

ABUSE – VICTIM, SURVIVOR & CONQUEROR

Introduction to ‘Abuse: Victim, Survivor and Conqueror’

Jesus directs us in the parable of the mote and beam to look at ourselves. It seemed right therefore to use only information related to the Christadelphian community to look at the painful journey of those who have been abused. The journey is one from being a victim to becoming a conqueror. This journey reveals how through abuse every aspect of life is affected, even the relationship to God and Jesus. To survive this destruction of life defensive and survival strategies have to be put in place by the abused. The final and difficult task for the abused is to understand the deep crippling affects the abuse has had on their life and to remove the survival and defence mechanisms. Removal of these strategies enables the person’s real self to emerge. The joy of becoming a conqueror is increased when, as the apostle Paul tells us in Romans ‘We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.’

VICTIM

We are going to start by looking at the victim in terms of trust, guilt, shame and fear.

Trust

- Intrusion is abuse and if it is sexual abuse it is intrusion of the most horrific nature.
- As abuse is carried out by those who are supposed to love and care for the child then why should the child trust anyone?

Guilt

- Abusers have to protect themselves, so by some means the abused is made to feel it is all their fault.
- It’s a secret, a special secret
- It feels wrong and yet a special secret not to be talked about increases the confusion and the guilt.
- A guilt which is carried into adult life.

Shame

- The feeling of being dirty in some way emerges: unclean, soiled, and contaminated.
- The shame and the guilt reinforce the silence.

Fear

- With the loss of trust and the feelings of guilt and shame there comes fear.
- Constant fear both day and night.
- There is fear in childhood and there is fear in the adult world.

REFLECTION PERIOD

Colossians 1:22.

1John 4:16-18.

2Peter 1:3

P.T.L. 285. We bow down and confess.

THE SURVIVOR

How will this child who seems to have no value keep living and grow to become an adult?

True and False Self

- The abused child has to hide the vulnerable real self inside a false self which looks brave and copes with life.
- Protection of the real self goes on in many ways, one could say in every aspect of the abused person's life.

Space and Position

- There is always need of an escape route.
- Movement in large or small spaces is difficult, as is where one is within those spaces.
- There is always a threat, fear of abusive danger

Food and Eating

- Food and eating are deeply emotional things.
- We have to accept this food, take it in and make it a part of ourselves.
- They seem to be fussy eaters.
- Certain textures of food are avoided.
- The whole process by which food is taken in may be denied
- It is an avoidance of intrusion.

Clothes

- The whole aim is to be unobserved and unattractive. This is the way to avoid abuse, to survive.

Avoidance

- There are everyday things that seem to trigger feelings of terror and these must be avoided.
- Avoidance of these everyday things means getting through the day and the night. It means survival.

When these things are put together one can see that every aspect of life has been affected

In the child, in the teenager, in the adult that drive to survive goes on

REFLECTION PERIOD

Hebrews 4:15&16
John 15:5.
John 6:35
Revelation 7:13
Ephesians 3:16 -19

P.T.L. 87. Lord hear our prayer.

THE CONQUEROR

This is the difficult part. To understand, to unravel, to discard the defences of that false self.

The power of survival has however turned into the overwhelming force and desire to conquer.

Trust

- While trust, in the process of therapy, has been achieved this is not to say that trust in general has been established, that may take years.
- Even more difficult and problematic is trusting God..

Guilt, Shame, Fear

- Because a common method of defence is to block out the memory of the abuse the guilt, shame and fear can only slowly diminish with growing perception and understanding.
- Love and support is essential as that which has been blocked for so long is allowed to surface.

True and False Self

- As trust grows and as the reality of the abuse becomes clearer and the blocking process crumbles so that protective false self also starts to crumble.

Space and Position

- .Why should having people behind you feel unsafe?
- While keeping everybody in sight there is also the need to be able to escape.
- Relating carrying a map, or sitting on the end of a row to this early need to escape from the danger of abuse is not always easy.
- The false protective self has become as if it were the real self.
- These behaviours now need to be understood as the defences against the abuse.

Food and Eating

- To receive food in any form and to take it in requires firstly a real awareness that this is what is happening. Receiving and taking into ones self.

- It requires trust to accept food from another and put it into ones self, to make it a part of ones self.
- For the abused person food and eating can be seen as yet another intrusion into their body
- It is possible for the abused person to also use the food as a defence.
- It is also possible for the abused person to find ways of denying that the process eating is in fact happening.
- It is with much joy that the abused person can eventually take their real self to a breaking of bread service. The real 'me' partakes fully of the meal of remembrance.

Clothes

- We may take clothes for granted but they are a very significant part of how we present ourselves.
- Clothes have been used to indicate moral viewpoints.
- In religious life the way we dress can for some even reach the point of acceptance or rejection of the individual.
- The motivation for a certain mode of dress from the religious viewpoint and the abused person's viewpoint may not be the same. Given time and increasing understanding the abused person will change their mode of dress.

Avoidance

- The everyday things of life have greater significance than we often acknowledge. They have a darker significance for those who have suffered abuse.
- Hair for example.
- Swords and knives can be symbolic.
- Time itself can also be a threat should the abuse have happened at roughly the same time on each occasion.
- Specific places
- In the garden certain flowers with a phallic appearance can cause problems
- All these need to be dealt with, understood and reappraised so that a real self can be put together

Difficult Decisions

- The conqueror has some difficult decisions to make. Should the abuser be faced?
- The other most difficult process is that of forgiveness.

REFLECTION PERIOD

I want us to reflect back on all we have considered. Move the situations, feelings, fears and protective behaviours into a wider context. Move them into the context of

daily life. Move them into the context of church fellowship and see wider implications and spiritual needs.

Romans 8:31-33 and 37-39

P.T.L. 118 We are more than conquerors.