

Life on Life 301
Class 5 // May 30, 2021
Abuse

I. What is abuse?

The following terms are non-technical definitions which would be widely accepted in counseling circles. More technical terms are available in a wide range of resources.

Abuse is any of a group of sins that people commit against another person which are particularly harmful, "damaging and soul-distorting" (Allender, Wounded Heart). Abuse is a sin that attacks the personhood of an image bearer of God. For example, a child is vulnerable because their "role" as an image bearer is by nature more vulnerable than an adult's role. So if someone abuses them, they are abusing "a child" because they are an easy target. Similarly a man abusing a woman -- he is sinning in a specific way that goes directly at her femininity (which is how she lives out the image of God, cf., Gen 1:26-28).

Abuse might be sexual, physical, emotional or verbal. All abuse is sin; obviously not all sin is abuse. The line between garden-variety unkindness and selfishness and "abuse" can be hard to distinguish. Certain overt behavior obviously deserves the label. Other less overt behavior might qualify as "abusive" for some and not for others. Remember at the outset that "abuse," a volatile word in today's culture, is merely a label for certain types of more extreme sinful behavior that hurts people.

Sexual abuse is a catch-all term taking place in a variety of ways and intensities. Its destructive influence varies tremendously. We use these terms for this type of abuse:

- **Sexual abuse** in general is the using a minor child for sexual gratification by an adult or by another minor child 3-5 years older. *Sexual abuse proper* is the above definition specifically characterized by pressuring another to touch your sexual parts or touching their sexual parts. I would go a bit farther in this definition to say that sexual abuse is one person using another person without their consent or perhaps even knowledge for their own sexual gratification. (voyeurism, etc.)
- **Sexual assault** is defined in Rid of My Disgrace as "any type of sexual behavior or contact where consent is not freely given or obtained and is accomplished through force, intimidation, violence, coercion, manipulation, threat, deception or abuse of authority." This definition gets beyond our society's narrow understanding of the issue and expands the spectrum of actions to be considered sexual assault.

When dealing with abuse in general and sexual abuse specifically, we should consider two issues: false reporting and under reporting. According to Rid of My Disgrace, the number for false reporting according to experts is two percent, slightly lower than false reports of other crimes. However, according to the FBI, "sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes due to fear and/or embarrassment on the part of the victim."¹ One report claims that only 5-20% of sexual assaults may actually be reported.²

Physical abuse is *hitting, pushing, pulling hair, slapping, choking, kicking, threatening to hit, etc., for the purpose of gaining influence and advantage or to express anger or frustration*. It is different appropriate spanking of a disrespectful or disobedient child, where that is done carefully and judiciously. Physical abuse not only occurs when an adult abuses a child or another adult but also can happen. It can also happen with a child and another child where there is significant size, age or strength difference, though that is more often properly relegated to the category of "bullying" than of "physical abuse."

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Report* (1973), 15

² Catalano, "Criminal Victimization"

Verbal abuse is harder to define. *In general, it is yelling, name-calling, cursing, sharply cutting people off in conversation to regain control of the conversation or to attempt to dominate the other person.* It is not always done with the intent of harm, though sometimes it is. It, too, can happen adult-to-child or adult-to-adult. In some cases, an older minor child may also speak abusively to an adult.

Emotional abuse is the hardest of all to define, the easiest to conceal/cover up and the easiest to claim against another person with the least amount of specific documentation. *In general, it is the attempted control of another person through deprivation, deceit, manipulation, cruelty, and arrogant superiority.* Some find it easier to describe the atmosphere created by emotional abuse than to define:

- You have to constantly be on guard to keep from upsetting them;
- Your perspective is frequently dismissed or mocked;
- Everyone else is the source of problems and they are quick to assign blame;
- They will not take responsibility for hurting others.

Some Common Ingredients of all these abuses

Silence and Isolation. Repetition by abuser. Justification. Victim-guilt. Internalization. Cycle very often repeats with the victim later abusing. No safe place. Denial. Fear/Anger confusion. Minimization. When faced, division from family often results. Victims who face often become contemptuous (portions of women's movement). Disoriented thinking by the victim. Apology cycle by abuser (when seen), followed by repetition.

Abuse is characterized by explicit or implicit pressure to get a desired response by an abuser who fails to distinguish between (a) their desires, feelings, disappointment and pain and (b) their injury (broadly understood) of another. It means that the abuser can justify what they have done even if they know it is wrong (i.e., "conditions warranted it") and they are likely to repeat the pattern if left to their own devices. Abuse becomes an escape hatch through which the perpetrator is made to feel right (emotional abuse), in control and therefore a person of impact (physical abuse) or wanted (sexual abuse).

Typically, the abuser does the thing intentionally, but the intent behind the thing is not something he or she is necessarily aware of. In other words, all behavior is purposeful and it is the purpose or goal that the abuser is serving. However, the goal is often "below the waterline," meaning that they may not be aware of their reason. That "ignorance" or purpose sometimes explains why abusive patterns can be addictive and repetitive, even with people who do not wish to continue it.

When a person is suffering abuse, it is often likely that the abuse is not limited to one of the above categories. Abuse often has an escalating aspect as can be seen in the document, "Teenage Power and Control in Dating" included in the resource section.

II. **Who is abused?** Of course abuse can happen in any relationship. Control is always a significant factor in abusive relationships.

- A. In 1983, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that a woman is beaten every 15 seconds.³ Things have not gotten better since then. From 1983 to 1991, the number of domestic violence reports received increased by almost 117%. That works out to be one woman was beaten every 6.4 seconds in 1991. While current statistics were hard to find, we can only surmise that number has gotten worse since then. In the United States, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between ages 15 and 44 - more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.⁴ Most of these abuses have occurred in marriage or committed relationships.
- B. In her booklet "Domestic Abuse" Darby Strickland redefines the term as domestic oppression and states that it is *dominance through coercion, control and punishment*. Domestic oppression is most often a man controlling a woman ("masal" of Genesis 3:16, shown by physical, verbal, emotional and/or sexual control or assault. Less commonly it may be the woman attempting to control the man by verbal and emotional pressure, resentment, manipulation and hostility when things do not go as she wishes. Examples vary, but might include any of the following:
- Isolation
 - Repeated criticism, mockery
 - Threats or intimidation
 - Demands for specific behaviors or attitudes
 - Shame, disparaging/derogatory comments
 - Physical strikes or the blocking of egress/escape
 - Physical intruding (e.g. bathroom or dressing area)
 - Verbally cutting off
 - Punishment or Blame- seeing the abusee as the problem and making them pay
 - Minimization (other's concerns, thoughts, or contributions)

Strickland states in her booklet that *"We need to see oppression as a non-marriage issue. It is an issue requiring the oppressed to be protected and the oppressor to learn to stop oppressing. She states that it differs from normal marriage counseling where both parties learn to modify thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and actions to help bring change to the marriage. Although John and we agree that the abused and the abuser are not to be looked at as equally responsible, Darby's emphasis on not putting the two people on level ground in terms of needed work could be seen to leave out the work the oppressed needs to do.*

John would say it slightly differently than Ms. Strickland. First, oppression only shows up in relationship. It is all about the **control of a relationship**. Normally oppression shows up most in the closest relationships. So it **is** a marriage problem in that attitudes and behaviors of oppression cause marriage relationship difficulty. However, "marriage problems" usually imply that each person is contributing to a shared problem. Though the oppressed usually needs to learn confidence in the Lord, not being controlled by fear or people pleasing, holding onto convictions, learning to speak out without sinning, **a counselor must address the abuse of the abuser as first in importance, because if the counselor views the abused' shortcomings as comparable to the abuse, we invite the oppression to increase.**

³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, Report to the nation on Crime and Justice. The Data. Washington DC Office of Justice Program, US Dept. of Justice. Oct. 1983

⁴ NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, 1983 and 1991.

III. How to counsel?

Something to consider when counseling the abused is pointed out by Darby Strickland in in the same booklet, that anyone trying to help must see this as a slow battle, and one in which the oppressed is in some measure of danger or harm or difficulty once others try to help. She makes a point of showing that when you try to help the oppressed be relieved from their oppression, you will enter into their suffering. Bob Kelleman calls this, "climbing into the casket."

Biblical counseling has come under some criticism in the past for causing harm to abused people. We believe that Biblical counseling has much to offer and would like to show a video of Chris Moles of Peace Works University on how to avoid possible pitfalls and truly help those who are suffering as the result of abuse.

Foundational Elements of Biblical Counseling in Regards to Abuse		
Element	Execution of well-versed diagnostic	Pitfalls of improper diagnostic
Gathering Data		
Discern Problems Biblically		
Build Involvement		

Give Hope of Christ		
Provide Biblical Instruction		

Things to remember when walking with the oppressed

1. Listening, protecting
2. Helping them learn to find their voice
3. Helping them identify the behavior as inappropriate (since they sometimes defend it)
4. Practice confidentiality
5. Guard against counsel that re-subjects them to abuse (e.g., do a better job of “xyz”)
6. Make sure of their safety
7. Move slowly, patiently, which is harder when you feel what they’ve been through
8. Help them find the nearness of Christ

Things to remember when walking with the Oppressor

The author expresses seven things that the oppressor will need help with. That will be a key job of the counselor who works with “him”:

- Oppressors feel entitled
- Oppressors dominate others
- Oppressors use threats
- Oppressors punish others to maintain control
- Oppressors are generally blind to the destruction they wreak
- Oppressors feel justified in what they do
- Oppressors generally feel like victims

Key Passages

Ecclesiastes 4:1 – *Again, I saw all the oppressions done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them.* Represents many passages where the compassion of God towards the oppressed is made evident.

Exodus 3:7-9 - The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

Psalm 146:7-9 He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Zech. 9:8 But I will encamp at my temple to guard it against marauding forces. Never again will an oppressor overrun my people, for now I am keeping watch.

Proverbs 6:16-19 – *Six things the Lord hates, yeah, seven are an abomination. Haughty eyes, lying tongue, hands shedding innocent blood, heart devising wicked plans, feet hasty to run to evil, false witness who lies, one sowing discord among brothers. (How many of those are done by an oppressor?)*

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

As well as Genesis 16; 1 Samuel 25; Psalm 69

IV. How the abused can offer Grace in a relationship

1. Remember that when Jesus told the lady taken in adultery, "I do not condemn you" (grace), He also told her, "Go and sin no more." Jesus doesn't blow off our sin; He forgives us so that we no longer have to live in it (Rom 6:1-6; 2 Cor 5:17-21).
2. Remember that though Jesus tells us to not judge lest we be judged, He also tells us that if we deal with the beams in our eye, we can see clearly enough to help others with specks in their eye. (Matthew 7) He also told us that we will judge angels and that we should be able to judge in matters between believers. (1 Cor. 6) He also tells us that a bond-servant of His will often be used to help others with sin patterns (2 Timothy 5:22-26; James 5:19-21)
3. If abuse is at low levels, remember that "love covers a multitude of sins." There is a time to 'overlook' some offenses.
4. If it is rare, pray through which offenses are worth "going to bat for." Come up with a plan and a time for dealing with them – you may need some practice sessions (see #4 below). These are especially those things which make it very hard to trust ones' self or to entrust children to this person.
5. If it is chronic, you'll likely need another person involved helping you through it, such as a licensed counselor or a good and godly same gender mentor or friend who will stick with you in it over the long haul. If it is someone who encourages you to minimize it or see it as normal, they may not be the best person. If they see everything through the eyes of abuse and are out to make sure you don't ever get hurt again, they probably aren't right, either.
6. Remember that any choice to address this with the other person needs to be for ministry to them (just like everything else in this class). How is your talking to them for their good?

7. Grace means I can forgive and I can give them a love they don't deserve; it doesn't mean we won't turn them in to authorities. If abuse is a pattern and endangers a child or adult, the authority of the church and the state should be utilized (Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 13:1-6) where appropriate. It is more loving and more grace filled (and often more successful) to do this than to separate. (Many would sooner separate or even divorce than use the church or turn someone in to authorities. That is unbiblical.)
8. Abuse is sometimes done by an evil person. This is very hard to discern, but it is essentially someone who enjoys harming you and shows no remorse for hurting someone. They often were themselves abused. In such cases, with good counsel, separation may be called for. This is quite rare.
9. When you or your child is in danger, please get help. Meet with a pastor, elder or professional counselor. Do not neglect it; we have seen the results.
10. Always remember that the abuser is also loved by God and can be redeemed.

V. SAS: Sexual Abuse Survivors Ministry - Around 2017, John Morrison and a group of ladies felt the need to minister to women who had suffered sexual abuse. Out of that need, SAS was born. It is a Bible study centered around the book, Rid of My Disgrace. The original group created the study guide and homework that is used here at FBC. The study has undergone many edits and is currently under revision as we speak, with the primary goal of reducing it from twenty to thirteen weeks. The class is led by a team of women who have experienced sexual abuse and/or assault and have completed the class.

Women who have been sexually abused may come to the study having experienced some of the following and are looking for relief.

- Depression or free-floating (unattached) anxiety
- Blocked memory of whole sections of life
- Extreme difficulty in relationships with opposite gender
- Sexual Dysfunction, especially intolerance/disdain for sex
- Disdain for opposite gender
- Overt guilt, especially related to sex
- Separation from self, especially during sex
- Promiscuity
- General feelings of uncleanness
- Sexualized relationships
- Manipulative and controlling behaviors
- Perfectionism
- Conflict avoidance
- High level of demand on those close to them to not hurt them
- Repetition of the same types of offenses.
- Inability to form close bonds emotionally.
- Common patterns of avoidance.
- Sleep complaints.

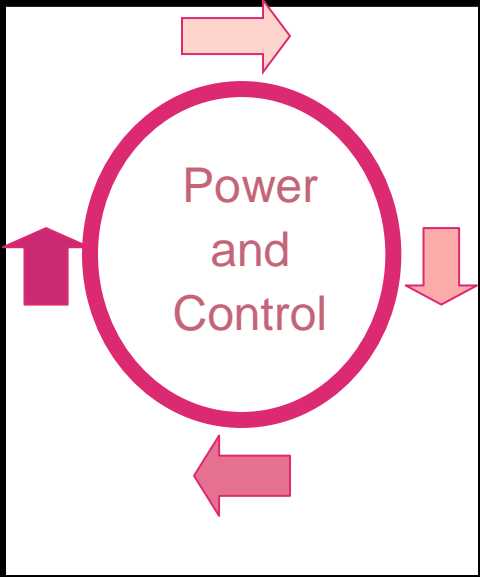
We will be starting a new class in August. Because of the damage done by sexual abuse and raw nature of the memories it brings up, we limit the study to eight women at a time to better form close, trusting relationships.

Topics that will be covered are defining sexual abuse and assault, denial, distorted self image, shame, guilt, anger, despair and grace. Each week participants will have homework, because as we all know that is where God meets people in his word.

Our hope is to first help ladies begin the process of healing and recognize their value in God's eyes. Then to address the patterns of sinful behavior that have occurred as a response to the sin of sexual abuse against them. And finally to live in the knowledge that their identity is in Christ not in the abuse in their past.

TEENAGE POWER AND CONTROL IN DATING

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<p>Physical Abuse - 8</p>	<p>Psychological and Emotional Abuse - 1</p>	<p>Verbal Abuse - 2</p>
<p>Any attempt to hurt or scare partner physically. Hitting, biting, hair pulling, grabbing, pushing, shoving, tripping, or kicking.</p>	<p>Putting your partner down and making them feel bad about themselves. Mind games or making partner feel crazy. Telling "secrets" to others. Ignoring or "silent treatment."</p>	<p>Name Calling Criticizing Publicly Humiliating Put Downs Embarrassments</p>
<p>Sexual Abuse - 7</p>		<p>Destruction of Personal Property - 3</p>
<p>Unwanted or uncomfortable touching. Continued sexual advances after being told "no." Forced sex. "Playful" use of force during sex. Treating partner like a sex object.</p>		<p>Destroying personal effects (pictures, letters, clothing, gifts). Ruining belongs. Defacing or causing damage to partners home, auto or other valuables</p>
<p>Abusive of Male "Privilege" - 6</p>	<p>Jealousy, Isolation, Possessiveness and Restriction of Freedoms - 5</p>	<p>Threats, Anger and Intimidation - 4</p>
<p>Making all the decisions. Going out with the "boys", but not allowing her that freedom. Walking out on an argument and leaving her. Doing all the telephoning and expecting her to be there.</p>	<p>Using jealousy as a sign of love instead of insecurity. Controlling what partner does, whom partner sees and talks to, where partner goes. Refusing to let partner work or join activities/dropping by unexpectedly to "watch" activities. Accusations of cheating on partner.</p>	<p>Using looks, actions, expressions or a loud voice to intimidate partner. Smashing or throwing objects. Threatening to leave partner or abandoning her in a dangerous place. Threatening physical harm.</p>

(From "Dear Abby" Winchester Star, Wednesday, January 19, 2000)

DEAR READERS: This was adapted from "*Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality*," with permission from the Project for Victims of Family Violence, Fayetteville, Ark. Something's just not right in your relationship, and you can't put your finger on it. So here's some help. If your mate is displaying a combination of these behaviors, then you may have a potential batterer on your hands.

A PUSH FOR QUICK INVOLVEMENT: Comes on very strong, claiming, "I've never felt loved like this by anyone." An abuser pressures the woman for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.

JEALOUSY: excessively possessive; calls constantly or visits unexpectedly; prevents you from going to work because "you might meet someone"; checks the mileage on your car.

CONTROLLING: Interrogates you intensely (especially if you're late) about whom you talked to, and where you were; keeps all the money; insists you ask permission to go anywhere or do anything.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS: Expects you to be the perfect woman and meet his every need.

ISOLATION: Tries to cut you off from family and friends; accuses people who are your supporters of "causing trouble." The abuser may deprive you of a phone or car or try to prevent you from holding a job.

BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS AND MISTAKES: The boss, you – it's always someone else's fault if anything goes wrong.

MAKES EVERYONE ELSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS FEELINGS: The abuser says, "You make me angry" instead of, "I am angry" or, "You're hurting me by not doing what I tell you." Less obvious is the claim: "You make me happy."

HYPERSENSITIVITY: Is easily insulted, claiming that his feelings are hurt when he is really mad. He'll rant about the injustice of things that are just part of life.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AND TO CHILDREN: Kills or punishes animals brutally. Also may expect children to do things that are far beyond their ability (whips a 3-year-old for wetting a diaper) or may tease them until they cry. Sixty-five percent of abusers who beat their partner will also abuse children.

"PLAYFUL" USE OF FORCE DURING SEX: Enjoys throwing you down or holding you down against your will during sex; says he finds the idea of rape exciting.

VERBAL ABUSE: Constantly criticizes you, or says blatantly cruel, hurtful things; degrades, curses, calls you ugly names. This may also involve sleep deprivation, waking you up with relentless verbal abuse.

RIGID SEX ROLES: Expects you to serve, obey and remain at home.

SUDDEN MOOD SWINGS: Switches from sweetly loving to explosively violent in a matter of minutes.

PAST BATTERING: Admits hitting women in the past, but says they made him do it or the situation brought it on.

THREATS OF VIOLENCE: Makes statements like "I'll break your neck," or "I'll kill you," and then dismisses them with, "Everybody talks that way," or "I didn't really mean it." If he has come this far, it is time to get help, or get out!