

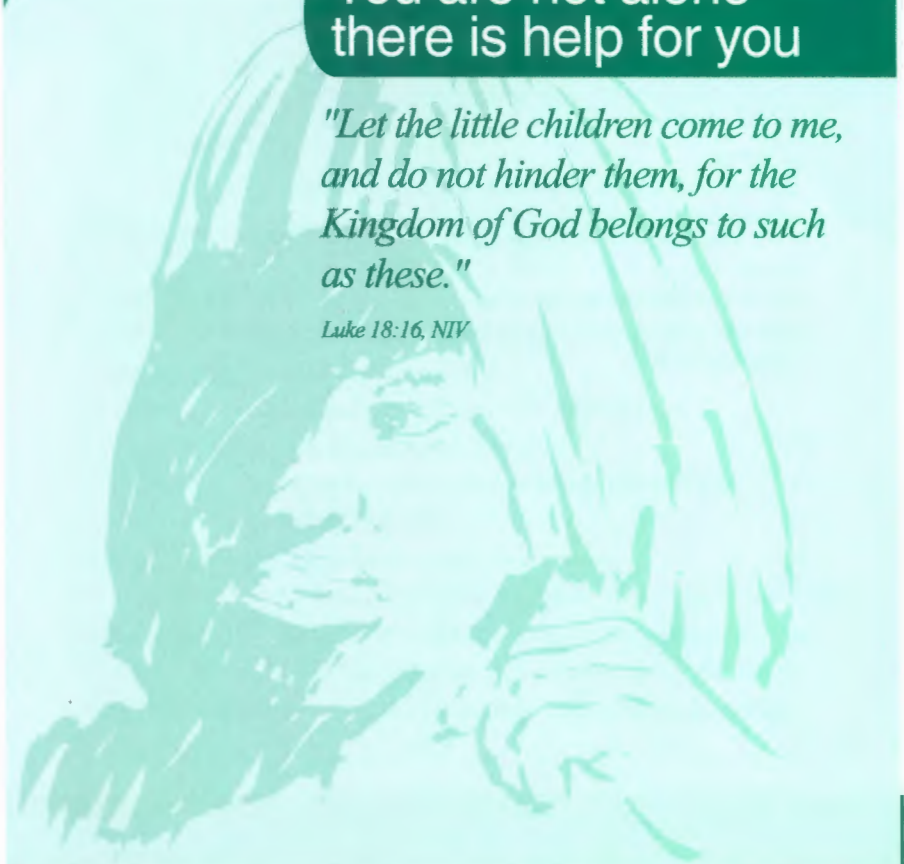
BREAKING the *SILENCE*

Has your child
been abused?

**You are not alone
there is help for you**

*"Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them, for the
Kingdom of God belongs to such
as these."*

Luke 18:16, NIV



What Is Abuse?

*To abuse someone is to intentionally or unconsciously injure or damage him/her physically, psychologically/emotionally, or sexually with the purpose to intimidate, dominate, control and/or exercise power. Abuse can be isolated or habitual, premeditated or spontaneous. The one who inflicts the abuse is typically called the **abuser**, the one who is abused is typically called the **victim**.*

Types of Abuse:

Physical:

actions which cause humiliation, physical pain or injury, such as kicking, pushing, or punching.

Psychological/Emotional:

actions which cause loss of self-esteem, and/or loss of self-determination, such as name calling, isolation, or criticizing.

Sexual:

actions of a sexual nature that are unwelcome, uncomfortable, or forced; this includes rape.

Child Abuse:

all of the above definitions, as well as neglect. This includes not providing for a child's basic needs such as food and clothing, and abandonment.

If Your Child Has Been Abused:

- Stay calm.
- Respect the child's privacy. Find a quiet and comfortable place and carefully listen to what he/she is saying.
- Believe the child and take him/her seriously; children seldom lie about abuse.
- Make a report to the authorities.
- Do not confront the abuser yourself.
- Take the child to the doctor for immediate medical attention.
- Let the child know that the abuse was not his/her fault.
- Enlist the support of your Women's, Children's, and/or Family Ministries leaders.
- Find a licensed therapist who specializes in child abuse.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Pray with the child and reassure them that Jesus loves them and does not want them to be hurt.
- Create a safety net around the child which includes your pastor, family members, and trusted friends; people that will encourage him/her spiritually and emotionally. The child will know that he/she is protected within this safety net.

These Common Beliefs Are *Not* True:

- Parents will be able to tell if their child has been sexually abused.
- Children need to be beaten in order to learn to respect their elders.
- Boys cannot be sexually abused.
- Violently shaking a baby will not hurt or kill him/her.
- Playing with a child's genitalia is harmless.
- Children are not affected when one parent abuses the other.
- Only strangers molest children.
- Children will quickly outgrow effects of abuse.
- If children walk around naked they are asking to be sexually abused.
- Denying a child food or other basic needs is not considered abuse.
- If a child's body reacts to fondling it is because he/she enjoys it.
- Children lie about being abused in order to get adults in trouble.

Safety Measures For Parents:

- **Network with** your children's friends and their parents.
- **Explain to children** that people who want them to keep secrets from their parents are not safe to be with.
- **Encourage children** to tell you if anything frightens or disturbs them.
- **Instruct them to *always*** check with you before accepting any type of gift from anyone (including money and candy).
- **Inform children** to always check with parents, or the person in charge at the time, before going anywhere, even if it is with someone they know. Have them state where they are going, who is going with them, and when they will return. Ask for a contact phone number if necessary.
- **Teach children** how to say 'No' to anyone who tries to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- **Help them to understand** that no one should expose or touch their private parts, ask them to do the same, or force them to handle body waste.
- **Instruct them never** to open the door if they are home alone.
- **Show them how** to phone emergency personnel. Supply them with a list of other important phone numbers to call if they are in trouble (including trusted neighbors).
- **Teach children** that there is safety in numbers.
- **Question the motives** of adults and older children who constantly want to spend time alone with your children.
- **If children** prefer to spend a lot of time at neighbor's/friend's home, find out why.
- **Screen baby-sitters** (male and female) very carefully.
- **Teach your child** the correct names of body parts so that if necessary they will be able to communicate clearly about an assault.

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