



Sexual Abuse and Shame

Considering Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse is not only a violation of the body but also of the soul and spirit.
- Survivors often carry misplaced shame, believing they are to blame, when the sin rests entirely with the abuser.
- This resource equips leaders to understand the dynamics of shame, provide spiritual and practical support, and point to Christ's healing.

Understanding the Connection

- Violation of dignity: Abuse strips away a sense of worth and agency.
- Shame's power: Survivors often feel defiled or "dirty," though guilt belongs to the offender.
- Secrecy and silence: Shame pushes survivors into hiding, prolonging trauma and isolation.

Key Scripture: "They looked to Him and were radiant; and their faces were not ashamed." (Psalm 34:5)

Psychological and Emotional Impact

- Distorted self-image – "I am unworthy" or "I deserved it."
- Mistrust and fear – difficulty forming healthy relationships.
- Triggers – flashbacks, body disconnection, struggles in intimacy.
- Cycles of silence – feelings of being unseen or unheard.

Biblical and Theological Dimensions

- Shame in the Fall – Adam and Eve hid themselves (Genesis 3:7–10). Abuse survivors often do the same.
- Christ bore our shame – "...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame..." (Hebrews 12:2).
- Restoration in Christ – The woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25–34) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11) show Jesus restoring dignity and removing stigma.

Steps Toward Healing

a. Breaking Silence

- Encourage safe disclosure in confidential, supportive spaces.
- James 5:16 "–Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."



b. Reframing Identity

- Survivors are not defined by what was done to them.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 “ –If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

c. Therapeutic and Pastoral Care

- Trauma-informed counseling.
- Deliverance from false guilt and toxic shame through prayer.

d. Community Support

- A loving, safe church family can provide affirmation, accountability, and restoration.

Practical Teaching Points for Leaders

- Do not minimize or spiritualize the abuse—validate the pain.
- Avoid victim-blaming language.
- Teach the difference between guilt (for what we do) and shame (false belief about who we are).
- Integrate scripture, counseling, and community in the healing journey.
- Remember: Healing is a process, not a one-time event.

Conclusion

- Sexual abuse wounds deeply, but shame does not have the final word.
- The Church and its leaders are called to be agents of dignity restoration, reflecting Christ who bore shame for our healing.
- Survivors can reclaim identity, worth, and wholeness in God’s presence.

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