

From Darkness to Light:

Walking alongside survivors of sexual abuse

Struggles: the definitions

Sexual Abuse (in childhood)	
Sexual Assault (in adulthood)	
Rape	

Struggles: the statistics

- 1 in 6 children aged 11-17 have experienced sexual abuse (NSPCC research, 2011)
- Teenage girls aged 15-17 report the highest “past year” rates of sexual abuse
- 1 in 5 women aged 16-59 has experienced some form of sexual violence
- 12,000 men are raped each year in England and Wales
- 90% of those who are raped know the perpetrator
- Around 15% of those who experience sexual violence choose to report it (rapecrisis.org.uk)

Struggles: the experience

Struggles: the law

What does your child protection / vulnerable adult policy require you to do when sexual abuse is disclosed?

Listening to Disclosure

- Hearing the story
- Hearing the offence
- Hearing the complexity
- Hearing the false beliefs
- Hearing the call to action (immediate and long term)

Listening to Behaviours

Behaviour	What is this behaviour "saying"?	Truth
Difficulty with trust		
Self-hate		
Problems with authority		
Shame		
Jealousy		
Anger		
Depression		
Self-harm		
Anxiety		
Promiscuity		
Avoiding sex / relationships		
Suicide / attempted		
Irresponsibility		
Addiction		
Eating disorders		
Poor boundaries		

Gospel Perspectives

The woman at the well in John 4 knew shame – and restoration.

Read John 4:1-30

1. In what ways was Jesus' approach to this woman striking and counter-cultural?
2. How did Jesus hold out hope to this woman?
3. What transformation do we see in the woman once she has met with Jesus?

- Humbly
- Prayerfully
- Biblically
- Three-dimensionally (saint – sufferer – sinner)
- Corporately

Case Study

Sam is a member of your congregation. She was sexually abused by her step-father when she was a child. Her mother was a nurse and worked shifts and, on those nights, when she was at the hospital, he used to sneak into Sam's room, make her watch pornography and make her act out some of the scenes. He threatened her into silence by saying that he would hurt her siblings if she ever told – hurt them and kill her. The abuse stopped when she became a teenager (the possibility of pregnancy became too high for him to risk intercourse any more). That's when the self-harming and the drinking began. By the time Sam was 22, she was depressed, covered in scars, sleeping with her boyfriend and contemplating suicide. A few years later, full of self-loathing, she remembered her grandmother speaking warmly about the love of God, so she started going to church. She became a Christian a few months later but life still hurt very much: her depression and self-harm persisted, her use of pornography continued and she struggled massively if anyone said anything to her that could remotely be considered critical.

Gospel Responses – sample questions to think through

	Biblical	Practical
Love	<p>What can we share of God's character?</p> <p>What can we share of God's community?</p> <p>What can we share of her identity?</p>	<p>In what ways can we appropriately embody the love of God?</p>
Know	<p>In what ways is she a saint, a sufferer ... and a sinner?</p> <p>How can we show that God understands her?</p> <p>How can we show that God is angered by the sins committed against her?</p> <p>How can we show that God wants her to turn to him in her pain?</p>	<p>In what ways can we take the time to know her well?</p>
Speak	<p>What words of comfort can we speak?</p> <p>What words of encouragement can we speak?</p> <p>What words of challenge can we speak?</p> <p>What words of motivation can we speak?</p>	<p>How can we model Christ-like repentance and change in our own lives?</p>
Do	<p>How can we show God's transforming work?</p> <p>How can we give hope for the future?</p>	<p>How can we encourage her to fight and flee temptation?</p>

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