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# CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN (Child Abuse)



# CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

## (CHILD ABUSE)

Never before has there been such violation of children in the world as there is today. Child abuse and sexual molestation are crimes against children that most often go undetected.

➡ SEXU 39

Worldwide it estimated that 30% of little girls and 25% of little boys are sexually abused before they reach their adolescent years. These 'little people' carry the pain of abuse for the rest of their lives, often bringing dysfunction into their adult lives as a result.

➡ SEXU 15

The Christian church has for too long been unprepared in screening child abusers who use the church to get at children. The church has also often remained silent about child abuse, not knowing how to help in the many aspects of it. The church, too, has often remained ignorant about child abuse, which has only assisted Satan in his evil works ( 2 Corinthians 2:11).

### Child Sexual Abuse Worksheet

The following is a short quiz which is designed solely to make one aware of his/her beliefs and knowledge (or lack of it) of child abuse:

**TRUE   FALSE**

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The most frequent abuser of children is a stranger.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Adult men and women abuse children equally.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Girls are victims of abuse more frequently than boys.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Boys are seldom sexually abused.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The sexually abused child wants to leave his/her family.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The sexually abused child suffers permanent psychological damage.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. The sexually abused child usually hates the perpetrator (the abuser).   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. The stigma of sexual abuse only affects the perpetrator (the abuser).   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. In a father/daughter incestuous relationship, the mother is often aware of the sexual relationship.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Incest (sex within the family) is more likely to occur in stepfamilies.                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Most children tell an adult if someone is abusing them.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Most sexual abusers are male and married with children of their own.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Women are never sexual abusers.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Once disclosed, sexual abuse is easy to treat.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. A child cannot get an STD from sexual abuse.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Often, child abusers are 'authority' figures to the child.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Catching the abuser and telling him to STOP will correct the abuser and make him/her stop abusing the child. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Perpetrators (abusers) are rapidly convicted and sentenced.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Answer Log

(1)F (2)F (3)T (4)F (5)F (6)T (7)F (8)F also the child (9)T (10)T (11)F (12)T (13)F  
(14)F very difficult (15)F often does (16)T (17)F almost never stops the abuser  
(18)F very few are caught, convicted, and sentenced.

### Sexual Abuse Defined

Child sexual abuse is any exploitation of a child under the legal age in a specific country (in many countries the age is 16 years) for the sexual pleasure and gratification of the adult. It may be a single incident, or events that occur over a number of years.

### Sexual Abuse Defined Further

This is any kind of incident that an adult inflicts on a child in parts of the body that are:

- Under the swimming costume (different for girls than boys)
- Uncomfortable to the child and has sexual inference

Sexual abuse of children includes any or all of the following:

- Obscene remarks and suggestions, obscene telephone calls, obscene internet
- Indecent exposure (showing any of the private parts of a body either by the adult to the child, or child to the adult)
- Voyeurism which is to watch a child undress
- Fondling the child (touching the child's private parts)
- Taking sexually suggestive photos or pornographic pictures; showing the child sexually suggestive or pornographic pictures
- Sexual intercourse or attempted intercourse including oral (sex with the mouth)
- Rape (forced sex), incest (sex within family members including stepfamily), prostitution (sex for money or payment in kind, and favours)
- Bestiality (sex with animals)
- Sexual abuse can be with opposite sex or with same sex

### Who are the Sexual Offenders?

- Child molesters come from every class, profession, racial, and religious background.
- Most are persons the child knows and trusts.
- The highest incidence of sexual abuse of children happens within the family or extended family, including stepfamily.
- Ninety percent of reported persons who abuse are married men.
- A large proportion are married with children themselves.
- Most sex offenders lacked affection and physical contact when they were young; however, that is NOT an excuse to molest a child.
- A high percentage were themselves abused as children. Again, this is NOT an excuse to molest a child.

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➡ SEXU 73

- Child molesters tend to gravitate towards places, professions, and activities which put them into easy contact with children (Note: Many abusers are people who work with children in churches, clubs, schools, community organisations, etc.). This does NOT mean that all people who work with children are abusers. It does mean, however, that abusers will seek out these places where children are readily available for them to abuse.
- Child abusers usually pick out their victims, and plan their abusive activity.
- A disturbing United States statistic shows that child molesters average **73** child victims before they are caught.
- Offenders avoid detection because they are so expert at hiding their deviant behaviour from the family, friends, and colleagues (both their own family and the family of their victims).
- Often sexual abusers are persons who are perceived as authority figures to the child (an adult person the child believes has authority over him. These can be teachers, childcare staff, church persons, a neighbour, a parent, etc.) Therefore, the child tends to be easily coerced into silence by that adult authority because of fear.
- Despite efforts to work with offenders, the risk of reoffending (committing this crime again) is 75%.

### **The Facts**

**MYTH** - Children are usually molested by strangers.  
**FACT** - 75%-80% of children are molested by someone they know.

**MYTH** - Incest is a rare occurrence.  
**FACT** - Documented estimates vary from 1 in 23, 1 in 10, to 4 in 10 children being victims of incest (forced sex within the family).

**MYTH** - Only girls are victims, not boys.  
**FACT** - Reported cases indicate a high percentage of girls are victims of sexual abuse, but both girls and boys are equally vulnerable and boys are not far behind the girls in the number that are sexually abused children.

**MYTH** - Women offend as frequently as men – it is just not reported.  
**FACT** - 90% of all known offenders are male.

### **Identifying Abuse**

Children who have been sexually abused, or are presently being sexually abused may or may not indicate the following symptoms, or some of them (Note: If a number of symptoms are being exhibited by the child at the same time, or in a pattern, or over a period of time, this could be an indicator of sexual abuse.):

1. Drastic changes in behaviour/moods, sleeping or eating habits. Example: The child suddenly becomes withdrawn, refuses to eat, or has disrupted sleep. These can be signs to investigate
2. Excessive interest in his or others' private parts, excessive masturbation, or sexual actions that he would not otherwise know about are signs to investigate

⇒ SEXU 14

3. Overdressing, cross-dressing, double dressing or obsession with an article/s of clothing such as stockings can be sign. Example: The child won't take this article of clothing off
4. Unnatural fear or excessive fear
5. Redness, swelling, pain in genital area – discharge or constant itching and itching and scratching/touching, and of course, infections or injury in the private part area
6. Uncharacteristic anger or aggression
7. Missing or not wanting to go to school/church, stealing, lying, running away, performing badly at school suddenly, fantasising, etc.
8. Regressive behaviour (withdrawing), crying, bed-wetting, suicidal tendencies or attempts
9. Extreme insecurity, lowering of self-worth...feels he/she is no good
10. Displaying the need to talk but then unable to

### **How to Protect the Child from Abuse**

Parents cannot be with the child 24 hours per day. Therefore, ALL children are potential victims of child abuse. Most children who are abused sexually were abused before they were 10 years of age. **THE BEST PROTECTION PARENTS CAN GIVE TO THEIR CHILDREN IS TO TEACH THEM EARLY HOW TO PROTECT THEMSELVES.**

### **Current Myth about HIV/AIDS and Children**

There is a very popular myth in many parts of Africa, India, and Eastern Asia, in particular, that is totally false and only perpetuates child abuse. **This myth says: If you are an adult and you think you might be infected with HIV and/or AIDS, then sleep with a virgin child, it will chase HIV and AIDS out of your body.** This myth is believed by many an infected adult, and perpetrated on many an unsuspecting child! This myth is particularly dangerous because it is totally untruthful, and it only serves to infect the child with HIV, AIDS, and/or STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).

### **Teaching Good Touches**

At approximately three years of age (each parent must determine his/her child's developmental ability) or before the child attends childcare, creche, or pre-school, the child should be equipped to protect him/her self against child abuse. One of the primary beginnings is for the parents to teach the child about 'good' and 'bad' touches. **It is important that you not teach the child about so-called 'good' and 'bad' people; only good and bad touches.** Most child abusers are good people, to the child!

- Pat on the head
- Hugging your family in a healthy way
- Kissing your family or friend on the cheek
- Holding your friend's hand
- Good playing

### **Teaching About Bad Touches**

⇒ SEXU 16

⇒ SEXU 17

- Anyone touching your private parts (anything under the swimming costume)
- Kissing on the mouth
- Playing games with your private parts
- Anyone wanting you to touch them on their private parts

Parents should begin to teach this in a relaxed, casual, and non-descriptive way. **Example:** the parent is helping the 3-year-old child (thereabout that age) undress for the bath. This child now is potty trained and has fair coordination. This is a good indicator that the child is capable of learning about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ touches. Mummy pats the child on the head and reinforces, “*Honey, this is a good touch!*” The child repeats this as reinforcement. This is repeated several times with parent demonstrating ‘good’ touches. Parent then encourages the child at a specific point that he/she is getting big now and that he/she must take off his/her own clothes for the bath, that Mummy wants ONLY him/her to take off clothing...no one else. This can be taught over several weeks/times. Parent then reinforces to the child that **no one but him/her is to take down panties or take off the clothes.** Parents then reinforce the concept that the private parts are ONLY for him/her, and not for anyone else...**that is a bad touch.** This needs to be in progressive steps over a period of time until the child is confident and understands the concept of **good** and **bad** touches.

**A note of caution:** parents should always give this instruction in **positive** ways, not negative ways. Avoid instilling fear; avoid putting across any idea that the child’s private parts are dirty! Avoid telling the young child about sexual things or telling him/her more than is necessary for the child to protect himself/herself. The idea here is to reinforce the concept in the child that IF the child is in the situation of a “bad” touch, he/she will **recognise it** for what it is and refuse.

**YOUR MOTTO MUST BE: NO – GO - TELL**

⇒ SEXU 74

### **Steps of Protection for the Child**

#### **1. Discuss the right to be safe.**

Explain that everyone, including the child, has rights. Start with simple ideas such as the right to breathe, eat, sleep, play, or go to the toilet. Ask children what would happen if you took any of these rights away. Encourage them to think, thereby developing their own judgement.

#### **2. Discuss the difference between touches that give a “yes” feeling and those that give a “no” feeling.**

Introduce the idea of “yes” and “no” feelings. Explain that children have the right to say “no” even to someone they love, if they do not like a touch or a kiss. Children should not be forced to be affectionate. Children should begin to trust their own feelings and judgements if they are to learn to keep themselves safe.

#### **3. Talk to children about their bodies.**

Explain to the child that his/her body is his/her own, and that no one should touch him/her in any way that makes them feel confused or uncomfortable. Do not frighten children with too much information. Rather, help them to become sensitive to their own feelings of comfort or discomfort. Teach children about their private parts, using either their proper names or “those parts covered by your bathing costume”.

**4. Talk about secrets.**

Differentiate between a secret you can keep and a secret you need to tell. If a secret is a surprise for someone, or one that definitely gives you a ‘yes’ feeling, then it is a secret you should keep. If a secret gives you the ‘no’ feeling, or it might hurt you or someone else, then you need to tell a grown-up whom you trust. Offenders often rely on a child’s willingness to keep a secret; so your child needs to know **never** to keep a secret of this nature.

**5. Encourage children to ‘tell’.**

Develop a relationship with your children where they feel free to talk with you, their parents. Assure them that whatever they tell you, you will not be angry and you will believe them. Even if they break a rule and are in a potentially dangerous situation, assure them that you still want to know and will be there to support them no matter what. Remember: the abuser often subtly instills fear into his/her potential victims by threats...threats that no one will believe them if they ‘tell’; threats that they will harm them if they ‘tell’.

**6. Make the child aware of bribes and tricks.**

Offenders may use bribes for sexual favours from the child. Explain the difference between a bribe and a gift to the child. Gifts are given freely – bribes want something in return. Tricks might involve presents, money, sweets, a cell phone, new shoes, etc. A common trick used by molesters is “Your Mum is sick and asked me to fetch you.” Establish a family PLAN that will always be used by every family member should there be a crisis in the family. For example: the family decided that if there is a crisis, everyone will phone either Auntie Mary or Uncle Musa in the event of an emergency. **ONLY** Auntie Mary or Uncle Musa will be the ones to fetch you if there is an emergency! Tell children that you want to be told if anyone offers them a bribe or tries to trick them. Also educate your children not to EAT anything from a stranger, or GO WITH a stranger, for any reason.

**7. Teach children to say “NO” when they need to.**

Educate children that they have your permission to say “NO” if they feel uncomfortable with anything they are being asked to do. This includes saying a polite but **firm** “NO” to authority figures such as adults, a relative, a teacher, a priest or pastor, a babysitter, etc. if that person is wanting them to do or see something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Frequently practice “NO” situations which might be potentially dangerous situations, particularly with young children.

**8. Do not define people as ‘good’ or ‘bad’.**

If children think that only 'bad' people hurt them, they will be ill prepared for the person who approaches them in a manner which gains their trust. If in the child's eyes, a 'good' relative approaches them for a sexual favour, then that child will be confused and perhaps think the sexual favour must then also be good. One method of relating this is that we all have 'good' and 'bad' in us, and even 'good' people sometimes do 'bad' things, or things we do not like.

**9. Answer children's questions timely and openly.**

If the children ask questions, answer with sensitivity and care, without dismissing their feelings or denying the reality of the situation. This helps children trust their own judgements and feelings, and is better than telling them not to worry. Children will not share their feelings if they are not taken seriously. Do not frighten children with too much information. An example: if the child comes and shares that he feels uncomfortable with Mr. X, the wrong thing would be to respond, "*How can you think that way about Mr. X?*" This kind of negative response conveys to the child that he/she has bad judgement about Mr. X; the child is made then to feel shame for thinking that way about Mr. X; the child is not believed. This child will unlikely express his/her feelings again with you. Rather, a right response would be, "*Honey, I'm glad you shared. While Mummy and Daddy look into this matter, you can stay away from Mr. X when you're alone, and only be with Mr. X when we're with you!*" It is important to follow through your child's reports of "uncomfortable" feelings by thoroughly investigating them.

**10. Believe your children.**

Children do not lie about sexual assault or sexual abuse! They do not have the vocabulary or the experience; therefore, children reporting such must always be believed. Question gently, but do not interrogate. Create an atmosphere of trust where children know they will be listened to and believed.

**11. Play "What if..." games.**

As parents, think up some case scenarios that could be possible 'sexual traps' for your child. "*What if Mrs. X comes to the school and wants to take you to the shops to buy some new shoes?*" "*What if Mr. X at school wants to take you to his house for ice-cream?*" "*What if Mr. X tells you that we have to work late and he is to take you home from school?*" It is a fun learning game, and gives children opportunity to test their ideas and judgements.

**12. Teach children to keep themselves safe.**

Even if this means breaking rules, the child must be made to trust his/her own judgement about uncomfortable feelings, if they are in potentially dangerous situations. For example: Mother goes to the store and leaves the child alone at home for a short period and tells the child to lock the door and stay inside until Mommy comes back. A knock comes to the door and the child finds the neighbour man outside the door wanting to come in. The neighbour asks if anyone is home and may he come in. The child must know that it is RIGHT in this situation to 'lie' and to say he/she is NOT ALONE (even if they are) and to be assertive in saying, "No, you may not come in!" even if that person is an adult and the child is feeling impolite.

## Educative tools to give your children to help them protect themselves against sexual abuse

Parents should teach their children the following protective measures for self protection:

- **SAY A BIG ‘NO’!**
- **GET AWAY QUICKLY...RUN IF YOU CAN.**
- **DO NOT KEEP IT A SECRET.**
- **DO NOT FEEL SHAME. YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME IF SOMEONE TRIES TO HURT YOU.**
- **TELL AN ADULT YOU TRUST WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU (like your mother, your father, the police, your pastor, or school principal).**

⇒ SEXU 20

### Strangers and Children

Educate children on the following points:

- Do not talk to strangers.
- Do not take anything from a stranger, even if you would like to have it or how much you want it.
- Do not go with a stranger, either walking, on a bicycle, or in a motor car. No matter what he/she tells you, do not go!
- Get away quickly as you can. Run if you must until you are safe.

⇒ SEXU 18

If a stranger asks the child to go with him or her, here are three questions the child should be taught to ask himself/herself:

- Do I have a “yes” or “no” feeling?
- Does an adult I trust know where I am? Has he/she given me permission right now to go?
- Can I get help if I need it?

### “Yes” and “No” feelings

**“Yes” feelings** = are those the child has been taught that follow RIGHT moves. For example: playing football in a game where there are many people including several adults.

⇒ SEXU 19

**“No” feelings** = those the child has been taught that follow WRONG moves. For example: teacher wanting you to come back to his house alone with him for a Coke after a football game.

The child must be taught and educated by the parents to:

- Carry on when the feeling is RIGHT.
- STOP and not stay around when the feeling is WRONG.

### “Good” and “bad” secrets

**Good secrets** = are those secrets which are full of surprise and good fun. They promote the well-being of everyone involved.

**Bad secrets** = those which are asked of you which have the potential for harm. Sometimes they involve bribery, fear, distrust, shame, etc. No older person should ever ask you to keep a kiss, hug, or touch, secret. They should never ask you to go someplace and keep it secret, even if you know that person well. If any person does this, **TELL A GROWN-UP PERSON YOU TRUST IMMEDIATELY.**

### **Handling Disclosure – What to do**

If a child tells you that he/she has been sexually molested, here are some helpful suggestions as to what to do:

1. Stay calm – don't panic or show shock – don't judge.
2. Listen attentively, sensitively, and empathetically, and acknowledge their feelings. Do not say things like, "*Now be a big girl...don't cry.*" It is very important that the victim be encouraged and given every opportunity to 'tell' what has happened, how it happened, with whom it happened, and how he/she is feeling. Allow the victims of abuse all the time they need to get it out. Do not rush them and do not display shock or disbelief.
3. Make notes afterwards, but not in front of the victim. This could make him/her feel very uncomfortable and 'close up' and not tell.
4. Immediately after it is told to you, report it to someone in authority – for example your pastor, child welfare, the police child protection unit. Note: particularly if the abuser is a family member of the victim, the victim may beg you not to report the abuse because of fear. It is **extremely important** that you remain calm and **never** fail to report abuse. Always report abuse to the proper authorities. Although it can seem traumatic (particularly when family members are involved), abuse that goes unreported continues on. The abuse does not stop and other people will subsequently be victimised. Here is where you must gently explain to the victim that **reporting** the abuse and allowing the law to take its course helps everyone, including the abuser. There is **NO HELP** for the victim or the abuser **UNLESS IT IS REPORTED** and followed through. Child abuse is a crime against children, a sin against God, and a crime in any society that **MUST** be handled in a legal way.
5. If the alleged abuser is a family member or person living in the same house as the victim, it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that the victim is immediately removed from the home until the process of law is completed. Allowing the child to remain in the home with the alleged abuser places that child's life potentially at risk. Many abusers who feel that their victim 'told' could threaten, harm, or even kill their victim to keep them silent and protect themselves. Remember, sexual abusers are "sick" persons who desperately need help, and are not to be taken lightly.
6. Immediately upon reporting (particularly in the case of sexual abuse), the victim must be taken to the nearest proper medical facility for a physical examination to determine damage. It is crucial that this is done as quickly as possible after the abuse has taken place in order to obtain evidence that would stand in the legal system. Particularly now in the age of HIV and AIDS, **IT IS ESSENTIAL** that possible

⇒ SEXU 75

victims of abuse or rape who may have been infected with the HIV virus receive medical treatment which can help to lessen that possibility. While this treatment is not always available to victims in developing countries, the rule of medical examination immediately is essential. If, for some reason, time has lapsed between the incident of abuse and reporting, in any case, always have the victim medically examined.

### Important Messages to Give the Victims

1. It is not their fault
2. You believe them
3. It is right to 'tell' and you are glad they did. Affirm 'telling'
4. You are sorry it happened to them and what the abuser did was wrong – the abuser needs professional help and must be stopped from abusing others
5. They are "OK" and not bad/dirty. They are still very special
6. They CAN be helped and you will get help for them
7. They can say 'no' to adults or to anything that gives them a 'no' feeling
8. Teach them about good and bad touches, and good and bad secrets for the future. Reaffirm them
9. Help the victims decide 'who' they are going to tell about the abuse (whether members of the family, spouse, etc.). Also help the victims decide 'how' and 'when' they are going to tell. There are some people close to the victims that in most cases should be told. They would be parents of a minor child, spouse of a married person, etc.

### Reporting Sexual Abuse

It is extremely important that there is no indecisiveness about reporting. Sexual abuse **MUST ALWAYS** be reported to the proper authorities, just as in any other crime. Suggestions to whom you should report:



- Your pastor. It is important here that the pastor is properly informed as to where to take it from there. Reporting should NOT stop with the pastor in the case of sexual abuse. Pastors are not law enforcement officers and do not handle criminal matters for follow-through. Pastors are an initial start for reporting, but it must not end there because sexual abuse is breaking the law. Either the pastor or you must take the reporting of sexual abuse to the legal authorities.
- Police units, particularly child protective units, are the designated authorities for reporting sexual abuse. Should the sexual abuser, himself, be a police officer, then the person reporting **MUST** insist on reporting the abuse to the Commanding Officer in charge. In the case of the possible abuser being a law enforcement officer, **DO NOT** report the alleged abuse to another officer who may be a friend or colleague. Always report to the person in charge, in that case.
- In some communities there are specialised Child Protection Units (C.P.U.s.) that will assist you in starting the whole process and the follow-up of reporting. It is important that local churches and agencies have an **accurate and complete list and complete list of phone numbers** of all such available child abuse agencies in their

own community, at their immediate disposal. All those working with children should also have this information available to them.

- In some major centres there are helplines and telephone counselling services available to report abuse. Some names are: Child Line, Life Line, Child Emergency, Child Help, etc.
- Therapeutic centres for help and psychological counselling is necessary for the victim of sexual abuse. Seek out community resources for trained help. Church people and pastors who are counselling potential abuse victims must be adequately trained. Being a Christian DOES NOT constitute adequate training for counselling an abused child. Seek professional help.
- Welfare agencies can be called in as well as social workers who have the legal power to remove a child in an emergency. These agencies are the best in the community to access counselling, support, guidance, and do the necessary investigation for children's court, where necessary. Once it has been reported to them, community services, such as, child welfare and nursing sisters should immediately go out to investigate cases of sexual abuse against children. A pastor or friend of a victim can fill the role of seeing to it that proper follow-through is continued until the case has been resolved.

### **Implications of Abuse for the Church**

The Church has a major role in ministering to and strengthening the family through some of the following:

1. The Church must fulfil its role in providing education and programmes for children and parents and church staff to prevent and manage child abuse. Seminars for parents on how to teach their children about sexuality and sexual child abuse are opportunities for the Church to help prevent this tragedy.
  2. The Church has a dynamic role to influence and change its community through evangelism, discipleship, teaching and training of its members, as well as offering its services to the community at large.
  3. The Church can also influence for good where negative factors brought into the community would accelerate exploitation of children. For example: the church can lobby strongly against unwholesome TV and radio programmes; it can speak strongly against child pornography; it can help to disband drug dealing where children frequent; it can affect the kinds of magazines that are sold in shops, etc.
  4. The church has an active role in destroying the works of Satan and working with God to restore and heal individuals who are being hurt by abuse.
  5. The church must offer biblical and godly counsel to victims and offenders of sexual abuse, by first having trained workers within its congregations, and second by offering its help to the community at large.
- 
6. The Church has a vital and essential role to play in providing support systems for

victims, offenders and their families by way of practical help. Example: refuge for the victim, shelter and clothing for the child victim, legal advice, consultation and doctor examination fees, medications, counselling services, etc.

### **The Spiritual Significance of Child Abuse**

- It is an emotionally traumatic event. Such an incident opens the door for Satan in the victim's life and can cause permanent emotional crippling or bondage. For example: guilt, anguish, fear, feeling unworthy and dirty, loss of self-worth, etc.
- It opens the doorway to two major problems in the victim's heart: **unforgiveness or bitterness and rejection.**
- It can put the victim and the offender into spiritual bondage. (Any sexual act has spiritual significance and in sexual intercourse, even rape or incest, the victim and the abuser become one in flesh and spirit.) Therefore, there can be transference of evil spirits or demonic oppression or possession (spirit of lust, sexual perversion including homosexuality), controlling other people, or power over other people (spirit of control), sexual addiction later in life...all of which hold these persons in bondage. Jesus comes to set the prisoner free (Luke 4:18) and this is where the Church comes in. Both the victim and the offender need spiritual counsel and ministry that will set them free from the bondage that sexual abuse brings. And they can be set free!
- There can be a hindrance to the victim's or offender's prayer life, faith and relationship to God, particularly if they blame God and are angry with Him. The church must be able to minister healing so they are free from these feelings (that hinder them) after abuse.
- The victim's or offender's thought life becomes disturbed and problematic. For example:
  - Obsessed with sexual thoughts or thinking about what happened so they cannot move on in life;
  - Obsessed with thoughts of, and plans for, revenge and allowing feelings to take control or to become self-absorbed at getting back at the perpetrator;
  - Becoming withdrawn, introverted and self-centered. Unable to think of anything else which affects his/her wholeness of life – can't concentrate or cope at school or at home, can't relate to other people, can't manage tasks he/she is accustomed to, becoming irresponsible and demanding (cannot give to others), and may display aggressive behaviour;
  - Can take the pain and hurt into adult life which renders him/her dysfunctional in his/her own relationships. For example: feel he/she can never get married, may have problems sexually as a married person, and cannot relate to his/her own children in adult life.

## **Problems Experienced by Victims of Sexual Abuse**

⇒ SEXU 77

### **Emotional problems**

- 1.1 Excessive fear, crying, aggression, tantrums, hate, silence, etc. Many times these emotional problems are either self-destructive (tendencies of suicide) or destructive of others (abusive to other people)
- 1.2 Deprivation and loss manifested in stealing, lying, or inappropriate attention-seeking such as sexual acting out or deviant behaviour displays (particularly in younger children), destructiveness, demanding time and attention in negative ways, uncaring, selfish, and rebellious behaviour
- 1.3 Anger and hurt causing problems in relationships (especially those involving communication and trust), running away, taking drugs, prostitution, irrational and irresponsible behaviour such as, truancy in school, girls falling pregnant, deliberately failing in school or in job expectations, avoiding responsibilities, denying the truth, and manipulating people, etc. can all be signs of sexual abuse
- 1.4 Desire for revenge and power. Manifests itself through gossiping, obsessive and uncontrolled cruelty or frightening thoughts, uncontrolled bouts of anger, scheming and plotting, distractedness and emotional barriers, projected distrust of all persons of the same sex and age as the abuser (like a father, uncle, aunt, etc.), hardening of the heart, stubbornness, independent, and resisting help
- 1.5 Depression – feeling of emptiness and loneliness – this goes along with guilt and hopeless feelings
- 1.6 Struggling with their own sexuality – sexual identification, how they see their bodies. Sometimes can be manifested in ‘same sex’ behaviour, cross-dressing, etc.

### **Mental difficulties**

- 2.1 Neurotic or obsessive behaviour, or severe psychiatric problems
- 2.2 Lack of peace, manifesting in nightmares, eating disorders and/or sleeping problems
- 2.3 Uncontrolled thought life
- 2.4 Phobias, negative associations, memory blocks, strong defence mechanisms.  
For example: Excessive washing of hands, wanting to keep articles of clothing on, wanting to or not wanting to bathe or be clean, etc.

### **Spiritual problems**

- 3.1 Fear of man/fear of God
- 3.2 God-consciousness is replaced by self-consciousness
- 3.3 Inability – hindrance to giving or being able to give/receive. Being unable to love or to accept love (be loved themselves)
- 3.4 Not thriving or living below God’s potential for their lives

### **Physical problems**

- 4.1 Infection, discharges or bleeding in private parts
- 4.2 Pain from tearing or brutality or perversion (can be in the rectum, mouth, etc.)
- 4.3 Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV infection and AIDS, cervical cancer, mouth sores, etc.
- 4.4 Bruising, cuts, etc. (especially with rape or sodomy)
- 4.5 Sexual problems later, ineptness, in manhood inability to have an erection, frigidity and no interest in sex as an adult, infertility, etc.
- 4.6 Speech and hearing difficulties, or slow progress

### **Social Problems**

- 5.1 Delayed interaction with other people, regression or lack of interest
- 5.2 Communication and relationship difficulties, cannot make friendships
- 5.3 Coping-problem solving skills get destroyed or disturbed
- 5.4 Too eager to please, no self-will, allow themselves to be used and manipulated

### **Church Ministries and Child Abuse Prevention**

In numerous countries, particularly in the United States, churches are now finding it necessary to take many more steps to ensure the safety of children from sexual abuse. Sexual abusers find children in churches as easy targets. Increasingly, children in church ministries have been victims of terrible sexual abuse that has brought the church into disrepute. Sometimes it can take years for a church or ministry to recover where abuse has victimised a child within the church itself. In October 1998, the General Superintendent of the USA Assemblies of God put out a guideline for American church ministries to prevent child abuse. These apply to all children's workers whether paid or voluntary. These suggestions were:

⇒ SEXU 78

**Step 1:**     **The 6-month rule.** Adopt a policy restricting anyone from working with children (young people under 18 years) to those who have been members in good standing in the local church for a minimum period of time (e.g., 6 months).

**Step 2:**     **Screening forms.** Have every person in the local church who is working with minor children (under 16 years) complete a screening application (see sample below) that asks for character references and any criminal convictions.

**Step 3:**     **Contact references.** Even though the potential person desiring to work with children in the local church has completed 'Step 2' and filled in the screening form, that in itself is not sufficient. The church must follow up and contact the references named, trying its best to check out the character of the potential children's ministry worker. If you contact the reference in person or by telephone, be sure to make a written record of the references and keep it on file at the church. This helps the church in the future should there be a question of sexual abuse involving a church worker. If legal charges are made, the church can show that it took all the necessary steps to avoid such cases of abuse; therefore, it was not negligent towards children in its ministries.

**Step 4:**     **Two-adult rule.** Adopt a procedure in your church, and inform your workers that the church prohibits minors from being alone with only one adult. There

should always be a minimum of two adults at any one time working with minor children.

**Step 5: The appropriate response.** Should an allegation of child abuse be levied against a church worker, or the church, do not immediately deny the allegations, blame the victim, or minimize the seriousness of the charges. Respond with concern and compassion, taking the allegation seriously for all concerned. Be sure to comply with your national and community child abuse reporting laws. Always investigate the matter with the appropriate leadership, parents, and authorities until the matter has been brought to a conclusion.

**Step 6: Education.** Provide periodic training within the church about child abuse for all those working with children (e.g., Sunday school teachers, baby care workers, church school teachers, youth leaders, and parents of minor children). A possible resource for such training is your local child welfare agency in conjunction with those in the community who are legally in charge of child abuse problems.

**Step 7: Accountability, not mercy.** Many churches have given known sex offenders a second chance by allowing them to work with minors again sometime. They err on the side of mercy. The church must always make considerations in relation to the protection for the child, not for mercy towards the offender. While the church may view a second chance for the offender as merciful, in such cases where charges of sexual abuse have been levied against a local church or ministry, the courts will deem this as reckless behaviour by the church. Any person who has been found to be an abuser of children in the past should find alternative places of ministry in the church after rehabilitation, but never again with children. This is wisdom!

While some of these steps may seem improbable and impractical for smaller local churches, it is folly for any church to assume that **sexual abuse does not happen in our community. Statistics prove that sexual abuse of children exists in all communities and is carried out in relatively similar forms in every community around the world.** The devastating results upon children are also the same....lifelong scars. Churches are wise to think ahead in how to deal with this problem and lead the way to STOP the exploitation of children in their community. Children are our greatest heritage!

*“Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” ( Matthew 10:16).*

See next pages for sample questionnaire for prospective church and children’s workers.

### **Minor Children’s Church Worker – Questionnaire (sample)**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you (tick one)  married  single  divorced.

How many children in your family \_\_\_\_\_

Your Occupation/Work \_\_\_\_\_  
(what you do for a living and name of company)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address of workplace) (Telephone # of workplace)

\_\_\_\_\_  
years

(Name of your work supervisor) (How long have you worked here?)

What age of children do you desire to work with? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the places, contact person, and telephone number of previous places or churches where you have worked with children in the past.

<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone #</u>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

Have you ever been accused of inappropriate behaviour towards a child (person under 18-years-old) in your life time? (tick)  yes  no. If you ticked "yes" please explain the circumstances. \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been charged with any criminal offence in a court of law or by traditional mediation? (tick)  yes  no. If you ticked "yes" please explain the circumstances. \_\_\_\_\_

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**Church Ministry Follow-up Report for Prospective Children's Workers**

Name of prospective worker \_\_\_\_\_

Did the prospective worker complete the questionnaire? (tick) \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No.

Are we convinced from the follow-up checking we did that this prospective children's worker has no previous allegations or charges of inappropriate behaviour with children? (tick) \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No.

Has this person been active in our church and has he/she displayed qualities we desire for working with our church children for at least 6 months? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No.

The names of persons we contacted about character references on this person are:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Contacted</u>	<u>Their comments about this person</u>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

When did this person become born again? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did this person become born again? \_\_\_\_\_

Name of previous church this person attended \_\_\_\_\_

Why did this person leave his/her previous church? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify any negative comments about this person, from others. \_\_\_\_\_

Did our church adequately inform this person about our rules of conduct when he/she works with our church children? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No. When and by whom was his person instructed? \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_ (by whom)

Church leader completing this form: \_\_\_\_\_

**THIS COMPLETED FORM SHOULD BE FILED IN A CONFIDENTIAL PLACE**

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