

*Where is the Love?*

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day 2004

August 28, 2004

Resource Packet

Prepared by the General Conference  
Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day Committee  
Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries  
*Adventist Review*  
Children's Ministries  
Education Department  
Family Ministries  
Health Ministries  
Ministerial Association  
Women's Ministries  
Youth Ministries

# **Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day Resource Packet**

Sermon – The Absence of Love by Jean Parchment

Children's Page

Seminar – Jannene Howse (accompanying PowerPoint Presentation in separate attachment)

Article – Paul Petersen

Handout – 7 Myths

List of Resources –books, websites, etc.

SDA Church Statements

## **In Separate Attachments:**

PowerPoint for Seminar (seminar by Jannene Howe)

PowerPoint - (Suggested use between Sabbath services, no commentary needed)

Suggested Bookmarks – you can use design to create your own

# SERMON

## The Absence of Love

Scripture: John 15:12 My command is this; love each other as I have loved you.

Opening Hymn: 318 – Whiter than Snow

Closing Hymn: 319 – Lord, I want to be a Christian

The sound of the party was irresistible. Laughter, voices, more laughter, then the quiet voice of someone telling a story. As she pressed her face close to the door, she could smell the aroma of delicious food being served, food fit for a king. She was certain of that because her sister was the one in charge of catering.

With her heart pounding she resolved, “I am going in there! I also will be a part of this celebration, I want to honor this man!”

Quietly, she crept through the door and made her way behind the honored guest. Quickly, she opened her treasured perfume and then did the unthinkable. Reaching out, she dared to put some on His head. She then dropped to her knees while uncontrollable tears of love and joy streamed down her cheeks unto His feet. She poured the perfume on His feet and used her hair to wipe them.

But alas, all did not go as planned. It’s possible that it was her intent to quickly disappear after paying homage; yet, the fragrance of the perfume drew everyone’s attention. Of course it would; she was in a room full of only men—perfume did not belong there! Then, in the most abusive tone the spiritual leaders reacted to this demonstration of love with criticism and rebuke, the evidence of the absence of love.

This incident was of such importance to the gospel message that it is found in all of the synoptic gospels. I invite you to read all four accounts when you are able; the references are: Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14; 1-9, Luke 7:36-50, John 12:1-8.

As we notice, Jesus did not offer rebuke or scolding for what could have been interpreted as a “suggestive” act by a woman whose reputation was that of a prostitute. Instead, all He saw was a precious young woman who had nothing but love that she so much wanted to give.

It did not matter to Him that she was going against the dictates of her culture where a woman was not allowed to talk with a man in public other than her husband, or that it was improper for her to be in a room with men other than her husband and sons.

Neither did it matter to Him that it might be interpreted that the act of letting down her hair in the presence of men confirmed what was already in their minds—that she was a woman of the night. All that mattered to Jesus was that here was a person He loved and whom He came to save.

She came to a religious community, a community that was the symbol of holiness, happiness, kindness, patience, gentleness, unconditional acceptance and love. Yet, what did she encounter, abuse by the way of criticism, judging, condemning, controlling, discrimination, and scorn.

Is it possible that these individuals, if they were confronted with the fact that they were abusive would likely excuse their behavior by saying “Oh no, we were only protecting our traditions, our guest, our reputation, or our

church.”

Quite often an abusive person will justify their actions or reactions saying, “I am doing or saying this because I know what is best for you.” Friends, as long as someone is being hurt there is no justification for abuse regardless of culture, age or ethnicity and that is why Jesus said, in defense of the woman, “Leave her alone.”

Let’s take a closer look at the people who were at this party. They were the religious leaders, the disciples, and the fathers who were the heads of households. These individuals represented the home, the community, and the church.

I invite you to look around at our church this morning. Each of us represent the home, the community, and ultimately we make up the church. We are the church.

And so we need to ask ourselves the big question. “Is there also an absence of love in my family? Is there an absence of love in my community? Is there an absence of love in my church? Do we as a church condone and foster an absence of love?”

What kind of picture do we get when there is an absence of love?

Brother and Sister Grey were the backbone of the church. He was an elder and she was also very active in church. Their children modeled perfect behavior, sitting quietly through the entire church service. But every Sabbath, as soon as the evening service was over, father Grey would take some of the children behind the church and give them a whipping. Why? Because they had at some time during the Sabbath “misbehaved.” What a negative picture of God and the church these children developed!

Children receive their concept of God and love as a result of how they are treated by significant adults in their lives. These adults, who are generally their parents, represent God and love to them. Consequently, if the method used to discipline a child is with hitting, punching, slapping, pinching, verbal abuse, withholding food, or denying medical attention, it will be difficult for that child to understand love and trust.

Why are we using this precious time allotted for a sermon to address this issue of abuse?

Because this is a very important issue to God. He made us to receive and give love. Abuse in any and all forms interferes with this process of giving and receiving love. The heart of the Gospel is for each of us to recognize and realize God’s love. Abuse is not love; it is the absence of love. Abuse wounds and hurts. And so we feel commissioned to address this issue of abuse even on the Sabbath because the Bible writers addressed it in several references:

Let’s look at Psalms 11:5

“The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence His soul hates.”

This is strong language! The soul of God hates those who love violence. What does it mean to hate? Synonym for hate is abhorrence, revulsion, disgust, and extreme dislike. We can safely say God abhors or is disgusted with violence of every shape or form whether it is in the home, church, or community. Let’s look at another text that highlights domestic abuse and violence.

Malachi 2:16 “I hate divorce,” says the Lord God of Israel, “and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the Lord Almighty.

And what generally is the cause of violence? James 4:1 has the answer: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

And what are these desires? Verse 3 explains, “When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your own pleasures.”

By all appearances it seems that James is implying that violence in all forms is generated out of the motive of selfishness. Selfishness is a desire to satisfy whatever urge we may have at the expense of someone else. That person could be a helpless dependent child, a teenager, a spouse, or a senior citizen. These desires can range from sexual to the desire to control and dominate. We need to remember that both male and female can be guilty of selfishness, which causes violence and abuse.

We think of an angry person as one who tends to display fits of violence, someone with a bad temper. That is one description. But anger also shows itself in other forms.

How about a controlling, critical, unbending individual. This person may always seem to “be in control” but really, are they? Such an individual, even if he or she does not fly off in a rage is also displaying selfishness.

Ok! God addressed abuse and domestic violence in the Bible. Is that not enough?

We wish it were, and that we could safely say that we are free from the effects of abuse. We must remember that we, the church, are also a part of the community. What happens in the community is reflected in the church. Ardis Stenbakken, Women’s Ministries Director for the General Conference, reported the following statistics:

World-wide: One out of every three women has been abused in some form.

In England and Wales: one out of every four murder victims are wives killed by husbands.

In Latin America and the Caribbean: six out of ten women have suffered physical or psychological abuse by their intimate partner.

In Papua New Guinea: 67% of wives report they suffer marital violence.

In Egypt, Jamaica, and Greece: one out of every five divorces is granted on grounds of spousal cruelty.

In Canada: domestic violence costs the country \$1.6 billion per year.

In the United States, 200 women are raped or battered per hour.

Given these frightening statistics, would we even wonder if this is not an issue to concern us? Yes friends, it is very sad to realize that abuse of all forms is also in our homes and our churches.

One of the most tender and touching scenes of Jesus’ ministry is recorded in Matthew 18: 5-6, 10. The disciples were in a political battle, vying for status. It must have been a surprise to these aspiring disciples when Jesus called a helpless little child, and using the child as an icon of importance in God’s Kingdom declared,

“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.”

Jesus could have stopped at this but He did not. He saw that it was of great importance to add,

“But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me 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.”

And in verse 10 He emphasizes,

“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”

He went on to tell the story of a man who had one hundred sheep and one wandered away and got lost. He then asks in verse 12 “

“Will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?”

Then He concluded in verse 14,

“In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

What a picture! God is not willing for any of our children to be lost.

Adults, let’s pause a moment to look at the children who are here with us. Would you agree that the right of every child here is to live in a safe, happy, and healthy environment? An environment where they would learn to love and trust? An environment where they would develop socially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?

Do we all agree that these are the God given rights of every child?

If you were given the responsibility of choosing to deny one of these little ones the right to health and happiness, which child would you choose? I know I could not make that choice, could you? Yet, Jesus is saying, if anyone here is responsible to cause one of these children to be in a situation where they will be forced to sin, that person is in big trouble with God.

How can we cause a child to sin? There are several ways where we as adults are directly responsible for the choices a child makes. Setting a bad example is one form of causing a child to sin. This is because we cannot teach values. Children catch our values by watching how we live, how we react and act. They are able to discern when our words do not match up to our actions. In other words, when we are not genuine and honest.

Emotional, sexual, physical, and spiritual abuse also causes a child to sin because abuse defaces the image of God. A person who has suffered abuse grows up with a confused image of God and of self. They grow up feeling dirty, used, unattractive, and overall having a very low feeling of self worth. Generally, as adults they have difficulty realizing and recognizing what wholesome, real love is about and often they feel that they don’t deserve love.

A book on abuse tell us:

When children are neglected or their needs go unmet, or when they are damaged early in life, often they cease to develop emotionally at the same pace as they do physically. While the body and its functions mature, the emotions cease their progress. A physical adult can easily be an emotional child.<sup>1</sup>

Abuse is certainly the devil’s tools to cripple and dwarf the emotional growth and development of children.

When children suffer abuse what are they learning? They are learning that the only way to resolve problems or conflicts is with abusive behavior. In the case of sexual abuse, the children internalize that the only way they can show love is through sexual contacts.

Therefore, abuse is cyclical and carries through from one generation to another. Children witnessing violence and abuse learn to deal with conflict violently—it is modeled as an acceptable way to live. Later in life they will generally become either a victim or an abuser. This creates a perpetuating cycle of abuse to the next generation.

Furthermore, the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services reports that children brought up in violent homes are 74% more likely to commit criminal assaults. And the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Division on Women noted that 81% of men who physically abuse had fathers who abused their mothers.

Abuse comes in many ways. One is verbal abuse, where a person is constantly put down and criticized, scolded, and embarrassed in public and before their friends. They are called names and made fun of constantly. They are called derogative terms such as you are ugly, you are dumb, stupid, fat, etc. This is also a very serious form of abuse.

There are situations where a child is separated from his or her parents for an extended period, or when a child is moved around from one caregiver to another; that child is deprived of the ability to bond to a significant person in his or her life. Children are not able to understand neglect, violence, hurt or pain.

As we focus on this issue, it is important to take the time to ask ourselves some very hard questions, “Am I an angry person? Do I use anger as a shield to cover my deep feelings of unmet emotional needs? Are there individuals in the home, at work or church who are scared of me?”

Do I have to have things happen my way; do I tend to be in control no matter what? Do I get upset when others do not agree with me? Has anyone ever told me that I am an angry or selfish or controlling person? It is very difficult for us to see ourselves, to evaluate our actions and motives. Many times we are guilty of doing wrong and we are not aware of it. This is why we may want to follow David’s example and make Psalm 139:23-24 a daily prayer:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting.

If this is my prayer, God will answer and show me if and when I am guilty of some form of abuse. If we are honest with ourselves we will admit that at some time of our lives, we have or presently are guilty of inflicting hurt and pain on a loved one, that there is an absence of love in our life.

If we are truly serious about how we relate to God and others relative to this abuse issue, let me suggest that you take some very important steps.

The first step is to acknowledge to yourself and God that you have been abusive or controlling in any form. Abuse is a sin against God. Then ask for His forgiveness.

The next step is to go to your spouse or whomever has been abused and ask for his or her forgiveness. Set a

time to have a heart to heart talk when the children are not present. Take time to discuss how you feel about your relationship. Then talk with the children. It is always the parents or adults responsibility to create an atmosphere where communication can take place, where the children can freely and safely tell parents how they feel. It is the parent's responsibility to do everything in their power to encourage this type of open communication with their children. It may be necessary to have someone outside help in trying to establish this avenue of communication.

It may be that the abuse issues are so deep and dark that professional help is necessary. The issue of sexual abuse and domestic violence is an issue that needs the proper help from a qualified individual. If that is the case, it is a God given responsibility to seek help from a medical doctor or a qualified professional counselor.

It is also the responsibility of leaders in the church to create an atmosphere where open communication can be encouraged between leadership and all age groups. This is the key to healthy growth and development of every home and every congregation. An atmosphere where everyone feels as if they are heard and understood, not just patronized and tolerated.

Abuse is not limited to only adults to children. Many young people are abusive to each other even when they are in a dating relationship. If you find that your boyfriend or girlfriend, or your fiancé displays abusive traits, if you are always put down, hit, punched, threatened, or feel controlled, these are warning signs that the relationship is not healthy. It is very important that you seek help and council before getting to the stage of marriage.

We must always remember that God hates violence but He loves the violent or abusive person and His reason for sending Jesus to die is to save that person from their violent, controlling, angry, depraved behavior.

There is hope. With a change of heart comes a change of attitude and even if the process of change includes professional help, God wants to use these methods to change us because God's soul hates violence. He is a God of love. The mission and gospel of Jesus is to help us to understand that God loves us and wants to save us regardless of all the sins that we have committed. His love for us drove Him to die to save us that we, in turn, would show others through our actions and reactions what His love looks like and feels like. Therefore His command to us is that we must love each other as He has loved us.

The next step in healing is searching for help. Read books on the subject. You can get books from your Christian or local bookstore. Or if possible, find a Christian counselor who will help you through the problem.

For more in-depth information regarding the different forms of abuse, you will be given a handout at the end of this service. Friends, whatever it takes, God has given us the responsibility to get help.

If you know of abuse that is happening in the home of another member or friend, it is our responsibility to do all we can to intervene. Abuse is the church's responsibility. We are just as guilty as the abuser if we turn a blind eye and refuse to acknowledge that this is happening. It is a sin to do so. God is pleading with each of us to do our part in addressing this awful problem.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Proverbs 31:8-9

It is a sacred responsibility to address this issue of abuse and violence in the home and in the church. Today, I am inviting you to commit with me to make this a matter of heart searching and prayer.

Pray for God to search each heart to discover if we have or are presently an abuser, whether it is sexual, physical, emotional, or spiritual. And if we are, to be honest enough to seek God's forgiveness and to get help. Repentance and reformation begins with each of us; it must begin with me.

In Malachi 4:5-6 God expresses His desire that the hearts of the fathers should be turned to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.

Can we commit that today be the beginning of the turning of hearts in the home, between fathers and mothers, between children and parents, between members of our extended family, between members of our congregation? If this your desire, let us stand for a prayer of commitment.

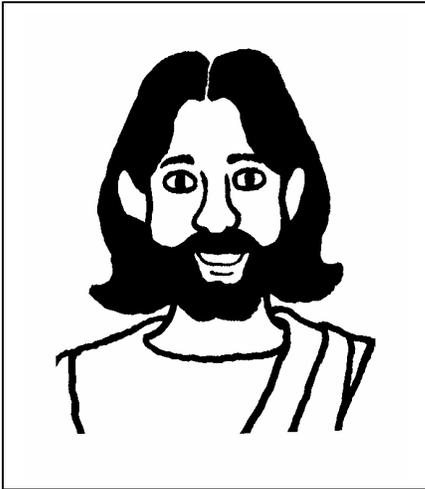
Suggested prayer:

Dear God, at this moment we praise you for the love gift in the Person of Jesus who gave His all to show us real love. Thank You for this gift. Because of His gift we ask for Your forgiveness for the many times we have defaced this love by being abusive to those who were looking to us for love and kindness. Search each of our hearts, and help us to discern our motives for each action. We seek your leading in our lives. Please teach us to love each other as You have loved us. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

<sup>1</sup>Belonging. Nancy and Ron Rockey, Kay Kuzma. Pacific Press, (1999), p. 76

# Abuse Awareness Day

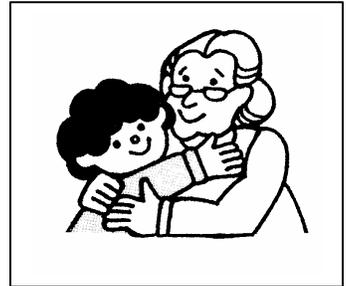
## Children's Page



**Jesus loves children.** You are very special to Him, and He wants you to feel welcome at Church and be a part of His Kingdom.

- Read Mark 10, verse 14 and complete the following.  
 “Let the \_\_\_\_\_ children come to me and \_\_\_ not hinder them, for the \_\_\_\_\_ of heaven belongs to such as these.”

When parents brought their children to Jesus, He took them in His arms and blessed them. Hugs are meant to make us feel loved, warm and cozy.  
 If someone hugs you and it makes you feel uncomfortable and scared, then you are allowed to say **“PLEASE STOP - I don't like it!”**



**It is wrong to hurt others.**  
**What are some things we should not do?**



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



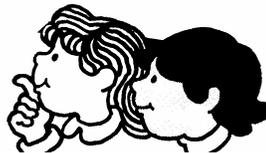
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*Don't be afraid to share your secrets. If anyone hurts you, tell someone who can help you.*

**Memorize Matthew 7:12, and recite it to your Pastor or Children's Ministries Coordinator.**

### What Would Jesus Do?

Draw a picture of children being kind to each other.

**Unscramble** Jeremiah 29:11  
 “plans harm you I to have prosper not you to

*Give your completed page to your Pastor or Children's Coordinator.*

## SEMINAR -

### 1. Preventing Abuse and Violence - A Top Priority

#### A. *God's Top Priority*

##### **1. What does God think about abuse and domestic violence?**

- a. God says His soul hates the one who loves violence. (Ps 11:5)
- b. Christ did no violence. (Is 53:9) He spoke the truth in love.
- c. Hundreds of Bible passages talk about violence, abuse, rape, incest, lying in wait, stalking, threats, twisting others words, intimidation, oppression and affliction.
- d. God's word absolutely condemns violence and abuse as sin and wickedness. We were created to love.

##### **2. God has acted so there may be no mistake about what He thinks.**

- a. When the earth became "filled with violence" and everyone's possible thoughts were only evil on a continual basis, God was sorry He had made man, "it grieved him at his heart." They chose not to believe His offer of salvation and all but eight drowned.
- b. The sexual violence of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah ("their sin is very grievous,") brought about their destruction.
- c. The Egyptian's brutal slavery of God's people and refusal to recognize the inalienable rights that God has given, ultimately led to the plagues and their drowning in the Red Sea.
- d. When the tribe of Benjamin harbored abusive rapists who brutally gang raped a man's wife to death, God told Israel to destroy the tribe of Benjamin. Israel swore not to allow their daughters to marry the 600 men that were alive.

#### B. The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Top Priority

- 1. At the 1995 General Conference Session in Utrecht, Netherlands church, World President Elder Robert Folkenberg isolated abuse and family violence as one of six major topics of concern confronting the church.
- 2. In 2001, the General Conference voted that the fourth Sabbath of each August would be dedicated to an emphasis on preventing abuse.
- 3. Eight Departments of the Seventh-day Adventist church have decided to make this issue a key priority. They are Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, Adventist Review, Children Ministries, Education Department, Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Ministerial Association, Personal Ministries Women's Ministries, and Youth Ministries.
- 4. Why is it a Top Priority?
  - a. God's word condemns violence in personal relationships. (Gen 6:11,13; Ps 11:5; Isa 58:4,5; Rom 13:10; Gal 5:19-21)
  - b. It is the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to affirm and build others up rather than to abuse or demean them. (Rom 12:10; 14:19; Eph 4:26; 5:28,29; Col 3: 8-14; 1 Thes 5:11)
  - c. There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and abuse of power. (Matt 20:25-28; Eph 6:4) Violence in the marriage and family is abhorrent. (From the 2000 Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual)
  - d. The gospel is God's rehabilitation program for sinners/abusers and the Church is to be a refuge for victims.

5. Abuse is Prevalent Within our Church —The presence of abuse in our church family is well documented by statistics of the Department of Family Ministries. There are many people in our churches who are hurting from abuse. There are many who have left.

**Abuse and Family violence statistics among Seventh-day Adventists:**

**Females** 8 - 18% reported being sexually abused  
15 - 43% reported being physically abused  
27- 69% reported being emotionally abused

**Males** 4 - 12% of males reported sexual abuse  
6 - 37% reported emotional abuse  
16 - 55% reported physical abuse

(Reported across seven world divisions—8000 people completed an Adventist Family survey, 1994, GC Family Ministries office.)

C. Abuse: World's Biggest Human Rights Issue

1. The staggering scale of murder, assault, rape, and abuse from domestic violence has led researchers to call the horror of domestic violence "*bigger than an atrocity.*"
2. Violent acts are most often committed behind closed doors and go unreported, making violence "*one of the leading public health issues of our time.*" (World Health Organization Report)
3. Ninety-two percent of American women rank domestic and sexual violence as one of their top priorities.
4. Kofi Annan, President of the United Nations, has recently said, "*Abuse against women is the most widespread of all abuses in the world.*" One in three females around the world will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime. (UN on the Status of Women, 2/28/00)
5. "*Violence against women is the most universal and unpunished crime of all,*" states *Not a Minute Longer.* (UNIFEM)
6. "*Violence against women in the home remains the most pervasive form of human rights abuse.*" (UNDFW: Women's Rights Are Human Rights, N.Y. 1992.) It is estimated that one in every three homes is affected by abuse.
7. *Women are 5-8 times more likely to be the victim of the abuse of an intimate partner than men.* (Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends or Girlfriends, US Department of Justice, March 1998)

**2. All About Abuse and Domestic Violence**

- A. What is Abuse or Domestic Violence?** Abuse or domestic violence occurs when one person uses violent or intimidating behavior to control or dominate the other person, resulting in physical, sexual and or psychological damage, forced social isolation or economic deprivation, or behavior that leaves the victim living in fear. Abuse is more than just an argument or disagreement. It includes fear, control, domination, victimization and harm. Someone is being

hurt.

**1. Physical abuse or violence**—Kills or harms another person's body.

a. Punching, hitting, slapping, shoving, throwing objects, pulling hair, biting, twisting limbs, choking, kicking, strangulation, the infliction of fractures or burns, the use of chemicals etc.

b. Use of weapons like guns or knives regularly leads to murder.

c. Depriving a person of basic needs—food, money, contact with others, denial of nutrition, denial of sleep, denial of medical care, forced restraint or forced isolation.

d. The practice of selective sex abortions, killing of female newborn babies—60 million females missing (UN), bride burning, honor killings [explain bride burning and honor killings?]- 1000s every year (UNFPA), female genital mutilation —90 million African women & girls (Heise 1994), sex slavery— 4 million slaves, mostly women & girls. (UNICEF)

**2. Emotional abuse**—Hurts or disables a person's psyche.

a. Words and behaviors that destroy another person's belief in themselves, humiliates them and reduces their self-esteem, destroying their identity. Designed to make victim feel helpless.

b. Insults about appearances, ability to cope or to be able to succeed on own. Negative putdowns, stalking, and harassment.

c. Brainwashing over time. Victim may begin to believe, accept and repeat the emotional abuse to themselves. Victim may feel guilty or worthless because abuser projects guilt onto them.

d. Threats—aimed at terrorizing—to kill pets, to kill you, to kill the children, to destroy the household property, or will commit suicide.

e. Manipulation, twisting the truth, saying the victim is evil, it's their fault etc.

**3. Social Abuse**<sup>¾</sup>Hurts a person's social standing.

a. Delivering verbal abuse in front of other people—putdowns, jokes, criticisms about appearance, sexuality, and intelligence.

b. Controlling behavior, controlling access to others, interrogations, false accusations.

c. Isolating a person by denigrating their friends and family, leading them to cut themselves off, fearing that it will enrage their abuser.

**4. Sexual Abuse**—This is any sexual act to which an adult does not freely give consent or any sexual act with a child e.g. rape, sexual abuse, pedophilia, female genital mutilation

**5. Spiritual Abuse or Persecution**— The abuser will attack the victim's beliefs, their faith, or their source of strength to maintain absolute control.

**B. Abusive behaviors can affect anyone.** Women and children are most often affected, but women can abuse too. Family violence cuts across all ages and sections of socio-economic, and cultural groups.

**C. The signs and symptoms of abuse**<sup>¾</sup> These can range from depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder, sleeping, eating and sexual disorders, distrust of people in general or authority figures, loss of self esteem, feelings of helplessness and worthlessness, isolation, addictions, abusiveness—sometimes leading to murder.

**D. Breaking the Generational Cycle of Abuse**

- a. Abuse is cyclical and carries through from one generation to another.
- b. Children witnessing violence learn to deal with conflict violently—it is modeled as an acceptable way to live. Later in life they will generally become either a victim or an abuser. This creates a perpetuating cycle of abuse to the next generation.
- c. Children brought up in violent homes are 74% more likely to commit criminal assaults. (Massachusetts Department of Youth Services) Eighty-one percent of men who physically abuse had fathers who abused their mothers. (New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Division on Women)
- d. The generational cycle can be broken if parents and families are willing to learn new ways of dealing with conflict. (See Department of Family Ministries and 2003 Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day materials for material or help with breaking the cycle of abuse.)

### **3. The Good News**

#### **A. How Do We, as Adventists, Talk About It?**

- 1. Correct information empowers everyone. Truth sets us free.
- 2. We shouldn't tolerate abuse. It is a crime and it is sin.
- 3. Abuse can continue where there is a culture of secrecy and silence. "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Prov 31:8,9)
- 4. God calls us to act. Abuse and violence flourish when good people do nothing. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl 8:11)
- 5. Many chose to ignore it. Jesus said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." (Luke 12:1-3)

#### **B. What can we do?**

- 1. We need to educate our children about their rights and responsibilities. We can educate our young girls on what to look for to avoid abusive relationships, how to value themselves as God values them.  
We can educate our young men on how to love—how not to abuse.
- 2. We can set up regional refuges and train women in our church to work in this huge field of human suffering. We can educate through seminars on Domestic Violence, Anger Management, Learning How to Love, Healing from Abuse, Family Relationships, and on Parenting.
- 3. We can help to pass laws in countries where there is no protection of domestic rights.
- 4. **How to Help Someone Who is Being Abused**
  - a. Listen and don't judge the victim or abuser. Take the report seriously no matter how important or powerful the abuser is.
  - b. Show that you care and pray with them. Presenting their case, ask God for help and wisdom for them to make the right decision. Believe He has heard you and claim His promises to defend and save the oppressed. Thank God for hearing and answering.
  - c. Find as many options of help in the community that you can. Look for a Domestic Violence service. Present the options to them, and help by listening

as they explore them. Pray with them as they consider them, asking God for guidance. Encourage them to tell a doctor so that any injuries can be documented. And remind them that domestic violence is a serious crime and the police and courts can provide help in these situations.

- d. It will be a very difficult and dangerous time for them—so continue to listen and indicate that you understand them. They will be fearful. Claim God’s peace, protection and freedom from fear.
- e. Whatever decision they make, whether to stay or leave, support them non-judgementally. Only they fully know the danger of their situation. Be careful to keep confidentiality.
- f. Consider the rights and needs of children separately.

### **C. Help for Those Being Abused**

1. An overlooked principle is, “Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands *as it is fit in the Lord.*” Eph. 5:22) and Children, obey your parents *in the Lord* for this is right.” (Eph 6:1). Wives and children are to obey husbands and parents *within the parameters of God’s will.*
2. As the Israelite slaves demonstrated, if we are being controlled or abused by someone, we may be unable to render free loving service to God. To strive and seek for freedom is a desire God puts in our hearts. For “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). When the Israelite slaves cried to God, recognizing His ownership of them above their slave masters, God heard, came down and freed them.
3. There is a moral aspect to marriage, but also a civil aspect. Abuse is incivility and earthly governments usually protect people from incivility. (Romans 13:3,4) In countries where the civil law supports protection of it’s people in line with God’s law, involving police, courts, intervention orders and government bodies is not outside God’s will if the abuser refuses to listen to the church. God says Himself, His church is not a hiding place for criminals. We are not to commit abuse and crime and then come to church and say we are Christians. He told his prophets not even to pray for such people. (Jer 7:1-16) If someone abuses their spouse or children it is a crime and a sin. Intervention orders or apprehended violence orders can be obtained in some countries to keep the victim safe from the abuser.

### **D. The Good News for Those Being Mistreated**

1. When a man was married to a woman who was violent and demon possessed Ellen White wrote:

“He is under no obligation to keep by his side one who will only torture his own soul.” (p.77 TSBA&D, EGW) “Don’t you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile (you), him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (1 Cor 6:19, 20)
2. Find safety. “If they persecute (abuse) you in one city flee into another.” (Matt 10:23) Domestic Violence refuges are available in many countries. If unable to leave, pray for help, and claim His promises. “I will say of the Lord He is my refuge and my fortress.” (Ps 91:2)
3. Once safe, if necessary, take time out until the abuser changes. When a woman separated from her husband because he “hopelessly mistreated” her, this is what Ellen White wrote to her:

“I have received your letter, and in reply to it I would say, I cannot advise you to return to D unless you see decided changes in him. The Lord is not pleased with the ideas he has had in the past of what is due a wife....If he holds to his former views, the future would be no better for you than the past has been. He does not know how to treat a wife. I feel very

sad about this matter. I feel indeed sorry for D, but I cannot advise you to go to him against your judgment. *I speak to you as candidly as I spoke to him: it would be perilous for you to again place yourself under his dictation.* I had hoped that he would change.... The Lord understands all about your experiences...Be of good courage in the Lord; he will not leave you nor forsake you. My heart goes out in tenderest sympathy for you.” (AH p.344)

4. Once the victim is safe, they can take time with prayer and counsel to consider their situation. Timeout separation gives the abuser time to consider their actions also.

## **E. The Good News for Abusers**

1. God loves the abuser, but hates the abuse. Jesus did not come to condemn but to save. Jesus came to lift the burden of guilt and shame, to empower us to love one another. He knows that being abusive hurts you too. (Prov 8:36)
2. Generally we abuse because we have been abused. But it is possible to break the cycle. Others have done it. Paul did it. The fear, hatred, control and bitterness can be melted away by applying God's love and forgiveness to our life. The gospel is a rehabilitation program for both victims and abusers. The great news is we can stop abusing and learn how to love! If we are abusing, we need to get help *now*, before we do any more hurting. Talk to Jesus and a pastor or counselor. (use handouts #3)

## **4. Conclusion<sup>3/4</sup>By Looking We Become Changed**

Victims or abusers, we have all been bitten by the serpent of sin and we are dying. But God has saved us through Jesus and in Him we are a child of God, loved, accepted, significant and secure. If you've been bitten, look—just look—at the serpent on the pole, look at the vision of love. “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all [people] to myself.” John 12:32, NRSV

## ARTICLE –

### **Beating Up My Spouse**

By *Paul Petersen*, Field Secretary, SPD

In my home country Greenland, we share the classical joke question, “Have you stopped beating your wife?” There is no right answer to that in my culture, either “Yes” or “No” you are in trouble. I remember as a boy it was not fun when we were told not to hit a girl. Girls could scratch with their nails, or even bite and I was a poor defenceless male.

Later we received strange news from Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, the world’s largest and very icy island, where one of my friends was working. A number of house disagreements ended up with the wife being brought in for violent assault on the husband. How funny. Women beating men!

Unfortunately reality is no joke. Violence and abuse in the home is a horrible thing. Once love ruled, now only fear may be left. Originally drawn to each other by sentiments of love, man and woman are now emotionally entangled by a common emotional history of violence, retribution and increasingly more futile attempts at reconciliation. Children grow up with violence as the predominant model of response to any crisis.

It is part of my nature as a selfish human being that I try to justify my actions after the fact. Various cultures may use what is perceived as acceptable excuses for aberrant behaviour. It is also very much a part of the nature of any religious person within a Christian culture to attempt to excuse selfish actions by appealing to the Bible, the accepted authority. Therefore, people at times justify abuse and violence by use of biblical texts. My wife is to submit, it is claimed with reference to Ephesians 5:22. And does not submission indicate that I as a male am to educate, teach, and even correct my submissive wife? To put her in the right place? And do we not throughout the Bible observe the fact that man is in charge? Just look at the divine laws given to Moses.

Does the Bible address the issue of violence and abuse in the home? Is it anywhere in the Holy Writings implied whether a spouse is allowed to beat the spouse or not? The fact is that neither the Old nor the New Testament is silent on this issue, and their teachings are coherent and consistent.

### **Old Testament Culture and Laws**

There is no question that the cultures in which the Bible was produced was male dominated, and that women at times had very little if any legal rights and very often were abused. But let us get it right. Historical fact is not ethical necessity. Historical description does not imply divine prescription.

The divine laws shared through Moses were in many ways protective of the weaker groups in society, trying to safeguard the widow, the orphan, and the poor against the consequence of evils that were already practised. God never condoned slavery, yet knowing that it was a fact, He gave laws that would give some protection against even wider abuse (such as Exodus 21:7-11 and Deut 21:10-14). Ideally God never wanted divorce, but as men sent the wives away anyway, God sought to protect the women against extreme abuse and secure their right to remarriage and social safety by providing the law of a divorce certificate (Deut 24:1-4). Compared with all laws known from the cultures of the Ancient Near East, this law was unique in its attempt to protect the women. God recognised reality, and He spoke into the particular culture of the day to establish the best possible laws under the circumstances.

Furthermore, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the Old Testament laws were customary laws. Most of them were orally transmitted. Those written down were either unique examples in conflict with tradition, or they were extreme cases that would serve as examples for similar, less extreme situations.

This background helps us to realise the scope and consequences of some of the laws that are otherwise less understood. If, for instance, a man hurt his slave, whether male or female, by striking the slave, that slave was to be set free (Exodus 21:26-27). This was an extreme situation. The slave was the socially lowest ranking person in the household. The Jews naturally understood the law to imply that the man certainly was not allowed to beat his wife either. Or look at the law in Exodus 21:8-11. It protects a slave wife who may end up even being the second wife in a household. The man is required to supply her with the three basics of food, clothing,

and conjugal rights/nuptial bliss. If that is the case for someone standing in the lowest position, certainly it applies to every spouse.

In the Jewish culture, this law became part of the basis for decisions regarding marriages. At the time of Jesus, all Rabbinical courts agreed that any man was obliged to share these three basics with his spouse. The woman was not allowed by law to seek divorce (that was the prerogative of the man), yet if the man did not provide these needs, she could go to the courts which would order the husband to comply and fine him if he did not. The fines were of a size that would force the man either to treat the wife decently or to divorce her so that she had the freedom to remarry.

### **New Testament Culture and Law**

Jesus never addressed some of these laws mentioned previously, but He was asked to take side in another legal battle fought between the various Rabbinical schools of his day. He took the stand (cf. Matt 19:3-10) that man was not allowed to send his wife away for just any reason. Moreover, he emphasised the original ideal. God never intended marriages to break up.

Yet, in reality it happens. Did Jesus ever say how to live with each other in such a way that the marriage will survive life's challenges? He certainly did. The injunction of Jesus to love the enemy provides a basis. This is another example of an extreme case. If we are to turn the other cheek (Matt 5:39), certainly it is implied that we are not to beat our spouse, the one who is closest to us. Jesus does not by His saying require you to hit your spouse at least twice, that is, on both cheeks; rather he demands you not to use violence at all. Living together in mutual love will keep the marriage intact.

Or look at the fruit of Spirit as described by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. It consists of love, joy, peace, and also kindness, gentleness and self-control. To beat up my spouse is not compatible with these values.

Let no one fool himself. The Bible nowhere justifies abuse and violence towards other people. It does not when it comes to my enemies. It does not when it comes to those who are closest to us. Don't abuse the Bible that way.

The problem of violence in the home is a tragic reality. We need to recognise it for what it is and avoid any attempt to use the Bible to justify evil. God wants to help anyone who is entangled in such a situation. God does not want the love to die and marriages to crumble. Many good Christian counsellors are educated to help couples who are victims of such a situation. What the Bible teaches on the topic is clear and self evident.

## 7 MYTHS & FACTS about Domestic Violence

### “Where is the Love?”

- Myth 1**                      *Domestic violence doesn't happen very often.*
- Fact**                              Domestic violence occurs in one in four to five marriages or de-facto relationships and includes all Christian groups.
- Myth 2**                      *Domestic violence is a lower-class phenomenon.*
- Fact**                              Studies indicate that domestic violence is a problem that transcends boundaries of class.
- Myth 3**                      *Domestic violence only happens amongst particular ethnic groups.*
- Fact**                              Domestic violence occurs in all groups. In one country in the first year of its operation, 1986, the Domestic Violence Advocacy Service had calls from women from 50 different countries.
- Myth 4**                      *Alcohol causes domestic violence.*
- Fact**                              Alcohol often triggers violence, but it is seldom the cause. In over 50% of cases reported to the police, the abuser was sober.
- Myth 5**                      *Women who are victims of domestic violence deserve it. They must provoke him.*
- Fact**                              There is no excuse for violence and in any case, many women report being hit from behind, with no warning.
- Myth 6**                      *Women who are victims of domestic violence must be crazy or neurotic or they must like it otherwise they would leave.*
- Facts**                              Studies show that the victims are normal – some may have had to adopt disturbed behaviours to survive in intolerable situations – just as others have done when tortured.
- Myth 7**                      *Men who are violent towards their partners are psychopaths.*
- Facts**                              These men are not usually psychiatrically ill. Indeed the prevalence of domestic violence, alone, must make us doubt this.

## **RESOURCES**

### **“Where is the Love?”**

#### **Books**

Alsdurf, James & Phyllis (1989) *Battered into Submission – The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home*. Highland Books, Surrey, England. ISBN 0 946616 75 2. 168 pp.

Amos, Anne, ed. (1990) *The Scandal of Family Violence*. Uniting Church Press, Melbourne, Australia ISBN 0 85819 793 6. 64 pp.

Amos, Anne, ed. (1991) *Victims into Victors – Beyond Family Violence*. Uniting Church Press, Melbourne, Australia ISBN 0 85819 818 5. 63 pp.

Brown, Kevin (1998) *Surviving Sexual Abuse – A Creative Response to Child Abuse*. Foreword by Bishop Richard Holloway. Monarch Books, East Sussex, England. ISBN 1 85424 398 5. 191 pp.

Couden, Barbara, ed. (1999) *Understanding Intimate Violence*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, USA. ISBN 0 8280 1418 3. 160 pp.

Cox, Valerie, ed. (1993) *Domestic Violence – It Doesn't Happen at our Church... or Does It? A discussion starter, resource kit and study guide*. Lifecare, Baptist Community Services, Sydney, Australia  
23 pp

Flowers, Karen and Ron with Audray Johnson, Elaine and Willie Oliver, Peace and Healing, Making Homes Abuse-free. Available through Advent Source. This book contains many listings for books on the subject of abuse and family violence.

White, Ellen G. (1980) *The Adventist Home*. Hagerstown, MD, USA. Review & Herald Publishing Association, USA. 583 pp

World Evangelical Fellowship (2000) *Biblical Thesis – A Biblical Response to Preventing Abuse Against Women*. Taskforce on Abuse Against Women Commission on Women's Concerns World Evangelical Fellowship. 43 pp.

#### **Brochures**

*Breaking the Silence – set of 6 brochures*. Women's Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

*Family Violence – Misuse of Power-* Joint Churches Domestic Violence Project, NSW, Australia.

*God Speaks Against Abuse, Violence, Rape – set of 6 brochures*. Australian Evangelical Alliance Commission on Women's Concerns “Australia Influenced by Discipled Women”, West Australia, Australia.  
*Sexually Abused –. Ministering to the, My Child has been, Help for the person who has been. Set of 3 brochures*. Australian Union Conference of SDA Church, Australia.

#### **Videos**

Videos are suitable for adult audiences only and are intended for pastors and church leaders education. Survivors give explicit details at times. Counselors or professionals with abuse and family violence expertise should be present to especially assist survivors and others.

*After Sexual Abuse.* Produced by the Mennonite Central Committee, 21 South 12th Street, P O Box 500, Akron, PA 17501. 717 859-1151. In Canada: 134 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T5K9. 204 261 6831. Color: 52 minutes. Includes discussion guide.

*Break the Silence: Kids Against Child Abuse.* Produced by Arnold Shapiro. Productions with host Jane Seymour. Copies available for \$7.00 from Break the Silence Videotape, P O Box 514. New York, NY 10013-0514. Color. 29 min.

*Bless Our Children: Preventing Sexual Abuse.* Produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103. 206 634-1903. Color: 40 min. Includes comprehensive discussion guide and 25 audience brochures.

*Broken Vows: Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence.* Center For the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Color. Running time: 59 minutes. (Also available in Spanish) . (Available in PAL format also).

*The Crown Prince.* Produced by The Media Guild, 11722 Sorrento Valley Road, Suite E, San Diego, CA 92121. 619 755.4931. Color: 38 min. Includes discussion guide.

*Deck the Halls.* Time Out Series. Produced by Select Media, 74 Varick St., Suite 303, New York, New York 10013. 212 431 8923.

*Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse.* Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence. Color. Running time: 48 minutes. (Also available in Spanish) (Available in PAL format also).

*Loved, Honored, and Bruised.* Produced by the National Film Board of Canada and marketed by The Media Guild, 11722 Sorrento Valley Road, Suite E, San Diego, California 92121. 619 755-9191.

*Not in My Church.* Produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103. 206 634-1903. Color: 45 minutes; Includes a comprehensive discussion guide and 25 audience brochures.

*Scared Silent: Exposing and Ending Child Abuse.* Produced by Arnold Shapiro Productions with host Oprah Winfrey. Copies available for \$8.50 from Scared Silent, Box 933022, Los Angeles, California 90093. Color: 50 minutes.

*Peace and Healing.* Family Ministries Department. English, Spanish or French. (Available in PAL format also).

*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 also)

**\*To order many of the videos listed**, contact: Faith Trust Institute (formerly Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence), 2400 North 45<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 10, Seattle, Washington 98103 USA.

## Websites

### Community Resources

In many countries there are resources in the community to which pastors, leaders and those involved with domestic violence and abuse, can turn. Look for the “safe house” or “refuge” in your community. These establishments are anxious to help people to learn about the issues surrounding abuse. They are usually listed in your phone book. Make yourself familiar with what is available in your community. Talk to your Town Council and make sure your church has a list of locally available resources.

The PATHS website has connections to World websites and addresses surrounding the issues of domestic violence and abuse. See [www.hotpeachpages.org](http://www.hotpeachpages.org) and click on World/world.htm.

### Websites

American women living overseas – [www.awoscentral.com](http://www.awoscentral.com)

Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearing House – [www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au](http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au)

British Columbia Institute Against Violence  
[www.bcifv.org](http://www.bcifv.org)

Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinic – [www.lfcc.on.ca](http://www.lfcc.on.ca)

Canadian National Clearinghouse on Family Violence –  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence)

Faith Trust Institute – Centre for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence –  
<http://www.cpsdv.org/>

Men on the Elimination of Violence Against Women  
[www.comminit.com/pdskdv62002/sld-4931.html](http://www.comminit.com/pdskdv62002/sld-4931.html)

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
[www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

National Organization of Battered Women’s Shelters – in Swedish  
[www.roks.se](http://www.roks.se)

Northern Ireland Women’s Aid Federation  
[www.niwaf.org/](http://www.niwaf.org/)

Pacific Women Against Violence & Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre  
[www.fijiwomen.com](http://www.fijiwomen.com)

Selbsthilfe – Missbrauch (Site is in German)

[www.selbsthilfe-missbrauch.de](http://www.selbsthilfe-missbrauch.de)

The Binti Pamoja Center – Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya  
[www.comminit.com/pdskdv92003/sld-8643.html](http://www.comminit.com/pdskdv92003/sld-8643.html)

Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)  
[www.wave-network.org](http://www.wave-network.org)

Women’s Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. [www.wm.gc.adventist.org](http://www.wm.gc.adventist.org)

Women’s Aid Federation of England (United Kingdom)  
[www.womensaid.org.uk/indexhtm](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/indexhtm)

Women’s Resource Information/Support Centre -  
<http://wrisc.ballarat.net.au>

### **Useful Articles on Websites:**

Fight Against the Fist. A series of Radio Shows from ABC Ulwazi, South Africa. Six 10 –minute min dramas about domestic violence.  
<http://www.comminit.com/Materials/sld-5470.html>

Picturing a Life Free of Violence: Media & Communications Strategies to End Violence Against Women – showcases a variety of strategies and materials used around the world to end violence against women.  
<http://www.comminit.com/Materials/sld-4425.html>

“Responding to Rape, Domestic Violence and Child Abuse.” These scenarios are designed to educate everyone in responding to rape, domestic violence and child abuse.  
<http://www.globalhealth.org/sources/view.php3?id=420&type=newsletter>

# Seventh-day Adventist Statement on Family Violence

Family violence involves an assault of any kind—verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or active or passive neglect—that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family, whether they are married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. Current international research indicates that family violence is a global problem. It occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socioeconomic levels, and in families from all types of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, it may be a physical attack on one's spouse. Emotional assaults such as verbal threats, episodes of rage, deprecation of character, and unrealistic demands for perfection are also abuse. It may take the form of physical coercion and violence within the marital sexual relationship, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behavior. It includes behavior such as incest and the mistreatment or neglect of underage children by a parent or another guardian that results in injury or harm. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material, and medical abuse or neglect.

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 apostle Paul refers to the Church as “the household of faith” which functions as an extended family, offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to all, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged. Scripture portrays the Church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as feelings of betrayal, rejection, and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust, and wholeness. The Bible also speaks of the Christian's personal responsibility to protect his or her body temple from desecration because it is the dwelling place of God.

Regrettably, family violence occurs in many Christian homes. It can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long-term distorted perceptions of God, self, and others.

## **It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—**

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:
  - a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.

- b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense of victims both within the community of faith and in society.
  - c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling by Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available, or other professional resources in the community.
  - d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities.
  - e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships. Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse.
  - f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together.
  - g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.
2. To strengthen family life by:
- a. Providing family life education which is grace-oriented and includes a biblical understanding of the mutuality, equality, and respect indispensable to Christian relationships.
  - b. Increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence.
  - c. Developing ways to prevent abuse and violence and the recurring cycle often observed within families and across generations.
  - d. Rectifying commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up family violence. For example, while parents are instructed by God to redemptively correct their children, this responsibility does not give license for the use of harsh, punitive disciplinary measures.
3. To accept our moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards. Any indications or reports of abuse must not be minimized but seriously considered. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

If we are to live as children of the light, we must illuminate the darkness where family violence occurs in our midst. We must care for one another, even when it would be easier to remain uninvolved.

(The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Ex 20:12; Matt 7:12; 20:25-28; Mark 9:33-45; John 13:34; Rom 12:10, 13; 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:2, 3, 21-27; 6:1-4; Col 3:12-14; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Tim 5:5-8.)

# Seventh-day Adventist Statement on Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person older or stronger than the child uses his or her power, authority, or position of trust to involve a child in sexual behavior or activity. Incest, a specific form of child sexual abuse, is defined as any sexual activity between a child and a parent, a sibling, an extended family member, or a step/surrogate parent.

Sexual abusers may be men or women and may be of any age, nationality, or socio-economic background. They are often men who are married with children, have respectable jobs, and may be regular churchgoers. It is common for offenders to strongly deny their abusive behavior, to refuse to see their actions as a problem, and to rationalize their behavior or place blame on something or someone else. While it is true that many abusers exhibit deeply rooted insecurities and low self-esteem, these problems should never be accepted as an excuse for sexually abusing a child. Most authorities agree that the real issue in child sexual abuse is more related to a desire for power and control than for sex.

When God created the human family, He began with a marriage between a man and a woman based on mutual love and trust. This relationship is still designed to provide the foundation for a stable, happy family in which the dignity, worth, and integrity of each family member is protected and upheld. Every child, whether male or female, is to be affirmed as a gift from God. Parents are given the privilege and responsibility of providing nurture, protection, and physical care for the children entrusted to them by God. Children should be able to honor, respect, and trust their parents and other family members without the risk of abuse.

The Bible condemns child sexual abuse in the strongest possible terms. It sees any attempt to confuse, blur, or denigrate personal, generational, or gender boundaries through sexually abusive behavior as an act of betrayal and a gross violation of personhood. It openly condemns abuses of power, authority, and responsibility because these strike at the very heart of the victims' deepest feelings about themselves, others, and God, and shatter their capacity to love and trust. Jesus used strong language to condemn the actions of anyone who, through word or deed, causes a child to stumble.

The Adventist Christian community is not immune from child sexual abuse. We believe that the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist faith require us to be actively involved in its prevention. We are also committed to spiritually assisting abused and abusive individuals and their families in their healing and recovery process, and to holding church professionals and church lay leaders accountable for maintaining their personal behavior as is appropriate for persons in positions of spiritual leadership and trust.

*As a Church we believe our faith calls us to:*

1. Uphold the principles of Christ for family relationships in which the self-respect, dignity, and purity of children are recognized as divinely mandated rights.
2. Provide an atmosphere where children who have been abused can feel safe when reporting sexual abuse and can feel that someone will listen to them.
3. Become thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact upon our own church community.
4. Help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused.
5. Establish referral relationships with professional counselors and local sexual assault agencies who can, with their professional skills, assist abuse victims and their families.
6. Create guidelines/policies at the appropriate levels to assist church leaders in:
  - a. Endeavoring to treat with fairness persons accused of sexually abusing children,
  - b. Holding abusers accountable for their actions and administering appropriate discipline.
7. Support the education and enrichment of families and family members by:
  - a. Dispelling commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up child sexual abuse.
  - b. Building a healthy sense of personal worth in each child which enables him or her to respect self and others.
  - c. Fostering Christlike relationships between males and females in the home and in the church.
8. Provide caring support and a faith-based redemptive ministry within the church community for abuse survivors and abusers while enabling them to access the available network of professional resources in the community.
9. Encourage the training of more family professionals to facilitate the healing and recovery process of abuse victims and perpetrators.

(The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Lev 18:20; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Matt 18:6-9; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Tim 5:5-8.)