

ESV Isaiah 50:4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, *that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.* Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

I. Emergency considerations

Is the abuse currently happening? Remove from abusive environment or find ways to escape the abuse (locked door, neighbor's house). Is the abused person a danger to him/herself (self-injury, self destructive relationships, drug & alcohol abuse, promiscuous behavior, suicide or violent behavior)? Seek support from family, church and community.

II. Expose the darkness of the abuse & abuser (*preparation for potential reconciliation: In order to "go and tell him his fault", the abused must know what the abuser's fault is according to Scripture*)

ESV Ephesians 5:8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but *instead expose them.*¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.¹³ But when anything is *exposed by the light, it becomes visible.*

ESV Matthew 18:15 *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault,* between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

A. Expose the darkness of the abuser's patterns

Consider the context for the abuse: is the abuser always the active aggressor while the abused is passive, or is he provoked by hostile words and threatening behaviors, or some combination of both? What exactly did the abuser do? Investigate times, places, & details of the abusive patterns. In child physical abuse, explain the difference between proper discipline and abuse, emphasizing that the child so abused was a victim, not the perpetrator. May need to use a doll to express the actual types of abuse experiences for children to explain or demonstrate what happened. Talk about his/her feelings towards these abusive actions, rejection, being treated like garbage and told the same.

B. Expose the darkness of the abuser's "manner of life" and his end: Scoffer & hypocrite destined to perish (unless he repents)

ESV Proverbs 9:7 *Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury.*⁸ *Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.*

ESV Proverbs 13:1 A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a *scoffer does not listen to rebuke.*

ESV Proverbs 21:24 "Scoffer" is the name of the *arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.*

ESV Proverbs 22:10 *Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.*

ESV Proverbs 24:9 The devising of folly is sin, and *the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.*

ESV Isaiah 29:20 *For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off,*

ESV Matthew 23:28 So you also *outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

C. Expose the complicating sins & heart idolotries of the abuser

ESV Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,*²⁰ *idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,*²¹ *envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.* I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Counseling Physically Abused People

Rev. Dr. Tim Yates

ESV Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who *by their unrighteousness suppress the truth*.¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.²¹ For although they knew God, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened*.²² *Claiming to be wise, they became fools*,²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.²⁹ They were filled with all manner of *unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice*. *They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness*. *They are gossips*,³⁰ *slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents*,³¹ *foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless*.³² Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

ESV 2 Timothy 3:1 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.² For *people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive*, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,³ *heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal*, not loving good,⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, *lovers of pleasure* rather than lovers of God,⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

ESV Proverbs 25:28 A man without *self-control* is like a city broken into and left without walls.

D. Expose the darkness of the concurring neglect and lack of protection from abuse in family, relatives, community, laws or culture

ESV Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, *do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*.

ESV 1 Timothy 3:4 *He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive*,⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

ESV Titus 2:4 and so train *the young women to love their husbands and children*,⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, *kind*, and submissive to their own husbands, *that the word of God may not be reviled*.⁶ Likewise, *urge the younger men to be self-controlled*.⁷ Show yourself in all respects *to be a model of good works*, and in your teaching *show integrity, dignity*,

See examples in Genesis 19:4-11 & Judges 19:22-20:6 of community permission of physical & sexual abuse

ESV Romans 13:4 for *he is God's servant for your good*. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For *he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer*.

ESV Romans 1:29 **They** were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. **They** are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, *haughty, boastful, inventors of evil*, disobedient to parents,³¹ foolish, faithless, *heartless*,

ruthless. ³² Though **they** know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but **give approval to those who practice them.** (*a community enslaved by sin*)

E. Expose the darkness of the worst abuse ever committed in comparison to the abuse suffered by this person

Christ's abuse was the worst possible abuse. Sinners abused the holy Christ!

^{ESV} Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces *he was despised*, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet *we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.* ⁵ But he was *wounded* for our transgressions; he was *crushed* for our iniquities; upon him was the *chastisement* that brought us peace, and with *his stripes* we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was *oppressed, and he was afflicted*, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By *oppression and judgment he was taken away*; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, *stricken* for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to *crush* him; he has *put him to grief*, when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of *the anguish of his soul* he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

F. Grieve the darkness of the abuse against Jesus and the abuse against self, which also grieves the Holy Spirit, particularly in "Christian" families.

^{ESV} Ephesians 4:26 [Tremble] and do not sin; do not let the *sun go down on your anger*, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. . . ²⁹ Let no *corrupting talk* come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not *grieve the Holy Spirit of God*, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all *bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

^{ESV} Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw that the *wickedness of man was great* in the earth, and that every intention of *the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and *it grieved him to his heart.*

^{ESV} Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, *weep with those who weep.*

III. Expose the sinful interaction of the abused with the abuse and abuser

A. Where has the abused person "returned evil for evil"?

^{ESV} Romans 12:19 Beloved, *never avenge yourselves*, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ *Do not be overcome by evil*, but overcome evil with good.

B. How is the abused person interpreting his/ her past?

C. Look at the “manner of life” that is the patterns of living that have been established in interaction with the past (See Bettler article noted below). Has fear, distrust, hatred or self-loathing become the “manner of life”?

Abused people often develop pain numbing strategies to live in other imaginary worlds. PTSD: *post traumatic stress disorder*: the person may immediately protect self by numbness and may feel no danger or pain, but perhaps months or years later will feel the flood of feelings hit them, along with the realization of fear and danger. Nightmares will be common. It’s like seeing a scary movie as a child; it will influence our imagination for months or years. As the abused person keeps rehearsing the event, fear produces other emotions that may be used as excuses of inability to do things, phobias. Particularly pictures, movies, or seeing another person being abused or actual similar experiences may trigger rehearsal of the abuse memories.

Abused people will often rehearse “what if’s?” and may develop depression and remorse for failure to choose the course of action that would have prevented the abuse. There is often guilt and self-blame.

Abused people will often feel mixtures of powerless, hopeless & helpless AND aggression, hatred and violence.

Watch body language as abused person speaks. You may be able to observe tendencies in the heart through the momentary expressions on the face as he/she talks. While the person may have a smiling tendency, hatred, rage and stubbornness may pass across the face in minor shades.

A credible approach to the abused person’s past

From “Counseling and the Problem of the Past” by John Bettler in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Issue XII, Fall 1994, p. 19

IV. Propositions

1. We believe that a counselee’s personal past has a significant influence upon his development of his *manner of life*.
We do not believe that the counselee is a helpless victim whose manner of life is determined by his past.
2. We believe that *a person creatively interacts with and interprets past events and incorporates his interpretation into his manner of life*.
We do not believe that a counselee so constructs his past that it has no necessary existence in history. Just as God acts and explains or interprets His actions, so the person interprets the actual events in his life.
3. We believe that the Christian should *seek to interpret his past as coming from God and for God’s glory*; the unbeliever will distort the event with an explanation that does not honor God’s truth. He will resist the truth and endeavor to believe the lie.
4. We believe that *a counselee is not always aware of the assumptions, values, and habits which shape his manner of life*.
We do not believe there exists within the person an “unconscious,” i.e., an unexplored and largely unexplorable entity which drives his behavior.
5. We believe that *exploration of a person’s past may help to reveal to himself his manner of life*. We do not believe that such exploration is always necessary to produce biblical change.
6. We believe that change occurs in the present. It involves *repentance for the distorted values and habits of a false manner of life, and the putting on of godly values and behavior patterns in the present*. **We do not believe that change occurs in the past through the reliving of past experiences**

or through emotional release of stored-up emotions (a process commonly called catharsis).

7. We believe that *God is sovereign over all the events of a person's life and works providentially through those events to make Christians more like Christ.*

IV. Let Christ shine his view of abuse on the person abused

^{ESV} Ephesians 5:14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and *Christ will shine on you.*"

A. What is the abused person's view of God's role in permitting the continuing damage of abusive evil?

B. What does the Bible say about God's purposes in permitting suffering?

1. *God has a special concern for his oppressed and afflicted people*

^{ESV} Psalm 27:10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but *the LORD will take me in.*

^{ESV} James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: *to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

^{ESV} Hebrews 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to *sympathize with our weaknesses*, but one who *in every respect has been tempted as we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

^{ESV} Psalm 23:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ *He restores my soul.* He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;* your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;* you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

2. *God causes all abuse experienced to have some good purpose(s) in shaping the Christ-like maturity of his people*

^{ESV} Romans 8:28 And we know that *for those who love God all things work together for good*, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also *predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son*, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

C. What positive examples in Scripture show how to respond to abuse?

1. *Joseph's response to abuse after years of reflection on the results*

^{ESV} Genesis 50:20 As for you, *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive*, as they are today.

2. *David's response in the Psalms to abuses of enemies & Saul*

^{ESV} Psalm 23:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ *He restores my soul.* He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;* your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ *You prepare a table before me in the*

presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Other Psalms?

3. *Christ's abuse was the worst possible abuse (sinners abusing the holy Christ), yet see his God-entrusting response.*
ESV 1 Peter 2:18 Servants, *be subject* to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also *to the unjust.* ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But *if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.* ²¹ For to this you have been called, because *Christ also suffered for you,* leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.* ²³ *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

4. *Overcome evil with good*

ESV Romans 12:19 Beloved, *never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God,* for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "*if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink;* for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good.**

5. *God's response to truth-suppressing abusers is to give them up to their debased minds, patiently waiting for their destruction as vessels of wrath*

ESV Romans 1:18 For the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,* who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. . . . ²⁴ Therefore *God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,* ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶ For this reason *God gave them up to dishonorable passions.* . . . ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, *God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.*

ESV Romans 9:22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has *endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,*

D. *Saturate the mind with God & his truth*

ESV Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

1. *Fear the Lord alone, who is on your side, rather than men*

ESV Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather *fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

ESV Psalm 118:6 The LORD is on my side; *I will not fear. What can man do to me?*

ESV Proverbs 29:25 *The fear of man lays a snare,* but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

ESV Isaiah 51:7 "Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; *fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings.*⁸ *For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool;* but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations."

ESV Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? *If God is for us, who can be against us?* ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to

condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

ESV Hebrews 13:6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; *I will not fear; what can man do to me?*"

2. *Joy in salvation still outweighs the light and momentary shame of abuse*

ESV 2 Corinthians 4:17 For this *light momentary affliction* is preparing for us *an eternal weight of glory* beyond all comparison,

3. *By the Spirit's help, contentment with our lot in life is possible during tragic loss*

ESV Job 1:20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped.²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

ESV Philippians 4:12 *I know how to be brought low*, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.¹³ *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

4. *Laugh with God as you see his response to abusive attempts to overthrow his kingdom*

ESV Psalm 2:1 Why do *the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?*² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."⁴ *He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.*⁵ *Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury,* saying,⁶ "As for me, *I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.*"⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

V. Pursue maturity through healthy Christian fellowship & use of gifts

A. Surround with godly relationship examples (consider living with a loving Christian family)

ESV Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us *consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,*²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, *but encouraging one another,* and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

B. Stop the cycle of abuse by renewing the mind & body interaction patterns learned from abuser

ESV Proverbs 22:24 Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man,²⁵ lest *you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.*

The abused have learned the ways of abusers given to anger, cruelty and . They are capable of abusing others, even though they hate what abuse has done to themselves.

1. Disciple in *proper self-expressions emotions* like anger, grief, sadness, frustration and how to receive God's comfort in those times, how to relax and prevent panic and fear from overwhelming the mind, leading to either "shut down" or explosion (Psalms; 2 Cor 1:3-11; Phil 4:8)

2. Disciple in *peacemaking/ conflict resolution skills* as a response to conflict, disagreements or anger in others.

3. Disciple in *desire to learn wisdom and receive godly correction* without rehearsing negative thoughts about how hateful and cruel people are.

4. Disciple in *biblical ways that others change* and how to be a part of that change process. Abused may mature to the point of being able to counsel & comfort other abused people (2 Cor 1:3-11).

5. Disciple in *biblical self-concept* (2 Cor 5:16-17; Eph 5:8-9; Gal 5:17)

6. Disciple in developing trust, *initiating* friendships, and productive service roles that develop gifts. Routinely encourage the good you see.

7. *Forgive*: Practice **level 1 heart-forgiveness** for the abuser: ^{ESV} Mark 11:25 *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone*, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. Consider **level 2 personal reconciliation** with abuser if you feel he is open to your correction (Matt 18:15-18; Prov 9:8-9) **or write a letter to the abuser** biblically defining the details of the abuse and how it hurt as outlined above, including the losses incurred due to the unhealthy living environment, sharing how the work of Christ by the Spirit is bringing healing, expressing level one forgiveness & seeking level 2 reconciliation. Whether the letter is ever sent is not the initial purpose in writing, but to *develop a written expression, a memorial of the damage done and the forgiveness offered*. Generally is it not wise to send a letter of this sort, since it doesn't allow for personal reconciliation and may further provoke the abuser to aggressive or hurtful actions from fear of being exposed publicly.