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Our Members:

Please call any of our members directly if you are in need of a listening ear and a helping hand.

Winter Article: Hope After Abuse
Upcoming Spring Article: Support for the Elderly



Confidentiality: The services Elim Support Committee is offering are confidential between the church member and the committee member contacted.

Hope After Abuse: (article on back)

Information for this article has been sourced from RAINN.org and familycrisiscenters.org. Readers interested in finding more information can also reference these websites.

Resource List

- **CAASA** – Centers Against Abuse & Sexual Assault
877-362-4612
Free and Confidential 24/7 Crisis Line
caasaonline.org
- **Creative Living Center**
712-476-5245
888-587-2537
creativelivingcenterpc.com
- **DHS** – Department of Human Services Abuse Hotline
800-362-2178
- **Family Crisis Centers of NW Iowa**
712-722-4404 • 800-382-5603
familycrisiscenters.org
- **Plains Area Mental Health**
712-546-4624
888-546-0730 – After-Hours Crisis Hotline
plainsareamentalhealth.org
- **Seasons Center for Behavioral Health**
800-242-5101
833-570-0716 – After Hours Crisis Hotline
seasonscenter.org

Hope After Abuse

“So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.” (Ecclesiastes 4:1) When we consider how this text applies to us today, we are brought to the realization that human nature has not changed since this verse was written. Without God, we are subject to all kinds of oppression and are left without comfort. The type of oppression we will address in this article is the subject of abuse. Oftentimes, those who are abused may feel powerless and without comfort. This article is intended to provide hope and support for those who have suffered as a result of abuse. In addition, we will also share information and resources that may help family, friends and church members support those who have been affected by abuse.

Abuse can take on many forms, such as physical, emotional, sexual, financial or psychological abuse. The abuser may also attempt to intimidate, manipulate, isolate or threaten the victim, so that he or she is afraid to speak out. Often, the abuser uses a combination of these behaviors in order to maintain power and control over the person they are abusing. Abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of age, race, gender, level of education, or socioeconomic background. Sadly, abuse often happens within families and most victims know their abuser. In addition, many abusers have been abused themselves as children. In this way, the cycle of abuse can be passed down from generation to generation.

As mentioned above, those who are abused often feel powerless as a result of the abuse. In addition, they are often overwhelmed with fear of the abuser, fear of not being believed if they tell, and fear of what will happen if they tell. Victims often feel shame and self-blame as a result of the abuse. Often the abuser attempts to make the victim feel as if they are the ones responsible for the abuse, as if they deserve the abuse. As a result of the abuse, victims may also lose their ability to trust other people and to have faith in God. This is especially relevant when children are abused by a caregiver or other adult who was entrusted by God to take care of them. The physical and emotional damage due to abuse is devastating and can extend many years beyond the actual act of abuse; often affecting the victim to some degree for the rest of his or her life. Victims often face depression and anxiety later in life and may have nightmares and panic attacks relating to the abuse. Some turn to substance abuse or sexual promiscuity in order to deaden the pain. Others attempt to deny the abuse and live in silent hurt and anguish.

After reading about the physical and emotional pain caused by abuse, one may wonder, “Is there hope after abuse?” Through the help of God and the support of others, there IS hope after abuse. As Psalm 72:12 states, “For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.” If you have been affected by abuse, God is able to help you and give you strength through the difficult process of emotional healing. In many cases, He has also provided friends or family members to help support throughout the process. If you are still in a situation where you are being abused, we encourage you to reach out to someone you can trust. For hope and healing to occur, the abuse must first end. If you are not able to share what is happening with family or friends, please call one of the numbers in the resource list at the end of this article. Do not give up hope until you find help. At times when you feel like there is no one you can turn to, remember that “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.” (Psalm 9:9)

We would also like to address the subject of hope and help for the abuser. Is there a possibility of forgiveness for those who have harmed others through abuse? According to Isaiah 55:7 there is hope, for “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” With God’s help, this means honestly repenting and forsaking the sin of abuse, rather than justifying or minimizing the effects of our actions in the lives of others. This may also require the abuser to acknowledge and heal from abuse that has occurred in his or her own childhood, thus breaking the cycle of abuse. In the end, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

In what ways can family, friends and church members support those who have been affected by abuse? The most important way to support someone who has been abused is to listen without judgment. If they are sharing their story of personal pain with you, it means that they trust you to believe them and to respect their confidentiality. Help them to find the support they need, whether it be medical attention or counseling. Practical support can also be helpful, such as financial support or helping with childcare. If the victim is a child, be sure to stay calm and reassure the child that they are not to blame for the abuse. Reacting in anger or disbelief may cause the child to withdraw or feel shame. If the victim is a child, you may also need to share the information with others who can keep the child safe. Following this article are a list of resources that may be helpful for those who have been affected by abuse. May God give us the ability to follow the words of Proverbs 31:9, “Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.”