



**Wiping the Tears: A Caring  
Response to Abuse**  
*Healing From Past Abuse/  
Sexual Abuse*

*Rev. Christine Raymond, MS, LMHC*

*November 7, 2008*

*Safe Harbor Ministries*

*[www.safeharborministries.org](http://www.safeharborministries.org)*

A close-up photograph of two hands held out in a gesture of prayer or offering. The hands are positioned symmetrically, palms facing up, and are set against a background of a light-colored, textured fabric, possibly a towel or a piece of clothing, which is slightly wrinkled. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tones and the texture of the fabric. The overall mood is one of hope and faith.

**God's Word Concerning  
Healing From Abuse**

**Psalm 116:1-9, 118:10-17 (NLT)**

**Isaiah 61:1-4 (NLT)**

A pair of hands, palms up, held out against a dark background. The hands are positioned at the top of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the veins on the palms. The overall mood is one of openness and vulnerability.

# Why do we need to talk about abuse in the church?

- Christians should not be ignorant about the nature, prevalence, and severity of abuse that exists in our homes, churches, neighborhoods, and our world.
- Abuse exists in every country and among all people groups.
- Abuse occurs within every faith tradition and every socioeconomic group.
- Some statistics about sexual abuse/assault

# Child Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse is any contact or interaction between a child and an adult (or a child who is older or has more power) in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or another.
- This ranges from exposing the child to sexual information to full physical sexual contact.
- No matter if it happens once or multiple times, with coaxing and promises or threats and violence, any sexual abuse is extremely harmful to the child and has long lasting results.

# Sexual Assault and Rape

- Rape and sexual assault are not sexually motivated crimes; they are crimes of violence that stem from aggression, rage, sexism, hatred and determination to exercise power over someone else.
- While it is perpetrated mostly by men against women, anyone can be a victim or a perpetrator.
- Far too often, those who have been victimized are victimized again by stereotypes and questions about rape that blame the victim. This often leads to further guilt, shame, and self blame, leaving the victim alone and isolated.

A pair of hands, one on the left and one on the right, are shown from the wrist up, holding a small, light-colored object between the palms. The hands are positioned in the upper half of the frame. The background is dark and textured, possibly a piece of fabric or a wall. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tones of the hands.

# The Initial Effects of Sexual Abuse

- Fear, anxiety, nightmares, sleeping and eating difficulties, depression, self-hatred, anger, hostility, aggression
- Sexual avoidance or promiscuity
- In children, sexual knowledge and/or and sexualized behaviors that are inappropriate and beyond what is age-appropriate.

A pair of hands is shown from the wrist up, held out with palms facing upwards. The hands are positioned in the upper half of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The background is dark and textured, possibly a fabric or a wall. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tones of the hands.

# Long Term Effects of Sexual Abuse

- Depression
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Self injurious behaviors
- Suicidal thoughts and gestures
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Isolation, low self-esteem
- Body image issues and/or eating disorders
- Intense feelings of shame and guilt
- Gender and sexual issues
- Difficulty in relationships: trust, intimacy
- Spiritual questions, difficulty trusting God

A close-up photograph of two hands, palms facing each other, held in a prayer-like position. The skin is light-toned. On the palm of each hand, there is a small, crescent-shaped red mark. The hands are set against a dark, textured background, possibly a piece of fabric. Overlaid on the center of the hands is the text "My Testimony and Healing Process" in a bold, yellow, serif font.

# **My Testimony and Healing Process**

A pair of hands is shown from the wrist up, held out with palms facing upwards. The hands are positioned symmetrically, one on the left and one on the right, against a dark, textured background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tones and the lines on the palms. The overall mood is one of openness and vulnerability.

# The Journey of Healing Involves:

- Remembering and speaking about the abuse
- Experiencing the sorrow, the grief and times of depression, and mourning the losses
- Giving voice to feelings of anger and rage
- Facing and resolving spiritual and life questions related to a world in which such horrors take place
- With God's grace and help, moving on to a sense of acceptance and the miracle of forgiveness.

The background of the slide features two hands held out, palms up, against a dark, textured background. The hands are positioned at the top of the frame, with fingers slightly curled. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tones and the texture of the palms. The overall mood is one of openness and vulnerability.

# Forgiveness

- Forgiveness cannot be hurried or forced; it is usually a process.
- It is only *after* we have acknowledged and experienced the depth of our pain and losses that we can truly forgive.
- Forgiveness is not saying that what happened was okay or the perpetrator deserves to be forgiven.
- Forgiveness is not reconciliation.
- Forgiving is not forgetting.
- Feeling emotional pain does not mean you have not forgiven. It means you still need healing.
- Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.

A pair of hands, palms up, held out against a dark background. The hands are positioned at the top of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the creases on the palms. The overall mood is one of offering, support, and care.

# Healing From Abuse

- It's worth it! (And YOU'RE worth it!)
- Healing from abuse is a courageous and worthwhile endeavor, and it takes TIME.
- You suffered ALONE during the abuse. In healing and recovery from abuse, you need to allow *safe* people into your life. A support network is best.
- *Break the silence* and begin to tell someone your story.



# How Can I Help?

- God uses *ordinary people* to have compassion on those who are suffering and to act as His Body in healing the broken-hearted.
- Take time to *listen* to the survivor's story. When you listen without judgment, trying to understand and empathize with her pain, you validate her experience, acknowledge that what happened to her was wrong and abusive, and show that she matters and she is not alone.
- Practical acts of service
- Spiritual comfort