



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

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

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

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

A pair of hands, one light-skinned and one dark-skinned, are shown holding a small, dark object between their fingers. The background is dark and textured, possibly a piece of fabric or a wall. The text is overlaid on this image.

# **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.

A pair of hands, one on the left and one on the right, are shown holding a small, light-colored object, possibly a flower or a piece of fabric, against a dark background. The hands are positioned as if presenting the object. The text is overlaid on this image.

# **Revictimizing the Victim**

**Far too often, those who have been victimized by sexual violence are victimized again. How?**

**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.**



# **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.**

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 spread. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the skin tones and the texture of the palms. The overall mood is one of vulnerability and openness.

# **Long Term Effects of Abuse**

**Depression**

**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder  
(PTSD)**

**Difficulty sleeping**

**Self injurious behaviors**

**Suicidal thoughts and gestures**

**Alcohol and drug abuse**

**Isolation, low self-esteem**

A pair of hands is shown from a top-down perspective, held out with palms facing upwards. The hands are positioned symmetrically on either side of the center. The background is dark and textured, possibly a fabric or a wall. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tones and the lines on the palms.

# **More Long Term Effects**

**Body image issues and/or eating disorders**

**Feeling emotionally overwhelmed or numb/disconnected/shut down**

**Intense feelings of shame and guilt**

**Gender and/or sexual issues**

**Difficulty with relationships: trust, intimacy**

**Spiritual questions, difficulty trusting God**

A close-up photograph of two hands, palms facing up, with visible wounds on the palms. The hands are positioned symmetrically, one on the left and one on the right. The skin is light-colored, and the wounds are small, crescent-shaped, and appear to be fresh or recently treated. The background is dark and out of focus, with some light-colored fabric visible at the top and bottom edges.

# **My Testimony and Healing Process**

The background of the slide features two hands held out, palms up, against a dark, textured background. The hands are positioned symmetrically, one on the left and one on the right, 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.

# **The Journey of Healing Involves**

**Acknowledging and speaking about the abuse**

**Experiencing the pain, the sadness and grieving 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 wholeness and the miracle of forgiveness.**

The background of the image shows two hands held out, palms up, with a white cloth draped over them. The hands are positioned as if offering something or in a gesture of prayer or surrender. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the fabric.

# 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.**

A close-up photograph of two hands, one on the left and one on the right, holding a small, dark, textured object between their fingers. The hands are positioned as if presenting or examining the object. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Forgiveness

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.

The background of the entire image shows two hands held out, palms up, against a dark, textured background. The hands are positioned symmetrically, one on the left and one on the right, with fingers slightly spread. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tones and the texture of the palms. The overall mood is one of offering, support, and healing.

# 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.**

A close-up photograph of two hands, one slightly above the other, holding a small, dark, textured object between their fingers. The hands are positioned as if presenting or offering something. The background is a neutral, light-colored surface.

# 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.

The image shows two hands held out, palms up, in a gesture of offering or help. The hands are positioned symmetrically, one on the left and one on the right, against a dark background. The skin tone is light. The text is overlaid on the hands and is in a yellow, serif font. The background is dark, with some lighter, textured areas that appear to be the sleeves of a garment.

# How Can I Help?

**Practical acts of service**

**Spiritual comfort**