

Hope for Parents of Victimized Children

*“But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand.
The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.”
Psalm 10:14*

Why Did this Happen to Our Child?

- Sexual assaults on children are unfortunately very common. One in three girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before the age of 18.¹ 83% of abused boys are under age 12.²
- The sad reality is that **we live in a sinful, fallen world** where ungodly people often take advantage and commit crimes against children because they are vulnerable, innocent, and trusting. These criminal acts are frequently committed by trusted family members or family friends; thus, these offenders have easy access to their young victims. 99% of persons incarcerated for sexual assault or rape are men.³
- Be assured that God is **El Roi, the God who Sees injustice and hears** your cries for help (Gen 16:6,13; **Ps. 10**; Ps. 68:19; Ps 69:33; Ps 109:22) and has the **power** to work *“righteousness and justice for all the oppressed”* (Ps. 103:6). God saw and heard what the offender did to your child and he holds that offender responsible for his sin unless he repents.

How Might the Abuse Affect Our Child?

- Physical Effects: Bedwetting, nightmares, difficulty with sitting/standing, stained, bloody or torn underclothes. Swelling, bruises, or bleeding in the genital area is a red flag.
- Emotional Effects: Silence & withdrawal, regression of behavior, inappropriate sexual behavior, inability to concentrate on schoolwork, aggressive or very passive behavior. Older children may use destructive behaviors to numb the pain: alcohol or drug abuse, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, eating disorders.

What Can We Do?

- **Encourage your child to talk with you and tell you everything.** You may want to keep record of this information so you can accurately recall the necessary details. While you may feel an intense range of emotions such as anger, shock and pain, it is very important that you remain calm and steady as you communicate with your child. Otherwise, your child, who may already be fearful about communicating, may shy away from talking further.
- **Make a police report by calling 911.** Whenever an offense crosses the line into criminal activity, you have the right to call legal authorities. The police are part of the legal system that God established and are His servants to do you good and to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (**Rom. 13:1-5**; Ps 106:3). Sometimes, parents under-react and don't report sexual assaults because of the shame factor (shame for their family; shame because of their

relationship to the offender) and they nobly believe that they can somehow talk to the offender and get them to make things right. Unfortunately, sexual offenders have long established a habit of abusing children. The best and right thing to do is to make a police report. It may be the very thing that will help the offender to address his life dominating sin and need for God's intervention. If the offender is a "Christian", he can demonstrate his repentance by cooperating with legal authorities. Remember, the legal system was designed by God to bring justice for victims.

- If the incident just happened, you may want to **take your child to the doctor** for a medical exam, even if there aren't visible injuries.
- You may want to resource the **Sex Abuse Treatment Center's 24 hour hotline** at 245-4144 or visit their website at http://satchawaii.com/what_to_do_overview.html
- **Get biblical counsel from your pastor.** Communicating and processing the offense against your family is a vital part of the healing process.
- **Assure your child that s/he is innocent of wrongdoing.** Often the victim suffers from feelings of false guilt, embarrassment and shame. Be encouraged that God is your ultimate Defender (Ps 68:5). The person who violated your child is guilty of a crime and needs to repent to God, to you and willingly face the legal consequences.
- **Fight for your child, using the legal system!** Be prepared to put other things in your life on the back burner as you tend to your child's welfare. Your child may not currently understand or appreciate the sacrifice of time, commitment, emotional energy, perseverance, but they will someday! Your direct intervention will make the difference between a broken, dysfunctional child (soon to be adult) and a whole, healthy person.
- Keep in mind that this process will be taxing on you and your child. S/he may be emotionally frayed after legal meetings or counseling sessions. Allow for that and do things to encourage and comfort your child.
- Many Christians believe that one can simply forgive from their heart and move on. It's important to know that God established the pattern of reconciliation and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. This is what Paul meant when he wrote "*Forgive as the Lord forgave you*" (Col. 3:13). God doesn't automatically forgive unrepentant sinners but He is always ready to forgive, when they choose to repent and ask Him for forgiveness. If the offender confesses and is truly repentant, he will demonstrate his repentance by willingly going through the legal court process for the sake of his victim. In addition, the offender should pay restitution to cover counseling fees, legal fees, and to help compensate for emotional damage.
- **Keep talking with your child, whenever it is appropriate.** Your child will benefit more from open talking with you than s/he will from a professional counselor! From time to time, you can ask, "*How are you feeling about.....?*" Don't push the topic but seize the windows of opportunity when you have them.

- If the assault happened on your property, you may need to get rid of certain furniture, change the environment, or even move to another home. Keep persevering! God will walk with you through this process!

- In summary, the keys to wholeness and victory are
 - Cry out to El Roi and worship Him through your darkest valleys.
 - Pursue legal action, because God established legal servants to do you good and punish the wrongdoer.
 - Keep communicating with your child through the whole process.
 - “Prokope” & “Hupomone”!

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”
Romans 8:37

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¹ Russell, Diana 1988. Handbook on Sexual Abuse of Children, Springer Publishing Co.

² ed. Mic Hunter. The Sexually Abused Male: Prevalence, Impact, and Treatment. MA: Lexington Books.

³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997.