

THE  
**HOPE**  
OF SURVIVORS

QUESTIONS  
& ANSWERS  
ABOUT CLERGY  
SEXUAL ABUSE

# DISCLAIMER

This booklet was produced in order to help answer multiple questions we received repeatedly over the years. The questions and answers have been extracted from correspondence between victims and The Hope of Survivors' volunteers. In some instances, answers are very specific to the victim/couple being addressed. However, there are principles that apply to all and so, for those reasons, these communications have been included.

For personal support, as a victim of clergy sexual abuse, please reach out to The Hope of Survivors so one of our volunteers can assist you in your healing journey.

The Hope of Survivors  
4245 Redbird Lane East  
Burleson, TX 76028-7951

Phone: (866) 260-8958  
Email: [help@thehopeofsurvivors.org](mailto:help@thehopeofsurvivors.org)  
Website: [www.thehopeofsurvivors.org](http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.org)

Copyright (C) 2022 The Hope of Survivors. All rights reserved.

# QUESTION 1

**My pastor uses 1 Corinthians 5 and says that I should repent for the abuse the pastor committed against me. Am I at fault or is my pastor?**

That text is referring to incest. If anything, what the pastor has done to you can be considered spiritual incest. He is the one guilty, not you. You are not to be excluded from the congregation. The pastor who is unrepentant and continues to mock at and indulge in sin is the one who is to be disfellowshipped.

It is often difficult to "make sense" out of the responsibility issue. The victim is not to blame for the abuse perpetrated upon her by her pastor or other spiritual leader. She is not responsible for his actions and behavior, he is. Many Bible scholars believe the woman who was caught in adultery was Mary Magdalene. Mary was set up and abused by a spiritual leader—her uncle (many believe) Simon. For the people to have "caught" her in the very act, it had to have been a set up. This set up was done by the spiritual leaders of the day. There was no mention of the man, the "partner."

If what scholars believe is true, then we have another wonderful example of God's love toward us, as VICTIMS. After writing in the dust, the men leaving, Jesus asked who condemned her, and she said no one. Then He said (and this is key), "neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." This is where the fine line comes between recognizing pastoral sexual misconduct as abuse, but also acknowledging that the victim is accountable to

God (for her own actions) in a sense as well. Not for the sin of being abused...but for not heeding the voice and warning of the Holy Spirit.

Many of the women who've contacted us admitted they knew it was "wrong" and felt guilt over the "relationship." True, they were powerless, in their own strength, to get away from it or to change it. In other words, you're not to confess and repent for being abused because that is not your sin—you are a victim. However, if you have lied, committed adultery, etc., that should be confessed and repented—AS THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS YOU. No person has the authority to tell you what your sins are. That's between you and the Holy Spirit. Adultery is not the same as an affair. An affair implies mutual consent and equality, something which does not exist in a pastor-congregant relationship. Adultery, however, is simply sexual activity outside of marriage.

He was in the position of authority and power. God holds him much more accountable than He does you. 1 Peter 4:17 tells us that "judgment begins at the house of God", and I believe the Lord will take matters into His own hands if the church fails to help you, vindicate you, and discipline this wolf in sheep's clothing. He is no representative of Jesus, and he has no place in the pulpit.

### **The Umbrella Analogy**

Think of clergy sexual abuse as an umbrella that covers the victim and her actions. Everything that takes place falls under the umbrella of abuse. Period. There are things said and done that never would have been said or done without the grooming and manipulation and abuse of the spiritual leader. Therefore, like King David, the

spiritual leader/abuser bears the sin and responsibility for what happened. (God, through Nathan the Prophet, rebuked David, not Bathsheba, although Bathsheba still had a relationship with God and would need forgiveness for her own sins.)

HOWEVER...this does not eliminate our individual and personal accountability to God for things we have said/done. Under the umbrella of abuse, I had committed adultery against my husband and God. I had lied to my husband and God. Those things were my sins—even under the umbrella of abuse. The Holy Spirit convicted me of those sins as I was seeking God's face and healing from the abuse. Under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I confessed those sins in which I took part—even though it was abuse and I felt I could not do differently due to the emotional/spiritual manipulation.

The bottom line is, I tell people that no other person has a right to flat out tell a victim they need to confess or repent of anything. Clergy sexual abuse needs to be seen and treated as ABUSE. IF the victim has a need to confess, that is between her and the Holy Spirit. A victim genuinely seeking healing and a deeper relationship with God will listen to the convictions of the Holy Spirit and do accordingly. And, I think it's important for everyone to seek God's forgiveness daily for sins we commit all the time—sins of commission as well as omission—so one can never go wrong when repenting and seeking forgiveness.

# QUESTION 2

**My pastor said we were meant to be together just like David and Bathsheba and that, if God can forgive David, He will forgive us. Is that true?**

In the story of David and Bathsheba many make the correlation that this was somehow a consenting relationship and there was a mutual attraction between them that allowed this to happen. However, this is not what Scripture reveals. David, the leader of God's chosen people, held the position of responsibility and authority.

In 2 Samuel 12:9 it states, "Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon."

God told David he had "taken" Uriah's wife to be his. He did not say chose, requested or pledged but, rather, "taken" which is not mutual consent.

Sadly, many pastors use this story to convince the women they are abusing that all will be forgiven and God will bless their new relationship. This is just not according to God's will. Although David and Bathsheba were blessed at some point—their son being King Solomon—they also suffered greatly for this sin.

# QUESTION 3

**The board of elders/committee is recommending my pastor's dismissal from the church. Should he be allowed to resign?**

In the majority of the cases we've seen, the pastor has been given the choice of whether to resign or be terminated. They almost always choose to resign, for obvious reasons. The thing to keep in mind is that at least he will be gone and you can then take steps to do what you can to raise awareness and keep him from getting back in, if that's what he tries to do.

I know this may seem discouraging to you right now, but this really is a step in the right direction and something to rejoice about. While, ideally, the church would terminate the pastor and make sure it was known that he was terminated and why, that seldom occurs.

Keep in mind though, God is still in control and God will, ultimately, have the last word and bring about justice in this matter. Keep your eyes on Jesus and trust Him to do what is right.

# QUESTION 4

**The church won't allow me to bring my own attorney to the ecclesiastical trial, yet the pastor will have his. Why is it always so unfair?**

It should never be this way but, unfortunately, it happens when the church decides to act like a business, and not a ministry. Whether the church follows the Bible or not is their choice, and they will be held accountable if they go against God's will in how they lead His church. Doing the right thing is seldom popular, but this is what God requires of all who represent Him.

The only way for you to prepare for this ecclesiastical trial is to draw as close to Jesus as you can. Spend as much time in prayer, fasting, Bible study as possible. As you follow God, you will have His peace, no matter what takes place. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

Our prayer for you is that justice and truth will prevail, and that God will vindicate you.

Remember, He will give you strength and grace to press on and courage to live your life, no matter what happens, according to the wonderful plans He has for you.



# QUESTION 5

**Why would I want to go to church with people who didn't even ask me my side of the story before pronouncing sentence?**

We usually don't recommend returning to the church where the abuse occurred. It is too traumatic, and it detracts from the focus of church—to worship God. Even if they offer to reinstate you to your position in the church, you should probably request to be transferred somewhere else. Gossip is a nasty thing—truly it is the murder of one's character—that's why God hates it so much. Truth is, so few people recognize what clergy sexual abuse is really all about and so they are quick to judge the woman as a Jezebel and their pastor as having been "seduced." Education is very important for people to have a proper understanding of the role of priest/pastor and the tremendous responsibility one has (in that role) to represent Christ.

# QUESTION 6

## **Why are there so many wolves in sheep's clothing in the church?**

Jude 1:4 tells us that, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Lasciviousness is generally defined as unbridled and/or perverted sexual passion. That's what these church leaders are doing. Sadly some people become priests, pastors, etc., for the money, power and prestige.

1 Peter 4:17, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" God's judgment begins with the church leaders, priests/pastors and those who profess Christianity. We are seeing more and more cases of clergy sexual abuse partly because the world we live in now is so very wicked, as Satan does his best to destroy us while he can, but also because God's judgment is beginning and He is "cleaning house" and removing these offending leaders from His Church. Romans 12:19 assures us that God will avenge us, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

You can trust the Lord to make things right. it's difficult to have hope when you've been nearly destroyed but God promises to create something beautiful out of a seeming disaster and

devastation. Romans 5:3-6, "But we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

# QUESTION 7

## **Why was my priest moved to another, better parish?**

Someone must really be on your pastor's side for this to have happened and for him to be going to such a "great" position. Typically the offender is moved into a lesser position if he's transferred.

Chances are there have been others—and will be others in the future. Left unchecked, your pastor will become emboldened if he does not become repentant. If he is repentant, you should be first on his list of people to contact to make things right.

You may wish to pray about what, if anything, God would have you do. I know some other victims who have been called to write letters to the new congregation and/or church leadership, explaining what the clergy member did. Sometimes the new congregation will remove him. Other times, they do not seem to care.

# QUESTION 8

**Is there any way to track my pastor, to see why he left the other churches he pastored?**

Churches, specifically the human resource departments, are required to keep information like that in the pastor's personnel files, yet they are not required to release it to you. The best way to find out would be to have an attorney check into it, but that's very costly. You could try to call some of the churches yourself, asking for whatever information you can gather. You may not get specific details, but it may be helpful for you to find out what you can.

If you have any contacts or know how to obtain contact information, you could possibly contact the previous churches and ask why he left.

# QUESTION 9

## **Should I leave the church where the abuse occurred and try to find a new church?**

We do believe that it is nearly impossible to have spiritual growth and healing while remaining in the same church where the abuse occurred. Most often we advise people to attend a different church, as it's too emotionally draining for some, too triggering for others, too distracting, etc. God wants each person to experience the best He has to offer, and when we come to the Lord's house to worship Him, we should not be distracted by anything—especially not an abusive pastor. God will take you and your husband to an even greater level of healing which usually comes through another church, not the one where your abuse took place.

Pray for God to grant you wisdom and discernment in this matter and that, if you are to leave this church, He will lead you to the place He has prepared for you.

# QUESTION 10

## **When should I disclose what happened to my church congregation?**

By disclosure at your current church, do you mean letting the congregation know or just certain individuals? It really varies and it is something that you should carefully pray about. Some people will understand and support you, others will want nothing to do with you, or may even blame you after they find out about it. You really need to be settled in truth and comfortable with your relationship with God and where He stands on this issue (as His thoughts are all that really matter) before you share with others, so that you don't suffer emotional and spiritual setbacks from their reactions. This does not need to be a public disclosure at your new church at all. As you develop friendships with others, you may choose to let them know of what has happened to you, although being careful of how much you share could be a wise decision.

We pray God will direct your steps.

# QUESTION 11

**I'm afraid that my church will let the pastor who abused me "off the hook," without any consequences. How will I handle that if it happens?**

It is natural for you to be concerned that the church would let the pastor who abused you off with minor, if any, real consequences. That's a natural fear and not unfounded either, given the historic precedence in these cases. It (the possibility of the church not doing the right thing) is something all victims face, and it is quite a challenge, but it is something you can survive with Jesus at your side. It's hard to want to continue to remain a part of, or support, an institution that doesn't practice what it preaches/teaches and doesn't hold to its own standards of conduct and policies.

Naturally, you will feel disappointed, if the church does not properly discipline your former pastor. Your faith and trust will need to be solely in Jesus, not in the church or its committees, and certainly not in any person or group of individuals. As you keep your mind fixed on Christ, He will give you His perfect peace and comfort you, no matter what the outcome is. (Isaiah 26:3) Spend some time reading Psalm 37, as it will encourage you that God DOES hold the wicked accountable, even when others (including church institutions) do not.

We encourage you to not worry about what may or may not happen but rather, spend your time praying for the Lord to move upon the ones responsible to make the right decision according to His will. Pray for God to override Satan's attempts to



thwart justice and accountability. Just pray for God's will to be done, and pray for you to have strength, courage and peace no matter what—because you're walking with God and He is on your side.

# LEGAL QUESTIONS

# QUESTION 12

**I was on the church payroll. What is the difference between a clergy sexual abuse case and a sexual harassment suit?**

The main difference between clergy sexual abuse (CSA) and sexual harassment is the fact that you were on the payroll. (Visit [thehopeofsurvivors.org/resources](http://thehopeofsurvivors.org/resources) to contact one of the attorneys listed. The ones listed on our site are very familiar with clergy sexual abuse cases.) As such, the justice system has an easier time with viewing the priest as your superior and takes his actions more seriously. Only a few states have criminal laws against CSA. You can check the current list of states here: <https://partnersagainstsexualabuse.org>

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a more highly recognizable and illegal offense. While CSA should be considered a criminal offense everywhere, just as a teacher-student or counselor-counselee relationship is, the system tends to shy away from it and takes the stance that, "for all we know their religious belief is that every woman should have sex with the priest." It's really terrible, but that's why the only recourse at times is a civil suit.

It would be prudent for you to verify if any legal counsel you retain is familiar with clergy sexual abuse among adult women, and if they have managed any cases like that and what their track record has been. You really need someone who understands what the dynamics are involving this type of exploitation and power imbalance and all that goes along with this form of abuse.

# QUESTION 13

## **Should I forgive the pastor and let it go, or should I proceed with litigation?**

This is a very personal decision, which has no simple answers. You need Divine wisdom at this time to know what God's will is for you in this matter. Fortunately, in James 1:5 we are promised that, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Yes, forgiveness is very important, but forgiveness doesn't mean there are no consequences, so the lesson of forgiveness doesn't necessarily equate to you dropping all the charges.

You are the only one (aside from God) who knows how well you would be able to handle a public trial. If God directs that you are to proceed with this trial, then He will also give you strength to bear all that takes place. If He desires you to let it go and trust in Him for vindication, in His way and His time, then He will also give you the courage, strength and patience to endure that trial of your faith, too.

# QUESTION 14

## **Should I go forward with a lawsuit? I'm afraid of being interrogated in public.**

Most victims are too emotionally fragile to handle that kind of detailed exposure and character defamation. However, if God directs you in that path, you can go in confidence of His leading as long as you seek His will. Sometimes a civil suit is the only way to get the church's attention. If that's the case, then God will strengthen and encourage you to move forward.

If you choose to accept an insurance company settlement, it might be easier for you to handle and, if he's done this before, or if the insurance company deems his behavior bad enough to label him as "uninsurable," then he will not (likely) be able to remain employed or find a new position within the church. And, since money is what matters most to some churches, this could keep him from causing further harm and hurting others.

# QUESTION 15

**Do you know of anyone who has gone the insurance company route? Has it been successful?**

There have been successful mediation cases, and that is what this type of process could turn into. It may be advisable to proceed with the letter of request to the insurance company since they would probably rather receive a letter from you asking for recompense, than one that states you've already filed a lawsuit (which will cost them a whole lot more).

As with any decision though, but especially one of this magnitude, pray and seek the Lord's will and wisdom. Not that it will all be a piece of cake, but He will see you through it.

# QUESTION 16

## **Is it appropriate for money to be part of the restitution that the church gives us?**

Restitution is a Biblical practice and mandate, every bit as much as reconciliation, repentance and restoration are (for all parties). Luke 19:8 provides a very appropriate example of what the fruits of repentance look like in terms of restitution: "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

Even King David provided a model of restitution when Nathan the prophet spoke to him. David replied in 2 Samuel 12:5-7, "As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." As we are well aware, David was the guilty party and he later wrote—out of deep conviction of his sin and repentance—Psalm 51.

The two cases above show the concern is for the wounded party, not the offending party. This is not about money—it's about a wounded lamb—wounded by the shepherd of the flock. It's about you and your family's spiritual and emotional healing. Yes, the pastor who abused you needs help and healing, too—but not at your expense.

QUESTIONS  
ABOUT  
SPIRITUAL  
LIFE/WALK  
WITH GOD



# QUESTION 17

**I'm finding it very hard to believe in the Church as an institution after all I've been through. I still believe in God, but He seems so very far away.**

God does have a Church—His bride—that He will be coming back for soon but, right now, He is preparing His bride. She is not ready. 1 Peter 4:17 tells us that "...the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." Even now, God is in the process of purifying His church, and He is starting by exposing the wolves in sheep's clothing.

It is extremely difficult to pray when God seems so far away. But He promises you that He is with you right now, and that He will be with you through every trial you will bear. He has an ultimate plan and purpose for your life and, if you're willing to trust Him through all of this, He will reveal His plan to you. Sometimes, the only prayer we can offer is, "Lord, help me." That's enough. God hears our prayers. More importantly, He hears our hearts—what we're unable to say in prayer. In Romans 8:26 we are promised that, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought..."

The Holy Spirit will carry our unspeakable pain to the Father. Isn't that encouraging? And keep in mind that "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 You may be far from being able to see what good can come of this or what God's plan may be, but He promises to always be with you and there is a plan for your life,

even your greatest sorrows will one day turn to joy!  
He will bring good out of this. He has done this in our  
life, and in the lives of those we've helped since  
founding The Hope of Survivors in 2002.

# QUESTION 18

## **Is it important to fast & pray?**

Fasting can mean different things. For some, it is the complete abstinence of food for a specified period. For others, it is abstaining from certain foods, like sweets, coffee, tea, alcohol, etc. In essence, the purpose of a fast (in religious settings) is to practice self-denial and to allow time for the body to put its energy into the mind for mental clarity as you're praying for a specific thing. That's probably not the best way to explain it. Let me just give you an example. Before we conduct a conference or program for the ministry, we generally will fast and pray. We will fast for a day, eating only one simple meal at the end of the day, but drinking pure fruit juice or water throughout the day so as not to become dehydrated. Fasting could be as simple as skipping a meal. We use the time in extra prayer, seeking for purification in our lives, and wisdom to know how best to help others, and praying for all who attend, etc. It's really just a way of committing your life to the Lord once again, denying self and seeking His will and His blessings.

# QUESTION 19

## **How do you pray for yourself without sounding selfish?**

It is not wrong to pray for yourself. Selfishness is when you pray for God to continually bless you with things, or to make everything go the way you want it. All of our prayers should be in accordance with God's will, not just what we want. Jesus left us an example of a prayer that is for himself, yet surrendered to God's will in Matthew 26:39, "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Jesus is praying that, if it's possible, He would not have to go through what He was about to endure (the Cross), however, He submitted His will to God's. He asked for a certain thing, but was willing to accept whatever God's plan was for Him.

God wants us to pray for ourselves when we are praying for our own purity, salvation, blessings to help others, etc. A selfish prayer would be, "Lord, please give me a new exotic sports car." When you are praying for vindication, when you know your sins have been confessed and you've repented and received God's forgiveness, then you can pray for God to move on your behalf because you are in His will when you're doing something right and for the right motives.

If you don't know whether your motives are pure in this, then pray as did King David in Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any

wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Ask God to make your thoughts, motives, words and actions pure. He will always help us when we seek Him.

# QUESTION 20

## **I feel so guilty and ashamed. When will it stop?**

The guilt and shame doesn't belong to you. When you ask for forgiveness and dedicate your life to God...the past is gone. You are a new creature in Christ. There is no guilt; there is no shame. It sounds as though Satan is still trying to toss his filthy robe on you when you're already wearing the beautiful white robe of Christ. Keep your eyes on Jesus and do not allow Satan to throw the past in your face. If you do allow him to do so, you are denying Jesus' power and the cleansing He has promised to give you.

You do not bear the responsibility; the pastor who abused you does. Even IF you did, which you don't, you have already confessed, forsaken your sins, so you still are not responsible. Is your faith strong enough to actually BELIEVE Jesus' promises to cleanse and heal you? Can you honestly say your faith is the size of a mustard seed? If so, then that's all you need to trust in Jesus. What God says, He will do!

Perhaps what you're feeling is how you felt when the abuse was taking place and, as you remember it, the same guilt and shame comes back. The key to stopping that is to fill your mind with God's truth whenever Satan tries to fill your mind with his lies. You will heal...if you allow Jesus to heal you.

It's important that you spend as much time as you can in prayer and reading His Word each day. That is what is going to make the biggest difference in

your life. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." How do we renew our minds? By filling our minds with God's Word. You will be transformed as you fill yourself with the Bread of Life on a daily basis. It may be imperceptible to you at first, but change will come. God is faithful.

If your faith is not strong enough to actually believe Jesus' promises to cleanse and heal you, there is a simple solution. It is found in Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." To build your faith and trust in Jesus, you need to be reading and hearing the Word of God. What a simple formula, yet so difficult to master at times. Your mind and life will be transformed as you study your Bible and draw closer to Jesus. Healing will come. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

May God increase your faith...may your "mustard seed" grow larger and larger each day.

# QUESTION 21

**I'm distanced from God because I feel dirty and can't seem to find my way back. Is this normal?**

It is normal to feel dirty and far away from God when you have suffered abuse, especially from a spiritual leader. It is difficult to learn to trust His Word and promises and to believe that what He says is true—that you are forgiven and, by His grace, are saved and covered by the blood of Christ. It's a choice you make to exercise your faith and believe what God has said. That's how you learn to accept His forgiveness and grace. If you have confessed your sins, God has forgiven you (1 John 1:9). It's up to you to believe that and cling to that promise by faith. It is Satan who casts the doubts in your mind and you must learn to tune him out and tune in the Word of God in its place. That's why it's so important for you to be in Scripture and prayer.

You are wearing the robe of Christ's righteousness, yet Satan wants to try to put his robe of guilt and shame upon you. You need not wear it, for you have been cleansed and forgiven. Your sins are no more if they have been confessed. God casts them as far away as the East is from the West. They are buried in the sea of forgetfulness. God doesn't throw them in your face, and you need not allow the devil to do so to you either.

Learn to know and accept who you are in Christ and Satan will not be able to make you feel dirty and ashamed anymore. God loves you immensely!



# QUESTION 22

**When I prayed and asked God to forgive me for what I did with my pastor, is it all done? Will God bring it up again, or is it erased forever?**

Acts 3:19 says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." And, 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Jesus died to save us from the penalty of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."). If we do not avail ourselves of His sacrifice through confession and repentance (which means to turn away from, go the opposite direction), then we have no propitiation (covering) for our sins and our sins will stand against us in the judgment day and we will have to account for them.

If we are faithful to confess and repent, our sins are blotted out and, as it says in Micah 7:19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Also, Psalm 103:12 tells us, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." God will remember our sin no more, for we have already confessed and repented of it. For the person who refuses to confess, repent and forsake sin, he/she will be held accountable for those sins, for he/she has denied the grace of God in the sacrifice of Jesus.

# QUESTION 23

**How do I know that I am saved? Do you think that I could be just pretending to be saved?**

You are concerned about your salvation because you wonder if you are just pretending? Do you love Jesus? Do you accept Jesus as your Savior? Have you confessed your sins to Him so that He might wash you and make you whole? If so, then the Holy Spirit will teach you and help you to grow in Christ. There is no magic word or phrase to say that makes you a Christian, no need to "be in the Spirit." When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will have peace and you will have the fruits of the Spirit (patience, love, gentleness, etc.). Being a Christian is about being Christ-like.

Jesus loves you very much. He died on the Cross just for you, as if you were the only person alive on earth. God wants you to have eternal life. 2 Peter 3:9 states, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God is more willing to save us than we are sometimes willing to be saved! Yes, there is hope for you to be a good Christian. God promises in His Word. Philippians 4:13 promises us that, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Jesus tells us in John 15:5 that, "...without me, ye can do nothing."

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We all need forgiveness daily

for our sins, for it is sin that separates us from God. The good news is that, once we confess our sins, God remembers them no more. Praise the Lord! Our slate is wiped clean in Heaven. We are covered by the Blood of Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer.

Next begins the process of sanctification, becoming more and more like Jesus. It's not quick and it's not easy because it involves denying ourselves and our natural inclinations. We may take two steps forward and fall back one, but that's ok, as long as we keep progressing forward. God will help you. The Holy Spirit is there to teach you and to help you. John 16:13 says, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

Sanctification is made possible by reading God's Word and praying daily. John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." As we spend time with Jesus in His Word, as we pray for Him to live and reign in our hearts, we will become more like Him. By beholding, we become changed. 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

# QUESTION 24

## **Will my pastor ever be brought to justice? What happened to a just God?**

You mentioned God's justice...God allows things to happen at times which seem unfathomable in our minds, but the Bible also tells us in Isaiah 55:8-9 that, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Ultimately, as each of us stand before the judgment bar of God, we will receive the reward for our deeds, whether they be good or evil. So, you can trust that even if it seems at this moment that God is allowing the pastor who abused you to "get away with this," he will be held accountable, for God's Word also says in Numbers 14:18 that, "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." And in Proverbs 11:21 that, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered."

Try to keep in mind the story of Job. It is there for an example and an encouragement to us—indeed for all who suffer unjustly. There was no reason for Job's affliction, other than Satan's evil work. God blessed and vindicated Job, and Satan will one day pay for all the pain and suffering he has caused. God uses all trials in our lives to perfect our character and

refine us so that we more perfectly reflect the character of Jesus.

May you be comforted by Psalm 42:5 at this time, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

# QUESTION 25

**I know in my head that God loves me, but I cannot feel it in my heart. How can I do this?**

It is "normal" and understandable that you would be able to "know" intellectually that God loves you and is there for you, but that you would not be able to realize it in your heart. I think that happens to the majority of people. I think one of the purposes of trials is so that we can learn—in our hearts—what it is to truly KNOW and depend on God. To know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God loves us. It takes practice and faith to cling to His Word and believe that those promises, His love, is for YOU. People may spend years "knowing" doctrine and Bible, but not truly knowing God as a personal Friend, Savior and Comforter.

Often abuse victims come to know Jesus in that sense during and after the clergy sexual abuse. We know of many people who praise God for the trials in their lives—not because they enjoy going through them—but because He is faithful to bring good out of evil as He has promised. A person can be lost, even with all that "head" knowledge without God in their heart!

God loves YOU. He sent His son to die for just YOU. If you had been the only human ever created, Jesus would have died that you might, through Him, have eternal life. That is love unfathomable. Each day will bring a new blessing—a new revelation—of God's love for you. Does He not tell us in Matthew 10:31, "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows"? And again in Luke 12:7, "But even

the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." The very hairs of our head! Imagine that?! And to think that God hath bestowed upon us such a great honor as to be called sons and daughters of God! 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

Cling to Jesus the best you can. Without Him, there is no hope. As long as you believe and are willing to place your faith and trust in Him, you need not be hopeless. The Lord will make a way for you. He will direct your paths.

Start right now by praising God for giving you another day of life and for the countless blessings which often go unnoticed and unappreciated. Thank Him for loving you and knowing you personally by name. Thank Him for being in control and ask Him to please forgive your sins and appropriate to you the Divine merits of His Son's blood which was shed on Calvary for the atonement of your sins. Ask Him to cleanse and purify your heart, mind and life, and to perfect Christ's character within you and to fill you with His Holy Spirit and work in your life to be a blessing to others for His kingdom.

# QUESTION 26

## **Do you ever put survivors in touch with one another to share and support each other?**

It is not the policy of The Hope of Survivors to personally connect victims. There are reasons for the policy, primarily the protection of victims. Suffice it to say that, if survivors meet at one of The Hope of Survivors' conferences or programs and choose to exchange information with one another, that is fine as it is each individual's choice and they have met the other person and have been able to make an informed decision for themselves. For us to do that without the two people meeting and making that choice on their own is not something we typically do. Victims can also come in contact with one another through The Hope of Survivors Private Support Group on Facebook. Just send a Facebook friend request to one of our leaders and ask them to add you to the private group.



# QUESTION 27

## **Do you have any books you could recommend I read about clergy sexual abuse?**

It is natural to want to know about this type of abuse and to read a few books on it when you have gone through it, just to make sure you're not alone and to gain some hope, comfort and education,. However, the best resource for healing and understanding abuse and your vulnerabilities is the Bible. Guided by the Holy Spirit, you will see greater healing in your life as you "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." James 4:8

It's easy to focus solely on our own pain when we have be deeply wounded by this form of abuse. Unfortunately, if this is ALL we concentrate on, we will miss seeing the overall picture. Focusing on our pain does not bring healing. By turning our eyes from ourselves, and what happened to us, we can grow beyond the devastation and then experience the deep healing God has for our wounded soul.

The only true remedy there is for total restoration and healing is found in Jesus. God's Word promises that if we seek "...the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near..." Isaiah 55:6 you can be made whole! If you truly want your marriage to survive and be better than ever, Jesus is the answer.

**An update to this initial reply:** There are now (in 2022) many books and survivor stories about clergy sexual abuse. Some of these can be found on our website—[www.thehopeofsurvivors.org](http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.org).

# QUESTION 28

## **Why is it that, when the smallest thing happens, I want to run?**

Might I suggest that you want to run because you are not hid in Christ? Because you are not allowing Him to be your Defense and your Shield? It is understandable to want to relocate and start life over. It is understandable that you would feel hurt by the treatment of other church members who are not being Christlike themselves. It's all very painful, I know. Yet, Jesus is with you, to comfort you, to heal you, to strengthen you. If you have accepted His love and forgiveness, then there is no shame or condemnation for you, and no need for you to hang your head or feel badly when others do not display the love of Christ. It's important for you to be who Jesus created you to be. You can't do that as long as you're allowing Satan to cast his robe of guilt and shame over you.

I do think it would be wise for you and your family to relocate—not because you feel like running away—but because you need a fresh start without these constant reminders. I thought it was impossible for us to move, too. We had our families, our home, our company office, etc., in that town. I was born there, Steve was raised there. Our roots in that community were very deep. I can tell you that, when we asked God what He wanted us to do and submitted ourselves to His will, He opened doors. Moving away was the best thing we ever did. It gave us freedom, peace, a new start. You can do all things through Christ. That's what His Word says and Christ does not lie. I would recommend that

you and your husband make it a matter of prayer—pray for God to reveal His will for your lives to you both, and pray that you will both be obedient to His will. You might be surprised at what God chooses to do. You may move, you may not, but God will answer your prayers. James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

# QUESTION 29

## **How do I calm my feelings enough to hear my husband's pain?**

It is a conscious, decided effort. You'll want to react, naturally, and sometimes you may do so before you realize that you're reacting but, if you can stop and think before you respond, you'll find it easier to be more compassionate and receptive to what your husband has to say. Be patient, carefully listen, express sorrow and compassion, and allow him to feel. Don't make it about you...leave that conversation about him. It was excruciatingly painful at times. Still is sometimes when we talk about it and I can see the pain coming to his mind again. That hurts me, to know I hurt him so deeply. I just reiterate my love for him and him alone. Trust takes time to be rebuilt, but it is not impossible to do so.

# QUESTION 30

**Did it take your husband (Steve) a long time to be able to trust you again?**

Yes, it took a while. I think trust came back in layers over the years. He was able to trust me more fully as he saw the changes I allowed the Lord to make in my life. I am pleased to say he trusts me implicitly once again. Glory to God!

# QUESTION 31

## **What is rape? Does it necessarily involve sexual intercourse?**

You have asked a good question. A simple and quick answer: YES and NO. Rape can occur even if there has been no sexual intercourse. I went to our website because I remembered we had a definition there, but it was talking specifically about sexual intercourse as a form of rape. Below is something I found through a link from [www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com) when I searched for the definition in the online dictionary:

"The number of sexual assaults reported depends on how those abuses are defined. The United States Code uses two terms to distinguish between different sexual activities:

- Sexual act: contact between penis and vagina or penis and anus that involves penetration; contact between the mouth and genitals or anus; penetration of the vagina or anus with an object; or direct touching (not through clothing) of the genitals of an individual under the age of 16.
- Sexual contact: intentional touching of the genitals, breasts, buttocks, anus, inner thigh, or groin with no sexual penetration."

You were raped—spiritually, emotionally and sexually. Being manipulated is part of the rape process, especially in the situations of clergy sexual abuse, professional exploitation, etc., where one is in a position of power over another. The pastor

forced himself on you in many ways and what you described is rape, even when it wasn't actual intercourse. When a woman says no to sexual advances, touch and activity, it is rape if the man persists.

RAINN is an excellent resource for victims of rape and sexual assault. You can visit their website at: <https://www.rainn.org>

# QUESTION 32

**When you were going through this, did you have times when you wanted to die?**

Did I have strong moments of not wanting to exist? Absolutely! I was intent on killing myself and attempted to do so frequently, but God always intervened before it was too late. At the time, I was very mad at God for intervening, but now I praise and thank Him, for He did—and does—have a plan for me.

I believe God has a plan for your life, too. I know you've been humiliated and abused, but Jesus was too. He was stripped naked and hung on the cross for all who passed by to see and to mock Him. Jesus KNOWS how you feel right now. Hebrews 4:15 reassures us that, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Jesus is touched by your "infirmities" and pain. Psalm 3:3 says, "But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." Can you see the Lord bending over, putting His hand underneath your chin, lifting your face up so that your eyes meet His and you see the wonderful love, tenderness and sympathy He has for you? What a beautiful thought! I pray you will meditate on that and allow Jesus to bring healing to your soul right now.

Please do not even entertain thoughts about dying or no longer existing. Those thoughts are from Satan, not God. I promise you, if you will cling to



Christ, He will heal you and bring you through this. One day, you will be able to look back and see how He's been with you, how He's led all along, and you will rejoice that you are alive. Please, wait for that day, for it WILL come.

In moments of temptation to kill yourself, please reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org> or call 800-273-8255.

# QUESTION 33

## **Must I always remain a victim?**

Just because you have been victimized does not mean you must remain a victim. Let this knowledge free you and give you power to be stronger and less vulnerable. You will also gain strength as you are proactive in righting this wrong. If you have the option to report this pastor/counselor to the counselor's board, then do so. He should lose his license and not be able to counsel anyone, as he is not a safe counselor or pastor. He has committed a crime, according to what you've told me, so it should be reported so as to protect other potential victims. You are actually blessed to have this recourse, as most pastors are not licensed counselors, although they do provide counsel.

# QUESTION 34

## **How many details should I share with my husband about what the pastor and I did intimately?**

As far as I can recall, I did share everything with Steve and I believe Steve knows all the details. What I meant was, you can give details about what happened, but not have to go into minute details (i.e., sexual positions, body details, etc.).

For example, it would be enough detail for your husband to say he'd slept with a woman from work in the backseat of the car...he would not need to say how he positioned her, etc. The level of detail can be very hurtful or helpful, depending on how deep you go. It's difficult to explain, but I would recommend you pray about it and ask the Lord what you should tell your husband.

# QUESTION 35

**What did Steve do to prepare himself to help you go through this?**

Steve searched for information online (not much available at the time), he called Focus on the Family for a counselor referral, he tried to talk to others about it and he even called the church Conference office anonymously to see what they would do. Steve knew it was wrong and that the pastor had pursued the relationship because Steve knew me and trusted me—that this was not something I would have done. Knowing the truth helped, but it was still painful.

# QUESTION 36

## **How much should I share with my husband about my past?**

Steve and I went through a couple deep conversations after the abuse where we confessed everything to one another—anything we felt we had done wrong since the day we met. We told each other about everything in our pasts, although we had pretty much done that already, so the main point was to confess and seek forgiveness for things during our relationship.

You and your husband will be able to build trust in one another again as you confess and seek forgiveness for the ways in which you've hurt one another since you've been together, but your husband will be able to understand you better if you open up to him and tell him about your past painful experiences. It will help him see how vulnerable you were and why, and what he can do in the future to help keep you strong.

# QUESTION 37

**I've always distrusted men. How do I trust a man again?**

There are many Godly men out there, but you need to seek wisdom and discernment from the Lord. It's not wrong to be reserved and withhold trust until you know someone is trustworthy. Since the clergy sexual abuse, I pray nearly every day for God to give me discernment and wisdom to know whom to trust. It has helped immensely and I can tell He has given me much greater discernment than I ever had before.

# QUESTION 38

**Nobody did anything about my pastor, the elder's lie to the congregation, and nobody cares about me.**

God cares and the pastor who abused you will be held accountable in God's timing. If you can learn to trust your Heavenly Father and leave this all in His hands, you will have much more peace about it. One of the things that helped me was to think of the abusive pastor through Jesus' eyes. Jesus came to save him, but he has spurned Jesus and chosen to follow Satan. Unless the pastor (and your former pastor) repents, this life is all he will have. He has forfeited salvation and eternal life. And for what? To feed his lust? How pathetic! Seeing that, and knowing that I have eternal life through Christ, enables me to let go of the anger and resentment over what he did to me and just have pity on him and, yes, even pray for his salvation.

# QUESTION 39

**Will my thoughts and feelings for the pastor ever go away?**

Yes, eventually the thoughts, misplaced emotions, songs, etc., will go away. As time goes by and, as you fill our mind with things of God, the memories of your former pastor and all that pertains to him will diminish. There is always a possibility that something will trigger a memory here and there, but they will not consume you—that is, not unless you allow them to. The Bible instructs us to take every thought captive. That means when unwanted or sinful thoughts pop into your mind, you ask God to take them and then you think of a Bible verse, hymn or something else to distract yourself. As it says in 2 Corinthians 10:4-6, "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."



# QUESTION 40

## **How do I allow God to heal me?**

Well, I can tell you how He worked to heal me and I think He would surely do the same for you. I immersed myself in His Word, the Bible. I allowed Him to teach me, to reprogram my mind so that I would think His thoughts and not the thoughts the devil wanted me to think. I allowed Him to take away all the pain of my past and I allowed Him to keep it. If I were to take it back, how could He help me? I allowed Him to bathe me in the Blood of the Lamb, that I might be cleansed, forgiven, made whole, by the power of Jesus. I invited His Holy Spirit to dwell within my heart and change my life, enabling me to be a blessing to others. I chose to allow God to be the center of my life, not the past and not the worries and pain, but the Lord.

Part of the healing process comes by standing up for yourself though—perhaps not in every case, but in most of them. Taking a stand and saying, "you're never going to hurt me again," or "I know what you did was wrong and I will not allow it to continue," gives you a sense of empowerment and control over your own life and what happens to you. The doctor/pastor/leader has stolen that from you. You have been under his control—not God's and not your own. That needs to end. Also, healing comes when we take what has happened to us and turn it into something positive by allowing God to use us to help others. Pray for the Lord to reveal to you what He would have you do. I know He will heal you—there is no question about that. He will recreate you and make you a new creature in Christ.

# QUESTION 41

## **Why do I still want affirmation from the counselor who abused me?**

Exploitation is a terrible thing, with many consequences. It's very confusing and difficult to overcome but, as the Bible tells us, "...with God all things are possible." As you continue to look to Jesus, He will heal you and help you and your husband through this.

Since you are aware of the fact that you still seek attention and affirmation from this counselor, each time you recognize that, I would encourage you to pray and ask Jesus to help you. Seek your affirmation from Him, and attention from your husband.

It might be a very good thing for you and your family to change churches, as it would remove you from this situation, and give you more space to heal. However, be careful about any new relationships you may form in a new church. Do not trust everyone automatically, and it would be best not to counsel alone, but with your husband.

# QUESTION 42

**What is the profile or wounds that would lead a man to do this to someone?**

You asked about his "profile" and, personally, I think that would be looking at this from a psychological perspective, rather than a biblical one. His profile is that he is a sinner, in need of grace and God's life-changing power. There may have been certain things in his past that could lead him to be self-focused (ego-centric), such as abuse, but it could also just be that he spends most of his time thinking about himself, which is sinful, and those sinful thoughts lead to sinful actions.

Not all are the same when it comes to abuse. Sometimes, you have a naïve pastor or counselor who gets so caught up in wanting to help and feeling so sorry for the "poor" woman, that he fails to guard his own emotions and fails to protect hers as well. Inexperienced counselors and pastors, and sometimes those who have big hearts, are frequently in this category.

Then, on the other extreme, there are those who care only about themselves, think the world revolves around them, and they deserve whatever they can get. These are generally your predatory pastors and counselors, who intentionally groom their prey and have many victims. They are often referred to as (in psychological terms) narcissistic and/or pathological and/or sociopath. Sometimes they have been abused or neglected as children, but not always.

I'm not sure where your counselor fits in that scale of things. He is new, correct? I would encourage you to pray for greater spiritual discernment, but also for the ability to focus not so much on the counselor and what he has done, but on your relationship with Jesus, your husband, your family and your healing.

# QUESTION 43

**I am going to expose the man who abused me, but am scared. What do you think the consequences will be after I have exposed him?**

Let me ease your fears some. It does NOT matter what the man who abused you thinks or says or believes. The fact is he abused you. Truth is on your side. The Lord is on your side. So, even though he may deny it or try to shift the blame to you, remain firm in your stance. He was (is) the spiritual leader and he used his position and power to coerce you into a sexual relationship you never wanted. You know, when you go to the website again, make sure you read some of the writings of Ellen White that are in the Pastors section of our website. She very clearly condemns those who betray their sacred trust and abuse those under their spiritual care and guidance.

God has given us biblical examples of this as well. Take Eli's sons, for instance. Hophni and Phinehas used their position to take advantage of the women at the temple. Eli refused to discipline them and remove them from the sacred office. That's what led to the death of many Israelites in battle, the death of Eli's sons, the loss of the Ark of God, and the death of Eli as well. God hates this type of abuse. He recognizes it as such and holds the spiritual leaders accountable. Also, review the 4 Major Imbalances at [www.thehopeofsurvivors.org/services/4-major-imbalances](http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.org/services/4-major-imbalances).

There's no set formula for how this all happens when a victim comes forward. Sadly, the responses of the

church or organization are as varied as the type of abuse and the number of women. I wish I could tell you exactly what will happen, but I can't. I hope that the man you share the details with will be an upright, God-fearing man and will do the right thing. If he is and does, then the outcome will be very positive for you. If he fails to do so, you are still doing the right thing by exposing the man who abused you for who he is and what he has done. God will not hold you accountable for what the leadership fails to do.

# QUESTION 44

**The man who abused me wants to talk with me in person. How do I respond?**

Why do you think they would send the man who abused you in person? Do you have an answering machine? If no, then buy one. If yes, then use it. Don't answer any calls until you know who it is, and don't answer your door. Honestly, you really don't have to live this way. If the man who abused you shows up, be firm and tell him you will not be attending and DO NOT allow him inside your home. Better yet, don't even answer the door in the first place. It's time for YOU to take control of this situation and your life again. He has controlled you enough already. The Lord is an ever-present help in times of trouble, you know. He will be with you. You simply have to remember to call upon Him.

# QUESTION 45

## **Do people who have contacted you ever meet locally and talk?**

Yes, that does occur at times when victims live in a close proximity to one another or are willing to travel. What we do is hold conferences in various cities, generally places where we are working with a few individuals already, and people come to those.

Over the years, we have had Support Groups led by The Hope of Survivors' volunteers in various locations but there are currently none in operation.



# QUESTION 46

**My friend thinks I'm exposing the pastor out of spite. Why would she think that?**

I know it must be very difficult for you to have your motives questioned in this matter, especially by someone you consider a friend. Why would anyone do this out of spite? What reason would you have to spite him? People simply do not understand unless they've been through it, know someone who's been through it or have excellent spiritual discernment.

The victim is generally the one people want to blame, as it seems so unfathomable that the pastor/counselor could do such a thing. They fail to see that it was unfathomable to you, too, yet it happened and now you want to protect others. For many victims, exposing the predatory pastor leaves them exposed and vulnerable, open to ridicule and cruelty, and that is definitely not something victims would want to do out of spite.

Had the other couple's complaint reached the senior pastor, perhaps he would have done something back then and you wouldn't have been another victim. We can only pray that God is going to put a stop to this now, by your willingness to come forward and by the church's district counsel's willingness to help. And, for people to see the wrong that was done and to focus on that, not some imaginary motive.

# QUESTION 47

**I'm getting scared about coming forward with my story. What if nobody believes me? What if no action is taken?**

Let's refresh our memories for a moment...who called you to come forward about this? Was it not Jesus through His Holy Spirit speaking to your heart and mind, prompting you to speak out against what has happened to protect others? Or, was it your own idea? No, God is the One who urged you to speak out. That being the case, don't you think it stands to reason that He will give you courage and strength to continue what He has asked you to do? Would you be able to let this drop and go on with your life, not exposing the pastor who abused you and knowing that, inevitably, there would be another victim down the road? Could your conscience live with that? I doubt it.

You are not in this alone. God is with you. The Hope of Survivors stands behind you to support you. The church's district counsel wants to help however they can. I pray this other couple will come forward, too. I'll write a separate letter to the senior pastor if need be, if he fails to respond appropriately to yours. You are not alone. Hebrews 13:5 is a promise, "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I believe God has called you for such a time as this, just like He called Esther. She risked her life, yet God saw fit to make the King's heart soften toward her and the evil plot was overturned. I believe you have been honest with me, you have shared things that may even make you look bad (in their eyes), so I think that proves your credibility. If you were trying to

"bring him down" or bring false accusations against him, you would not be so honest about yours and your husband's failures. The fact that you speak so openly about them shows me that you two desperately sought help, bared your soul to this professed man of God and counselor, and he took advantage of your vulnerability to cause you harm. That is inexcusable.

Keep your eyes on Christ and what He requires of you. Think of what He went through...despised, rejected, beaten, spat upon, hung naked, crucified...He understands your pain and fear. He will comfort you. We do not deserve to be treated any better than Jesus, but praise be to God we are treated better than He was most all the time. What accusations do you fear will be brought against you? What could you hope to gain in this, other than to bring about the exposure of a pastor's misconduct, at the expense of your own privacy and the somewhat public disclosure of yours and your husband's marital struggles? People ridiculed Jesus too, denied that He was God's Son, accused Him of crimes, etc. Jesus has compassion for you, for He has traveled this road before you and He will not leave you alone.

You did not know that anyone else would support you (aside from The Hope of Survivors), nor did you know about the other couple until I contacted the District Council, yet you were prepared to go forward at that time. I think Satan is planting fear in your heart to keep you from exposing one of his most powerful human agents of destruction. Keep trusting in Jesus. This is no time to allow the devil to discourage you.

I'll close with this thought for you to meditate on today (and whenever needed). Deuteronomy 31:6,

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Be of good cheer, for greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

# QUESTION 48

**A certain ministry that deals with clergy sexual abuse is discontinuing their ministry because they want to forgive and move on. Should I forgive the pastor who abused me and just move on? What do you feel about this?**

First of all, I think it is a personal decision on their part, not something that is applicable across the board. If that were the case, there would be no resources for any type of abuse victim. What I read, between the lines, of course, is that for this particular couple, it is too difficult for them to keep re-living the pain as they try to help others. Not everyone is called to minister to other victims, and perhaps their healing was not as complete as they thought it was when they started their website. I can tell you that, while counseling others continually is emotionally draining (the mental health profession suffers one of the fastest burn out rates), if someone has resolved and healed from their own abuse issues, they will not be re-living it each time. I do not find myself re-living things or experiencing personal pain every time someone writes, else I'd be a basket case. I suspect this couple (and I have no idea who they are) wanted to help others because of what they went through, but they really weren't quite ready for it and therefore, could not be sustained through it.

Forgiveness is important, no doubt about it, but one can have forgiveness and still be able to help others through the process of their recovery. We do not harbor any unforgiveness at all. God granted us forgiveness for our abuser and this ministry was

never set up as a means of "attack" on any clergy or institution, but as a source of healing and hope for wounded sheep. It makes a difference. Perhaps for them, they had not forgiven and did this out of anger or revenge and now that they've drained themselves emotionally and want to "forgive and forget" they are "closing up shop."

You are right to believe that those who enter into the process of helping others to recover should have already gone through the healing and forgiving process on their own. Unfortunately, that isn't always the case, as we see here. I think they are incorrect to imply that forgiveness and "moving on" mean "don't talk about it anymore." I don't believe that to be the case, nor do I think God views it as such, else why would He have commissioned us to begin The Hope of Survivors?

Please don't fret about it. I think they simply were tired of it all and, rather than admit they didn't want to or were incapable of continuing, they decided to tell people to "forgive and forget." Their statements don't make me feel anything, other than sorrow for the people who have come to rely on them and now will be (once again) sheep without a shepherd. Some people just should never enter into things like this if they can't follow through.

No, we have no plans of closing down The Hope of Survivors and moving on. Steve and I will be here until the Lord calls us to do something else (IF He has other plans for us in the future). However, The Hope of Survivors is a separate nonprofit organization with a full board of directors and, should God call us into other lines of ministry at some future time, He would provide individuals to take our place at The Hope of Survivors. The ministry is not going anywhere, at least not as far as I can see, and God has given no

indication that it would be raised up and then eliminated. God knows the great need of this ministry and has given us a vision for its future.

# QUESTION 49

**I don't know why I got involved with the pastor.  
What is wrong with me that I would fall for him?**

I want you to know that you're not crazy and there's nothing wrong with you. Clergy sexual abuse happens to all kinds of women, and many of them are highly intelligent, skilled, professionals. What you need to understand is that this abuse doesn't happen because of an intelligence factor (or lack thereof). It (the abuse) is orchestrated on an emotional level. Intellectually, you would not have been vulnerable to this pastor's advances.

Emotionally, something led you to be vulnerable. You said you haven't been abused before. What other things in your life could have made you vulnerable (illness, troubled marriage, death in the family, high stress, financial problems, etc.)? Other things that make people easy prey are being people-pleasers, always trying to help others, never wanting anyone to be upset with them, etc. You may find it helpful, as do others, to think of it in this way. If this pastor had been the electrician, the garbage man, the UPS driver...you would never have become involved with him. True? It was because of his role as the pastor, his spiritual authority over you, that you were led astray.



# QUESTION 50

**Do you think the pastor who abused me told his wife the whole truth about our relationship?**

Somehow, I don't think so. . .

Like you, I believe he has not told his wife the whole story. Whatever he has told her has, no doubt, been slanted in his favor. That only works for so long.

Women have God-given intuition...they know when their husbands are lying and are being unfaithful.

What breaks my heart and gives me compassion for the wives of these predators is this: Think of how easily he controlled and manipulated you, when you were not even in the same geographical location or in contact daily.

Now, think about how much power and control he must exert over his wife and his family, who live with him 24/7 under the same roof! I can only imagine how much pressure is placed on the wife to not tell, to keep his secret, etc. In fact, our former abusive pastor even went so far as to try to sue his wife for spousal support when he divorced her after abusing me. His reason? She is the one who called the Conference and that led to his being terminated. It wasn't her call that got him fired, it was HIS actions, but see how he was able to twist that around? Living with him must have been horrible! Fortunately, the judge threw that out, as he could see through it all. But you see what I'm saying about the control, right?

# QUESTION 51

**I still feel like I love the pastor who abused me and I still miss him. Will I ever get over it?**

Be glad you were "rejected" (by the pastor who abused you). This is not love and this is not God's plan for you. You do not love this man...you're emotionally attached to him and having conversations stirs that all up inside you again, but it is not love. Love is of God and it is pure.

God never places love in someone's heart for another man's or woman's wife or husband. Satan, however, can cause us to feel very emotionally attached to someone and that is often confused with love when it is, in fact, a snare of the enemy. I believe you know this...I think you're on an emotional roller coaster right now though. You don't have to be...stick with what is true (God's Word is true) and do not allow the devil to tempt you or cause you to believe his lies and fantasies.

I'm glad you were able to tell someone about the abuse, and I'm sure she will help hold you accountable so that you do not become entangled in this man's trap anymore. He is still manipulating you. Telling you that he engaged in this other relationship because you left is manipulation and control. He did it because he wanted to...because he has a sexual sin problem, not because you left. You have not been rejected...you've been blessed to see the truth about what kind of man he really is. Praise God!

It doesn't matter what happened in his past,

whether he was abused, neglected or whatever, HE is still responsible for his behavior as an adult. He abused you, and nothing in his past can excuse that. I pray the Lord will grant you healing over your emotions, that you would be made whole in and through Christ and be able to look toward the future the Lord has for you.

# QUESTION 52

## **How long will it take me to heal?**

There's no set timeframe for healing. Everyone heals differently at different paces. Generally, the worse the trauma (rape, physical, sexual contact), the more time is needed for healing. Thankfully, the closer you draw to Jesus and the more you surrender all to Him, the quicker and more complete the healing process will be. God has given us His Word (the Bible) that we might be made whole. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) Also, John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

The more you feast on God's Word and seek the Holy Spirit's working in your life; the more you will be able to overcome, heal and live the life God has planned for you. This is what is needed to heal. This is what healed me—drawing closer to Jesus and allowing Him to renew my mind and heal me.

Avoid all occult and New Age practices as you try to heal. That may seem rather obvious, but Satan easily hides some of his methods, and too often unsuspecting Christians become involved in things that cause greater damage. Visualization, guided imagery, acupuncture, "healing" prayer, inner child healing...these are some of the things that must be avoided, for they are Satan's tools, not God's.

Yes, writing out your story is very cathartic for many

people. Some victims become very elaborate, others just give a brief overview. Either way, if writing your story, or writing poems about how you feel, is something you can do, I'm sure you'd find it helpful. I wrote, and I drew, just to get the emotions out. Others have written, drawn, created music, etc.

Once you have received healing, for the most part, you will find that it helps even more to begin to share your story with others and encourage others who may be in similar situations. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 states, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." That is what The Hope of Survivors has been called to do, but God calls each of us to do this in our own way, as He shows us His will for each of our lives.

You might find this article helpful when you're addressing forgiveness and shame in your life.  
<http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.org/forgiveness-is-a-gift/>

You desire to be made whole. God desires to make you whole. There's no way you can lose, as long as you continue to walk with the Lord. In John 10:10 Jesus declares, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." God has good plans for you (Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28-29) and He will heal you and your marriage as long as you surrender all to Him. Sometimes we want things immediately, and that doesn't always happen. It takes time, hard

work and much prayer and dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to heal. If you and your husband are both committed to God, and to one another, then you can rejoice in knowing healing will come to you and your family.

# QUESTION 53

**My husband and I feel like God might be calling us to start a ministry to others who have been victimized by their pastors—just like we were abused by our pastor.**

I admire you and your husband for thinking that you want to do something to help other victims in the future. Some words of caution for consideration though...don't start until you have experienced healing from God, otherwise you may find that it continually brings up things in your life and causes problems for you and your husband, or you may not be able to truly help others as you intend because you're not over it yourself. I don't say that from personal experience (as the Lord healed us before He commissioned us), but from what I have seen in other victims who have felt this way (like wanting to help) and then fall apart when they hear all the stories day in and day out. One couple began a website and communicated with many other victims and then, after a few years, decided it was too much for them and kept their pain in their face all the time, so they shut down their website. That was very traumatic for those people who had come to depend on them for help.

Another caution is to make sure this is what God is calling you to do, not just something you and your husband decide to do on your own. I say this not to discourage you, but to make sure you pray about and follow God's guidance.

Steve and I never planned to begin this ministry. It was not a thought in our minds at all. In fact, we

were actually trying to figure out ways to help another organization, but nothing ever worked out. One night, as we were sitting at home talking about our experience and how there was no real helpful information out there (at the time), Steve was convicted that we needed to develop a website that gave everyone who would search for it the opportunity to learn the truth about clergy sexual abuse.

As the Lord compelled us to move forward on this, the website grew, we filed the paperwork to become a nonprofit organization and the focus shifted from just providing information to providing full-time counseling as well, later on it included providing materials and conferences to pastors and church leaders. It's a huge undertaking and, had we known how costly it would be and how consuming it would be, we probably would have ran from it! However, the Lord's grace is sufficient and He is supplying the needs—human and financial.

Anyway, I only want to encourage you to seek the Lord's will in the matter, not to rush into anything.



# QUESTION 54

**My friends and others are saying that I should just put this behind me. Should I?**

I think part of what you're experiencing stems from the fact that you and your husband are actively involved in the education process of others, as well as your own healing and seeking justice. That can create some confusion for people, even those who have been supportive, as they may think you are strong and very able now, no longer hurting or in need of "kid gloves," so to speak. What they fail to see is that, for some (and this appears to be you and your husband), healing takes places while actively fighting for justice and raising awareness of the issue. For others, though, that is too much for them to handle and healing comes in less outward-focused forms.

While you and your husband should be working through things in your marriage, growing stronger together and in the Lord and leaving the past behind you, that is a process, not a single act; and, it doesn't mean that you do not remain in the midst of the battlefield while there's still a process taking place. You can't "get over it" while you're still having to bring it up, go through the trial process, etc. In some sense, it would be "quicker" for you and your husband to "get over it" if you dropped everything, moved away and got all new friends. But, that's not always possible, feasible, practical or desirable; not to mention, it's not always God's plan. Sometimes He leaves us in the midst of things to grow and to help others see truth.

# QUESTION 55

**If really bothers me when I see the pastor who abused me suffering no consequences for his behavior. Where is the justice in all of this?**

I certainly understand and empathize with you over the apparent injustice of the pastor who abused you being free, able to do as he pleases, suffer no consequences, and seemingly living a "good" life. Psalm 37 helped me immensely, and I recommend it to everyone who is struggling with the injustices we see in this world today. God will not let the wicked go unpunished, even though we may not see instant results.

Another thing that really helped me was to ask God to help me see my abuser through His eyes. When I am able to do that (by God's grace—and thankfully He enabled me many years ago to do so), I cease to worry about the injustice and the lack of apparent punishment for the abuser's crimes. Think of it this way: If the pastor who abused you fails to repent and truly give his life to the Lord, this life on earth will be all he has. He will miss out on Heaven and eternity with Jesus because of his failure to surrender all and live a godly life. Think of the life he's lived...is that really something to be compared to living with Jesus in eternity? How pitiful to only have this miserable, wretched life when he could have so much more! When I think of my abuser in these terms, it enables me to have pity on him, to pray for him and to forget about how unjust it seems that he walked away with his full retirement and everything else he wanted—except me—thank God! Nothing on this earth compares to what

our loving Father has in store for us, and I would rather be in Heaven with Jesus, than worry about the things of this earth. God can be trusted to vindicate you, to reward the works of evil in like manner, and to execute true justice. It may not be in your lifetime, but God will do it. Systems and organizations, like men, are fallible and imperfect and often fail to do what is right. God, however, is holy, just and good. Trust is there for a reason—you can trust the Lord to make things right in light of eternity, if not at this time on earth. I pray you can trust in that and not allow the current situation to cause you so much frustration and irritation.

# QUESTION 56

**I think I have been through a lot of healing already, but sometimes a memory from the pastor or walking past his street brings back a flood of memories. Is this normal? Do I seek forgiveness for it again?**

I pray that I've understood your thoughts and questions correctly. There are many layers to this—like that of an onion—you peel back one and have to address another, yet the hope of healing in each area and growing stronger lies before you, as Jesus beckons you to draw nearer to Him.

This is now a time for you and your husband to start over in your Christian experience, as well as your marriage. The abuse lasted so many years that nearly everything, if not everything, has been tainted by the ungodliness of the pastor. Jesus would have you to seek to know Him anew—without the influence of the pastor or anything else you're accustomed to. It is a beautiful experience to gain a new relationship with Jesus after all you've been through. A new knowledge of His Word, a new religious experience that may or may not include all the liturgy, trappings, rituals, etc., you've been accustomed to doing. Just keep your focus on Jesus and let the Holy Spirit lead you. He will direct you as you heal, as you draw even closer to Jesus and to your husband, as you discover new meaning in life and in His Word.

If I understand your concerns about your thoughts of the pastor correctly, you're right, it's difficult to put into words. I think you are describing how

sometimes feelings and memories sweep over you and you're not sure what the appropriate response is to that. Is that right? I guess the easiest way to give you an answer would be to illustrate from my own experience and pray you will find it helpful.

There are still times when memories flood my mind and thoughts of the pastor intrude. I don't want to think of him, and the thoughts are certainly not romantic thoughts at all. I would not say I miss him or anything like that. Yet, there is a keen sense of loss when he comes to mind—the loss of the supposed friendship we all had together (which wasn't genuine at all, but felt like it was at the time); the loss of his eternal life if he fails to make his life right with God; the destruction that took place in each of our family's lives because of his sin against us; the shame of my own actions during the time—all these things come into my mind in an instant. I know I've confessed all, and I believe God's promise of forgiveness so, rather than asking for forgiveness again (He has cast all my sins into the sea of forgetfulness—I seem to be the one who remembers them!), I thank Him for His forgiveness, for making me new, for cleansing me, for blessing me in so many ways. I then pray for the pastor's salvation and for his family.

God has given me forgiveness and a sense of pity and compassion for him because this life is all he's going to have if he fails to repent. I think of that, and I think what a pathetic and sad life it has been! He will miss out on the best of everything God wants us to have. I can afford to pity him and pray for him. If he repents, he will have eternal life to gain. God will take care of the justice in all this, and it won't matter to us if he ends up in Heaven because we will all be changed. Does that make sense? Sometimes words are very limiting when it comes to

describing what you feel and sense.

Perhaps the sadness you're feeling for the pastor now, and the confusion in your mind, is similar to what I've described above?

I would just encourage you to relish the new growth and experiences you are having with Jesus. Starting over is a good thing, not a bad thing. Please let me know if I failed to understand your concerns correctly, and I'll try again.

# QUESTION 57

## **Will I ever be able to automatically trust anyone again?**

It takes time to learn to trust and you will likely never give anyone automatic trust again, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. People, no matter who they are, need to earn your trust like they need to earn your respect. Of course you feel uncomfortable in a healthy and safe church or other environment. It's because it is unfamiliar territory to you. It will take time and healing for you to be able to accept that safety and peace is what is best and become comfortable with that. As you allow the Lord to heal you, He will give you peace, as only He can do. Whenever someone tries to adjust from a negative situation to a positive one, especially when all they've known is the negative, it is very uncomfortable, unfamiliar and sometimes even painful. That's why so many battered wives stay with their husbands or find new men who treat them the same. It's familiar and "comfortable." They don't know how to be treated properly and with love and respect.

# QUESTION 58

**After what I've been through, is it possible to ever have a good relationship with the church?**

It's natural to be wary of church and religion, as well as professed Christians in general, after all that you've gone through. However, by God's grace, you will one day be able to enjoy the fellowship of other believers in a church setting. We are blessed to be able to do so because of the Lord's healing power and transformation in our lives. We know that Jesus is no respecter of persons, so we trust He will do the same for you as He heals you.

More importantly than having a "successful" church relationship though, is having an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. As that relationship grows stronger and stronger, the actions, words and those around you will have less detrimental impact on you and you'll be able to keep your eyes solely fixed on the Lord. He alone is our Example. When we look to others, we are sure to be disappointed, no matter who they are or what church they attend.

My prayer is that the Lord would restore health to you in every area of your life and enable you to be part of the church once more so you can be with like-minded believers and be blessed by their fellowship.



# QUESTION 59

**Why did I not listen to my basic instincts, but instead let the pastor do what he wanted?**

We, especially as women, tend to submit to authority and power. Rightly so in many cases, however, as you have discovered, power and authority are not always rightly used. When power and authority are abused and used for downright evil, we are not to submit to that, but submit to God alone. When someone has control over us, through their power, we are sometimes rendered incapable of acting upon what we know instinctively to be right. Even when we muster the courage to say "no" or to try to end things, whatever may be the case, we are often left without the ability to follow through with that decision when we are placed under ridicule, threatened, etc. The effects of clergy sexual abuse are simply (complexly—if that's a word!) devastating! It is physical, emotional and spiritual abuse all rolled into one giant crime against God's children. Yes, it does make you question your instincts, your morals, and everything you have ever known. It makes you question God—and that is perhaps the most dire consequence for some—they question God, turn from Him, and never come back. In those instances, clergy sexual abuse has taken the individual's life—perhaps for eternity. Very tragic!

# QUESTION 60

**I married the pastor who abused me. Now, I'm so confused—I don't feel that God wanted us to get married, but what do I do now?**

Ok, back to the main points here...One, your marriage to your abuser was not ordained by God to begin with, you're absolutely correct about that! Two, although God created marriage to be a lifelong commitment between two people, the Bible gives permission for divorce in the case of adultery. Your husband's activities (attending exotic clubs, watching pornography, etc.) are forms of adultery. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." I would venture to say that your husband did not just "look" at other women. I would be surprised if he did NOT have affairs and illicit relationships along the way. I know you were married for several years, but for how long did this behavior occur? That you knew of anyway? And, how did you finally find out what was really going on?

The bottom line: Seek the Lord's will and follow Him. It is our (The Hope of Survivors) consensus that you have biblical grounds for divorce and that the Lord would not expect you to remain in such a "marriage" as this. I know if you ask Him, He will show you the way and even walk you through it. Carry you, if need be.

I can recall an experience so vivid in my mind. It happened many years ago before I was even a

Christian. I was living with my fiancée (not the same man as my husband) and he was very abusive. I prayed one night (always believed in God, just never went to church) that if God didn't want me in this relationship, to please get me out of it. I think it was within two weeks that I was completely out of the house and on my own. Praise God for answered prayer! I am glad I never married that man. I was only a child (16-17) and escaping an abusive home to begin with. My husband is a precious gift from God. I relate this story to you simply because I want to encourage you with the thought that the Lord does hear your prayers and He will answer.

QUESTIONS  
FOR/FROM  
THE  
HUSBANDS

# QUESTION 61

## **Is there any support for the husbands in these cases?**

You are welcome to speak with my husband Steve. He works with the husbands of the victims. The thing we have found is that husbands have far less time to communicate (as opposed to the victims), though they are in as much pain, if not more in some ways, as the wives. It is very helpful for a husband to speak with another who has been through it and I believe you will find it helpful to correspond with Steve.

It does take time for the pain to lessen and for trust to be fully rebuilt between the two of you. Knowing something intellectually (i.e., that this was abuse) doesn't make the pain go away. There is still a sense of betrayal by both the pastor and your wife and that is difficult to heal from quickly.

Fortunately, we serve a God who is able to recreate us all into His image and the persons He created us to be; He is able to restore relationships and make them better than ever. We can surely attest to that fact. The Lord will do the same for you and your wife.

# QUESTION 62

## **What can I do to help my wife through this?**

You are already making great strides toward helping her through this by staying with her. Many husbands don't. You are defending her honor by realizing that she was abused and taken advantage of by a spiritual leader; and by being the provider for your family so that she's able to stay at home and go through her own process of reading, learning about what's happened to her, healing, etc. The best answer I can give you though is to strengthen your relationship with God. As you grow stronger spiritually and emotionally by studying God's Word, she will be able to draw from your strength and it will increase her spirituality as well. This doesn't negate the fact that she needs to spend her own time in Bible study and prayer, which I would encourage her to do as part of helping her through this.

As far as the details, again, since you have already been rebaptized and renewed your wedding vows, I would consider this an infringement on your marriage covenant. It would be extremely unhealthy and would undermine the sacredness of your new marriage covenant and will cause intimacy death if continued. Also, by your baptism, you are both new creatures in Christ and the past is behind you. To bring it up again is to go back to where you were before and that is not spiritually healthy, nor is it walking in the newness of life that Paul speaks of when he says "forgetting those things which are behind." You both are fully aware of the intimate acts that tore your life apart. Rehearsing

every detail won't change what happened, and can in no way bring about healing by re-opening wounds.

# QUESTION 63

## **What can I expect from my marriage?**

Apart from the faithfulness and fidelity that you've both pledged to one another, I would start to look for better ways to communicate in many areas. Obviously, communication had broken down and that is one of the reasons you and your wife were unable to talk about what was going on with the pastor. There should be 100% honesty between you both. God is able to heal you both, individually and in your marriage.



# QUESTION 64

**Is the clergy sexual abuse going to be the core of my relationship from now on?**

While it is the focus now because you are both trying to heal from it, as time goes on, you will grow stronger in your relationship with Christ and one another, and there will be days when you don't even think about it at all. One day, if you desire, you'll be able to use this experience to help others. What was a weakness could become a strong point in your marriage.

# QUESTION 65

## **Am I supposed to forgive my wife?**

I would have thought that would have already transpired in order for you to be rebaptized and to renew your vows. But, understanding all that, forgiveness is a process and you will have to—when the thoughts come back to your mind—extend forgiveness to her again, just like God extends forgiveness to you each day. Although this is in the past, and we all need forgiveness daily, the principle is still the same. I'm sure your wife wants—and has asked for—your forgiveness. What would keep you from forgiving her today for what has happened in the past?

# QUESTION 66

## **How do I reconcile the feelings of betrayal with the act of manipulative rape?**

This is probably the most difficult area. As a husband, you do have the right to expect that the marriage bond of love and intimacy will never be broken. I'm sure your wife would feel the same if the role was reversed. Since each situation is different, but many of the dynamics are the same, it is nearly impossible to understand or calculate how someone is able to use their authority and trust to gain access to your wife in a sexual manner. The main thing I can recommend for you to do from this point forward is to educate yourself on how this type of abuse takes place. You will need to learn how the mental manipulation played into the breakdown of your marriage and your wife's boundaries.

Once you understand that, you should be able to expect more from your marriage than before because both you and your wife realize the issues and should be able to place safeguards around your marriage so that this would never happen again. You do, and you did, have the right to expect that your marriage vow would be honored as you pledged when you were married. Maybe you need to share your feelings about the betrayal in your relationship with your wife and help her to understand how you also were a victim and that even though it was abuse, she still betrayed you and your vows.

# QUESTION 67

## **How do I help my wife through the healing process?**

You're already doing a lot of the steps for her by just being there. That is a great resource when one is hurting so badly. The first year is the most difficult because everything is so fresh and there is so much to be dealt with, brought to the surface and understood for both of you. While you don't want to send her into a tailspin, you should be able to address some of these areas with her. The healing process is one you need to go through together, meaning you should be working on your healing during this time as well. For you to put your healing off until she is done with hers, only prolongs the painful process and creates additional problems down the road.

If possible, I would suggest the two of you get away together and leave this topic off limits. Plan one-day outings if a weekend is not possible. Enjoy each other's company. If necessary, set a specific time and a time limit to discuss this issue and then drop it.

# QUESTION 68

## **Should I enter litigation?**

As far as the legal process goes, it is a long, painful experience and it will be financially, emotionally, physically and spiritually draining for you and your wife, as well as your kids. The choice is yours, but you should not enter litigation without much prayer and knowing for certain that it is God's will. You must make sure the marriage—as well as the two of you—are strong enough to go through the process. It will greatly prolong your healing and likely just lead to much frustration.