

# HOPE FOR HEALING

#### DIANE LANGBERG

(Judges 19:25)

o one wants to think about sexual abuse—especially abuse of children or young people. However, statistics show that one in four females and one in six males are sexually

molested prior to the age of eighteen. Such numbers indicate that many people are looking at life and spiritual matters through the lens of sexual abuse. And with such numbers, it is also certain that our church congregations include many people who are aching from having been sexually abused.

#### **SEXUAL ABUSE DEFINED**

Sexual abuse occurs when an older person sexually exploits a child in order to satisfy the abuser's needs. It consists of any sexual activity—verbal, visual, or physical—engaged in with a minor. Verbal sexual abuse includes comments about a person's body, lewd remarks, and the discussion of sexual activity. Visual sexual abuse includes pornography and being forced to view sexual activity of any kind. Physical abuse includes fondling or sexual contact.

Sexual abuse is most often perpetrated by an adult who has ready access to the child by virtue of authority or kinship. It can be a one-time occurrence or span many years. The majority of abusers of both male and female victims are male. When sexual abuse begins, the average age of the child is between six and twelve. The child is considered unable to consent due to developmental immaturity and an inability to understand sexual behavior. Sexual abuse is illegal in all fifty states.

#### SCRIPTURE AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Scripture says much that relates to the topic of sexual abuse. Except within the context of a marriage, all sexual relationships are wrong. Scripture constantly demonstrates God's love and care for children as an example for all people to emulate.

Scripture also has direct references to

sexual abuse. Tamar was raped by her half brother Amnon, and from that point on "remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house" (2 Sam. 13:20). Judges 19 describes a woman's gang-rape by a group of crazed men. That hideous abuse and the protection of the abusers by the Benjamites caused a terrible war in Israel that cost 40,000 men their lives.

## HOPE FOR HEALING

To be abused is to be touched by evil. Evil, like good, has an impact. There are many things that contribute to the impact of sexual abuse in a life. No two people are alike.

It is important for people to understand how the abuse has impacted them. What has it taught them? Where has it harmed them? Healing is applied knowledgeably only when a wound is understood. It is also crucial to know that no matter what the extent of the damage, no matter how badly one has been wounded, there is hope for healing.

Abuse that is frequent and of long duration has more severe effects. The more closely related the perpetrator and the victim, and the wider the age difference, the more severe the effects. Abuse by males is often considered more harmful, as is abuse involving penetrations of any kind, or abuse that is sadistic or violent.

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the ability to relate to another person. The damage is multiplied over and over again during the essential developmental time when the child is forming a foundation for adulthood. Just as a young sapling can be trained to grow straight and tall or misshapen and twisted during its formative early experiences.

People who have been chronically abused learn that bodies are for hurting > Genesis 50:20 and believe they have no choice about what happens to them. Healing will mean ➤ 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 learning how to care for their bodies—to > 1 Thessalonians 5:14 protect them from harm and maintain their integrity. It is very healing for survivors to see that Jesus lived in a body that was also abused. He was hit, spit on, humiliated, and left naked in front of others. The Healer, who is scarred for all eternity, knows the pain of abuse.

Sexual abuse also results in damage to the emotions-fear, grief, anger, and guilt often govern abused people's lives. It will take hard work to learn to deal with these emotions. But it can be done. Nothing is outside of God's power to heal and control.

Sexual abuse also damages people's thinking. Abused people lie to themselves that the abuse was not really bad, that the abuse was their fault, or that the abuse occurred because they are worthless. God hates abuse because He hates all evil. But He does not hate the victims. Abuse is the fault of the abusers, not the victims. Abuse victims will need help to hear God's truth speak louder than the lies of abuse.

Sexual abuse also deeply damages victims' spirits and ability to relate to God. Abuse hinders their ability to hope, may make them afraid of God, or make them unable to trust Him. Victims often struggle to understand why God allowed the abuse to occur.

We can help victims of abuse by help-

to the body, the mind, the emotions, and ing them to focus on the character of God. The person of Christ and the Word of God teach the truth about who God is. As they learn more about God's power and ability to heal, they can place their past and their future in God's hands.

#### **FURTHER MEDITATION:**

years, so a child can be impacted by life's Other passages to study about the issue of abuse include:

- > Psalms 11: 27: 119:50, 73-88

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e will not ners, who will go on servant, of these eah or in went their hem near c. <sup>15</sup>They n Gibeah. the open take them

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were Benjamites. 17 And when he raised his GIBEAH'S CRIME eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of going, and where do you come from?"

<sup>18</sup>So he said to him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; now I am going to the house of the LORD. But there is no one who will take me into his house, 19 although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything."

<sup>20</sup>And the old man said, "Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square." 21So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

<sup>22</sup>As they were enjoying themselves, sudthe city; and the old man said, "Where are you denly certain men of the city, perverted men," surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!"

<sup>23</sup>But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage. 24Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!" 25But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine

19:22 <sup>a</sup>Literally sons of Belial 19:24 <sup>a</sup>Literally his

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

## THE LEVITE'S CONCUBINE

(JUDGES 19)

Whether abusive acts have to do with power, things, or people, the results lead to destruction. When the writer of Judges concluded this journal about a nation in

disarray, he summarized the chaos with these words, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). No pattern of behavior leads to horrific abuses more quickly than when each person does whatever they want to do without regard to some external standard. The account of the woman abused by her husband and by strangers demonstrates this.

When the man from Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem, he ignored God's rules for relationships. She wasn't allowed to be a marriage partner; she was property. Her rebellion was a cry for dignity.

The Levite's trip to Bethlehem to retrieve his concubine turned into a tragedy of errors. On the return trip, the couple found themselves under the narrow hospitality of a man from Gibeah—wide enough to guarantee the Levite's safety even at the cost of his host's daughter, but utterly excluding the concubine. She was eventually offered as a sexual diversion to a mob that surrounded the house. Their intended homosexual assault on the Levite became a vicious gang rape of the concubine, resulting in her death.

Apparently oblivious to his own cowardice and abuse, the Levite dismembered the woman's body and sent parts throughout Israel, demanding justice. Even though the nation of Israel acted to exact justice on Gibeah, they also had to suffer as a result of the pervasive atmosphere of sin among the people. Sinful abuses not only led to death; almost as many Israelites as Benjamites died during the judgment of Gibeah. The nation had to be shocked and horrified into realizing the spreading effects of the abuse of God's law and the resulting abuses of persons created in His image.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about abuse on pages 328, 329. See also the key passage note at Genesis 19:4-9 on page 27.

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<sup>30</sup>Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be SODOM'S DEPRAVITY found there?"

So He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

<sup>31</sup>And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?"

So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty."

<sup>32</sup>Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?"

And He said, "I will not destroy it for the

sake of ten." 33So the LORD went His way as So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. 2And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way."

And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square."

<sup>3</sup>But he insisted strongly; so they turned in



Being There (18:19) God chose Abraham, desiring that he "command his children" regarding the way of the Lord, righteousness, and justice. This implies that Abraham would be involved in his children's lives in order to teach them.

A parent's caring involvement in his or her children's lives is a crucial factor in the children's development. Being a great parent starts with knowing God and is fulfilled in consistent teaching, fair discipline, and loving actions toward one's children. Clearly God expects parents to be present in their children's lives to teach them the way of the Lord. Topic: Child Development

#### KEY PASSAGE



## TRAGIC CHAIN OF EVENTS

(19:4-9)

abuse cases. When he shockingly suggested that the evil men rape his daughters instead of his guests, Lot was trying to substitute one sexual sin for another. He jeopardized his own daughters and violated his responsibility as a parent. Despite the angels' miraculous intervention (Gen. 19:11), the spiritual and psychological damage had been done. The daughters' later incestuous relationships with their father was another link in the chain

Lot's terrible actions reveal the tragic chain of events that often occurs in sexual

reaction of sexual abuse (Gen. 19:30-38). Sexual abuse, in any form, results in low self-esteem, conflict over sexual identity, inability to trust, isolation, and feelings of guilt and shame. It can result in long-term physical and psychological damage. As in the case of all sinful actions, the abuser usually fabricates

a rationale for his or her conduct. The morbid story of Lot's daughters illustrates this all

too well.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about abuse on pages 328, 329. See also the personality profile of the Levite's concubine on page 327.

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daughter, a thing which ought not to be done. But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. 9And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. 10So vou shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it."

brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. <sup>12</sup>Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife."

<sup>13</sup>But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. <sup>14</sup>And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us. <sup>15</sup>But on this *condition* we will **consent** to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised, <sup>16</sup>then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. <sup>17</sup>But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

<sup>18</sup>And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. 19So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He was more honorable than all the household of his father.

<sup>20</sup>And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: <sup>21</sup>"These men are at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land is large

graceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. <sup>22</sup>Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. 23Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us." 24And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circum-<sup>11</sup>Then Shechem said to her father and her cised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

> <sup>25</sup>Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. 26And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. <sup>27</sup>The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. <sup>28</sup>They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field, <sup>29</sup>and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses.

> <sup>30</sup>Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

> 31But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

#### JACOB'S RETURN TO BETHEL

Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make enough for them. Let us take their daughters an altar there to God, who appeared to you

#### SOUL NOTE



An Inexcusable Act (34:2) Shechem first "lay with" Dinah and "violated her," then claimed to love her and to want to marry her. While his love for her may have been genuine, his actions were inexcusable. He said he wanted to marry Dinah, but he had already done evil. A young man may think he is in love, but to

force a woman to have sex with him violates and abuses her. This does not show love at all. For Shechem, his act resulted in death and destruction for an entire city. The consequences of such abuse, no matter how one tries to justify it, are far-reaching and destructive.

Topic: Abuse

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tt their faoseph will for all the sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, 17'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." ' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

<sup>18</sup>Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are ing; but God will surely visit you, and bring your servants."

<sup>19</sup>Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. <sup>21</sup>Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide

for you and your little ones." And he comforted balmed him, and he was put in a coffin in them and spoke kindly to them.

#### DEATH OF JOSEPH

<sup>22</sup>So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

<sup>24</sup>And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dyyou out of this land to the land of which He

> <sup>25</sup>Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up mv bones from here." <sup>26</sup>So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they em-

Egypt.

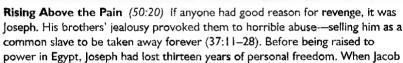
## SOUL NOTE

"But as for you, you meant

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meant it for good."

GENESIS 50:20



died, the brothers feared that Joseph, now a powerful ruler, would exact his revenge. Instead, Joseph wisely understood that God had sovereignly overruled his brothers' abuse, making their evil turn out for good. Such a response can only come from those who trust God to rule—and overrule—in their lives. Topic: Abuse

5'And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will. <sup>6</sup>It shall be eaten the same day you offer *it*, and on the next day. And if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. <sup>7</sup>And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it *is* an abomination. It shall not be accepted. <sup>8</sup>Therefore *everyone* who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the hallowed *offering* of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people.

<sup>9</sup>'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup>And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather *every* grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.

ll You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. <sup>12</sup> And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob *him*. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. <sup>14</sup> You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I *am* the LORD.

<sup>15</sup> You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor

the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. <sup>16</sup>You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. <sup>18</sup>You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.

<sup>19</sup>'You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.

<sup>20</sup> Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to a man as a concubine, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for this there shall be scourging; but they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. <sup>21</sup>And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, a ram as a trespass offering. <sup>22</sup>The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he has committed. And the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him.

#### SOUL NOTE



Living Justly (19:16) The law was designed to help God's people live justly with one another. "You shall do no injustice," God commanded (19:15). In relation to this command, God tells them not to gossip. Gossip is a form of character assassination that reflects hatred (19:17). We should confront wrongdoing

directly, not gossip with others about it. God expects us to live above our frustrations and to love our neighbors as ourselves (19:18). Jesus taught this same principle (Matt. 22:39). Topic: Gossip

#### SOUL NOTE



**Staying Pure** (19:29) How can we help our children to stay pure in a world filled with sexual deviance and abuse? In an environment of sexual promiscuity, parents are responsible for protecting their children. God gave women and children great dignity and divine respect. The law in this passage warns fathers

not to prostitute their daughters, a terrible form of child abuse. Parents must take seriously their duty of guarding their children's morals, teaching them about sexual purity and helping them to maintain it. **Topic: Abuse** 

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<sup>5</sup>Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to make war; and they besieged Ahaz but could not overcome him. 6At that time Rezin king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and drove the men of Judah from Elath. Then the Edomites<sup>a</sup> went to Elath, and dwell there to

<sup>7</sup>So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me." <sup>8</sup>And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria. 9So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin.

<sup>10</sup>Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its workmanship. "Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz came back from Damascus. 12 And when the king came back from Damascus, the king saw the altar; and the king approached the altar and made offerings on it. 13So he burned his burnt offering and his grain offering; and he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. <sup>14</sup>He also brought the bronze altar which was before the LORD, from the front of the temple—from between the new altar and the house of the LORD—and put it on the north side of the new altar. 15 Then King Ahaz com- 16:6 Some ancient authorities read Syrians.

and burned incense on the high places, on the manded Urijah the priest, saving, "On the great new altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by." <sup>16</sup>Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that King Ahaz commanded.

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<sup>17</sup>And King Ahaz cut off the panels of the carts, and removed the lavers from them; and he took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pavement of stones. 18 Also he removed the Sabbath pavilion which they had built in the temple, and he removed the king's outer entrance from the house of the LORD, on account of the king of

19Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

#### HOSHEA REIGNS IN ISRAEL

The twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years. <sup>2</sup>And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him. 3Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. 4And the king of Assyria uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. There-

# SOUL NOTE

Through the Fire (16:3) Ahaz was an evil king who worshiped idols. Instead of following the example of his ancestor David, Ahaz chose to follow the other evil kings of Israel. The statement, "He made his son pass through the fire," refers to child sacrifice to the god Molech. Such disregard for human life and abuse of

children created an atmosphere of political chaos and spiritual degradation throughout his kingdom. When the most innocent are not protected, there is little safety for anyone. Topic: Abuse