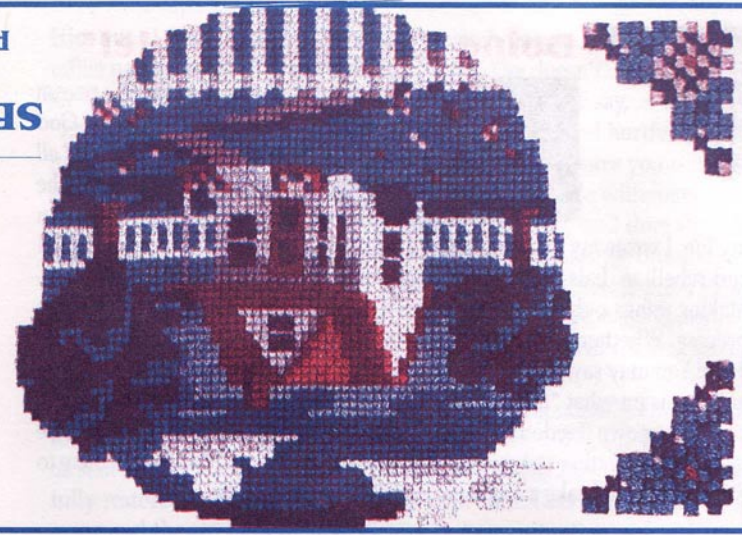


SETTING THE CAPTIVES FREE  
ALSO  
Including signs of abuse, and  
practical helps for victims and abusers.

# THE FAMILY SECRET INCEST



of place may mean the difference between a child's freedom or continued abuse.

Each situation is different, but the following things indicate some problems in general and could be warning signs of sexual abuse:

- 1) Unusual shyness or privacy regarding the body. Not wanting to undress in front of others at proper times may indicate feelings of an "unclean" body, or an attempt to hide tell-tale physical marks.
- 2) Sudden, extreme changes in behavior, such as reverting to bed-wetting or thumb-sucking, withdrawal, loss of appetite, nightmares, running away, failing at school, or a fear of adults, a particular person or place.
- 3) Unusual interest or knowledge of sexual matters, or expressing affection in ways inappropriate for a child that age. If a child is found instructing other children in sex-related play, he may be reenacting his own real life situation.
- 4) Torn or stained underclothing. Bleeding, abrasions, or swelling of the genitals or mouth.
- 5) Take note if you notice anyone showing affection to a child that appears sexual in nature, or making remarks about the child's body that seem out of order in terms of sexual attractiveness, etc.

If you discover an abusive situation, or if a child tells you he's been abused, it's **very important** that you offer loving support and reassurance. First of all, **believe** what he says. Children almost **never** lie about these things. Be careful about your own reaction because a child can misinterpret your disgust or dismay as being directed towards him. **Tell him that he didn't do anything wrong, and that you are glad he told you.** Finally, get help for the situation **immediately.**



## Protecting Your Children

The key ingredient for protecting your children is open and honest communication with them in **all** areas - not just on the subject of sexual abuse. It's important your children know they can come talk to you about *anything*. Make time each day to find out how your kids are doing and what they are feeling - and be sure to really *listen*.

It's best when children learn about life in a natural, godly, relaxed way - in terms appropriate for their age. As they grow we teach them names for their eyes, hands, and feet - but we may fail to teach them about the "private parts" of their body. This can create a feeling of wrongness about what God designed to be beautiful. Your children will learn about sex from *someone*. The question is who, how, and when. If you don't inform your children, they might be easier victims because they can be told "all the kids do this" and not know any differently. Seek God's wisdom and timing, but in general, if a child is old enough to ask, he's old enough to be told in terms he can handle and understand.

Training a child to *always* obey *every* adult can be dangerous. Your child needs to know that if an adult is asking him to do something he thinks is wrong or he feels "funny" about, it's okay to say "no" until he checks with you. Also, forcing your child to hug and kiss "Uncle Charlie" or others when he doesn't want to can be damaging. The message is: My authorities say I'm supposed to submit myself to things that are distasteful or uncomfortable to me. Children need to sense your protection. Remember, almost all child abuse is done by people the children know.

Teach your children that if someone ever says, "Don't tell," "Mommy will be mad," or "It's a secret," they should come and tell you right away. Let them know you'll be glad they told you... and be sure you are.

One particularly helpful concept is to talk to children about "good touch," "bad touch," and "confusing touch." You can simply explain: "Good touches" make you feel good; like hugs from mommy, petting your dog, or holding hands with daddy. "Bad touches" make you feel bad; like if a friend hits you, or if you are kicked at school. "Confusing touches" might start out good, but then make you feel bad or funny inside; like if you were sitting on

someone's lap and then they started touching you in places you didn't like. Or if someone asked you to touch him somewhere that was scary for you.

Talk about these things with your children. Teach them that they always have the right to say "NO" - and to come tell you about it right away. A child needs to know that God made his body and that it's beautiful. But God gave his body to *him*, and he doesn't have to let anyone touch his body in ways that make him feel funny, afraid, or bad.

## Further Resources

*Protecting Your Children From Sexual Assault* - This kit includes two excellent, Christian-based workbooks (*Little Ones Workbook* and *Parents Teaching Guide*) to help parents and children learn how to deal with sexual abuse; \$11.00 plus \$3.00 shipping; additional children's books are \$5.95. Order from Little Ones Books, P.O. Box 1805, Buffalo, NY 14231; (716) 632-0500.

*He Told Me Not To Tell* - Insightful booklet on the sexual abuse of children with information for anyone concerned. Especially good for helping parents with their children; \$3.75. Order from King County Rape Relief, P.O. Box 300, Renton, WA 98057; (206) 226-5062.

The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse offers a free catalogue of their publications. To order write to: National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, Fulfillment Center, 200 State Rd., S. Deerfield, MA 01373-0200; Tel. 1-800-835-2671.

Be an intercessor on behalf of these innocent and unsuspecting children. Pray that these crimes will be revealed, and the abusers along with the abused are released to healing and freedom in the Lord.

"Incest: The Family Secret" was reprinted from an article in *The Last Days Magazine*, a colorfully illustrated publication filled with challenging articles, ministry opportunities, and more! For additional copies of this article, please order Ref. #070. For more information about Last Days Ministries, our missions training schools, or our free Ministry Materials Catalogue, send your requests to: **Last Days Ministries, Box 40, Lindale, Texas 75771-0040 USA.**

### Are You Searching?

If you want to know more about what it means to be a Christian, we have some information we'd like to send you. There is no charge or obligation. Just write to Last Days Ministries and ask for the free packet "Walking With Jesus."

If you want further help or encouragement, we'd love to send you some other articles free of charge. Just write and ask for "The Father Heart Of God" (#046) by John Dawson, "...But I Can't Forgive Myself!" (#067) by Melody Green, "Restoration Through Forgiveness" (#113) by Doug Easterday, "Hurt And Bitterness" (#057) by Winkie Pratney, and "How To Find God" (#042) by William Booth.

For local help or information:

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TRACKS**

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7/94

This is the true story of the actual experiences of a woman who was on staff for many years here at Last Days Ministries. After much prayer she chose to remain anonymous in respect for the other members of her family, and because of the relationships she is trying to rebuild. - Melody Green



exual abuse within family circles is one of the worst kinds of crimes. If a thief broke into your home and stole some of your possessions, you would immediately report it to the police. But what if someone was able to break into your life and steal your feelings of self-worth, cripple your ability to trust others, and beat you down until you were bruised with fear? What if you were a child, and that "someone" was your father or brother or grandfather or uncle?

I was five years old the first time I remember anything sexual happening between my dad and me. The moment he told me, "Don't tell," I knew that what Daddy was doing was wrong! I can't remember how often these encounters happened, but I do remember how I feared and hated them! The awkwardness, the repulsion, and the resentment...

Incest may be the one secret that holds its victims in the tightest chains of all. Confusion, guilt, and fear create a dungeon from which there seems to be no escape. The nightmare of incest lasted nine years for me, yet even after the physical abuse ended I was still a prisoner. For years I tried to deny what happened, hoping I could make it all go away. But like someone caught in quicksand, the harder I struggled, the deeper I sank... until I finally found the One Hand that could pull me out from my pit of torment.

## What Is Incest?

First, I want to clarify what incest is *not*. When speaking of sexual abuse, I'm not talking about normal physical affection between parents and kids. Hand holding, hugs, kisses, and good-natured fooling around are all *essential* ingredients in a loving family. Without healthy affection, parents and children alike will miss much of the warmth and security that God intends family members to express to each other. Incest is something altogether different.

In its strictest definition, incest is sexual intercourse between people who are too closely related to marry. It also includes other sexual acts such as fondling, molestation, and exhibitionism, since these too leave deep and lasting emotional scars. In my case my father was the offender, but it can often be another family member. Abuse by stepparents or close family friends also falls into this category because of the child's trusting relationship with them.

Sexual abuse happens in families of every social, economic, and ethnic background - *not* just among the poor and unreligious. Many molesters appear to be upstanding members of their community and church. Sadly, most cases go unreported, so the full extent of this problem remains hidden.

Of the known sexual abuse, 75% is committed by the children's own parents. The victims are usually girls between 8 and 12, with 20% under seven.<sup>1</sup> There are also many young boys abused by both men and women. One girl out of four and one boy out of ten will be sexually assaulted at least once by the age of 18 - and for those trapped in the nightmare of incest, the average period of abuse is *seven* years.<sup>2</sup> The hurt and long-term effects are understandably alarming. In recent studies, 70% of the prison inmates and 90% of the prostitutes interviewed had been molested as children.<sup>3</sup>

## "Don't Tell!"

Physical force or severe threats are rarely needed to take advantage of children, or keep them from telling. Though innocent, they feel dirty, ashamed, and "different," sensing the wrongness of the situation. As a young child, I was too afraid to tell anyone what was going on. Even at 18, when a very trusted friend asked me if my father ever abused me, I *strongly* stated that he hadn't! I didn't want to embarrass my dad or myself. Shame and fear work together to keep a stranglehold on a child's ability to call out for help. The fear of losing daddy's love, breaking up the family, or telling and not being believed is enough to keep most children quiet. Abusers become experts at manipulating these young emotions: "If you tell, I won't love you anymore" or "Mommy will leave if she finds out." One woman shares, "I was trapped. My father threatened to leave if I didn't do what he asked. He'd left once before and Mom had a breakdown. I couldn't risk that."<sup>4</sup>

But there's a deeper reason children don't tell. Incest is much, much more than the violation of a child's body. It's the ultimate betrayal of their trust in the very people who are supposed to be their protectors, comforters, and closest friends. While they are suffering perhaps the most severe form of emotional abuse, their loyalty and love for their abuser make it nearly impossible for them to speak up.

When a child *does* get up enough courage to tell someone, many times their parents or friends respond to their claim with horror, disbelief, judgment, or denial. One woman recalls, "I'm 45 years old. My grandfather molested me until I was 13 and told me never to tell anyone. I can vividly remember telling my mother when I was 10 that I didn't want to visit my grandparents anymore because my grandfather touched me. Mother said, 'Don't be silly.' Neither she nor my grandmother did anything. The guilt I've felt! How do I keep from hating my family for this?"<sup>5</sup>

## My Own Story

People may say "Silence is Golden," but not the silence that was between my dad and me. When anything sexual happened, I began pretending I was asleep - but we both knew I wasn't. This "sleeping" made things easier for me. Since I supposedly wasn't conscious I didn't have to deal with the situation. The next day was always strange. Silence again. Neither of us acted like anything unnatural had gone on... but it had! I felt trapped. Silence was not golden to me! Silence between my dad and me... silence between me and those who might have helped.

I was about 14 when my dad stopped - but unfortunately, things didn't stop there for me! The secret visits of the past haunted me, and my memory became my enemy. Part of me was just a hurt and confused child, but deep inside there was another part - a very angry part!

## The Rampage Of Revenge!

By the time I was 15 I was on a course of self-destruction. Drugs, bad friends, and thoughts of suicide filled my life. My dad's abuse left me with some twisted concepts of life in general, including the false idea that the way to be loved, approved of, and accepted by men was through my body. I believed the lie that men only wanted "one thing," and it was my ammunition as I waged my own private war of suspicion and cruelty towards all men.

The following years were filled with so many boyfriends that I can't even remember all their names. I'd lure them in through my dress and actions, then abruptly cut them off. I was driven by the burning desire to somehow "get even." My life was a wreck, but I'd just about convinced myself that my dad's abuse would **not** affect me. But to the contrary, my past *controlled* me for years.

Then, when I was 21 and in the midst of my deepest hurts, my whole life changed. I believed in Jesus as a young child, but walked away from Him in rebellion as I grew older. Now I heard about Jesus again - and how He came to bring Good News to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim freedom to the captives. Afflicted, brokenhearted, and captive - I surely qualified! I opened my heart to Jesus once again, and as I gave my life to Him, He started a wonderful healing in my heart.

It didn't all happen overnight. My healing has been both a crisis and a process. The crisis was coming to a point of honesty, admitting my true feelings and looking to God for help in dealing with them. The process has been unlearning the wicked life-style I had become so good at, and replacing it with right and godly behavior. A little over seven years have gone by since I came to that crisis point, and I'm now free from the pain and hatred that once ruled me. I couldn't have done it without the grace and the power that became mine through a deep relationship with Jesus. I now want to share some of the things the Lord took me through, and perhaps answer some questions you might have, in hopes that it will help some of you who may be hurting at this very moment.

## You Are Not Responsible

If you have suffered through sexual abuse your life has been drastically affected. But however much your experiences may affect your life - they don't have to *ruin* it! I am living proof of that. For me, I first needed to get rid of my wrong ideas about what happened. Jesus said,

1) *Parade Magazine*, July 29, 1984; Children's Hospital National Medical Center, Washington, D.C. 2) Child Assault Prevention Project, Columbus, OH. 3) King County Rape Crisis Center, Renton, WA. 4) *Glamour*, November 1981. 5) *Ms. Magazine*, April 1977.

## Doing The "Impossible!"

Some of you might say, "Forgive the person who hurt me? Impossible!" Without God it would be, but Jesus said, "With God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26) When the chains of unforgiveness were broken in

my life, I wrote my dad to tell him. I asked him to forgive me for my hatred and rebellion. I also told him that because of Jesus, I totally forgave him. Making things right with those we've wronged is essential in the forgiveness process. Whether you do it in person, by phone, or by letter... it must be done! You may say, "But I was the one wronged!" Yes, that's true, but if you only focus on what "they" did, you'll never be free. Forgiving others is the key to your own freedom. When we refuse to forgive, what we may really be saying is, "I'd rather stay hurt and bitter than be healed!" But God is there to comfort you and take away your pain if you will let Him.

## Walking Free

It takes a turn of a key to set a prisoner free. But once they're out, there's an awkward and sometimes difficult period of readjustment. Forgiveness was the key releasing me from the prison of my past, but I needed to learn some things before I was really adjusted. Because I spent so many years

walking in bitterness and resentment, my whole outlook towards men, sex, and relationships needed a total overhaul. I needed to learn to treat men with respect rather than disgust. I needed to change my seductive behavior and learn about modesty and purity. And I needed to start looking to God to discover my true value - believing in His unwavering love and acceptance.

Piece by piece, the puzzle continues to fall into place, and by the grace of God I'm now enjoying a happy and productive life, a fulfilling marriage, and the freedom to tell my story - which is something I thought I'd never be able to do. Sure, from time to time the Lord shows me something more that needs to be restored in this area, but the major breakthrough has taken place. I've given my past to the Lord, and I'm thankful He's brought me this far. Now my experiences, instead of just being a hindrance, can be used to help others who are hurting.

The Bible says, "If any person is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (II Cor. 5:17) Jesus has made me a new person and given me a new life. I pray that you will find the same peace in God and forgiveness in your heart as I have. "For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds," declares the Lord... (Jer. 30:17)

There is only one way to deal with this problem. The Bible says, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." (Proverbs 28:13) God wants to forgive you and pour out His compassion on you. He's the only One that can bring true peace and cleansing to your heart. But you must bring this problem out into the open. First confess it to God, then to a trusted Christian counselor. If you are married, you will need to tell your mate as well, or your relationship will be based on lies. Then with all your heart, you must follow through with a decision to turn from your sin, and towards God. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and HE WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON HIM... HE WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON." (Isaiah 55:7)

God delights in being merciful, and He is calling out to you right now. He says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls." (Matt. 11:28-29) Jesus wants to lift your heavy burden of guilt. He wants to give you strength to overcome the power of sin in your life. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. He loves you just as much as He loves those you have hurt. He knows you are hurt too. You are a precious child to Him and He longs to cleanse you, heal you, and fully make you His own. Admit your guilt to the Lord, asking Him to forgive you, and allow Jesus to be the Lord of your life. For continued help and support, get involved with your local church or fellowship, and commit yourself to be accountable to at least one mature counselor of the same sex to openly share your heart, your past, and your prayers with on a regular basis. If you're already attending a church, you need to go to your pastor immediately and be totally honest.

Parents United is a secular organization that helps parents who have abused, or fear they will abuse, their children - physically, emotionally, or sexually. To find the nearest chapter or group in your area, just call 1-800-422-4453.

## Our Responsibility

How would you want others to respond if you were a child caught in the snare of sexual abuse? Jesus said, "Whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them." (Matt. 7:12) If you know or suspect sexual abuse in your family or anywhere else, you must do something about it. So many have chosen to "look the other way" that the government has made a law about it: If you know of a child abuse situation, you are legally responsible to report it to the authorities. If you don't report it, you are breaking the law! "... do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them." (Eph. 5:11) Child abuse is rarely an isolated incident, and unless legal pressure is brought to bear, the abuser may go on for years abusing generations of children.

If you're not sure where to start, you can call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453. You don't have to give your name when you call. They can answer any questions you have, and assist you in contacting local help.

## Signs Of Child Abuse

It's easy to ignore signs that "something" might be wrong, but ignoring things won't change them. We don't want to breed undue suspicion, but this is a widespread problem and just being sensitive to things that seem out

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). So let's start with the truth: **You are not responsible for the wrong choices of others.**

All abuse victims struggle with shame, false guilt, and a horrible distortion of self-worth. One woman who was raped by her brother said, "Think of the lowest thing in the world, and whatever that is, I'm lower." Many feel they must have somehow encouraged the abuse. I wrestled with these things myself. I already felt dirty because of my father's abuse, and to top it off, he called me ugly names - making me feel like it was all my fault! Another girl shares, "I felt like there was something terribly wrong with me that other children didn't have wrong with them. I knew this didn't happen to everyone. I wondered what made me different. I thought there must be something I did to cause my dad to do this."

The fact is, to a child, sexual encounters result in confusion, guilt, repulsion, and shame. It's definitely not the sort of thing a child asks for. After a lot of inner battles, I finally saw the truth: **I never would have initiated those encounters on my own.** My father decided to pursue a sexual relationship with me. It was his desire, not mine! You must release yourself from any false guilt you may have. I call it "false" because that's what it is. Put away forever the idea that you brought all this misery upon yourself. You were a child and you were a victim. **It was not your fault!**

## But I Did Something Wrong

Maybe you did something you knew was wrong, and that thing led to your abuse. For example, perhaps Mom told you not to go to Grandpa's, but you went anyway... and Grandpa molested you. Or you and your cousins were "playing doctor," and the next thing you knew, your oldest cousin raped you. In situations of this type, it's true you may be responsible for doing something wrong - but no matter what situation you got yourself into, **you are not to blame for the wrong choices of other people.**

Look at it this way: If you left \$1,000 on the kitchen table and a thief took it, you might feel foolish for leaving the money out, but you didn't cause that person to steal it. The sin was in his heart, and he saw an opportunity to carry out his heart's desires. Someone more trustworthy would have put the money in a safe place until you returned. Your offender's choice to abuse you was just that - his own wrong choice. Someone more trustworthy would not have taken advantage of you no matter how tempting the situation may have been.

## Maybe You Enjoyed It

Probably one of the most difficult things to overcome is the feeling of guilt you have if you ever received any emotional or physical pleasure from what was going on. One woman states, "What my father did made me feel dirty, but so did my own response. I think that caused even more guilt - the fact that there was some pleasure involved. At times it did make me feel good, up to a point. It was a progressive relationship, and in the beginning it was pleasurable. It was attention from my dad. I'm sure all little girls love attention from their dads, and so did I. That attention was special. But then as it progressed it was very frightening and painful, and I felt used and worthless. In the end it all just worked together to give me that feeling of not being a whole, normal person."

It's vital for you to understand that feeling some enjoyment does not mean you are abnormal or to blame for the situation. In fact, it appears that many victims have experienced mixed feelings. You can't escape the fact that you live in a physical body designed to respond in certain ways to certain things - and all children want approval and affirmation from authority figures.

You may have felt some physical or emotional pleasure at times but this does not mean you consented to be abused. You must get a hold of this truth: **You were just a child!** Children can be sexually curious at times, but no child seeks out abuse.

## Where Was God?

Have you ever wondered where God was when you were being abused? The Bible tells us, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3) The truth is, it broke God's heart to see you suffer such injustice and endure such pain! He loves you more than you know, and even while you were in your mother's womb He wanted you to have a future of knowing His love. But things don't always work out the way God would like them to. Why? Because He gave each of us the freedom to make our own decisions - good and bad.

Just as you are not responsible for the wrong choices of others, neither is God. When God gave us the freedom to choose, He ran the risk of us using this freedom to destroy ourselves, and hurt others as well. He never intended for people to be cruel and wicked - or for them to shut

Him out of their lives. But He's had to watch people inflict pain on each other throughout history. Why doesn't He stop it all? Well, God could at any moment appear and say, "Enough!" He could wipe out every selfish, unkind, and hurtful person from the face of the earth. But where would that leave you and me? Many of us would have dropped like flies years ago without ever finding the love of God. He loves everyone equally and doesn't wish judgment on anyone. If we receive judgment it's because we brought it on ourselves by refusing to yield to the Lord and accept His grace. His last choice is judgment, because it's a final decision. God patiently endures great heartache and gives each of us time in hopes that we will come to see our great need for Him before it's too late.

Jesus knows what it's like to suffer innocently and unjustly. He can relate to your pain and He longs to comfort your sorrow. God's unselfish love for us sent His only Son to earth, to suffer and die so we could be forgiven and fully restored to a loving relationship with Him. God's love gives us the grace and the strength to have victory in every situation no matter how hurtful or devastating it may be. There's a story of a father whose son was dying of a terminal illness. At the boy's bedside, he turned to his minister and said, "I have one question for you, and if you can answer it I'll be satisfied. Where is God right now?" The minister thought for a moment, then answered gently, "I believe God is in the same place He was while watching His own Son suffer and die on the cross."

## Opening The Wound

At this very moment God wants to reach down tenderly into that little child's heart of yours - a heart that's been crushed under such a heavy load - and lift your burden. Open your wound of pain and pour out everything you feel to God. Be totally honest and share every hurt with Him. Tell God what happened. Tell Him how it made you feel. He wants to heal you and comfort your soul. He is waiting with open arms... arms longing to hold you and love you. Ask His forgiveness for the things in your own life that you know have been wrong, and let Him cleanse you and heal you. One of the most wonderful promises we have from God is that "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) Not only will He forgive and cleanse you from your own sin, but Jesus will cleanse you and heal you from the hurtful effects of other people's sin as well. He's there for you right now... just call out to Him. "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." (Psalm 62:8)

## Forgive And Live

For years I tried to bury my past, but it was like trying to hold a beach ball under water. It works, but not for long! The longer I tried to ignore my abuse and held bitterness in my heart, the more my life fell apart. Why? Because what I had buried, I buried alive! Seven years after my abuse I was a mess and not just because my dad molested me - but also because I refused to forgive him. I used to think no more dad, no more problem! But that wasn't true. A large part of my problem was in my own heart. Unforgiveness keeps us a slave to our past. When we think we have a right to hold a grudge, what we don't see is that our grudge is really holding us!

There was no freedom in my life until I realized the ugliness of my own sin. I found it much easier to forgive others once I saw how much I needed forgiveness! The night I finally admitted to myself that I hated my dad, I admitted it to God as well. I wasn't responsible for the abuse I suffered, but I saw I was responsible for my own sin - the rebellion, hatred, and bitterness I allowed to fill my life. I told God I was deeply sorry for all of it, and He was there for me! If a holy God was willing to show me mercy and forgiveness when I didn't "deserve" it, how could I withhold forgiveness from my dad? With this understanding, I decided to forgive. It was a choice. It's true, my dad didn't deserve forgiveness... but none of us do. Forgiveness is a gift. If you want to be healed from the wrong that's been done to you, you must forgive! Getting your own slate clear with God is the first step towards getting it clear with others.

The following questions will help you uncover any hurt or unforgiveness you may be feeling or suppressing. Grab a pen and paper, and honestly answer the following: 1) Write down the name(s) of the person who abused you and the things they did that hurt you - sexual or otherwise. 2) What are your honest feelings towards that person? 3) What unloving things have you done to them - in reality and in your thoughts? 4) How are your relationships with people of the same sex as your offender? How do you feel about that sex, and how have you treated them? 5) Have you in any way taken out your hurt on someone else or on yourself? This would include self-destructive patterns such as drug or alcohol abuse, depression, suicidal thoughts or attempts, etc.

Pray about your answers to these questions and let God show you any areas that He wants to change or heal.

## SETTING THE CAPTIVES FREE

The following is devoted to giving further help and instruction to current victims of abuse, for whom there is help; their abusers, for whom there is hope; and for parents and responsible, caring citizens everywhere - who must look, listen, and become involved.

## Is Someone Abusing You Right Now?

If you're being sexually or physically abused, you must do something about it RIGHT NOW! You need to tell someone immediately and keep telling until you get the help you need.

There are people who will believe you - and they will help you. There is a way out of the nightmare you are in! If you don't know who to turn to, you can call Childhelp, the National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453. It is free to call their number from any phone in the United States. If you can't dial by yourself, just call 0 for the telephone operator and ask her to get the number for you. You can call day or night, seven days a week, and they will get you help.

For those of you in other countries, call your local Police Department or Social Service Agency. And again, **KEEP TELLING until you get the help you need!**

## Hope For The Abuser

Child abuse is a devastating sin, but it's not unforgivable. If you've abused someone there's an incredible burden of guilt and shame that weighs heavily on you. Your life has been affected as well. Your guilt cannot be hidden behind drugs, alcohol, or lies, and it cannot be erased by just determining to "cope" with it. Whether it's

in the past or something you're still practicing, you need the deliverance that only God can give you. You can't just "fix up" your old life, you need a brand new life from Jesus. You have been a slave to your appetites, but you can be set free if you are willing to pay the price. Though your actions have been wrong, there is somewhere you can go to be healed.