

**Abuse Prevention
Emphasis Day
August 24, 2002**

Resource Packet

*Prepared by
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*For the General Conference
Department of Women's Ministries*

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day

Suggested Sabbath School Program

- Song Service
- Opening Hymn: “*A Shelter in the Time of Storm*” No. 528 SDA Hymnal
- Welcome
- Scripture reading: *2 Samuel 22:33*
- Opening Prayer
- Musical selection
- Special Feature: “*Seeking Strength*” written by Meibel Mello Guedes, Brazil*
- Benediction
- Break for classes

**Suggestion: Have note cards or stationery ready for class members to write a note of encouragement to someone who has been affected by abuse. Encourage them to mail their note and ask them for feedback the following week on how the recipient responded to the note.*

Suggested Sabbath School Feature

Seeking Strength

By Meibel Mello Guedes

Scripture: *God is my strength and power. 2 Sam. 22:33*

It is possible throughout your life that you have heard many stories of women who have had to face the pain of betrayal by their spouse, and who had to face the pain of separation or abuse and so experienced much anguish.

When this happens to a friend, you are with her during the crisis and help her to overcome the obstacles. You give her a shoulder to cry on, you listen to her hurt and perhaps, if she is ready, you suggest alternatives which in your opinion should be considered opportune for this time. If you had the power in your hands, you would of course do everything you could to free her from this unfortunate situation. However, many times, no matter how much you want to do for your friend, you feel helpless.

Let me tell you what I feel and do when I am asked to help someone who is going through a situation like this. First I pray to my God and say, "What can I do to help this friend? I have an immense desire to help her and I would do anything so that peace, harmony, and family unity can remain unshaken. Lord, give me the right words at the right time."

Recently, I spoke on the phone with a friend who lives far from my home. She was experiencing a bitter situation in her life. Her spouse ridiculed her and treated her with contempt, as though she were a totally incapable individual. At times she was tempted to believe that all the negative characteristics her husband mentioned were really true.

Among many messages which I sent to her, she took out one in which I mentioned all of her good qualities. When she was tempted to believe the cruel and malicious words uttered by her husband, she concentrated on the positive words and her virtues which I had mentioned in that letter. She told me that she read that message many times each day, and therefore was able to think, "I am not the person that my husband says I am; I am the person that my friend described." Another prayer that was always in her heart was, "Take these negative thoughts from me. I was created in Your image and I have a great deal of value because you love me and redeemed me. I am certain of one thing, I have a great value for You, for my children, for my relatives, and my friends."

Many, many people around the world are mistreated; they receive a daily load of abuse; they are used as objects; and many are disrespected. As time goes by, they lose their dignity and self-worth; they feel worthless because they feel they are not loved by people important in their lives. It is very possible that you know someone in this situation. Most of these individuals are women. God created these women; they are women for whom Jesus died on the Cross of Calvary; they are worthy of the love and compassion of our Heavenly Father who sees all and feels all. These women have an infinite value in the eyes of our Father. They are worthy of our care and support also.

Dear friend, if you know someone who is experiencing a crisis like this, write them a special message today, let him or her know that they are special to Jesus. Tell them that abuse is not their fault and that they don't deserve to be abused. Help them to know their value in Jesus. Or if you are the victim of a situation like this, I have written the following words just for you, with much love: "Dear friend, you are beautiful. Your interior beauty is even greater than your exterior beauty. You are unique; there is no other person like you. Your virtues, your kindness, your desire to overcome, your smile make you a very special person. Look on high; contemplate the power of our Creator; He wants to see you happy. Contemplate His face on the cross, where He received mocking and scornful words, where He was humiliated and tortured. He knows perfectly how much malicious words hurt; therefore He understands your suffering.

"No matter how much loneliness you feel, remember He is at your side, concerned with the struggles you are facing. He extends His hand and says, "Daughter (or Son), be of good cheer, unite your fragility with my strength and you will be a winner! Look beyond the clouds and you will see the rays of sun which shine to illuminate your path. When you analyze yourself, always think in a positive, optimistic manner. Many others have gone through this path of pain. Those who have taken the chance to look up came out winners. Be one of them."

"May you hear and feel the voice of God today telling you the following words, Daughter (or Son), I love you. You are very special! Do not be discouraged; go on, I am at your side."

Meibel Mello Guedes is the wife of Pastor Arlindo Guedes, mother of three daughters, and grandmother of precious little Maressa. She is Women's Ministries and Shepherdess Director for the South Brazil Union Conference and is completing a Master's degree in Education. Her hobbies are reading, studying, and talking about Jesus.

BREAKING THE SILENCE
Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day

Suggested Divine Service Program

- **Song Service**
- **Opening prayer**
- **Welcome**
- **Call to worship:** *“The Christian Home”* No. 827 SDA Hymnal:

*Never have grudges against others,
or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody,
or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness.*

Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.

Try then, to imitate God, as children of His that He loves, and follow Christ by loving as He loved you, giving Himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

Among you there must be not even a mention of fornication or impurity in any of its forms, or promiscuity: this would hardly become the saints!

There must be no coarseness, or salacious talk and jokes—all this is wrong for you; raise your voices in thanksgiving instead.

You were darkness once but now you are light in the world; be like children of light.

Sing the words and tunes of the psalms and hymns when you are together, and go on singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts,

So that always and everywhere you are giving thanks to God who is our father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

--From Ephesians 4 and 5, Jerusalem.

- **Opening hymn:** *“Love at Home”* No. 652 SDA Hymnal
- **Scripture reading:** *Matthew 22:37-40*
- **Tithe and offerings**
- **Children’s story:** *“Alex’s Message”*
- **Prayer of intercession**
- **Special music**
- **Sermon:** *“Daybreak”*
- **Closing hymn:** *“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”* No. 100 SDA Hymnal
- **Benediction**

Daybreak

Timeless answers for an old question . . .

A sermon resource by Karen and Ron Flowers

Co-directors of Family Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Theme

The quality of our human relationships reflects the quality of our relationship with God.

Theme Text

1 John 3:14

Introduction

A Rabbi once asked his students, “How can we determine the hour of dawn, when the night ends and the day begins?”

One student suggested, “Is it when you can distinguish between a dog and a sheep in the distance?”

“No,” the Rabbi answered.

“Is it when you can distinguish between a fig tree and a grapevine?” asked a second student.

“No,” the Rabbi responded again.

“Please tell us the answer, then,” urged the students.

Said the wise teacher, “It is when you have enough light to look human beings in the face and recognize them as your brothers and sisters. Until then the darkness is still with us.”

Until we see ourselves as part of one family, the darkness is still with us. Dawn arrives, daybreak comes, only when we are able to look into the faces of all human beings around us and recognize them as our brothers and sisters.

Vertical and Horizontal Relationships

Our Lord recognized that we form relationships in two directions—with God and with humankind. The *vertical* if you will . . . and the *horizontal*. More importantly, He gave spiritual significance to human relationships. He elevated them to a moral plane parallel to our relationship with God.

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus summed up the law in two commands: “Love the Lord your God . . .” and “Love your neighbor . . .” Like two sides of one coin, love for God and love for others are bound together. Christianity holds on to these two relationships at the same time. When one is emphasized to the exclusion or minimization of the other, religion is warped.

Overemphasis on the Vertical. If, in my experience, I over-emphasize my vertical relationship with God without allowing my spirituality to permeate the world around me through my relationships with fellow human beings, I have an unbalanced, mystical religion. Throughout history, such a view has led to the formation of so-called “spiritual centers,” where “the religious” have sought deeper spirituality in isolation from the world.

One such is the Shrine of La Verna in Italy. There, still today, monks endeavor by self-imposed exclusion from human contact to reach a state of perfect holiness. It is their quest to achieve such a high spiritual state that God will honor them by giving them in their bodies the stigmata of Jesus—the wound marks in his hands, feet and side—as church tradition records they were bestowed on their beloved patron saint Francis of Assisi. In order to achieve such holiness, they believe they must be totally separated from the world around them. In some cases, monks have imposed radical isolation upon themselves for over seven years, coming down out of their monastic cells twice a day—once for prayers and once to eat. At no time do they exchange even a word with another human being.

One is compelled to admire the resolve and determination of such individuals, the singular, intense focus which they exhibit. But if we hear what Jesus is saying, we must question whether or not—in their great desire to be attuned to God—they have not missed something equally important, namely their spiritual responsibility to their fellow human beings.

Overemphasis on the Horizontal. On the other hand, if my life is focused only on life in the here and now, even if I am involved with people, doing for people, but loving the “Lord’s work” more than the Lord of the work, neglecting to give attention to deepening my personal relationship with God, I run the risk of slipping into a kind of social religion. It is a religion that operates from a shallow pool of platitudes. It ebbs and flows with the waves of popular concern. But it lacks the depths of understanding and experience with God that undergirds warm loving relationships and compassionate caring ministry over the long haul. This too is an unbalanced experience.

The story of Frank (a pseudonym) comes to mind. Frank was a thin little man who kept dried seaweed in his pockets instead of jelly beans. He had a widespread reputation for his piety and sacrifice. When the congregation refinished the church basement, he gave a lot of money and worked scores of dawn-to-dusk Sundays until it was finished. He personally paid for and serviced the literature rack in the bus station. And when an evangelist set up his tent during off-season on the carnival grounds, he passed out more handbills than anyone. He was always present at prayer meeting and prayed most earnestly, and he could always say all his memory verses. Surely, if a man could love God, he did.

One has to wonder, though, about some other things. Frank didn’t seem to have much of a relationship with his wife and children. He didn’t bring the family into public view much. The wife was always busy taking care of the house and rearing the kids, and their house needed a lot of repair. Fellow church members can’t remember ever seeing her in a new dress. A friend in the church gave her a flat of pansies once in the Spring. She cried.

Avoiding the Ditches. Clearly, there is the ditch on either side. In the New Testament, Paul and Peter call Gentiles from their preoccupation with life here, with the human side of the equation, to a relationship with God that will infuse relationships in the here and now with new meaning. For example, the book of Romans dedicates 11 chapters to clearly presenting the good news of the gospel. Then and only then, beginning in chapter 12, does the apostle turn to describe the transformation that belief in Jesus and a commitment to the principles of His kingdom will work in the human realm. At the same time, Matthew records his windows on the ministry of Christ for a generation whose preoccupation with the *vertical* had led to legalistic hypocrisy in the human realm. In his gospel, the events and words of Christ impress this people with the importance of the human side of the equation (cf. Matt. 5:23, 24; 25:35-45). Perhaps the Jewish audience for whom Matthew was writing was more like many religious people today.

We need the vertical relationship, but we also need the horizontal. Hearts are starving for warmth and kindness. Often the hearts that are starving the most are those closest to us. They are starving while we are pursuing our relationship with the Lord. Hence there is much in the New Testament which details how true religion will live life in human clothes.

New Testament Emphasis on Human Relationships

Jesus. Jesus spoke in both general and specific terms about His intent for human relationships under the principles of His new kingdom. And a lofty intent it is!

- John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”
- John 15:12 “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

This is the radical *agape* love of God toward which we are called to stretch in our relationships. It is a love that is willing to give of oneself, considering not only one’s own interests, but also the interests of others.

Apostles. Like Jesus, the apostles recognized the significance of human relationships.

- 1 John 4:21 “And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”
- Gal. 5:14 A most amazing verse, “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

There is something very important here. God is profoundly interested in how we do relationships with each other.

Why Love for Fellow Human Beings Is Important

Human beings need to know human love in order to comprehend God’s love (1 John 4:11, 12). “No one has seen God” the Scripture affirms, but if we love one another, God’s love is revealed in us. It follows, as the Bible teaches, that *agape* love is our greatest witness (John 13:35).

Dan (a pseudonym) once told a pastor his story. First, you should know that Dan was the head elder in his congregation. He was also the treasurer. And the personal ministries leader, and the Sabbath School teacher, and the caretaker of the property When the pastor and his family arrived, Dan's wife informed the new pastor's wife that it would be all right having them around for awhile, but that her husband really was the shepherd of that congregation. He had a saying of his own that conveyed the same sentiment: "Pastors come and pastors go, but I stay on forever!"

It wasn't long into his pastorate in that place that the pastor began to receive reports from the members of the hardness of this man's preaching and teaching in their midst. "It's like he has the church in the palm of his hand and he's squeezing out all of it's life juices," one woman confided. "He says we aren't faithful with our tithes and offerings. We don't study our Bibles enough. We don't eat the right things or wear the right clothes. We never do anything right!"

Finally the pastor knew he had to confront the brother. With trepidation the young pastor made an appointment with the elder. Expecting a mighty defense to his confrontation, the young pastor was totally taken by surprise by the great sobs that came from deep within the old man as he listened to the concerns of the pastor and the members of the church about his ministry in their midst.

Then, without explanation, he wiped away his tears and began to tell a story of a little boy. A little boy who wanted so very much to please his father, but who never seemed to be able to do anything right. At first the pastor was puzzled, then the connection broke over him. The old man was the little boy. And now, in his dealings with the church, his own experience had come full circle. He was the hard father, and the congregation were his children. "I know they say God is a loving Father," he concluded. "I preach about it, but I don't know what it means."

A person's experience with human love either sets them up to understand and respond to Scripture's familial metaphors of God as loving parent and marriage partner, or their human experience makes it virtually impossible, but for a miracle of grace, for them to understand and accept God as Love.

The love of Christians for people. The love of Christian parents for their children. The love of Christian spouses for each other. The love of Christians extended freely into a needy world. Such agape love is our most powerful testimony and evangelistic witness. We have priceless opportunities in our human relationships. Hear Paul's plea for the radical transformation of the gospel to be worked in our lives that our witness might heard:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. Be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

By our love for each other, our love for God is manifested (Matt 25:40). This is a second reason why God elevates human relationships to a spiritual plane. Our love for others is a tangible expression of our faith. Loving others is not our salvation, for that salvation was prepared for us in Christ before the foundations of the world were laid, long before we ever did anything good. But our love for each other *is the evidence* that we have laid hold of the salvation God has worked out for us in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:14 makes this very point: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love one another” (NRSV). Our love for others is the surest evidence that we have understood and responded to the gospel. The quality of our human relationships is the best litmus test for the quality of our relationship with God. If you would apply Scripture’s measure to the state of your spirituality, you must look honestly at the quality of your human relationships. The nature of your relationship with God is revealed in the way you treat your marriage partner, your children, your parents, your fellow human beings (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

This truth is affirmed in the Seventh-day Adventist world church statement on family violence:

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or tear one another down. There is no room among Christ’s followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, His disciples are called to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept males and females as equals, and to acknowledge that every person has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way violates their personhood and devalues human beings created and redeemed by God.

The story is told of a young theology student who sought to deepen his spirituality through much time in prayer and Bible study with fellow theologians. Long days he was in class and at work, and late into the night he was absent from the home praying and studying with fellow students. One day when he came home for supper, his young son begged him to stay home for the evening. Seeing the father roughly brush his son aside, his wife attempted to intervene. “He only wants to be with you,” she said. “He loves you so much.” Her intervention was met with an angry rebuff indicative of how little we understand the connectedness between our relationship with God and our relationship with our families. His abrupt reply unquestionably revealed the shallowness of his spirituality: “That’s the trouble with you woman,” he said with disgust, “you don’t understand the things of God.” It is also true that this young theologian did not understand that the way he lived his life gave his young son a distorted view of God.

This love for one another, of which the Bible writers speak, is not a love we generate in ourselves. Sin has destroyed our capacity to love one another. In the place of loving, we seek to control, to have power over one another. Our “love” for each other is conditional—“I will love you if . . .” But God wants to plant His *agape* love in our hearts. 1 John 4:12 says, “If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.”

Some time ago a remarkable story by Henri Nouwen appeared in the magazine, *Signs of the Times* (May 1989) under the title “Adam’s Peace”:

I live in a house with six handicapped people and four assistants. We live together as a family. We eat together, play together, pray together, and go out together. We all have our own preferences, and we all have our problems getting along with someone in the house, whether handicapped or not. We laugh a lot. We cry a lot too. Sometimes both at the same time.

Adam is the weakest person in our family. He is a 25-year-old man who cannot speak, cannot dress or undress himself, cannot walk alone, cannot eat without much help. He does not cry or laugh. Only occasionally does he make eye contact. His back is distorted. His arm and leg movements are twisted. He suffers from severe epilepsy and, despite heavy medication, sees few days without grand-mal seizures. Sometimes, as he grows suddenly rigid, he utters a howling groan. On a few occasions I’ve seen one big tear roll down his cheek.

It takes me about an hour and a half to wake Adam up, give him his medication, carry him into his bath, wash him, shave him, clean his teeth, dress him, walk him to the kitchen, give him his breakfast, put him in his wheelchair and bring him to the place where he spends most of the day with the therapeutic exercises.

After a month of working this way with Adam, something happened to me. This deeply handicapped young man, who is considered by many outsiders a vegetable, a distortion of humanity, a useless animal-like creature who shouldn’t have been born, started to become my dearest companion.

As my fears gradually lessened, a love emerged in me so full of tender affection that most of my other tasks seemed boring and superficial compared with the hours spent with Adam. Out of his broken body and broken mind emerged a most beautiful human being offering me a greater gift that I would ever offer him: Somehow Adam revealed to me who he is, and who I am, and how we can love each other.

Adam in his total vulnerability calls us together as a family. Adam. The most broken of us all, is without any doubt the strongest bond among us. Because of Adam there is always someone home. Because of Adam there is a quiet rhythm in the house. Because of Adam there are words of affection, gentleness, and tenderness. Because of Adam there is always space for mutual forgiveness and healing. Adam, the weakest among us, is our true peacemaker. How mysterious are God’s ways!”

(First published as “The Peace That Is Not of This World”, Weavings, March/April 1988. Published as “Adam’s Peace”, Signs of the Times, May 1989. Copied with permission of the Estate of Henri J. M. Nouwen.)

Conclusion

It's hard to know whether the wise old Rabbi who talked about the darkness and the dawn ever read the New Testament. Perhaps he did. In the first letter of John we find these words: "I am writing you a new command. . . . Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light" (2:8-10).

References

Nouwen, H. (1989, May). Adam's peace. *Signs of the Times*.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day

Suggested Children's Story

Please Note

The following suggested children's story is of a very delicate nature, one not ordinarily talked about, especially in church. But it is a very important message. We would suggest that you think carefully about who should tell this story; it should be someone who is highly respected by parents and children alike—perhaps even the pastor. It should be someone who can speak in such a kind and simple way that the children will clearly understand the intended message.

In the original, as written by Kerene Whelan, the private body parts are named: “penis, vagina, breast, and bottom.” If you live in an area where this would be acceptable, you may wish to use these correct terms. If using these terms would cause more problems than it would solve, please follow the suggested change as given. May God bless you as you reach out in love to the children of your congregation.

Author's Biography

Kerene Whelan lives in Melbourne, Australia with her husband and 2 children. She holds a Diploma of Counseling in Abuse and Abusive Behaviors and a Diploma of Science (Nursing). She has worked for many years with children in her professional capacity and as a volunteer. Kerene has a firm conviction that only with the education of both adults and children can the rate of child abuse be reduced, especially within the Church setting. Kerene is establishing an educational business called Making Our Kids Safe (MOKS) It is dedicated to educating children and adults about abuse, and what the individual can do to prevent abuse. Watch out for further stories for kids in the future by Kerene. Anyone interested in helping with seeding grants to help establish the business and make available further educational material, please contact MOKS Business Manager:

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Suggested Children's Story

Adapted from “Alex Angel”

By Kerene Whelan

GOD LOVES YOU! He is glad you are who you are. There is no one else in the whole world just like you. You are very special because you are you. God made every part of your body. Every part of your body is special and has a special job to do to help keep you safe and healthy.

Our body is covered by skin. Our skin can help us feel good touches like a nice hug. It can also let us know when we don't like something. Our hands might get sweaty, or the little hairs on the back of our neck stand up and we feel afraid. Our body is letting us know we don't feel safe.

God made our minds. We can think about how to play safe and keep our self safe. If we don't feel safe, our mind can help tell us what to do. It can help our legs move fast so we can run away. It can help our mouths to shout “NO” and to go find an adult who we trust and who will believe us, to tell them what happened. It can help us think of ways to avoid the problem in the future. If we feel like hitting someone we are angry, our mind can help us decide what we can do instead of hurting someone.

If you are asked to touch someone's private parts, the parts we keep covered with clothes, your mind can help you remember to say a firm “NO” and to go and tell a trusted adult about it. If someone calls you names or tells lies about you, your mind can tell you to remember the truth.

You are special! God made you, you. You are wonderfully made and God has a special job for you to do for Him.

God created feelings; it is O.K. to feel sad, angry, mad, or yucky when you are hurt by someone, especially if someone you know touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. Or if someone hits, bites, kicks you or, calls you names and teases you. These are not nice and you must use your mind that God made for you and tongue that God made for you, to go and tell someone who you can trust and to keep telling people until someone believes and helps you.

It is also very important that you keep telling someone who you trust when people are nasty to you by what they say or do to you. You can practice with your friends what to do if you feel unsafe, so that if you ever feel unsafe, you will know what to do straight away.

God can help your mind to think about who to talk to when you don't feel safe. Some people are teachers, police people, counselors, social workers, nurses, and doctors. Can you think of anyone else?

Sometimes when you are playing with family and friends, they may accidentally touch you on your private parts., or they may hit or kick you hard when trying to get a ball. It may hurt or make you feel uncomfortable but it may not harm you. However, if someone keeps doing it to you and you feel unsafe, please tell someone you trust about how you are feeling and what is happening. It is never O.K. for anyone, even family or friends, to talk nasty to you, to hit , kick, bite, or pull your hair. It is never O.K. for them to keep touching your private body areas. This is treating you with disrespect. It is never O.K. for you to treat people in this way either.

You are special. God does not want people to treat you with disrespect or for you to treat others with disrespect. Sometimes someone may be treating you disrespectfully and there are friends or family in the same room as you who don't notice you are being treated like this. You need to tell them what is happening so they can help you to be safe again.

God loves you. He wants you to learn how to keep yourself safe and how you can help others be safe also. Can you pass this message on to all the other children that you know, so one day, all the children in the world just like you will know about God, how He loves them and how He wants them to be safe?

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day

Suggested Adventist Youth Society Program

Theme:

The following monologues are designed to break the silence about abuse, to foster awareness, insight, and discussion. You may want to present this information in drama form or simply read it as a scenario. However you choose to present this information, the purpose is to engage your youth in a meaningful discussion about abuse. We pray that this program will be a stepping stool to help break the silence about abuse in our homes and in our churches.

Subject Matter:

Matria and K.T. are students at Trivon High. Matria, an only child, is a shy, quiet young woman full of insecurities. Her parents recently divorced after her father had an extramarital affair with her mother's best friend. The experience has left Matria bitter, resentful and distrustful of men. She has a hard time taking responsibility for her actions and blames others for her faults.

Tall and muscular, K.T. looks more like a football player than the captain of the basketball team. He recently became the man of the house following his father's death to cancer. The oldest of three children, he dutifully helps his hard-working mother take care of his two younger siblings. His good heart, maturity, and loyalty to those he cares about allow him to take his responsibilities seriously.

Matria and K.T. become boyfriend and girlfriend. It does not take long before Matria exhibits abusive behaviors towards K.T. Embarrassed and confused, K.T. struggles with the reality of being abused by his girlfriend despite his strength of character and his size.

Disclaimer:

We realize that that this scenario may seem improbable to some of you. However, the issue of men being abused by their girlfriends or wives is a reality that we must face. This in no way discounts the fact that millions of women and children around the world are being abused, even killed, yearly. Although this particular subject matter is presented, we encourage you to also incorporate abused women and children in your discussion. Try to have available statistics for your country or state.

Note:

If your church does not have an AYS, the youth leaders may want to use this material in a Sabbath School program or in some other venue.

Written by Fabiola Jacqueline Vatel, GC Women's Ministries

Martria's Story

By Fabiola Jacqueline Vatel

I guess you could say that I never really liked myself. It's not my fault, though. You see, my parents never taught me *how*. Dad was a workaholic and Mom, well, she was too busy spending Dad's money on herself. I guess that's why he worked so hard. I think Dad probably got fed up with her being so self-centered. Maybe that's why he ran off with Mom's best friend. Dad always said Gwenda paid more attention to him than Mom did. The trouble was, neither Mom *nor* Dad ever paid much attention to me.

Imagine how excited I was when K.T. asked me out! I figured I must've been pretty decent if the captain of the basketball team asked *me* to be his girlfriend! Sometimes, though, I can't help but wonder what he sees in me. I mean I'm not the *prettiest* girl at Trivon High. He tells me that I'm beautiful and that he loves my personality, but what if he's lying? What if he's just saying these things to satisfy me while he's checking out some other girls?

About a month ago, I made K.T. promise me that he wouldn't talk to or even *look* at any other girls. I told him that I wouldn't go to any of his tournament games until he promised. By the second game he was on his knees! Not only did he promise, he even said that he *loved* me! I knew for sure that K.T. was mine.

I was on my way to history class a couple of days later when I spotted K.T. from a distance talking to someone by his locker. I peeked a little more closely through the crowd. Guess what? He was *flirting* with Penelope, one of those perky cheerleaders! At that point I don't know what came over me. I slammed my books on the ground and stormed towards K.T. He finally noticed me as I got closer and you know what he did? He smiled at me as if he was actually happy to see me!

The next thing I remember, I was kicking him in the groin, punching his back, and biting at his arm with all my might. Penelope disappeared through the crowd of spectators that had formed to witness the scene. Mr. Thomas, a guidance counselor, appeared out of nowhere it seemed, and eventually tore me away from K.T.

"How could you *do* this to me?" I yelled back at K.T. as Mr. Thomas dragged me, still kicking, to the principal's office. "You promised! You *promised!*" K.T. simply stood there in

the middle of the hall, staring at me in shock, massaging his arm, his cheeks flushed with embarrassment.

That got me suspended for three days. K.T. later explained that Penelope and he were just talking about the team's tournament championship victory. I apologized to him. He forgave me. I felt really bad. It's not my fault though! I mean, K.T. just makes me so *mad* sometimes. He knows just the right buttons to push to set me off.

Just like the other day. I phoned him *five* times in a row and he never returned my phone calls! I sat by the phone waiting for *three* hours. When he finally called, boy did I let him have it! I cursed him out, and you know what? Again, I felt really bad afterwards.

I feel so lonely right now. Maybe I should call K.T. and apologize. I really don't deserve him. I hope he doesn't dump me. I told him that I rather *die* than to live without him in my life. I wish I wouldn't get so angry with him. I hate myself for being this way. I just can't help it.

K.T.'s Story

By Fabiola Jacqueline Vatel

Mom says I'm the man of the house now. Ever since Dad died things have been real hard for the four of us. Mom's got two jobs so she counts on me to wake up Nate and Less every weekday morning, get them ready for school, and walk them there.

After school, I usually take Nate and Less home, fix dinner, get them started on their homework, and head over to my cleaning job at Rollo's, the corner store down the street. Lately, I've had to take them to basketball practice with me after school. They cheer me on the whole time! Last night, I was on my way to bed when Mom came home. We hugged; then she told me how proud she was of me! Suddenly life didn't seem as hard.

Life became *even* better when Matria came into the picture! She was a sweet, caring girl. That's what attracted me to her. You know what? I think her smile won me over! There's something strange about her though. She gets in these weird moods. I guess it's depression. I try to comfort her but no matter what I say she doesn't seem to believe me. No matter what I do to make her feel better, it always seems as if I'm doing the wrong thing. It makes me feel so useless.

Matria really threw me off about a month ago. She called me up on the phone in *tears*, worried that I was cheating on her. Can you believe it? I had finally found a girl that I actually cared about and she didn't even *trust* me! Next, she *ordered* me to prove that I really cared about her by promising never to talk to or even *look* at any other girl! I said "*No way!*" Then she threatened that she wouldn't come to any of my tournament games. I figured she was bluffing.

Matria *knew* how important to me these three games were. I was the captain and star player on the team. Depending on how well I played, I could finally get my hands on a college scholarship! That way, Mom wouldn't have to take out any loans and she wouldn't have to worry about us paying for my education.

Well, Matria wasn't bluffing. We played two games and she never showed up. If Mom hadn't gotten off early from work just to see me play, I don't know how I would've made it. I couldn't take it anymore. I rushed to Matria's house that night and begged her to come to my last game. I told her I loved her and that she was the only girl I had eyes for. That was a *serious* mistake.

A couple days later, I was on my way to my locker when I bumped into Penelope, one of our cheerleaders. She was just as excited about our championship victory as I was! As we were talking, I noticed Matria coming towards us. I was pretty happy to see her since we hadn't seen each other all day. The closer she got to me, the more I changed my mind.

The next thing I knew she was on me, beating me up! I was so shocked, I didn't know *what* to do! My dad always taught me never to hit a woman. So I just stood there, trying to shield myself from her attacks. Someone must have alerted Mr. Thomas, a guidance counselor, he's the one that put a stop to it. I don't know which was worse, the pain in my groin from Matria kicking me, or the embarrassment. Here I was, a star basketball player, tall and muscular, and I'd just been beat up by my thin, petite girlfriend in front of half the school.

Well, that got her suspended for three days. I guess that gave her a lot of time to think. She phoned me at home and tearfully apologized. Guess what? I forgave her.

I know it sounds stupid, but I really love this girl! I know she's got problems, but I think I can handle them. When she's not angry, Matria is such a *sweet* person. Honest, she is!

Just the other day, she got mad at me for not returning her phone calls. I had to work late that day! When I finally got a chance to call her back...she really gave me an earful. She wouldn't listen.

I feel sorry for Matria. I mean, obviously she's not happy about life. I just don't understand why she gets so angry with me. I don't want to leave her because I'm afraid she might hurt herself. I feel like she's my responsibility, you know?

Discussion

1. How would you define abuse?
2. What are the types of abuse?
3. Discuss myths about abuse.
4. Compare and contrast Matria and K.T.'s upbringing.
5. How would you describe Matria's personality?
6. How would you describe K.T.'s personality?
7. Is Matria's anger toward K.T. justified?
8. Does Matria take responsibility for her actions? Explain.
9. How does K.T. react to Matria's actions?
10. K.T. feels that Matria is his responsibility. Why do you think this is so?
11. Put yourself in K.T.'s shoes. What would you do if you were in his situation?
12. If Matria and K.T. were part of your church's youth group and you were made aware of this situation, how would you handle it?
13. What do the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy have to say about the ill-treatment of others? List texts and references.
14. Discuss the types of abuse that were exhibited in this scenario.
15. How did this scenario help you to better understand the reality of abuse?

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day Resource Pages

Books:

Alsdurf, J., and Alsdurf, P. (1989). *Battered into Submission*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 168 pp.

Collinson, D. (2001). *Encounters With Darkness*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing. 125 pp.

Couden, B., ed. (1999). *Understanding Intimate Violence*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association. 160 pp.

Dunbar, M. (2002). *The Truth About Us: How To Discover The Potential God Has Given You*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource. 150 pp.

Morris, M. (1993). *Sins of the Father*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association. 224 pp.

Vanderman, G. (1992). *The Overcomers*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association. 96 pp.

White, E. (1996). *Comfort*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association. 144 pp.

White, E.. (1980). *The Adventist Home*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing. 583 pp.

Brochures and Booklets:

Abuse and Family Violence: A Global Affliction. Available through GC Family Ministries..

Family Violence: A Christian Response. Available through GC Family Ministries.

How To Believe When Hurt. Charles Scriven. Produced by Pacific Press Publishing Association.

Seventh-day Adventist Statement on Family Violence. Produced by the General Conference of SDA.

Understanding Sexual Abuse. Kit Watts, ed. Compiled by Review and Herald Publishing.

What Everyone Should Know About Family Violence. Available through GC Women's Ministries.

When Days Are Dark. Gerald Nash. Review and Herald Publishing.

Where is God When You Hurt? Richard Coffen. Produced by Pacific Press Publishing Association.

Videos:

Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse. Produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, USA. (206) 634-1903. Color. Running time 48 minutes. (Also available in Spanish)

Broken Vows: Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence. Produced by the Center For the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, USA. (206) 634-1903. Color. Running time 59 minutes. (Also available in Spanish)

Wings Like a Dove: Healing for the Abused Christian Woman. Produced by the Center For the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, USA. (206) 634-1903. Color. Running time 34 minutes.

Too Close to Home. Produced by Adventist Media Centre, South Pacific Division, 150 Fox Valley Road, Wahroonga, N.S.W. 2076, Australia, for the Trans-Tasman Union Conference of SDA. Color. 34 minutes. (Available in PAL format)

Workshops:

Peace and Healing, Making Homes Abuse-free. Prepared by Karen and Ron Flowers with Audray Johnson, and Elaine and Willie Oliver, NAD Church Resources, AdventSource 5040 Prescott Avenue Lincoln, NE 68506 1-800-328-0525, 1996. Video included. Available in PAL and NST format. (Also available in French and Spanish)

Phone Numbers:

Adventist Support Line

Australia: 1-8000-220-468

New Zealand: 0-800-442-458

Polly's Place

Michigan, USA (616) 687-9822

AdventSource

Nebraska, USA 1-800-328-0525

Domestic Violence Hotline

New York, USA 1-800-621-4673

Websites:

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence:

<http://www.cpsdv.org>

Hope For Healing: information on abuse, links and steps to healing

<http://www.hopeforhealing.com>

Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: offers information on human rights and abuse in all African countries

<http://www.derechos.org/human-rights/afr/>

Safe Horizons: offers resources on domestic violence for South America, Mexico, Europe, South Asia, Canada, and the US

<http://www.safehorizon.org>

Local Resources:

