

A photograph of a group of people sitting in a church or community setting. In the foreground, a person is holding a pen and an open notebook. The background shows other people, some holding books, suggesting a religious or community gathering.

# Engaging Faith Communities

Mike Sloan and Robert Peters

A photograph of a group of people sitting in a community meeting. In the foreground, a person is holding a blue pen and a notebook. The background shows other people, some holding books, suggesting a religious or community gathering. The text "Engaging Faith Communities" is overlaid on the top half of the image.

# Engaging Faith Communities

The Goal: Safer Communities

A photograph of a person sitting in a church service, holding a notebook and a pen. The person is wearing a dark jacket and blue jeans. The background is blurred, showing other people in the congregation. The text "Engaging Faith Communities" is overlaid on the top half of the image.

# Engaging Faith Communities

Case Study:  
Katie and the Youth Pastor

# Engaging Faith Communities

## Good News and Bad News



# Engaging Faith Communities

## Challenges with Faith Communities



# Engaging Faith Communities

Do I have to come to this training?



# Engaging Faith Communities



**GRACE**

Godly Response to Abuse  
in the Christian Environment

Leadership  
Training



# Leadership Training

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## Creating a Safe Church Culture: Leaders Make the Difference



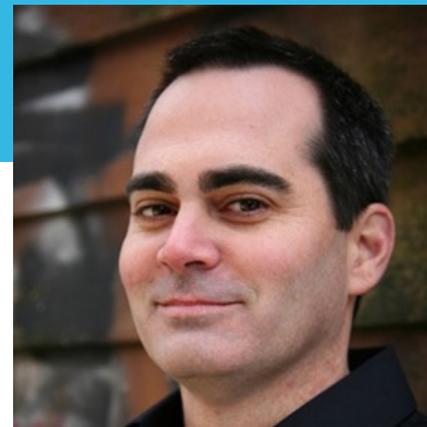
**GRACE**

**Godly Response to Abuse  
in the Christian Environment**



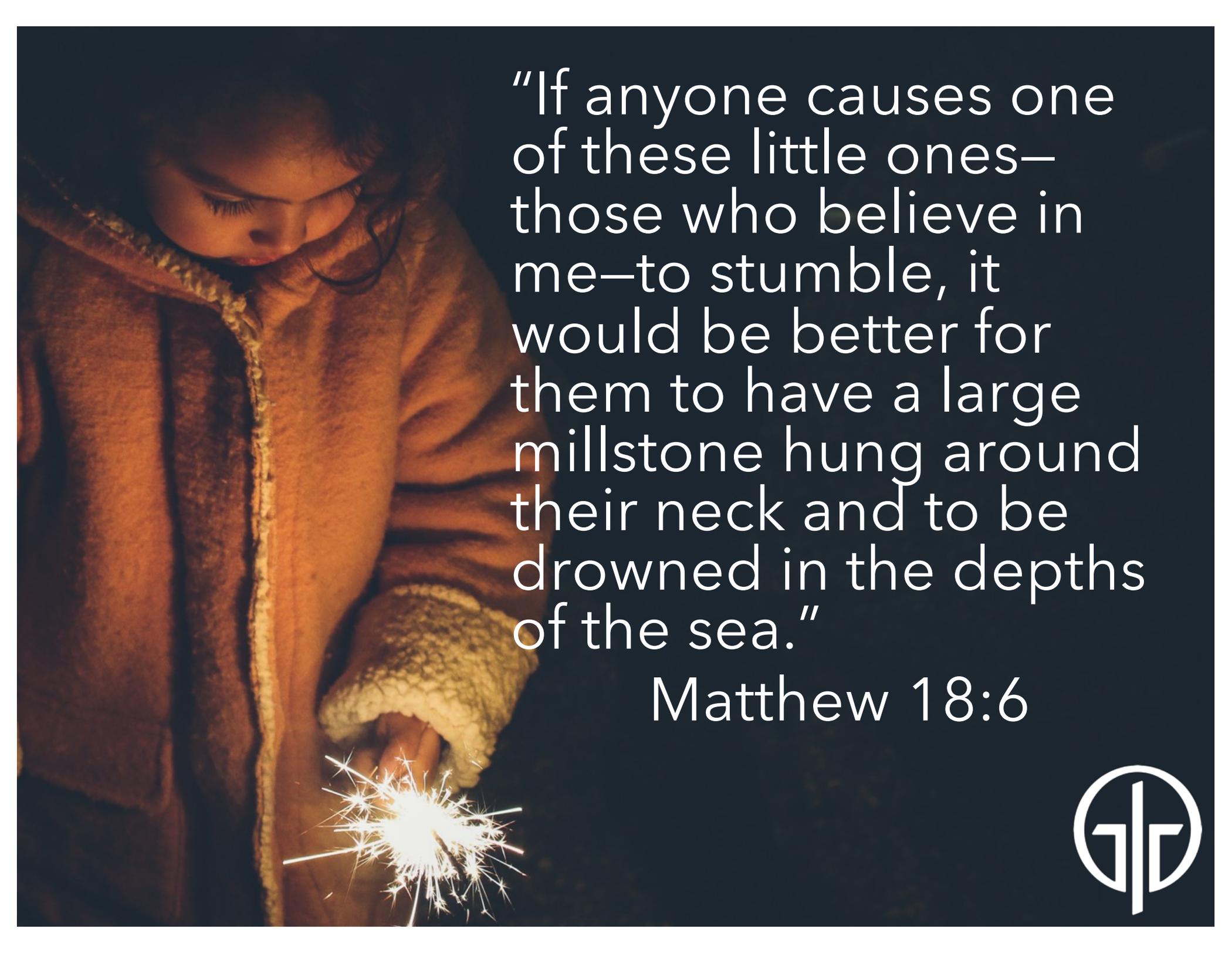


BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS



“And whoever  
welcomes one  
such child in my  
name  
welcomes me.”  
Matthew 18:5



A young child with dark hair, wearing a brown winter coat with a fur-lined hood, is looking down at a lit sparkler held in their hand. The sparkler is bright and glowing, creating a starburst effect. The background is dark, making the child and the sparkler stand out.

“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

Matthew 18:6



“They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

Matthew 7:15



Where is the wolf?



"Behold I am sending you  
out as sheep in the midst  
of wolves. Therefore, be  
wise as serpents and  
innocent as doves."

Matthew 10:16





## **SAFEGUARDING** Certification

Goal: Build the necessary culture where adults are educated and empowered to protect kids.



# Ministry Systems



"That Nassar will die in prison is little comfort because the systems that allowed...him to survive and thrive for so many years remain very much alive."

*Michigan State needs to wear this shame*

- [TheUndefeated.com](http://TheUndefeated.com)



# Church System

Power

God

Mission

Denial

Education

Victims

Offenders

Policy

Reporting



# Ministry Systems



"...offenders can recognize ideal settings for child molesters even if the rest of us can't."  
- Dr. Anna Salter, *Predators*



# Ministry Systems



"I consider church people easy to fool... they have a trust that comes from being Christians."

- *Convicted Child Abuser*





Scenario:  
Kate and  
the Youth  
Pastor



# Ministry System



“Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Proverbs 31



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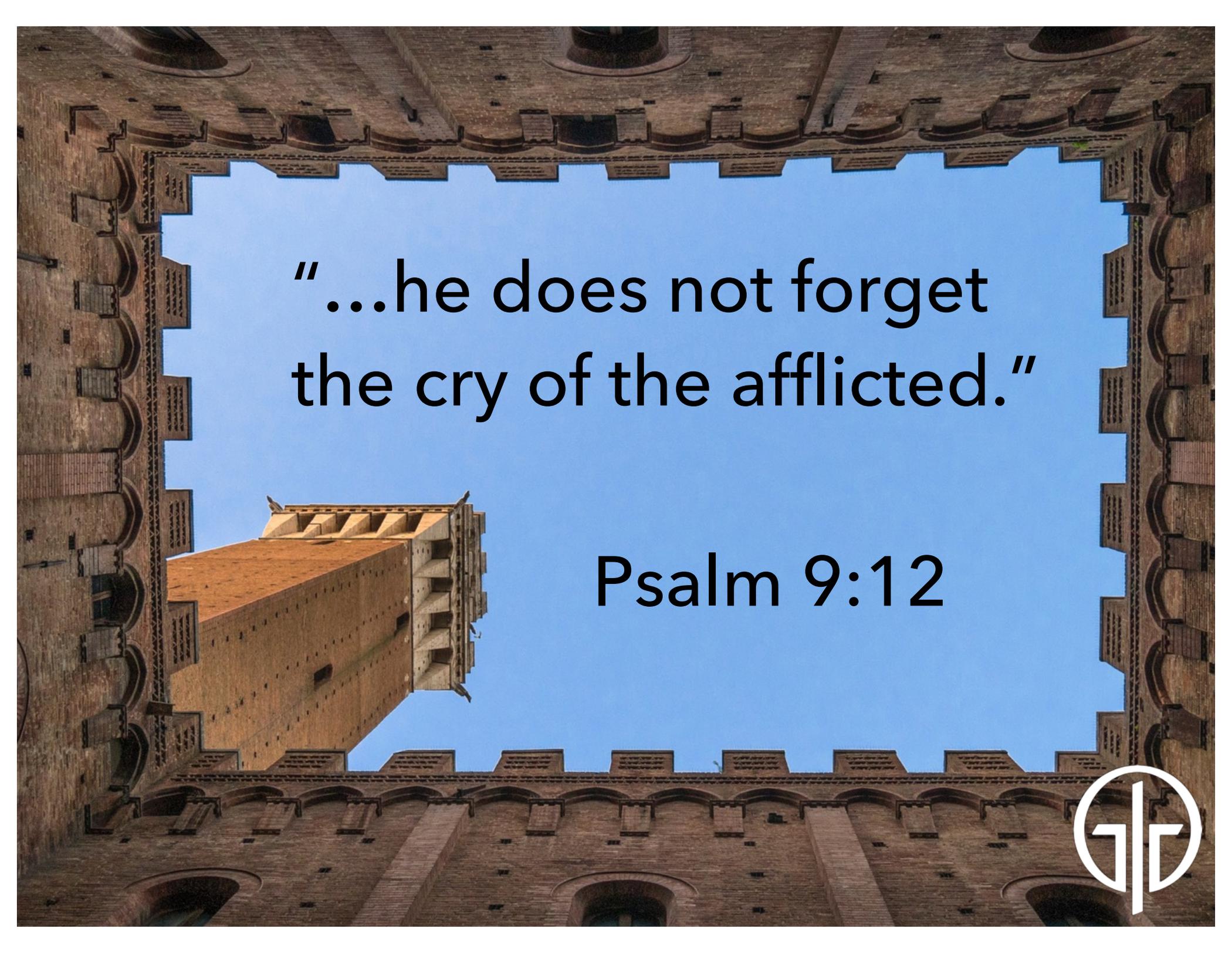




"The Lord is a stronghold  
for the oppressed..."

Psalm 9:9





“...he does not forget  
the cry of the afflicted.”

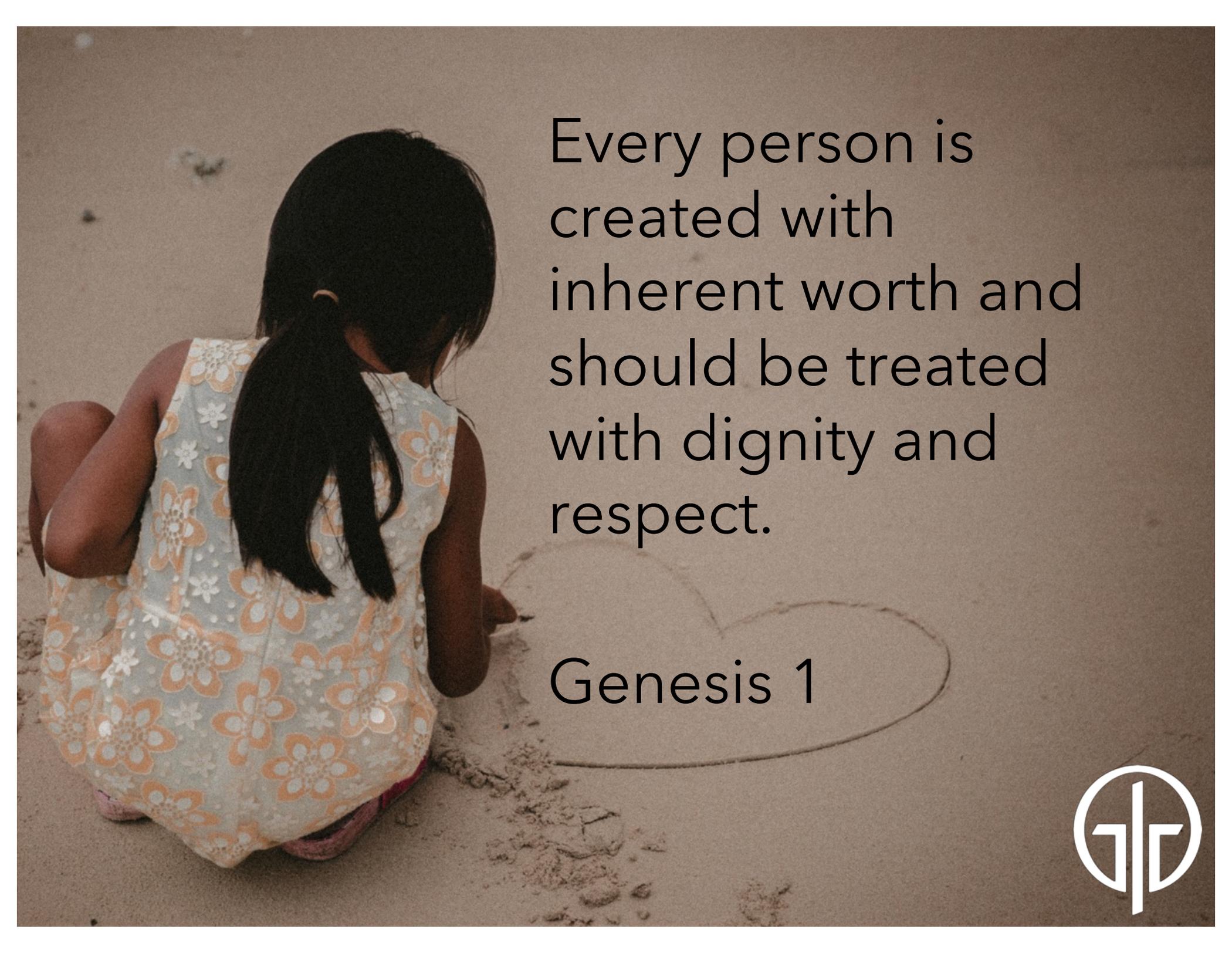
Psalm 9:12



"No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the Lord."

Leviticus 18:6

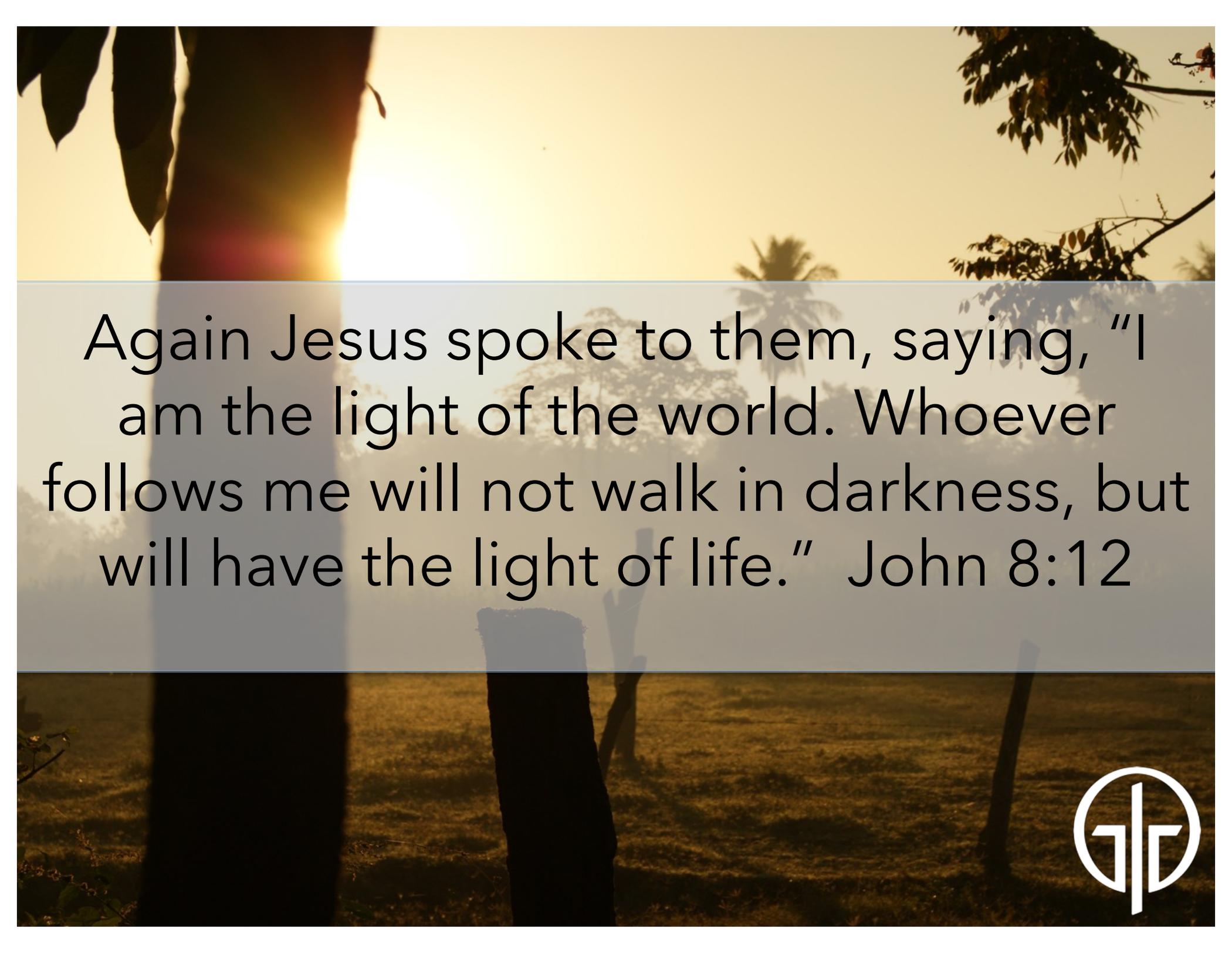




Every person is  
created with  
inherent worth and  
should be treated  
with dignity and  
respect.

Genesis 1





Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12



Jesus is "a light for the nations."

What is the light Jesus brings?

Isaiah 42; Luke 4



“Learn to do right; seek justice.  
Defend the oppressed.  
Take up the cause of the fatherless;  
plead the case of the widow.  
- Isaiah 1:17

“For I, the Lord, love justice;”  
- Isaiah 61:8



“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim **good news to the poor**. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, **to set at liberty those who are oppressed**, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Luke 4:18-19



# Ministry System

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Ecclesiastes 4:1, "Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them."



# Ezekiel 34 and the Good Shepherd



Why is “neutrality” the wrong response to abuse?



# Ministry Systems



“A pastor does not have to be a child abuser to do tremendous damage. Predators will recognize systems where leadership will prioritize the system over the individual.”

- Dr. Diane Langberg



How do we  
teach about  
the authority in  
the church and  
the home?



How do leaders  
ensure we are  
listening to others  
and serving them?



Violence against  
women and  
children is an  
epidemic in our  
culture.



Pro-active leadership on abuse is at the heart of your calling as a pastor, elder, or other leader.



vulnerable *and* demonstrate safe beh



You cannot outsource  
protecting the vulnerable.



There is a difference between child protection and risk management.



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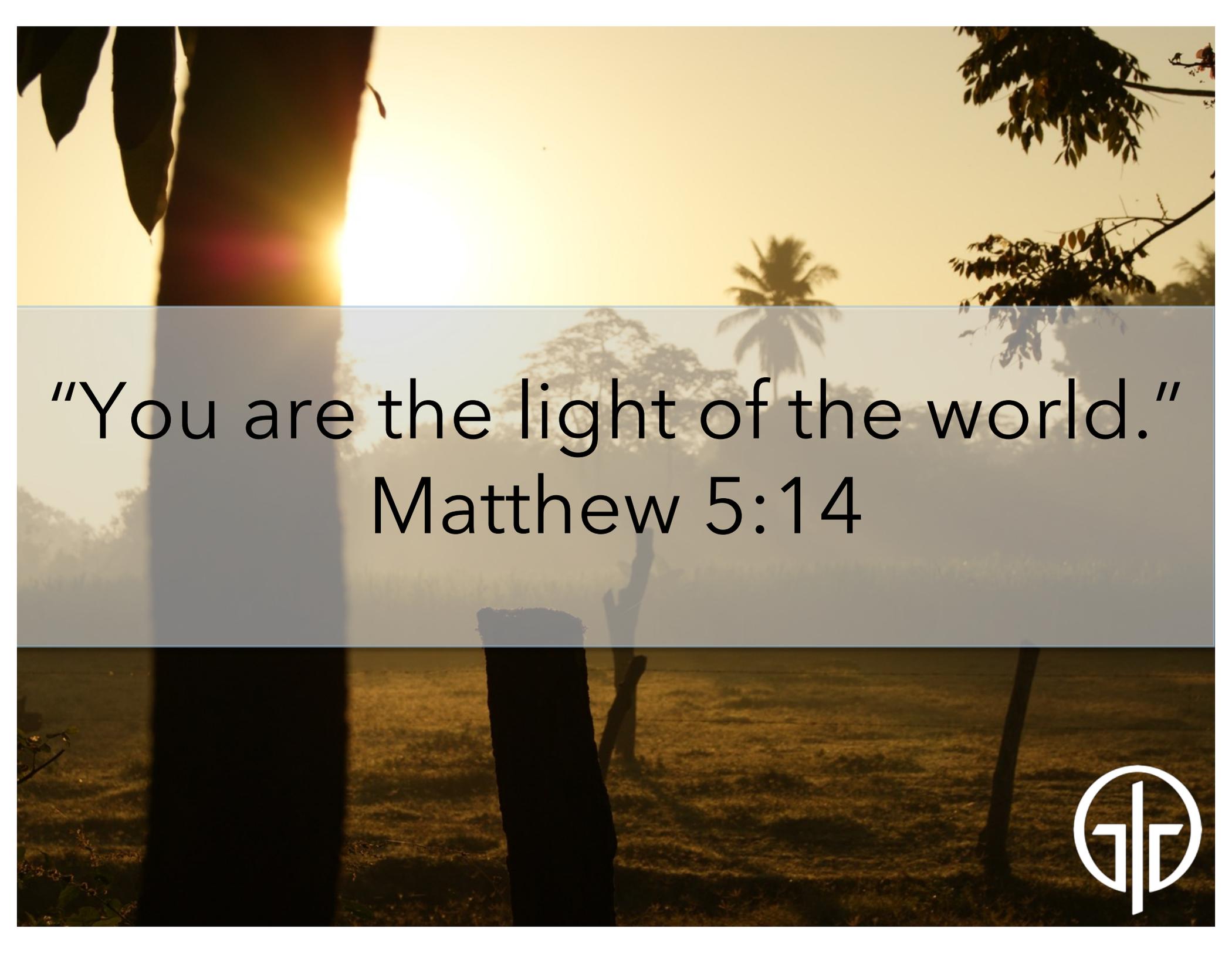
Offenders

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Reporting





“You are the light of the world.”  
Matthew 5:14



“Thou shalt not commit  
murder, thou shalt not  
commit adultery, thou  
shalt not violate  
children...”

- Didache 2:2 (90 AD)



# Church System

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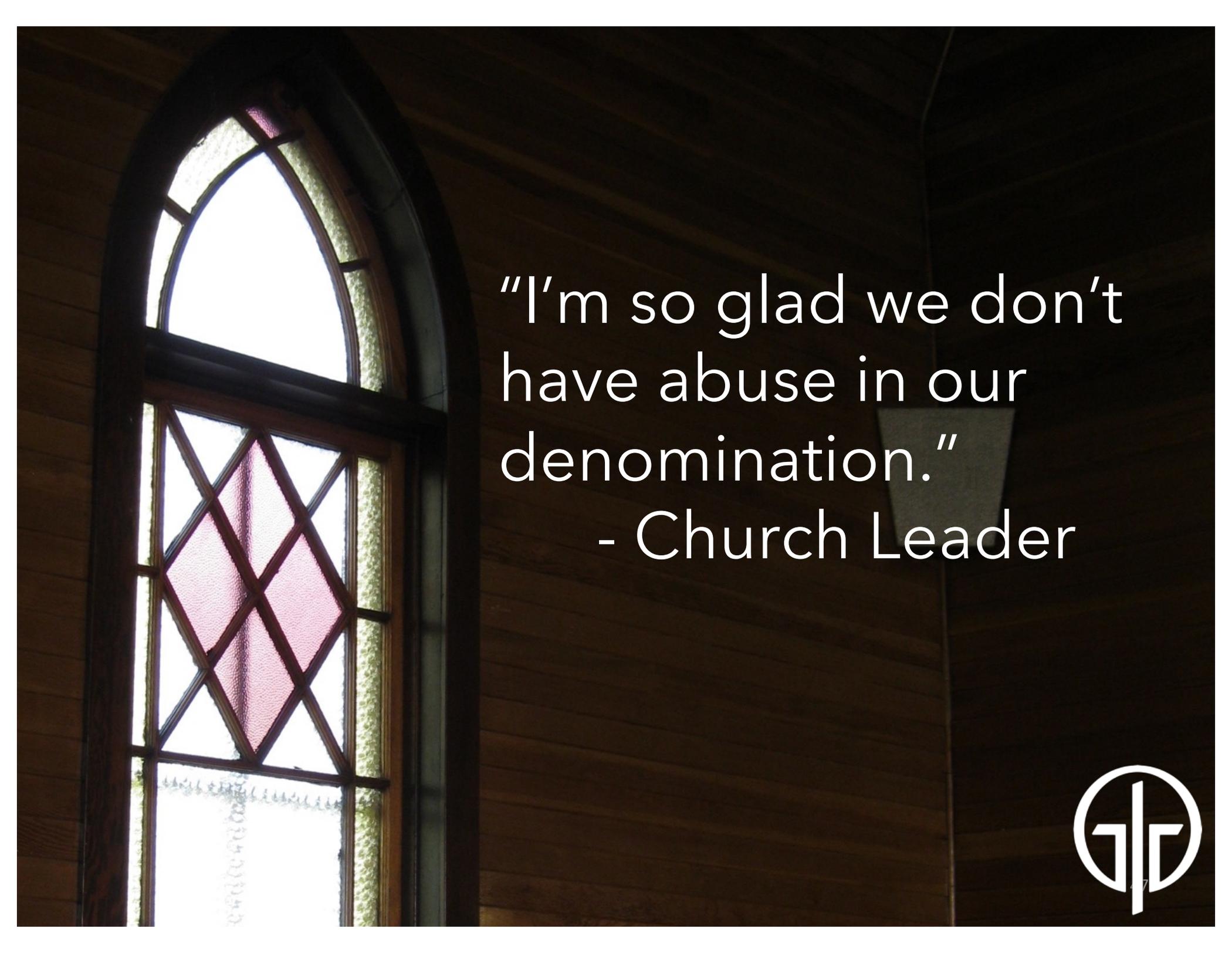
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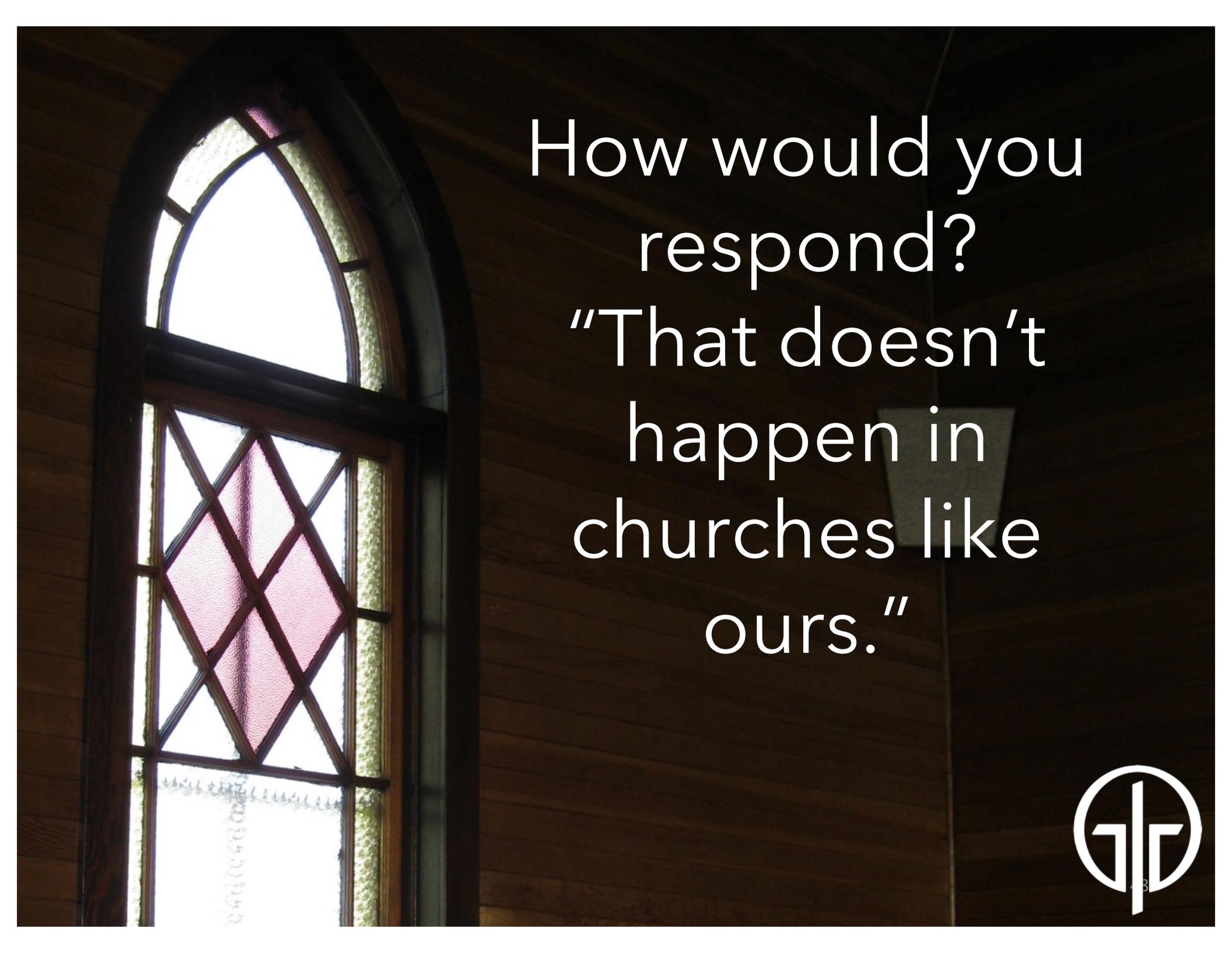




“I’m so glad we don’t  
have abuse in our  
denomination.”

- Church Leader





How would you  
respond?

“That doesn’t  
happen in  
churches like  
ours.”



# Common Abuse Myths

What myths have you encountered?



# Common Abuse Myths

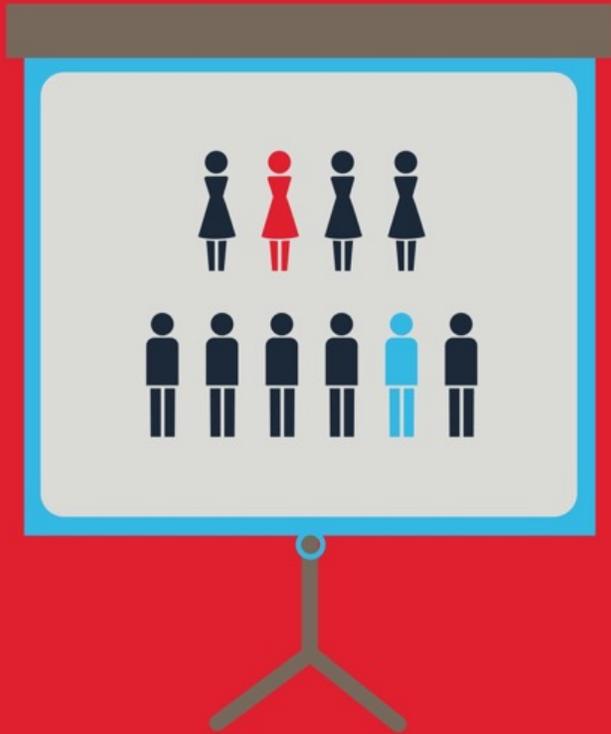
- ❖ Abuse is rare
- ❖ Abuse doesn't happen here (my church, family).
- ❖ Abusers are usually strangers.
- ❖ Only men abuse
- ❖ False reports of abuse are common.
- ❖ Sexual abuse victims victimize others.



# Common Abuse Myths

- ❖ “Isn’t that a Catholic problem?”
- ❖ Victims just need to forgive and move on.
- ❖ Reporting an abuser will ruin his life forever.
- ❖ We should handle accusations of abuse in the church.





1 in 4 women  
& 1 in 6 men

**HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED  
AS CHILDREN.**



# Prevalence in the Church

Do statistics of prevalence apply to the church?

- Offenders maintaining significant involvement with religious institutions "had more sexual offense convictions, more victims, and younger victims."

*Eshuys & Smallbone, Religious Affiliations Among Adult Sexual Offenders (2006)*

- Offenders say Christians are "easy to fool."
- 93% of male offenders are "religious"
- 2-3% of Pastors receive seminary training on child abuse prevention and response *Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center*
- Over 90% of offenders are "known"



# Common Dynamics that Make Christians Vulnerable



**GRACE**

**Godly Response to Abuse  
in the Christian Environment**



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Reporting





Over 90% of  
Victims Know  
Their Abuser

(Finkelhor, 2012 and Whealin, 2007)



# Most Abuse Occurs in the Home





40% of Child  
Sexual Abuse is  
Perpetrated by  
Other Kids

(Finkelhor, 2012)





Many  
Victims  
Never  
Tell





False Reports  
of Child  
Sexual Abuse  
are Rare



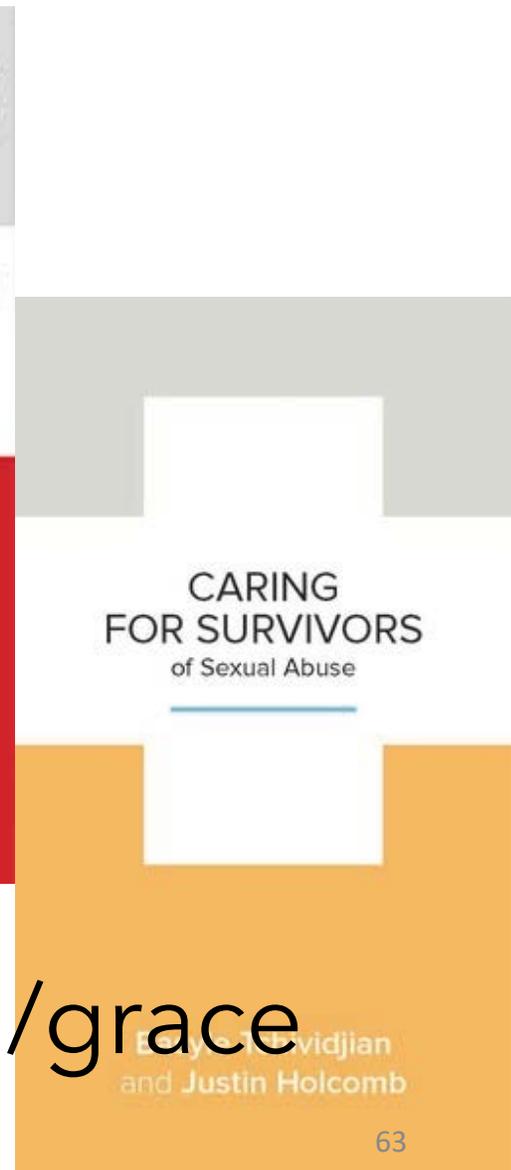
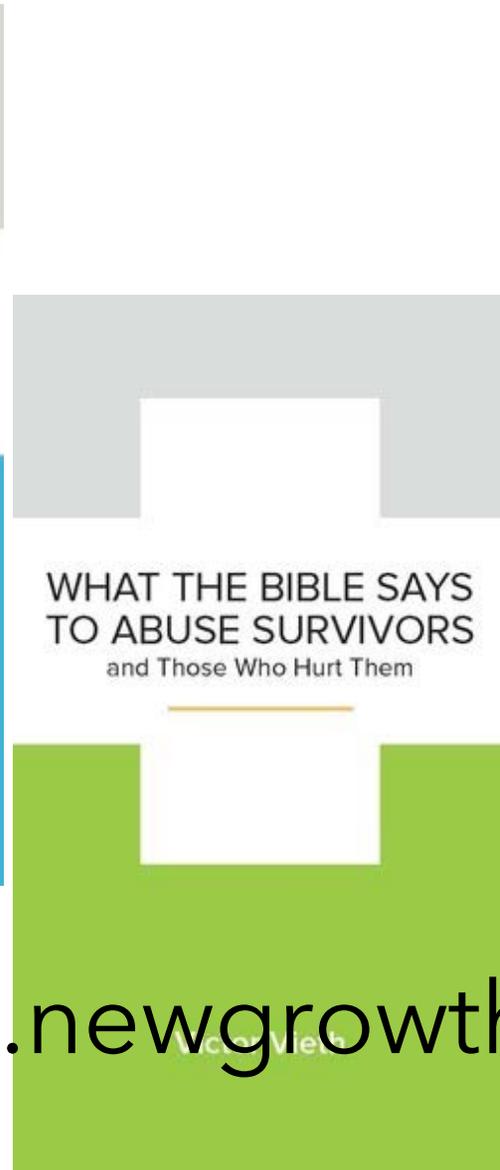
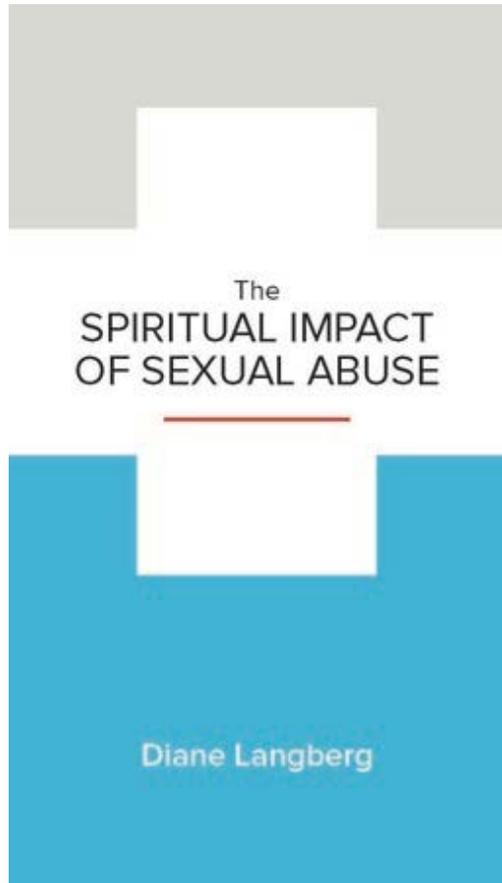


“Although we need to be mindful of the possibility of false allegations, multiple studies conclude that these instances are rare, and that when children do lie, it is usually done to protect the perpetrator, not to get anyone in trouble.”

Victor Vieth

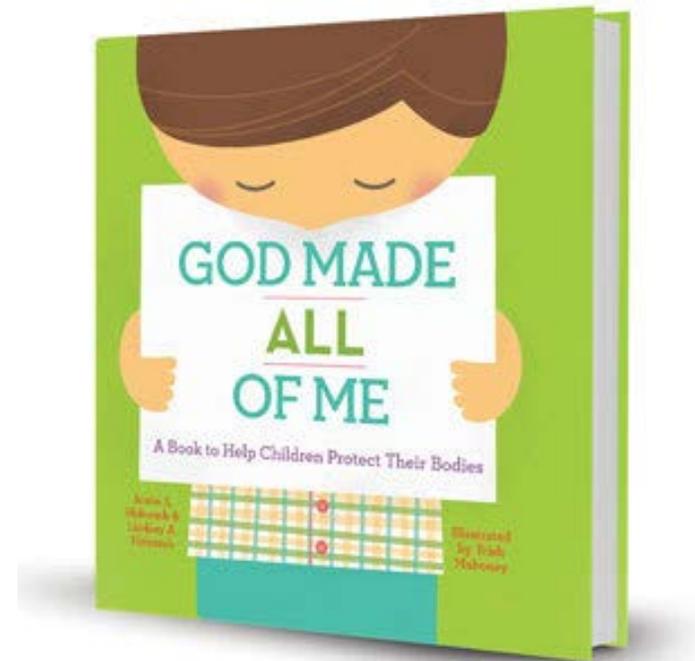
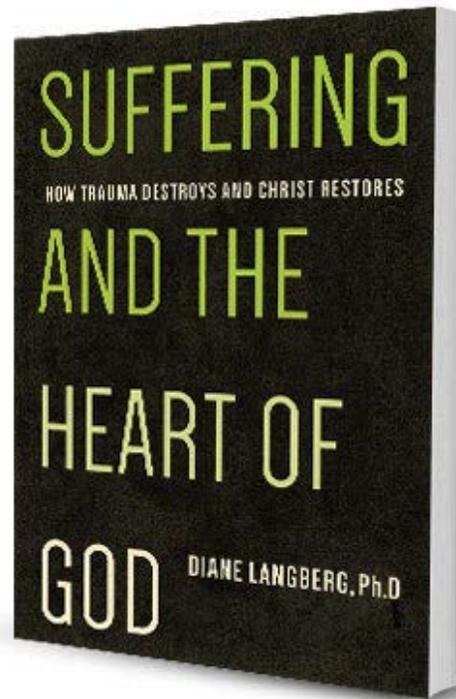


# Required Reading



[www.newgrowthpress.com/grace](http://www.newgrowthpress.com/grace)

# Recommended Reading



[www.newgrowthpress.com/grace](http://www.newgrowthpress.com/grace)



65

“Why would we take so much time to discuss such a terrible topic as child abuse?”



66

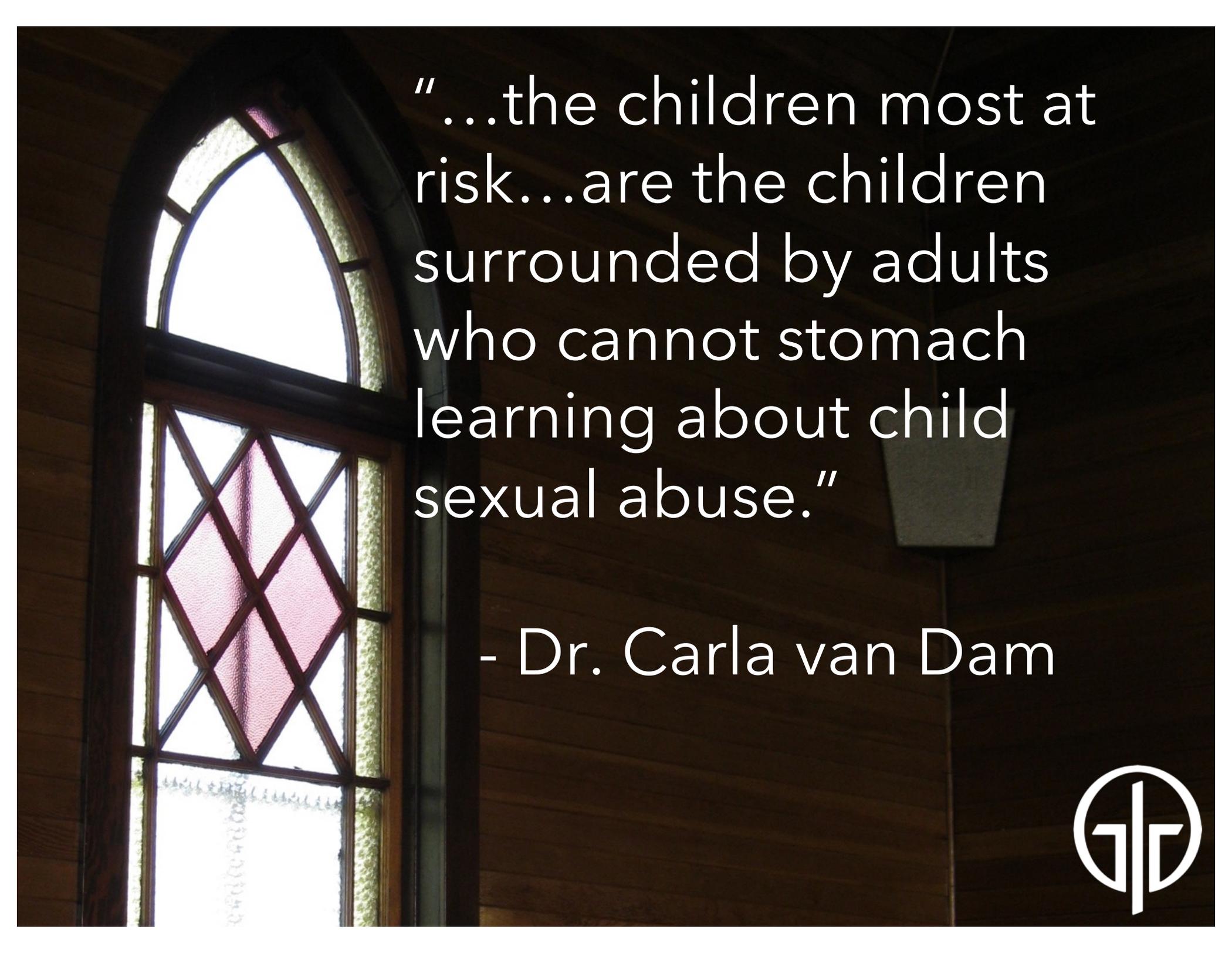
“I don't work with the kids,  
why do all adults need to  
come to the training?”



# Church-wide Training:

- *Educated Vigilance*, not Paranoia
- Common Indicators of Abuse and Normal Sexual Development
- Offender Tactics - "Grooming" Behavior
- Normal Disclosure Behavior
- When to report a concern, policy violation, or abuse.





"...the children most at risk...are the children surrounded by adults who cannot stomach learning about child sexual abuse."

- Dr. Carla van Dam



# Church System

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Mission

Denial

**Leaders**

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Education

**Victims**

**Adults**

---

Offenders

Policy

**Kids**

Reporting



Should we always believe victims  
when they disclose abuse?



'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

- Luke 10:35





# Victim Blaming



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Emotional abuse (humiliation, threats) (11%)
- Physical abuse (hit hard enough to receive injuries) (28%)
- Contact sexual abuse (28% women, 16% men)
- Mother treated violently (13%)
- Household member alcoholic or drug user (27%)
- Household member imprisoned (6%)
- Household member chronically depressed, suicidal, mentally ill, psychiatric hospitalization (17%)
- Not raised by both biological parents (23%)
- Neglect–physical (10%)
- Neglect–emotional (15%)



A young man with short brown hair and a beard is sitting in a church pew. He is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. Behind him are two tall, narrow stained glass windows with colorful, abstract designs. The lighting is soft, coming from the windows, creating a contemplative atmosphere. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text.

Survivors  
can't just,  
"Move on."



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The background of the slide features the silhouettes of four individuals standing against a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise sky. The central figure is a man wearing a baseball cap, facing away from the camera. To his left, another person is partially visible in profile. To his right, another person is seen from the back. On the far right, a fourth person is partially visible. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

Offenders are both opportunistic and use a set of behaviors we call "grooming"



The image features a group of people's silhouettes against a sunset sky. The sky transitions from a bright orange glow near the horizon to a darker, muted purple and blue at the top. The silhouettes are dark and featureless, showing the profiles and backs of several individuals. One person in the center is wearing a cap. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

Child predation is often driven by fantasy and planning.



Offenders groom  
victims, families, and  
churches.



Ministry System



Offender Tactics



"If your brother sins,  
rebuke him, and if he  
repents, forgive him"  
Luke 17:3



## Forgiveness is not:

- Forgetfulness
- Immediately moving on
- No damage to heal
- No consequences
- No accountability
- No safeguards



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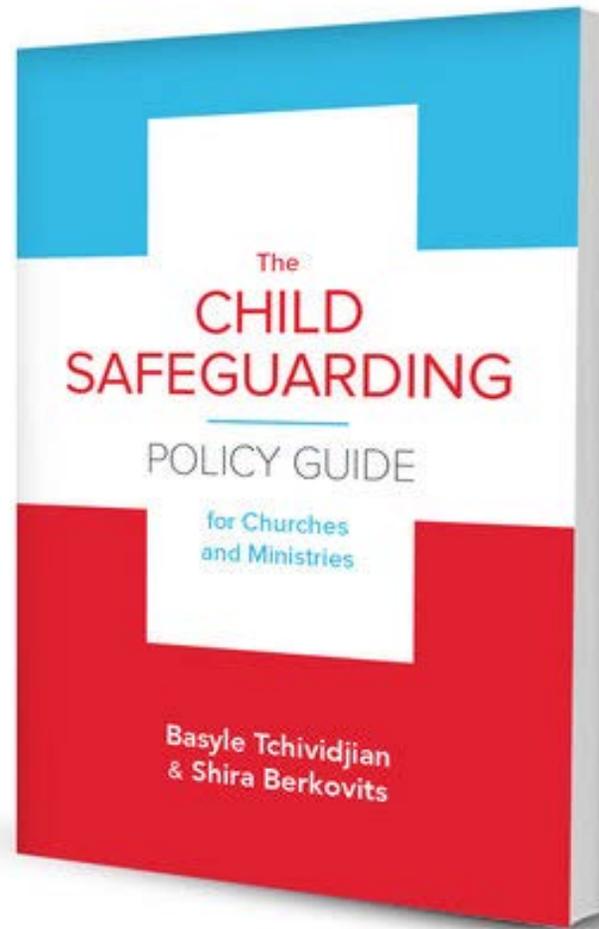
**Policy**

**Kids**

Reporting



# Policy Resource



# Ministry System

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# Church System



What is the cost of standing up to an abuser?

“He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”  
John 10:12-13



# Church System



What do I do when there is....

1. Abuse?
2. A policy violation?
3. There is a real concern about a person or a situation?



# Protecting Children...*it's the LAW* *in Illinois.*



Mandated reporters\* are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

Information on **FREE** online training is available at [Illinois.dcf.gov/safekids](http://Illinois.dcf.gov/safekids)

\*Mandated reporters are professionals who may work with children in the course of their professional duties: Medical Personnel, School Personnel, Social Service/Mental Health Personnel, Law Enforcement Personnel, Coroner/Medical Examiner Personnel, Child Care Personnel and Members of the Clergy.



Illinois Department of  
**DCFS**  
Children & Family Services

PROTECT OUR CHILDREN, CALL  
**1.800.25.ABUSE**  
[www.DCFS.Illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.Illinois.gov)



REPORT.  
DON'T INVESTIGATE.

Why shouldn't the organization do its own investigation before reporting to make sure abuse has taken place?



REPORT.  
DON'T INVESTIGATE.

Do we report minors who  
offend against other minors?



REPORT.  
DON'T INVESTIGATE.

Don't we have to follow  
Matthew 18?



# Church System



Abuser

Leaders

Matthew 18



Victim

---

“If a wolf in sheep’s clothing ravages a lamb, send the little lamb back to the wolf...”



# Church System



Abuser

---



Victim

Leaders

What should  
be the first  
goal?



“Child victims of sexual abuse face secondary trauma in the crisis of discovery.”

Dr. Roland Summit

THE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ACCOMMODATION SYNDROME



# Focus on the Victims

1. Safety for the victims and others is priority one.
2. Medical/Professional Mental Health Care
3. Compassionate listening: Continue to ask what is needed and respond with care and creativity.
4. Do not ever push forgiveness, reconciliation, or meeting with the abuser.
5. Lament/righteous anger is appropriate
6. Do not leave your field of expertise.





Leaders and others within the system are often easily manipulated by an offender even after they are caught.



# Special Issue: Pastoral Ministry to Offenders - Proceed with Caution



# Jesus taught and embodied care for others:

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

"Love one another as I have loved you."

"...as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

"whoever would be great among you must be your servant"



**ASK MORE  
QUESTIONS**



# Engaging Faith Communities

## The Power of Faith Communities



# Engaging Faith Communities

A large cable-stayed bridge spans across a body of water. The bridge features two prominent towers with multiple stay cables. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky is a mix of soft purple and orange hues.

Moving Forward Together

# Engaging Faith Communities

A large cable-stayed bridge spans across a body of water. The bridge features two prominent towers with multiple stay cables. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light purple. The bridge extends into the distance, with its structure becoming smaller as it recedes.

Getting a Foot in the Door

# Engaging Faith Communities

A photograph of a long cable-stayed bridge spanning across a body of water. The bridge features a prominent pylon with multiple stay cables. The scene is captured during sunset, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky transitions from a pale purple at the top to a deep orange near the horizon. The bridge's structure is silhouetted against the bright sky.

Tools to Approach Churches

# Engaging Faith Communities

A large cable-stayed bridge spans across a body of water. The bridge features two prominent towers with multiple stay cables. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light purple. The bridge extends into the distance, with its structure becoming smaller as it recedes.

Roadmap to Partnership

# Engaging Faith Communities



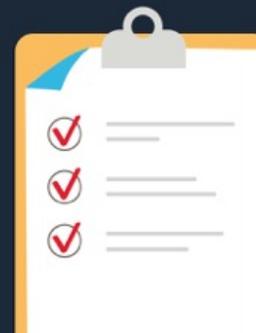
1 out of 4 children  
ARE PHYSICALLY ABUSED



1 in 4 women  
& 1 in 6 men  
HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED  
AS CHILDREN.



**CHILD ABUSE**  
eats away at faith.



**SAFEGUARDING**  
Certification

# Engaging Faith Communities

A large cable-stayed bridge spans across a body of water. The bridge features two prominent towers with multiple stay cables. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light purple. The bridge extends into the distance, with its structure becoming smaller as it recedes.

The Power of Partnerships

# Engaging Faith Communities

"Recently, I attended training entitled "Creating a Culture of Protection in the Faith Community," led by Rev. Mike Sloan of GRACE, and hosted by Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County. I told Mike after the two-day event that I had NEVER thought about the local church being a place where predators would seek to take advantage, so naïve! Because of the training and on account of the fact that CAC provides robust support to the local church I am going to lead my local church in lovingly confronting a culture of denial regarding abuse in its many forms. Mike told us that, "the safest church is an educated church." Using that as our vision statement and by God's grace we are going to make our church a safe place and a healing place."

Mark Marfisi, Hope Community Church, Plano, TX



# Engaging Faith Communities

## Recommended Resources for Churches