse?

Child abuse refers to any child under the age of 18 years, who is not married, who, through the actions of their parents or carers or through their failure to act to protect, has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm – be it physical or serious emotional harm.

The forms of abuse are:

- **Emotional harm** – which could include living with domestic violence.
- **Neglect** – which could include a failure by the adult to protect the child or young person from exposure to any kind of danger.
- **Physical abuse** – this could include physical injury, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This includes beatings, being burnt with hot instruments, having cold water poured over the child, and so on.
- **Sexual abuse** – a central characteristic of any abuse is the dominant position of an adult that allows him or her to force or coerce a child into sexual activity. Child sexual abuse may include fondling a child's genitals, masturbation, oral-genital contact, digital penetration, and vaginal and anal intercourse. Child sexual abuse is not solely restricted to physical contact; such abuse could include non-contact abuse, such as exposure, voyeurism, and child pornography and prostitution. Abuse by peers is also included.

Sexual abuse is an area that we struggle with the most, simply because of its very nature. The child or young person who is being abused may feel that it is normal, or they may blame themselves. The abuser will want it to be kept a secret and will go to great lengths to deny that it is happening. This places a lot of guilt and pressure on the child/young person.

'I pray for you, because I know you need healing. You have not succeeded in ruining what God has blessed. You took from me when I was helpless and now, I will replace what was lost, by God's grace.'

God has given me too much to be grateful for, for me to allow this perpetrator to win. I will live for today and follow Jesus' lead. Sometimes it's hard, and the last thing I want to do is believe that there was purpose in my suffering, but I sometimes find courage in my favourite verse:

But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord.

I wait for God my Saviour;

my God will hear me.

Do not gloat over me, my enemy!

Though I have fallen, I will rise.

Though I sit in darkness,

the Lord will be my light. Micah 7:7, 8

Who are the victims of child sexual abuse?

Children and adolescents, regardless of their race, culture, or economic status, appear to be at approximately equal risk of sexual abuse. Statistics show that girls are sexually abused more often than boys.

Who are the perpetrators of child sexual abuse?

Studies of those who commit child sexual abuse vary in their findings, but the most common finding is that the majority of sexual offenders are family members or close friends who are known to the child. Sexual abuse by strangers is not nearly as common as sexual abuse by family members or friends. Research further shows that men are the most likely perpetrators of sexual abuse, but there are cases in which women are the offenders.

What to do if you think you are being abused

Every child and young person has the right to a safe, happy childhood. So if you are being abused you may be feeling confused, bewildered, and frightened after what you have just read, and wondering what you should do. Taking the right steps is important. Firstly, talk over your situation with someone who may be able to advise you and support you or give you practical information. It is important that you know that you are not alone, and help is at hand. You can:-

- Confide in a trusted friend or family member, or the pastor. Talking to someone who can listen is important.
- Most churches have a Safety Officer specially assigned to child protection. Find out who that person is and contact her/him.
- The South England Conference has a Child Protection Manager. You are free to call him and arrange to speak in confidence. **01923 232728**
- There is also the Cornerstone Counselling Service: **0207 723 8050**
- If there is no one in the church whom you trust to talk to, then call the NSPCC Helpline: **0808 800 5000**.

Never feel as though you are a helpless victim with no recourse or hope. Sexual abuse is a crime. When you confide in someone, ask them to accompany you when you report the matter to the police. There are many people and resources that can empower you with support, such as counselling. Most of all, do not forget the words of Jesus 'Whoever comes to me I will never drive away.' John 6:37. So trust him to deliver you and give you peace.

Staying Safe from Abuse

Julia Smith LLM, MA

People who abuse, whether they are leaders or members of a church community or a stranger, have no distinguishing characteristic. Ninety-five percent of children calling ChildLine about sexual and physical abuse know the abuser. Research by the NSPCC shows that children are more likely to be sexually abused by someone they know, including relatives, family friends and people in positions of trust, than by a stranger. People who abuse include parents and family members, teachers, family friends, pastors, elders, youth leaders, choir leaders and a host of other people found in church communities.

They are often very 'trustworthy', friendly, knowledgeable and likeable, have excellent communication skills, attractive personalities and are very engaging. They may have good Bible knowledge, strong leadership skills and have earned the respect and trust of the membership. Others may operate in less visible roles and are more below the radar, so to speak.

The Bible would characterise these people as 'ravenous wolves, in sheep's clothing', and like roaring lions, intent on devouring the emotional and spiritual health and well-being of many to satisfy their base and repulsive illness. Sadly, in the Church, because of the environment in which members trust each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord, there is a dangerous presumption that these individuals and others in church communities like them are safe.

It is impossible to describe a typical sex abuser. Since there are no outward signs to identify an abuser, below are some tips on how children, young people and adults may increase their awareness and thereby keep themselves safe from abuse and sexual harassment in church communities.

Tips for young people and adults

You have the right to say no. The Bible promises that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth – this includes helping us to sense when a person makes you feel uncomfortable or a situation does not feel right. God has given us these warning signs to protect us from harm, including harm that may happen in your church community. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, tell them so, politely yet firmly, and move away from them.

Talk about it. People in church communities do not always tell others about their abuse and it can therefore continue for years¹. Abusers in church communities thrive on the culture of secrecy and 'confidentiality'. Members of WOMAASH (The Association for Women and Men against Abuse and Sexual Harassment) discovered through conversation that

several of them had similar unpleasant and inappropriate sexual advances from one prominent brother in the church. These stretched over a period of over 30 years. This brother was subsequently arrested and charged with the sexual abuse of a young woman in his church. Their silence gave the abuser the confidence to continue his abusive behaviour.

Keep talking until someone believes you. In a study by Victims of Clergy Abuse Linkup², the president Jeanne Miller stated that of the 3,000 persons who had contacted her organisation, virtually every one had gone to their church first for pastoral support and resolution. Rather than help, they were further punished for breaking silence. WOMAASH and other Christian organisations provide support for victims and survivors of abuse.

Be strong. Don't let the culture of the church get you down. Women who are sexually harassed in church communities are often accused of inviting the unwanted attention; wives who are physically attacked by their husbands are often advised to alter their behaviour so that his response would be more reasoned next time; men who are physically abused by their wives or girlfriends are joked about. These responses only add to the guilt the individual may already feel. Remember, the Lord IS your strength.³

Avoid the abuser. This is often very difficult for children, since they often have no control over the situations they may find themselves in. One young woman who was abused by a local leader at her church spoke of her difficulty in attending church where this man continued to play a prominent role. If attending another church is an option, do this.

Speak to others. Talking to others about your experience will help you to come to terms with the experience and alert others so that they keep on their guard. A group of young people at a small church shared their experience of a young elder who regularly touched their legs. By doing so, they were able to prevent him from continuing that behaviour by bringing it to his attention when it happened.

Examine your behaviour. This is probably one of the most difficult things to do. Ask yourself; are there aspects of my behaviour that may have 'attracted' the abuse? While you have no control over the abuser, you do have control over your own behaviour, so check it and make adjustments where this is needed.

Report it. Remember, those in authority are in the best position to advise you on what to do and take action against your abuser. It may also be an opportunity for her/him to get the psychological help needed to overcome this sin.

Educate yourself. Learn about the impact and effects of abuse on others. Church organisations such as WOMAASH have regular activities and programmes. Encourage your family ministries, youth department and women's ministries departments to hold programmes in your local church.

Do the God thing. 'The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.' Isaiah 32:17. Sin of all forms is deeply abhorrent to God⁴. Indeed, the Bible says that he hates it. The effect of your action to prevent the continuation of abuse could contribute to the peace and trust that God desires for his church.

© Julia Smith, Chair Association for Women and Men against Abuse and Sexual Harassment (In church communities).

¹ Cawson *et al.*, 2000, Child Maltreatment in the UK: A Study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect, NSPCC.

² Mary Andall-Stanberry (2006) Facts or fiction, Understanding the scale of abuse and sexual harassment in the church.

³ Ps 27:1.

⁴ See Ezekiel chapters 8 and 9.

He Took Away The Colour From The Flowers

Louise Francois

'... Cheryl's posture folded to that of a little child, she held her stomach, and in the voice of a three-year-old moaned, "Oh, it hurts! It hurts!" She held herself still, frozen. I felt I was watching the rape of a little girl, as if time had stood still for thirty years and I was looking through a window to the past. Then, wailing, she said, "He took away the colour from the flowers." Later she recalled that an uncle was once arrested for child molestation.' Barry Grosskopf, MD, *Forgive your Parents and Heal yourself*. p.68 ISBN 0-684-82406-x

For me, it was a neighbour. Arrested and charged for sexual crimes against children, he was deported back to his home country. Have I forgiven him? I had selected memory, so forgiveness was not an issue then. My silence gave him opportunities to develop a career in sex crimes against young females. Around 2004 he had a tragic end. Was it justice? I do not know. I only know the negative impact of his assault on my body and mind development. My passage into self-esteem, confidence, self-worth and the beauty of a little girl flowering into God's beautiful woman. This type of pain does not leave like people do. It always stays with you. Cheryl was 30+ when she first saw Dr Grosskopf. How old am I? Well, you are free to speculate.

Cheryl's experience connected. I re-lived the pain and cried. Thus, for all Cheryl's out there; I wrote: *He took away the colour from the flowers.*

Then wailing she said,
"He took away the colour from the flowers."
Crumbled and crushed in her corner –
as if waiting to regain
what? She could not tell
and the grief, raining down fragmented tears –
crashed heavily on the red hard wall of her fears
mistaken for cleansing showers.

Will the predator return?
Confused, she could not tell.
So, in between wailing and agitation
she muttered,
He ripped away the colour from the flowers.
Why?
They were not even blooming,
so far, so far away from harvest
and barely able to stay the season's blowing.

A minute silence,
between the torrents, it broke through –
No!
Mercy condemns the 'holy hush'
the predator shall no longer quench your prayers.
Mercy says no!
No more shall he spray his essence.

Then wailing she said,
'He took away the colour from the flowers.'
Then like an eternity rings –
the sound of Mercy saying;
No!
I will never let him have control,
I will wipe away your tears
Mercy will never let you go.

Then as if given a moment's grace,
she felt Mercy leaning in her corner.
Startled, she heard,
Mercy says no!
Shame shall no more make you over,
you do not have to be afraid –
so wrap up in peace my darling child,
for Calvary healed your fears,
moreover, the powers in its red regain the
colour in your flowers.

It is known that young people experience abuse in various forms and to varying degrees. The term is used to cover a range of experiences, some of which are devastating and may result in the death or profound psychological damage of a child. Other forms of abuse can cause distress, but to a lesser extent. Individuals respond differently to the same experiences, and the effect of abuse on an individual is dependent on a number of complex factors such as family type, emotional security, whether the abuser was a single occurrence or ongoing, and whether the abuser was a trusted, known individual or a complete stranger.

All forms of abuse are damaging and, I believe, are deeply abhorrent to God, since they are far from his ideal of the way that he desired his children to be treated.

Of the many years that I have attended church, listened to and, indeed, took part in programmes on abuse, these have been generally aimed at raising the awareness of congregations to the dangers of abuse to girls and young women – and quite rightly so. I have few recollections of similar awareness-raising programmes that have focused on the abuse of boys in church communities.

The popular media has given much attention to the revelations of clergy abuse of boys in the traditional churches such as the Catholic church. However, such coverage does not tend to focus on the emotional and psychological effects of such abuse on boys and men.

The study by Holmes, W. C. & Slap, G. B. (1998) concludes that sexual abuse of males is common, under-reported, under-recognised, and under-treated.

I began researching this issue in 2005, when asked to do a presentation on the subject. Though interesting, it was an area of research that I found deeply disturbing, since it meant me revisiting my past as an abused boy in the Caribbean, and subsequently as a teenager by a young man in my local church whom I trusted and looked up to. It took me several decades to speak, even to my wife and family, about these experiences. If I am honest, I had buried the experiences far into the recesses of my mind and presumed that it had had little impact in life.

During a recent presentation on abuse at a church, I shared my experience of being abused as a teenager by an older youth leader at my local church in London. Afterwards, a mother shared that her son, now a young elder at his local church, had also been sexually abused by the same person whom the community holds in high regard. On speaking with this young man, it was not surprising to discover that some of his friends, young serving pastors and leaders in our churches, were also survivors of abuse. Few, if any, have spoken publicly of their experience.

So what is the incidence of abuse on boys and men, and what are the effects on their emotional, mental and spiritual health?

Researchers have found that men who were sexually abused in childhood, whether or not they seek out mental health services, may suffer from:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Dissociation
- Hostility and anger
- Impaired relationships
- Low self-esteem
- Sexual dysfunction
- Sleep disturbance
- Suicidal ideas and behaviour

They often live with unexplored guilt and shame, experience flashbacks, multiple personality disorder, emotional numbing, anger and aggressiveness, tend to be hyper-vigilant, power-seeking, and have an anxious need to please others. (Adams-Tucker, 1981;



Blanchard, 1986; Briere, 1989; Briere *et al.*, 1988; Burgess *et al.*, 1981; Conte and Schuerman, 1987; Rogers and Terry, 1984; Sebold, 1987; Summit, 1983; Vander Mey, 1988.)

Effects of abuse on boys in church communities

Nationally, 1 in 6 men experience abuse by the age of 16 years, Cawson, P. *et al* (2000). If the statistics are true, and there is no good reason to believe that they are not, on average, a significant number of men in the Adventist Church, including those currently in positions of leadership, are survivors of abuse. From the programmes that the Association for Women and Men against Abuse and Sexual Harassment (WOMAASH) has held in churches in the SEC, I have become more aware of the behaviours of many men who tend to exhibit defensive and hostile behaviour towards those who are prepared to deal with this difficult and sensitive subject.

We are told that one of the reasons why a male might be more affected by sexual abuse is that it calls into question his whole sexual and personal identity 'as a man'. When a male is victimised by another man, he is more likely to experience confusion about sexual identity (Johnson and Shrier, 1987; Rogers and Terry, 1984; Sebold, 1987).

When this victimisation takes place by a trusted adult in church, this can have a deeply damaging impact on the psycho-spiritual health of the boy or young man. Unlike girls, who tend to internalise their anger, boys become hostile and take on self-destructive behaviours. Many may leave their church settings and completely separate themselves from the beliefs that they grew up with. The image of God becomes confusing and distorted.

When these incidences of sexual abuse have been reported, leaders generally adopt what has been described as the DIM approach (denial, ignorance and minimisation). Church leaders have generally tended to believe the 'trusted' elder, deacon, teacher or even the bishop accused of being an abuser, in preference to believing the abused. The culture of not believing that abuse happens in church communities may account for why around three-quarters (72%) of sexually abused children did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time, and around a third (31%) still had not told anyone about their experience(s) by early adulthood. Boys are

less likely to disclose the abuse, with 33% of the men reporting that they had never disclosed the experience to anyone.

The impact of not being believed can be experienced by some victims as worse than the original abuse, since it reinforces the threat that the adult may have made when the abuse took place that 'no one would believe them'.

I grew up in a church where abuse of boys was not uncommon. What has amazed me is that many older people knew what was going on, but no one warned us. No one saw it as their Christian duty to protect us.

One of the reasons why abuse in church communities is so pervasive is the culture of trust, respect and confidence that underpins the Christian community. Children are socialised and taught to respect adults, especially those in positions of authority. This is a good thing. However, it is well known that paedophiles often groom their victims, their parents and guardians, by assuming positions of responsibility. Under this assumed respectability, he or she is then given full access to children.

Yet, there remains, even today, when it is more acceptable to talk about abuse, a reluctance to believe that the Church has its 'share' of abusers. There is a need to educate members to differentiate between trusting a Christian brother or sister and having a healthy objective mistrust of those whose masquerade as a Christian in God's Church. Jesus' warning, 'by their fruit you will know them' Matthew 8:16-20, does not only relate to winning souls. We should also be scrutinising the damaged 'fruit' that these abusers are producing, and take steps to remove them from the 'safe cover' that the Church provides.

It is very important that we break the silence of the abuse on boys wherever it occurs and in whatever form it has taken place. This could release, remove guilt and shame and liberate individuals who may have been 'carrying their load' for months, years or decades. 'Then they that shall be of thee shall raise up the foundation of many generations, you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.' Isaiah 58:12.

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Male Perspective on Sexual Abuse

Jonathan Alexander
(a pseudonym)

'The world breaks everyone and afterward some are strong at the broken places.'
Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*



**brother
MAN**

Men's Conference

NEW HORIZONS

Date: Saturday 30th August 2008
 Time: 10:00am - 6:30pm
 Venue: Regent Hall
 276 Oxford Street
 London W1C 2D1
Telephone: 020 7494 1000, Fax: 020 7494 1001

Presentations include:

- Developing Male Spiritual Identity
- Women, Sex and Grace 1
- Constrains of Abused Disciples: Pleasantry Through the Eyes of a Woman
- Handling Your Business... Counselling as a means of dealing with deep seated male issues
- Love, Sin and Grace
- Beyond Mentoring

by Ruth & Elvis Gyebi

husband and wife team who are trained and practising counsellors in the Berkshire region. Ruth is a founder member of WOMAASH.

Culture, Abuse & CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church made national headlines when it was accused of sheltering child sex abusers within its leadership hierarchy. Archbishops, cardinals and bishops allegedly re-located known paedophiles and sex offenders, keeping their identities a secret and allowing countless other children to be victimised. (*ChristianAnswers.net*)

Sexual abuse is not a crime exclusive to the Catholic Church. A research study conducted in 2007 by WOMAASH (Women and Men against Sexual Harassment and Abuse) showed that over 90% of respondents believe that sexual abuse and harassment is not adequately addressed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The extent of abuse within the Adventist Church can only be a 'guesstimate' at the moment; the exact numbers will not be known while churches continues to protect, keep silent and move perpetrators from church to church. Many children and adults suffer silently, never reporting the crime due to fear, shame and/or unfounded guilt. The silence of church members, as well as the abused, encourages abusers to become habitual rather than single incident predators.

Culture has an effect on how abuse is addressed. The Church is made up of many cultures with complex ranges of beliefs, values and attitudes. Different cultures have different beliefs about virginity, chastity, homosexuality, rape, and the general value of children.

Many Christians, have an 'ostrich-head-in-the-sand' mentality and deny that abuse exists. Churches cannot afford to ignore the fact that among their members are those who perpetuate sexual abuse against children. By not facing up to the problems in their community, churches risk exposing children to further abuse. (*Tear Fund*.)

Because the Adventist Church is made up of diverse cultures, in some circumstances some people may place their cultural beliefs before their Christian beliefs. We have observed that clients we listen to feel that some families tend to protect their cultural values rather than protecting the victim. Many abused people keep quiet because of the danger of tarnishing their family's reputation in church or their community.

A Seventh-day Adventist survivor revealed that the reason she had kept quiet for over 20 years was partly because of the fear of not being believed, but even greater was the fear of

further victimisation from family. Coming from a strong African culture where abuse is not openly discussed, victims are victimised instead of protected, and so, for this individual it was better to keep quiet than to speak up.

What does the Bible say about sexual abuse of children?

God is concerned about children. Matthew 18:6 says: 'But if anyone causes one of these little ones to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.'

Every child is a unique individual created in the image of God with inherent worth. However, like the vessel being created at the potter's wheel in Jeremiah 18:4, this image can be marred by sin against the child, such as sexual abuse, for example. The effects of this can distort children's personalities and potential. Like the potter, God is able to form the clay into another vessel, as seems best to him. Scripture mentions sexual immorality on a number of occasions, usually in the context of forbidding it (Deuteronomy 5:18, Matthew 5:27-28, 15:19, 19:18).

The perception from a number of church discussions is that sexual abuse simply does not happen in our Church. After all, are we not Sabbath keepers? Do we not hold the three angels' messages? And are we not the true Church? Then how can someone speak of sexual abuse in our Church? We are quick to point fingers at the Catholic priests, but what about our ministers and the Church as a whole?

God is interested in our pain, because when we cry, he cries with us.

Let us create a safe environment for abuse victims to start telling their stories to professional people.

Resources
Parkinson P., (1997) Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches. Hodder and Stoughton UK
ChristianAnswers.Net
Tear Fund publication

'Abuse breaks something sacred inside us . . . the most important harm I have wrestled with is . . . the problem of a broken heart. Adults can better bear a broken heart . . . but it doesn't work that way for children.'

Fran Henry, survivor of child sexual abuse and founder of *Stop it Now!*



Women as Abusers

'... I was in denial for several years that I was abusing the other women in the choir. It took me a long time to admit that I suffered badly from internalised sexism.'

'... me an abuser, no way, that is a man's thing . . . I am just a "little stressed out" and need a bit of support with the kids.'

'... there is no manual for being a good partner . . . I was only trying to keep him and "crossed the line" because of him.'

by Duncan Lawrence Life Coach, Family Therapist and Diversity Adviser

These are quotes from very real women, some of my past clients, all, by the way, who are considered 'professional' women. Most people wrongly only see 'abusers' as some type of freakish, odd and stereotypical person, and most of us at times probably think we could even 'point one out in a crowd'. I am sorry, folks. One of the first myths to break early on within this article is:

Myth breaker: Abusers are both men and women and come from all walks of life . . . all cultures, races, creeds, classes, etc. Chances are you possibly know a woman who has abused others and/or has been abused by another woman!

Definition of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse can be summarised as actual or likely sexual exploitation of another person or adolescent. The person may often be a 'dependent personality' and/or developmentally immature.

Warning characteristics/signs and potential flashpoints¹

Often it is very difficult to tell 'victims' apart from those women who abuse them, because they both often portray similar characteristics.

Victims themselves often feel shame, guilt, are often secretive, feel like a 'walk-over', often over-compensate to cover the physical/emotional scars, are sometimes violent, depressed, anxious, withdrawn, anti-social, sometimes have low confidence, low self esteem, sometimes are angry or full of rage, abusive, often isolated from potential sources of friendship, engage in self harm at times, often suicidal, sometimes have drug/alcohol challenges, have relationship challenges, become part of the victim to victimiser cycle, and so on.

Women who abuse others have some of the characteristics listed below:

- Often present a reasonable public image
- Impulsive
- Opportunist
- Depressed (which could lead to anger)
- Follower/easily manipulated
- Narcissistic
- Need to oppress others and make others worry or fear
- Often promiscuous
- History of emotional and/or physical violence/oppression
- Often choose deceit, fury and assault to get their own way
- Use moods, rages and impulses to control others around them
- Some steal and/or destroy their partner's possessions
- Internalised sexism victims and/or perpetrators²
- Liars

- Unresolved jealousy of others
- Poor self image/self-esteem
- Dysfunctional views of others (including treating partners, family, and so on, as possessions)
- Often abuse children and animals
- Sometimes fake injury to themselves.

'Becoming' an abuser is quite complex and much bigger than this article can reasonably convey; but for the many women who abuse others, the potential flashpoints are situations where • they are in positions of power/authority • they feel limited and where they have no power/authority • they can feel enormous stress • they clearly do not access healthy courses of actions/solutions and do not show the restraint and personal and social resources that most of us rely upon daily, even when faced with very challenging life situations.

Some possible ways forward for abusers and their victims

Ways forward can be as controversial and complex as the reasons why women abuse. Doing nothing is never an option!

Some of the things we do know that work include (for abusers and victims):

- We must not push women abusers and their victims 'underground'. We all, especially those in position of leadership, need to admit openly that abuse exists and occurs all too regularly.
- Need immediate support (regardless of the circumstances) without time-wasting, blame and/or recrimination. Sources of support can be located where abusers, victims and survivors may be . . . the work place, churches, mosques, synagogues, schools, youth clubs, and so on.
- Specialist support, using specially trained personnel (professionals and specially trained volunteers), is crucial to break the cycle of abuse and help the process for healing and forgiveness to begin (e.g. taking them from victims to being survivors.)
- Try respectfully and sensitively to reduce feelings of isolation within those individuals and groups around you.
- Finally, the good news . . . with honesty, courage, support, resources and vigilance, we can drastically reduce the number of women abusers and their victims quite quickly!

¹ For adults, young people and their families/carers.

² *internalised sexism* (n): Describes the process where some women 'internalise' sexism/sexual harassment that was originally directed towards them and then act on it (sexism) in a self-destructive, or otherwise negative manner (for example, reinforcing negative stereotypes about woman, 'woman-to-woman' oppression and/or violence, not liking your gender, etc.).

Examples of Treatment Formats are forgiveness and personal development projects, 1-1 and groups (outpatient), Residential programmes, Medication, Self-help groups, Telephone counselling/coaching, Incarceration.

If it is at all possible to speak of God as being at his best, then it must be when we are at our worst. Whether we want to admit it or not, we are all broken people – either physically (sickness), emotionally (pain and death), sexually (abused), relationally (separation and divorce) or spiritually (far from God). Sin has left us all in bad shape. We have become callous, unkind and uncaring to each other. The end result of this disposition is that we have become verbally, physically and sexually abusive towards each other. Our Lord predicted that in the end time *'Moral decay will be so prevalent that most people won't even know what love is'* (Matt. 24:12, *The Clear Word*).

Jesus, the Great Liberator

Jesus loves broken people. In fact, his desire is to heal our brokenness by allowing us to spend much time in his presence and experience his unconditional love. The great value that Jesus has indiscriminately placed upon every one of us is inestimable. Jesus came to liberate broken people: *'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, That they may be called the trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified'* (Isa. 61:1-3, NKJV).

Jesus was accused of spending too much time associating with broken people: *'And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and sinners, they said to his disciples, "How is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*' (Mk. 2:16, 17). Jesus (the potter) specialises in taking broken vessels (you and me) and making them over again into a new creation (Jer. 18:4). Jesus heals our brokenness so that we may glorify him (Isa. 61:3). He takes the fragrance of our brokenness and uses it to perfume and sweeten another person's life by using us as healers and liberators.

The church as a place of healing

When the church is working right as God intends it, there is no better place for people of all cultures, colours, creeds, religion, race, ethnicity and nationality to find healing, love, acceptance and belonging. We need to understand that the church is a place for

broken people and not to be so alarmed when evidence of people's brokenness surfaces. As a church we should be proactive in creating a safe environment for broken people and not be reactive by treating them as misfits. There is usually a reason, unknown to the rest of us, why people behave the way they do. Therefore we should not be too quick to judge or condemn, because often such responses are coming from the standpoint of ignorance.

In the book, *Belonging*, Nancy and Ron Rockey make this crucial point that every congregation needs to understand when dealing with broken people (that's all of us):

'Human beings are a composite of all past memories. Combined, these memories create our thoughts and our feelings out of which become our behaviours' (p. 58). They also pointed out that 'Our responses, our behaviours, stem primarily from the emotion of old memories and not just the present situation or the emotion of the moment' (p. 38). How differently would we treat each other if we knew the memories that motivated those behaviours? We need to take greater care as members of the body of Christ to do what Christ would do, which is to 'look into people and not just at people'.

As a pastor I'm intentional about creating congregations that are:

- **Inclusive** – discrimination whether by race, sex or age has no place.
- **Accepting** – everyone should have a sense of belonging.
- **Non-judgemental** – our mission is to love people not to condemn them.
- **Non-hierarchical** – at foot of the Cross the ground is level – everybody is important.
- **Diversified** – celebrates the richness of cultural differences.
- **Safe** – people are comfortable to be vulnerable.

In recognition of our varied needs, our church runs a Sabbath School class for individuals who are ready to deal with painful memories of the past. The material that the class uses is the Twelve Step Recovery Programme (by Hal Gates). A maximum of twelve people form the class, where a safe environment is created for people to share and be supportive of each other's pain. One of the facilitators of the class

has been through this self-help programme and is allowing the fragrance of their brokenness to perfume, sweeten and brighten the lives of others.

Here is a personal testimony from this person:

'Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God!' (1 John 3:1, NKJV)

I'm truly amazed that we are a part of the family of God and he loves us. Let's not take for granted the awesome blessings and privileges that come with being a member of the church.

At eighteen I accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour and was baptised.

This was the most important decision I have ever made. Being a new Christian was exciting and refreshing. My whole life had changed. New friends, new interests, new desires, wow! I began my new life in Christ. Like any thing else in life, you have your high and low periods. There will be moments on the mountain top and moments in the valley.

One day I found myself in the valley of despair and turmoil. The reality of the aftermath of my childhood sexual abuse was emotionally, physically and mentally overwhelming. The counselling sessions were difficult. However, I came away with the understanding that the abuse was not my fault.

God gave me the courage to share my story in a play we had at church. The opportunity to enlighten others of the after-effects of sexual abuse was just the beginning of my recovery journey.

Jesus poured out his love upon me during this time of need, by providing for me a Twelve Step Recovery Programme (by Hal Gates), providing healing for damaged emotions. What never ceased to amaze me is that Jesus loved me through my church family.

He literally brought us together, right there in our church. Young people, who were broken, wounded, struggling and searching for something more. We were not all sexually abused. Some of us were lonely and looking for friendship, depressed, bitter and angry or had some kind of addictive, compulsive or co-dependent behaviour. Our issues may have been different, but our needs were the same. We longed for peace and were seeking a more intimate relationship with God.

Imagine the thrill when we discovered that our Twelve Step

The Fragrance of Brokenness

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Support Group would meet those needs. As we worked through the steps we would find peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with others, and we were prepared for ministry.

Week after week we were awakened to the consciousness of our true condition and our great need of Christ. We were able to be set free from our prison of darkness, denial and fear. *'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.'* (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV)

At the birth of our Twelve Step Recovery Programme, we studied God's Word, were nurtured, fellowshipped, prayed with and for each other.

Today, twelve years later, we continue to meet, a **Christ-centered** support group network made up of persons who have been there. We know and understand the problems, feelings of hopelessness and needs of those addicted to substances, compulsive behaviour and co-dependency.

Oh, what joy, to see the lives of God's children being transformed into new creatures! A life of peace, new friendships, a life ready for ministry and a more intimate relationship with God is what we received.

I am truly grateful to be a part of the family of God.

Conclusion

As a result of the sin, shame and guilt of our fore-parents, Adam and Eve, Satan has concocted the lie that we have no worth or value, and many of us have believed him. According to Nancy and Ron Rockey, *'One of the greatest fears of humankind is that we will somehow come to a knowledge of our true selves'* (p. 23). God wants us to see ourselves as we really are in light of his love and grace. Remember, Christ is a greater Saviour than you are a sinner. The apostle Paul reminds us that *'where sin abounded, grace abounded much more'* (Rom. 5:20, NKJV).

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How to Study the Bible

In our last article we introduced some of the steps we can take to make our Bible study deeper, more enjoyable and relevant for our lives. We started with basic principles for study in general, and then suggested six questions we can apply to any biblical passage that should make it come alive. We applied these briefly to Daniel 3.

This time we'll apply these in more depth to another well-known passage. You'll find the text below, but in order to get the most out of this article, you'll need to refer to a Bible as well.

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' (Genesis 12:1-3, *New Revised Standard Version*.)

Let's revisit those basic questions we looked at before. Remember, our aim is to understand the text so that we can apply it to our lives.

First, what is the *context* of the passage? It comes immediately after a genealogy (Gen 11:10-32), which is itself preceded by the story of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

That story concerns people who disobey God and rebel against his will. They say 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves' (Gen 11:4). They have great ambition and they know how to achieve it. But note that in our main passage God promises Abraham, 'I will . . . make your name great'. The contrast between the two statements about making a great name shows that true greatness is achieved not through human pride, but is a gift of God.

Note also the *flow* of the passage. It contains both commands (e.g. 'Go from your country') and promises (e.g. 'I will bless you'). In fact, it seems that the fulfilment of the promises rests on Abraham obeying the commands. If he does not obey the commands – if he doesn't leave behind what God tells him to – then he cannot receive the promises.

Next we turn to the *content*. There are numerous points we could look at. But let's just consider this one: God promises Abraham, 'I will make of you a great nation.' But how will this happen? The previous context told us that 'Sarai [his wife] was barren; she had no child' (Gen 11:30). God doesn't mention anything about Sarai giving birth, so where will this great nation come from? Out of thin air? From Abraham and Sarai's children? From Abraham and another woman? Well, at this stage we simply don't know, because the text is silent. Here's an example of how biblical texts can raise questions, and that we have to be patient while we go looking for the

FOR ALL IT'S WORTH

by Dr Laurence Turner
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answers. As you continue reading the story, look out for answers to these questions.

When we move on to the *world behind* our passage, we'll need to investigate some basic facts – geographical, historical, cultural – that will help us to understand what's going on. A good Bible dictionary will help here. Abraham's call came to him while he was living in Haran (Gen 11:31). This was an important trading centre, a place of affluence. Yet God asks him to leave this behind. And also to leave his family. A brief look at a Bible dictionary will show us that the extended family was the centre of life in Abraham's world. Your home and your family gave you your identity. Those basic facts help us to understand the difficulty in obeying God's call and the huge risk Abraham was taking when he moved on.

What about any *biblical connections* with this passage? Do other parts of the Bible help us to understand it? Using a concordance, or the marginal references in your Bible, will lead you to many possible points of contact. Among them is the following:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.' (Galatians 3:8, *New Revised Standard Version*.)

In discussing the Gospel, Paul refers to this very passage in Genesis. (As he does also in Romans 4:16-17.) So,

whatever else we might see in it, we discover the beginning of the Gospel. If we want to know more about the Gospel, we should take a closer look at the call of Abraham. How God dealt with Abraham could give us some insights into how God deals with us.

By this stage in our study we know the passage better than when we started. This is important because we can only apply what we first understand. Some questions we could ask of ourselves include the following:

God asked Abraham to give up what his culture thought was most important. So it would appear that some things are more important than my culture. What might they be for me? Can my 'culture' get in the way of following God?

In this story God will only achieve radical things in this world if Abraham is willing to be a radical disciple. Am I willing to be a rebel for God? What precisely should I be radical about?

What other questions does the passage raise for you personally?

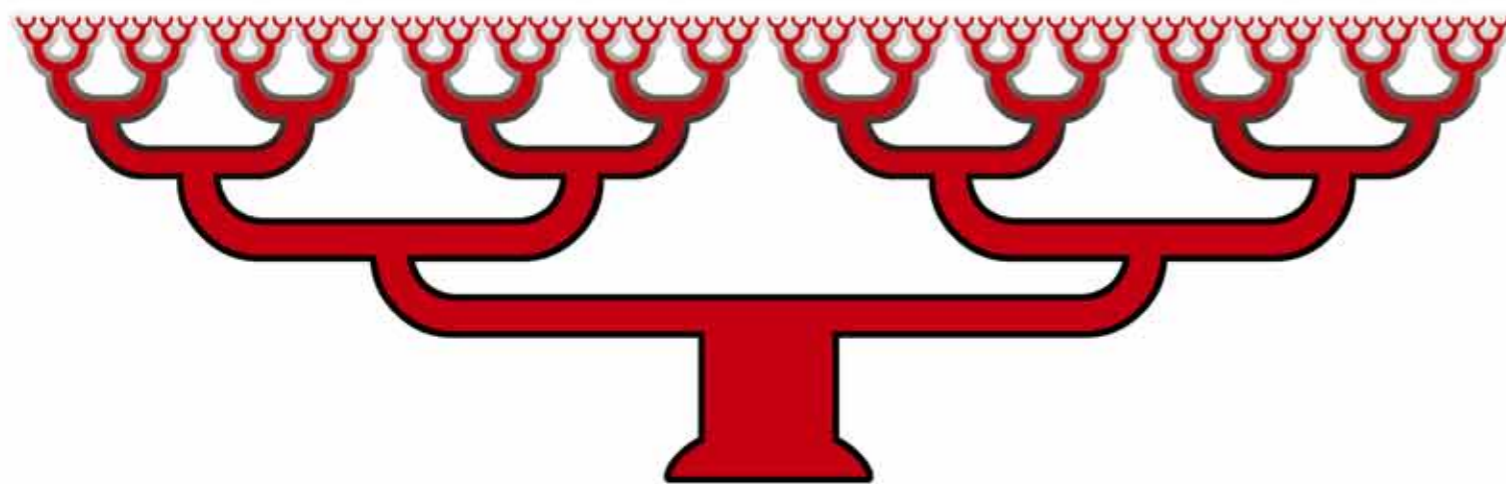
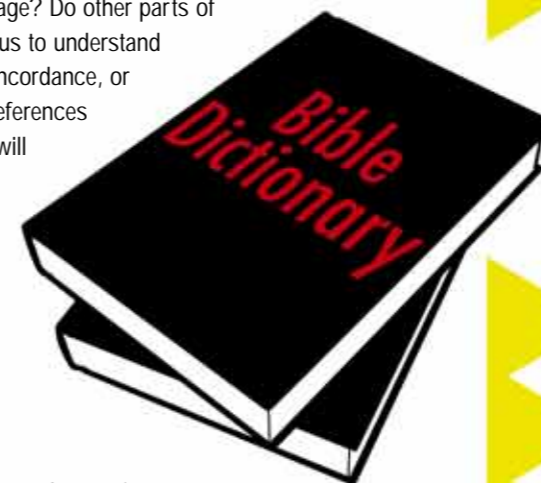
And while you're thinking about those, here are some more questions for you to ponder.

Why do we have a genealogy (Gen 11:10-32) immediately before the call of Abraham?

If Abraham is told to leave behind his family and relatives, why does he take Lot, his nephew? (See Gen 12:4-5.)

Why doesn't God tell Abraham where he is going, rather than just saying, 'Go . . . to the land that I will show you'?

What might your answers to those questions tell you about your relationship with God?



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Please send all questions, observations or enquiries to: Agony Aunt, Encounter, BUC Youth Department, Stanborough Park, Watford WD25 9JZ or email: bucyouth@adventist.org.uk



See you there?