

Child Abuse

**Effects, Consequences
and Rehabilitation**

by Max Klein

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The author has studied under the teaching ministry of R. B. Thieme Jr., his faithful and beloved pastor for over 30 years. During that time Max has learned many biblical principles and doctrinal truths which have given him a clear understanding of the spiritual life. It is this spiritual life that Max desires to explain in an easily understandable written form, so that others may also come to know the spiritual life that God has provided for all believers in Jesus Christ.

Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the word of God.

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in [the filling of] the Spirit and [Biblical] truth. (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him. (John 3:36)

The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints an the marrow and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Study to show thyself approved, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

Child Abuse: Effects, Consequences and Rehabilitation

Part One: The Effects of Child Abuse on the Victim

Can children handle pressure and adversity without parental help? The answer depends upon the maturity of the child. However, most young children cannot handle the problems and pressures of life by themselves, and must rely on their parents to solve their problems for them. Irresponsible parents do not solve the problems of their children, and so allow stress to function in the lives of their children. On the other hand, responsible parents solve their children's problems, and so are able to prevent stress from developing in their children's souls.

Unfortunately, some parents abuse their children in every possible way. These are degenerate parents - parents who possess no wisdom, humility, or integrity, and therefore fail in many of their responsibilities toward their children. They not only fail to prevent stress in their children, but cause a lot of stress for them too. They scream in anger at their children, causing fear to lodge in the child's subconscious. They fight in front of their terrified children. They worry and explain their worries to their children so that their children learn how to worry. The abuse is monstrous.

Parents lacking wisdom abuse their children by failing to supervise them properly. This abuse may take many forms. For example, they may be unaware of their child's sinful masturbation, or on the other hand even allow it as a way of

relieving stress. These parents do not realize that masturbation not only is destructive to the soul, but also affects sexual relations in marriage later on in life. They permit their children to read or watch pornographic material, not realizing that this not only encourages the lust pattern of their child's sin nature, but also puts garbage in the subconscious.

Other forms of soul abuse are more subtle. For example, many parents permit their children to constantly read or watch science fiction cartoons and movies without thinking about the consequences this may have to their child's development. Science fiction develops a pseudo frame of reference in the thinking of their child, isolating them from reality. Children need to learn truth, not fiction and fantasy. All children need to learn truth and principles related to the laws of establishment; and if they are believers they must also learn principles related to the spiritual life. Wise parents provide an environment that nurtures their children in truth.

God designed the soul so that the child would naturally have complete faith in his parents. Consequently, any form of child abuse is a betrayal of the child's trust, though not all forms of child abuse have the same destructive effect on faith. In occurrences of extreme child abuse such as torture and sexual abuse, faith as a system of learning is severely damaged. Furthermore, child abuse - and especially extreme abuse - destroys humility and replaces it with arrogance (preoccupation with self) and the emotional complex of sins.

The most important learning period in a child's life is between the ages one through to about eight, when his personality and character are being formed. During these formative years the child should learn many important principles and values in life; he should be able to develop a conscience with correct norms and standards, and a humility that will orient him toward all legitimate authorities. This learning process is facilitated by the child's complete trust in

his parents, a faith directed toward his parents that he will never have in his life again. However, if the child is abused by his parents this most important period for learning is lost.

Furthermore, if the child is betrayed by his parents through extreme abuse, his faith in them will be destroyed. Instead of developing humility, he will develop arrogance. Instead of learning authority orientation, he will easily incur bitterness and rebelliousness toward those in authority. So, rather than learning beneficial things, he ends up learning how to be arrogant and bitter instead.

Usually, the abused child is unable to find help anywhere. His family has betrayed him and in many cases others either don't care, or don't believe the child's claims of abuse. He is left alone to cope with this trauma by use of his or her own resources. In the case of the child who has never learnt to solve his problems through Bible doctrine, which can only be inculcated into the soul through academic learning, he must rely upon some psychological defense method instead. Two examples of psychological defense methods are repression - burying anxieties such as fear and anger into the subconscious; and denial (of these emotions). Use of these defense methods may also lead to projection, where the child assigns his own sinful emotions to others. Defense mechanisms are defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, 3rd ED (Revised), pp 393-4: "Defense mechanisms are patterns of feelings, thoughts, or behaviors that are relatively involuntary and arise in response to perceptions of psychic danger. They are designed to hide or alleviate the conflicts or stressors that give rise to anxiety." These defense mechanisms used for survival by abused children ultimately result in garbage (harmful emotions and ideas) in the subconscious and deep seated psychological defects.

There are at least five categories of child abuse; some are more traumatic than others:

Sexual abuse: Parents, siblings, relatives, or others victimize and traumatize a child through various categories of sexual activity such as incest, prostitution, and exposing one's naked body to children.

Physical abuse: This includes beating, burning and other forms of torture; selling into slavery and prostitution, and murder.

Soul abuse: This is destruction of the child's faith and humility, caused by the parents failure to prevent stress from developing in the souls of their children during their formative years (Ephesians 6:4; and Colossians 3:21).

Soul abuse results from the failure of parents to teach their children what is right and wrong, and then to embed right concepts into their child's soul by rendering just punishment to him when he is disobedient or has violated establishment principles. If parents do not punish their child for wrongdoing he will not learn to respect authority, but will accumulate guilt in his subconscious and thus develop emotional and psychological problems.

Teaching a child to hate the other parent in a divorce is also soul abuse. Children should never become involved in the problems and antagonisms that occur in marriage. Differences should be solved away from the children.

Christian parents abuse their children if they fail to evangelize them and teach them basic Bible doctrine. As children learn the spiritual life, step by step they will learn to solve their own problems: "You, parents, stop provoking your children to anger [children react to pettiness, too many restrictions, unfairness, and legalism], but always rear them in the training and instruction about the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4).

Emotional abuse: Seeking to control a child through emotional sins such as fear or guilt is abuse. Some parents

attempt to make their child a responsible and hard working student by using guilt to instill a false motivation in his soul. They may say to him: "Mommy and Daddy will be very unhappy if you don't get good grades in school this semester." If the child should then fail to get good grades he will feel guilty for his parent's unhappiness. This is not a true sense of responsibility in a child, but an incorrect form of motivation which can lead to neurosis, and even suicide. Parents should never motivate their child through guilt, anger, hatred, malice, fear or violence.

Parents must never encourage insensitivity toward either people or animals. Parents who laugh at the misfortune of others are teaching their child to be insensitive and cruel. Parents who ridicule and denigrate other races are teaching their child to be callous and insensitive toward those for whom the Lord died on the cross. Parents who abuse animals are teaching their child to be cruel to God's creatures. They should instead be teaching their child to be thoughtful and sensitive toward the feelings of others and to be caring and considerate of animals.

Parents should not encourage arrogance. Many parents treat their children as if they were royalty. Children are born with a sin nature and are prone toward becoming arrogant. Until they develop respect for their parents and some humility there is nothing inherently good about them. So, don't brag to others about how smart your son is or how beautiful your daughter is. In God's eyes this is not greatness.

Parents should not encourage hypersensitivity. Children should never be permitted to sulk or whine in self-pity, or to throw a tantrum which is arrogant preoccupation with self. Some parents actually encourage hypersensitivity by comforting or commiserating with their child who is wallowing in self pity. Hypersensitivity must be discouraged by good teaching and correct discipline.

A child must be taught to solve his problems rationally. If a child is a believer, he must be encouraged to gather the facts and to apply some Biblical principle or doctrine to his problem or perplexity. If he does get out of fellowship, his parents must encourage him to name his sin to the Father and then to apply some Biblical principle to that situation. Whether the child is a believer or unbeliever, the parent must not permit emotion to intrude into the problem solving procedure since problems and perplexities can only be solved by gaining the facts and by making correct decisions through cognition.

When punishing a child, parents should never threaten the child or his pet-animal with physical abuse, belittle a child with insults (you idiot, you ugly duckling etc.), or isolate the child from fellowship with the parents by confining a child in his bedroom, closet etc. When punishing a child the parent must be motivated by his love for his child, and the desire for his child to become a happy and responsible person in society.

Neglect and Deprivation: This includes failure to provide the necessities of life (food, shelter and clothing), failure to teach the basic concepts of life (like good hygiene, manners, social and thinking skills), and failure to provide medical care when necessary. In the case of Christian parents, they also have a duty to evangelize and teach basic doctrine to their children.

Parents need to learn how to influence their children correctly. Children begin life with blind faith and trust. If the parents destroy their child's trust, the child will develop substitute defense mechanisms to protect the soul from unbearable stress. These defense mechanisms create garbage in the subconscious of the child's soul which hinders him from trusting God and metabolizing Bible doctrine. Parents have a tremendous influence in a child's life and must take heed of their great responsibility.

Part 2: Consequences to Child Abuse Offenders

The following passages regarding child abuse are found in the book of Matthew:

18:5. “Moreover, whoever receives one child such as this one because of my person receives me.”

In this verse Jesus Christ is emphasizing the extreme importance of child-rearing. This is a mandate to avoid child abuse, and for parents to fulfill their responsibility toward children by protecting the souls of their children from stress. When parents fail in this regard, the child loses faith in the parents and becomes totally preoccupied with self.

18:6. “But whoever causes one of these little ones who have believed in Me to be trapped [*σκανδαλον skandalon* - reference to child abuse], it would be better for him [the one guilty of child abuse] that a millstone turned by an ass were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the deepest part of the sea.”

Since this is a reference to extreme child abuse, the evil child abuser should not have a decent burial, but an unmarked grave far out to sea. In this way child abuse is discouraged in society. The memory of such people should be removed from the memory of those who knew him, especially from the memory of the abused person. Philippians 3:13 says we are to “forget those things which are behind.”

18:7. “Woe to the world because of entrapment! [*skandalon* – further reference to child abuse] For it is inevitable that entrapment occurs, but woe to that person through whom the child abuse comes!”

The Greek word *skandalon* means to hurt, to cause disaster, to cause to sin, to trap someone who is innocent. The innocent child is trapped by the evil lust of parents or siblings in child abuse, by those responsible for protecting the child. In this metaphor, it is the abuser who sets the trap for the child.

The person who causes trauma in another person will be judged by trauma. Galatians 6:7 states, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." There are certain judgments that occur in human history that apparently have no explanation. Since the abuser brings great shock to the child, God will judge the abuser through great shock. The supreme court of heaven never lets a child abuser get away with his abuse.

When an unbeliever abuses a child sexually, he builds up tremendous scar tissue in the soul. This scar tissue can eventually destroy his ability to use faith. So, in later life, the child abuser may desire salvation, but is unable to express faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

18:8. "Moreover, if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble [sin], cut it off and throw it away from you; it is better for you to enter [eternal] life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire."

18:9. "And if your eye causes you to sin [causing trauma in another person through child abuse], pluck it out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter [eternal] life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the lake of fire."

Verses 8 and 9 are addressed as a warning to the unbeliever involved in child abuse. The hand represents the function of sexual abuse and other forms of physical abuse. The foot represents the decision to abuse, and the following action to move in the direction of child abuse. The eye represents the lust pattern of the sin nature. This passage is not saying that

self-mutilation is the solution to child abuse. The Bible does not advocate self-mutilation. Rather, this is a Greek idiom of comparison and exclusion: better one thing than another thing, better no eyes, hands etc. than child abuse, which builds scar tissue in the soul. When the unbeliever's soul becomes saturated with scar tissue he is unable to believe in Christ because scar tissue of the soul destroys the ability of the soul to use faith as a system of perception.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 states, "Moreover, even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the God of this world [Satan] has blinded the thinking of the unbelieving." Satan blinds the thinking of the unbeliever through his cosmic system of religion, self-righteous legalism, degeneracy and evil. Continued exposure to some aspects of this cosmic system, e.g. child abuse, builds up scar tissue in the soul of the individual. It is possible for an unbeliever to accumulate so much scar tissue that he is unable to use faith to believe in Christ Jesus. The unbeliever who persists in child abuse will suffer forever in the Lake of Fire, not because of child abuse, but because he rejected Christ as savior.

18:10. "See to it that you do not despise [treat with contempt, abuse] one of these little ones. For I say to you, that their [guardian] angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven."

This verse is a strong warning to parents and others not to abuse children. This warning comes from the Supreme Court of Heaven. God the Father is the presiding judge of all cases of child abuse. The child's guardian angel will report to God the Father all cases of child abuse. The presiding judge of the Supreme Court of Heaven will bring down severe judgment upon the abuser.

It is the sovereign will of God that all victims of child abuse be spared the trauma of such injustice. God therefore takes some children in death before they reach accountability, while for the others He has provided perfect solutions through the Gospel and Bible doctrine.

Part 3: Rehabilitation for the Child Abuse Victim

When a child experiences trauma over a prolonged period of time he will develop natural defense mechanisms which divorce him from the reality of the situation and thus protect his soul from the excessive stress. Through the use of these mechanisms, such as repression, dissociation, denial etc. the experience is buried into the subconscious of the soul and the child is able to maintain his sanity for an extended, yet limited, period of time. Without these defense mechanisms the child would become psychotic almost immediately. However, as the child matures into adulthood these problem-solving devices of childhood no longer become effective. As the adult becomes more responsible for his own life, he must accept the realities of life, rather than suppressing or rejecting reality as he did during childhood. He must also deal with the garbage in his subconscious, which needs to be cleaned out before he can stabilize psychologically.

God has infinite concern for abused children and always provides a grace solution. The garbage and flaws which accumulate through child abuse can be removed from the soul by regeneration through faith in Christ and development of the spiritual life. Bible doctrine circulating in the soul of the believer and his response to God's love for him will remove the flaws and garbage step by step.

In Matthew 18:6-10 Jesus is teaching his disciples about the warnings and consequences due to child-abuse offenders. In verses 12-14 he continues to expound on the subject of child abuse though now referring to the believer who was abused in childhood. Verse 11 does not exist in the best and oldest manuscripts and does not belong in this passage. This verse occurs in Luke 19:10, though some scribe who had no understanding of the context thought it should also belong in the Matthew passage and inserted it here, distorting the original message. In our context (Matthew 18:12-13) we have a straying sheep, not a lost sheep. In Luke, Jesus is talking to the Scribes and Pharisees. In Matthew, Jesus is talking to His disciples. The Luke passage is a parable regarding salvation; the Matthew passage we are studying here is an analogy regarding child abuse.

18:12. “What do you think? If any man owns a hundred sheep, and one out from among them has gone astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one who has gone astray?”

By application this question becomes a challenge to the abused child who is now an adult believer. He is an adult believer who has reacted to his child abuse and so has wandered away from the plan of God and divine solutions.

The hundred sheep in this context are all believers. The shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 10:11). “The sheep that has gone astray” refers to the believer who has reacted to child abuse and wandered off from the function of metabolized doctrine in the soul.

God has provided for every believer a solution to every problem in life. There is no such thing as a unique problem for which the grace of God has not provided. As an adult, reaction to abuse which occurred in childhood is failure to

apply God's solution. Many believers stray from God's plan simply because they fail to use the divine solution. They fail to remove the bitterness, anger, hatred etc. which is located in their souls. This stress prevents spiritual growth - they have wandered away from God's solution and the opportunity to live a psychologically normal and happy life.

Recall of child abuse as an adult creates a tendency for self-justification for carnality or personality disorders, or both. The believer uses his past experience as justification for allowing the sin nature to now control his life. Post-traumatic stress syndrome, dissociation and schizophrenia (James 1:8, James 4:8) etc. are all forms of straying. If he blames his stress on his past trauma and adverse circumstances, that is the end of any spiritual growth. His subconscious garbage always thinks "I have to be right; I am right; the other person is wrong." He makes a great effort to maintain righteousness based on self justification, and has such a preoccupation with self that he is unable to use the divine solution. The garbage in his subconscious and scar tissue in his soul create a stone wall of arrogance between his volition and God's grace solutions. Therefore he convinces himself: "Bible doctrine doesn't work. I've tried it."

Scripture commands the believer to forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are in front of you. The garbage is not emptied from the subconscious by remembering traumatic experiences of the past. Garbage is removed from the subconscious, and scar tissue of the soul is healed through dealing with the sin nature by the use of divine solutions.

Divine solutions to problems are progressive rather than instantaneous. Most people want instantaneous solutions to problems, but that is not the way the plan of God works. Many believers in churches where the pastor neglects to teach doctrine to his congregation are led to believe that holding

hands and singing songs, making group confessions, praying loudly etc. will instantly solve all problems. However, permanent solutions demand your day-by-day perception and application of Bible doctrine over a long period of time. Divine solutions are permanent because they require divine thought in the stream of consciousness which must ultimately produce a love for God. This love then provides the motivation to apply grace to self and others, which allows him to heal the wounds that occurred in childhood.

The steady accumulation of doctrine in the soul must not only deal with the issue of the sin nature, but must progressively clean out the garbage in the subconscious plus the trash in the stream of consciousness which includes the subjective arrogance of self-absorption, emotional revolt of the soul, blackout of the soul, scar tissue of the soul, accompanied by an accumulation of a false scale of values related to human viewpoint.

Injustice to the individual is one of the most difficult problems to face in life. God has provided the solution to injustices as well as every other problem in life. Every time we get into human solutions we postpone the divine solution. The life of Joseph is one of the greatest examples of God handling the problems of injustice. Injustices are some of the greatest challenge to the spiritual life of a believer. These injustices are going to occur, and you must put them in the hands of the Lord, turning them over to the supreme court of heaven.

To come back with the Lord to the flock you have to want to recover. Some believers do not want to recover. The only hindrance to recovery is the volition of the straying believer. It is the will of God for full recovery, therefore He will do everything he can to bring the stray back to the spiritual life. It is not God's will that a believer who is a victim of child abuse be ruined by trauma. However, full recovery demands that you seek God's plan and God's solution. You and you alone are the

only one who can live your spiritual life; no one else can live it for you. God assigned to you your very own spiritual life. All the counseling in the world will not solve your problems. Only through the use of your own volition can you solve your problems.

18:13-14. “And if it turns out that he finds it [the straying sheep], truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. So, it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these children should be ruined [*απολλυμι* *apollumi* – this word has the meaning ruin, destroy, to lose, to die, or to perish. In the context of the believer we should therefore translate this word as *ruin*].”

During the ministries of Moses and Jeremiah, the adults rejected the message but their children were positive to the teaching of the word of God. The parents were evil and initially caused a lot of stress in the souls of their children – however under the faithful ministries of Moses and Jeremiah the children were able to become great believers through metabolization and application of Bible doctrine.

Through the step by step process of learning, metabolization and application of Bible doctrine a believer can remove the psychological defense mechanisms which he has relied on in childhood and replace them with the problem solving devices of the spiritual life. In grace the abused child can become a normal person, able to face reality and having great capacity for life, happiness and love. One of the greatest and highest functions of one's spiritual life is to win a complete victory over any traumatic experience in one's life.