


*Leading Out of the
Dark: Ministering to
Those Who Have
Experienced
Trauma*

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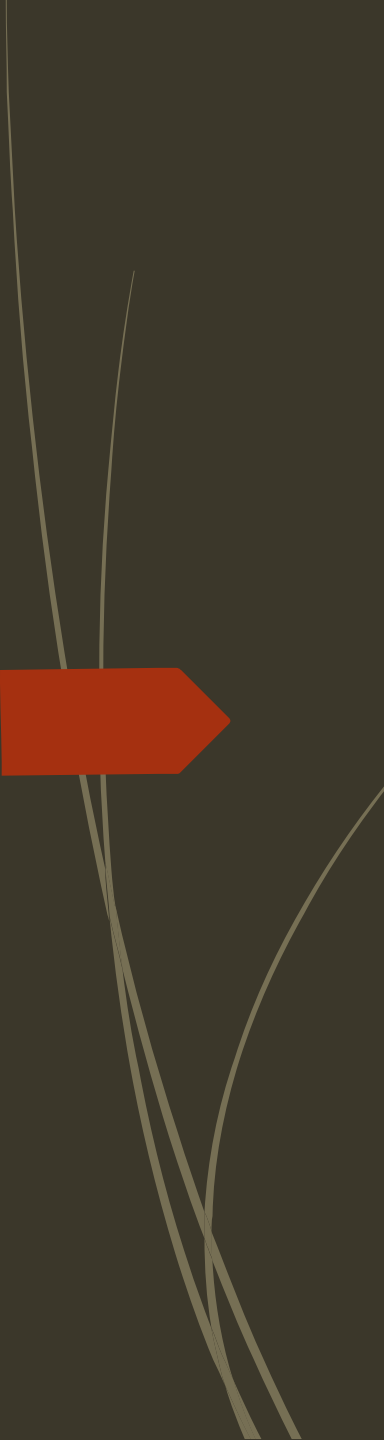
“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison



How can ministries help those who have experienced trauma?

- Think in terms of principles, not rules
- Became educated about abuse
- Be a safe person by focusing on the client's need
- Pay attention to boundaries

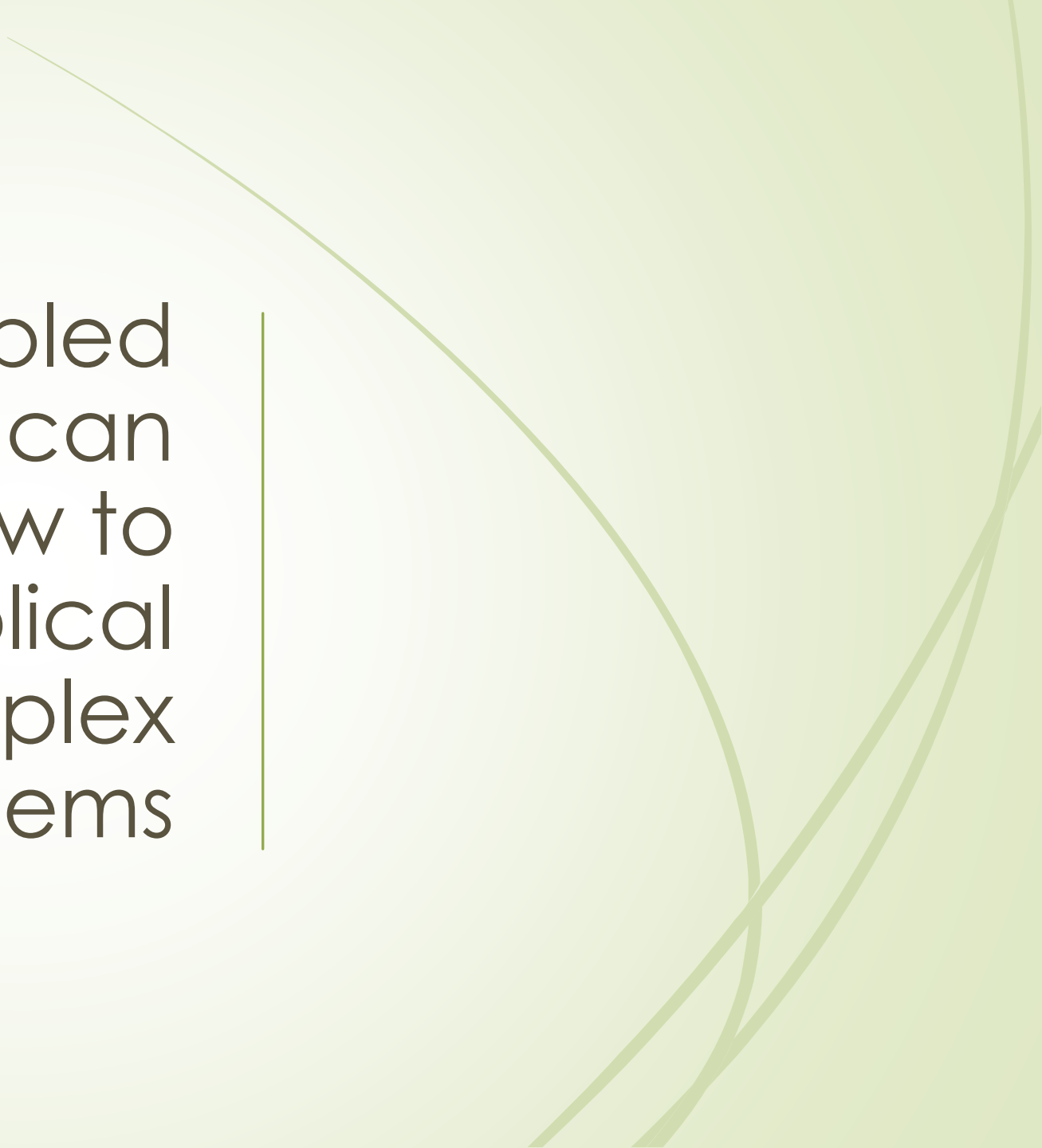


I. Think in terms of principles, not rules

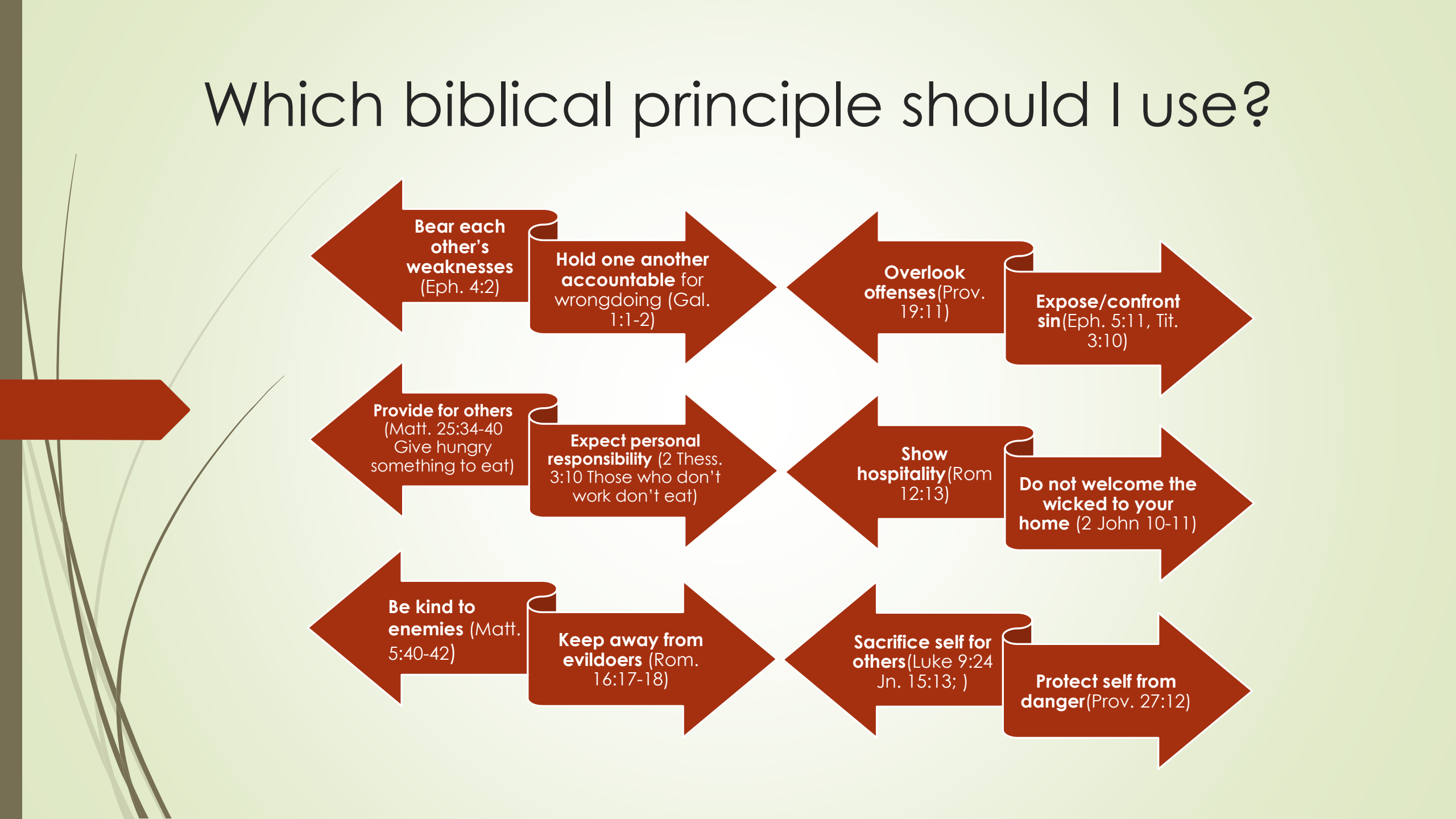
- Complex: No easy answers or cookie-cutter responses
- The more complex the situation, the greater the need for general guidelines vs. black and white rules
- Benefit of rules: Clear, easy, require little effort or thought
- Danger with rules: *Guideline* can become more important than the *person*; no need for relationship; pride
- Using principles rather than rules requires maturity, discipleship, discernment, humility, relationship
- Jesus challenged rules for principles

Though biblical principles may be clear, applying those principles to complex human situations often is not

Faithful, disciplined
believers can
disagree on how to
apply biblical
principles to complex
human problems

The slide features a light green background with a dark green vertical bar on the left. On the right side, there are several decorative green lines: a thin vertical line, a thin diagonal line starting from the top center and extending towards the right, and two thick, curved lines that sweep from the bottom right towards the top right.

Which biblical principle should I use?



Bear each other's weaknesses
(Eph. 4:2)

Hold one another accountable for wrongdoing (Gal. 1:1-2)

Overlook offenses (Prov. 19:11)

Expose/confront sin (Eph. 5:11, Tit. 3:10)

Provide for others
(Matt. 25:34-40
Give hungry something to eat)

Expect personal responsibility (2 Thess. 3:10 Those who don't work don't eat)

Show hospitality (Rom 12:13)

Do not welcome the wicked to your home (2 John 10-11)

Be kind to enemies (Matt. 5:40-42)

Keep away from evildoers (Rom. 16:17-18)


Sacrifice self for others (Luke 9:24 Jn. 15:13;)

Protect self from danger (Prov. 27:12)



What to do when principles seem to conflict?

- Sense of humility
- Guidance of the Holy Spirit – listen for the Lord's voice
- See things accurately/truthfully (1 Cor. 13:6; Lk 11:34)
- Obtain information re context
- **Prioritize safety and sanity**
- Jesus always on the side of the oppressed
- Institutions made for well-being of people, not vice-versa



II. Become educated about abuse

- Applicable Biblical Principles
- Important Aspects of Abuse
- Abuse Cycle
- Responses to Abuse

“Difficulties in
destructive relationships
have to be understood
differently from the ones
that happen in healthy
relationships”

- Bancroft & Patrissi

Applicable biblical principles

Defend the oppressed

Is. 1:17 "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed." Psalm 82:3 "Defend the weak and fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and oppressed."

Look at things truthfully

1 Corinthians 13:6 "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth." Eph. 4:25 "Instead, speaking the truth in love..." Eph. 5:9 "Live as children of light, for the fruit of the light consists in all...truth"

Do not underestimate evil/sin

1 Pet. 5:8 "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Matt. 10:16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

Evil/sin is deceptive and often hard to see

Matt. 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." 2 Cor. 11:14 "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

Take wrongdoing seriously

Jeremiah 8:11 "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." 1 Cor. 5:13 "Expel the wicked person from among you." Romans 1:18 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness"

Do not excuse evil

Ephesians 5:11 Paul says that we are "not to participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead expose them." Matt. 18:17 "If they still refuse to listen, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

Protect the vulnerable/Ensure safety

Isaiah 58:10 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" Proverbs 27:12 "The prudent see danger and take refuge."

“Woe to those who call
evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness, who
put bitter for sweet and
sweet for bitter.”

Isaiah 5:20



Sheep, Fools, Wolves

➤ **Sheep:**

- Clueless, ignorant, weak, blinded
- Compassion; searched out, led, rescued (Jer. 50:6-7; Matt. 9:36, 12:12, 18:12-13)

➤ **Fools:**

- Unwise, don't learn, choose self instead of God
- Consequences/reaping what sowed (Proverbs 1:7, 1:32, 10:10, 10:21, 13:20)

➤ **Wolves:**

- Intentionally deceitful, choose to hurt for personal gain (Ez. 22:27)
- God's wrath/destruction/wise as serpents/beware (Psalm 52; Matt. 10:16, Matt. 7:15-19, Matt. 23)



Important Aspects of Abuse

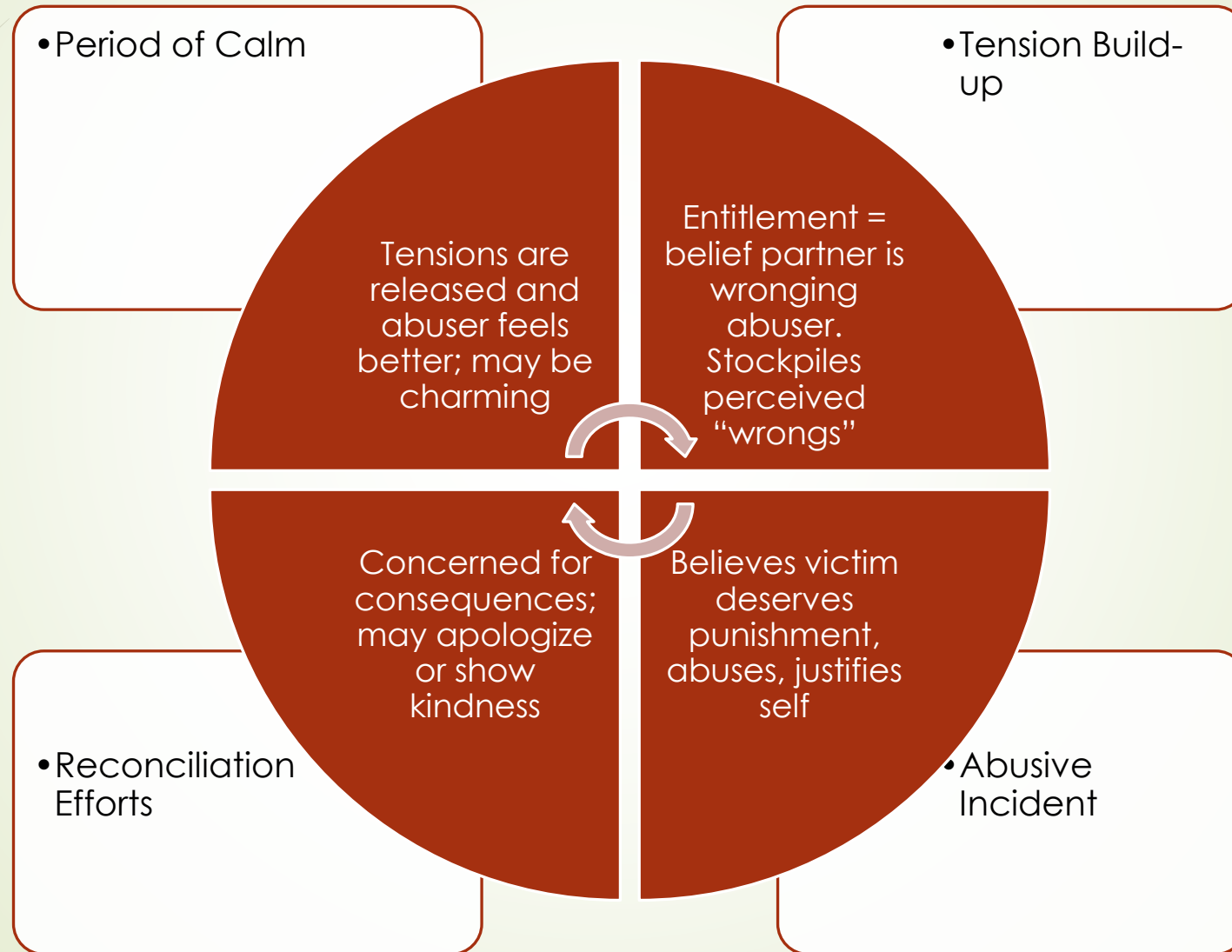
- Pattern of behaviors that **control** and **devalue** someone, from attitude of **entitlement**, that brings personal benefits
- Distorted sense of right and wrong/reality
- Oppressor has greater rights, feels *justified* to abuse; others exist to make fulfill abuser's demands
- Patterns of demanding and punishing
- Use of domination and fear to have power over
- *Personal* problem with the abuser, not a *marital* or *relational* problem; *only* fault of abuser



Important Aspects of Abuse

- ▶ Purposeful CHOICE (unwilling, not unable)
- ▶ Behavior largely conscious, underlying thinking mainly unconscious
- ▶ NOT due to: needing anger-management skills, poor self-esteem, addiction, or mental illness
- ▶ Change comes only from addressing *values of entitlement* and *ending disrespect*
- ▶ Abuse is NOT JUST PHYSICAL
 - ▶ Emotional abuse
 - ▶ Sexual abuse
 - ▶ Spiritual abuse
 - ▶ Financial abuse

Cycle of Abuse



Experience of the Abused Person

Confusion – hard to
see clearly

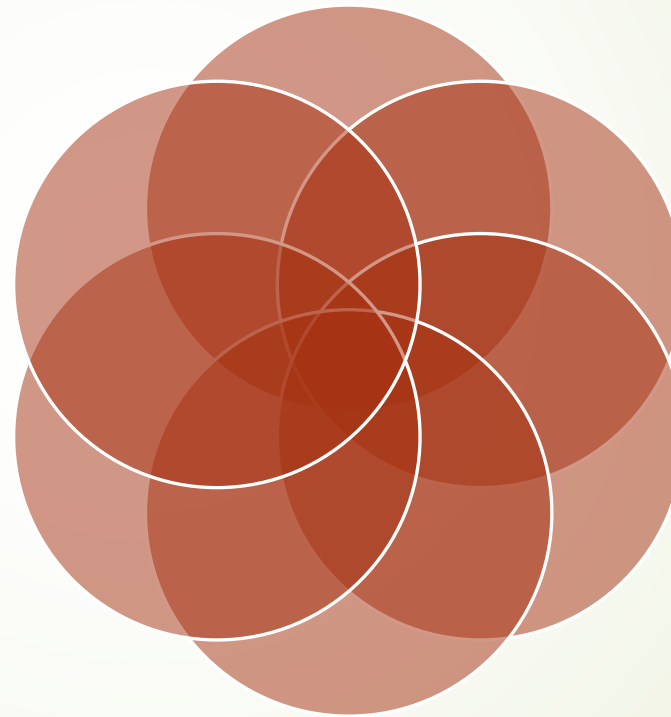
Shame

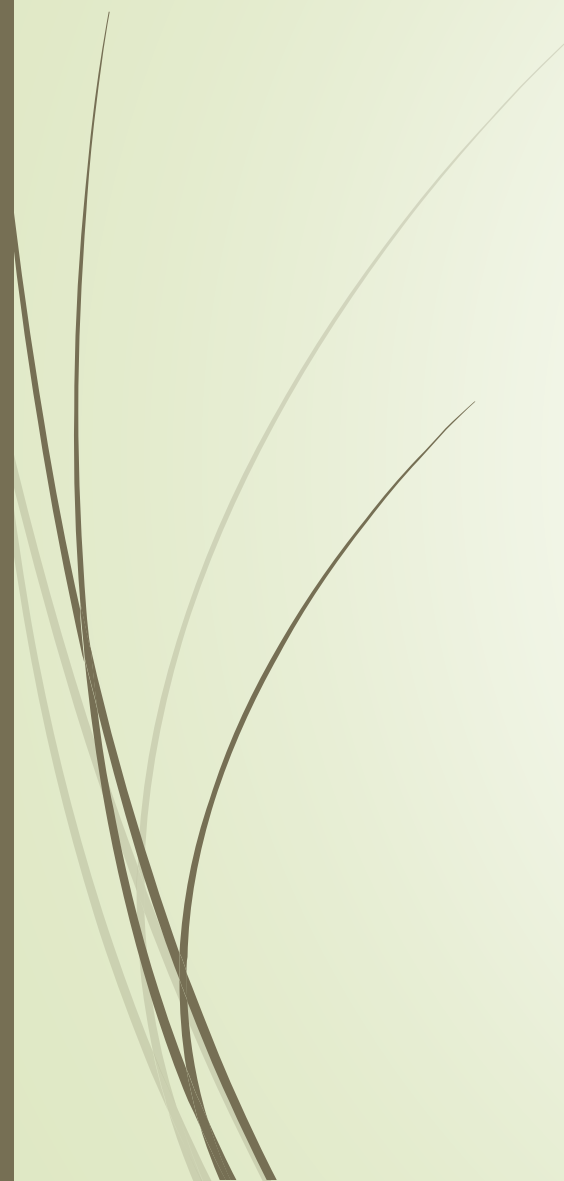
Don't trust own
perceptions

Fear

Physical
Manifestations
(gastrointestinal,
pain, sleep/eating
problems)

Anxiety



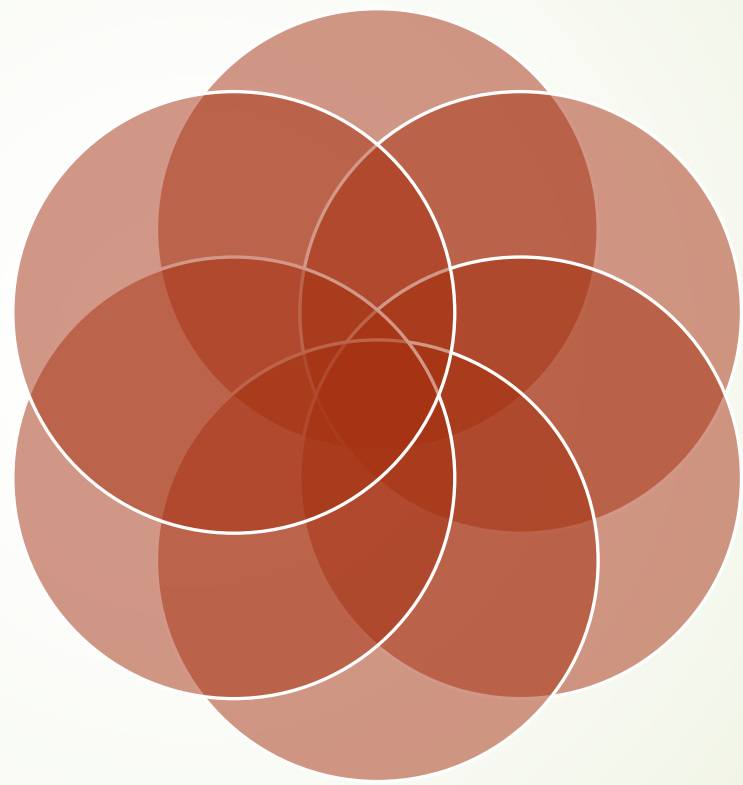


Walking on eggshells/hypervigilance

Often defend oppressor

Overwhelmed

Difficulty trusting others



Guilt

Isolation; avoidance

*“We hurt the people
being hurt if we can’t
call evil evil or toxicity
toxic”*

- Christian Counselor Leslie Vernick



Abuse requires rugged love – God's love

- ▶ Redemptive love never enables wrongdoing: law of consequences
- ▶ Separating from the toxic environment may be required
- ▶ Forgiveness is not the same as restoration of relationship. Restoration requires:
 - ▶ True repentance (turning from wrongdoing and pursuing right)
 - ▶ Rebuilding trust
- ▶ The pain of consequences is one of God's most effective tools for change: "In order to repent, prodigals must feel pain." (Dan Allender)

“Love is something more stern and splendid than mere kindness. Kindness, merely as such, cares not whether its object becomes good or bad, provided only that it escapes suffering. If God is Love, He is, by definition, something more than mere kindness...”

– C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*



III. Be a Safe Person By Focusing on Client's Need

- ▶ Create an environment of empathy and compassion
- ▶ Take concerns seriously
- ▶ Listen & enter into client's experience
- ▶ Develop plan for safety/sanity

Keep in Mind


- Abuse is confusing and disorienting; both oppressor and victim don't see accurately
- Victim likely already feels at fault
- Oppressors are excellent deceivers; good public image
- Abuse is only the fault of the *abuser*.
- Remember that institutions God gave are not more important than the people in them (marriage/Sabbath)
- Often takes much time for abused person to leave abuser



How do we respond?

Create environment of empathy & compassion

- Address and respect confidentiality; security
- Posture: Draw close and be small.
- Monitor voice tone, face, posture for empathy/care
- Allow her to express her feelings however she needs to do it
 - speaking is healing
- Be willing to show you are emotionally affected



How do we respond? Take concerns seriously

- ▶ Do not discount or minimize
- ▶ Client more likely to minimize than exaggerate
- ▶ Realize that she may be monitored – be careful about communication
- ▶ Validate that destructive behavior is **wrong** and there is no excuse for it
- ▶ Avoid any hint of condemnation or insinuation that victim should do something to stop or put up with the abuse (Submit, love more, etc.)



How do we respond?

Listen & enter into client's experience

- Be patient – go at client's pace
 - May come out in bits and pieces, may be repetitive, may not always make sense: trauma is disorienting
- Ask questions gently
- **LISTEN** much, talk little. Seek to understand/enter into client's experience
- Reflect back what you hear
- Validate her feelings
- Acknowledge strengths or good aspects of spouse that client brings up (focus: behavior, not person)

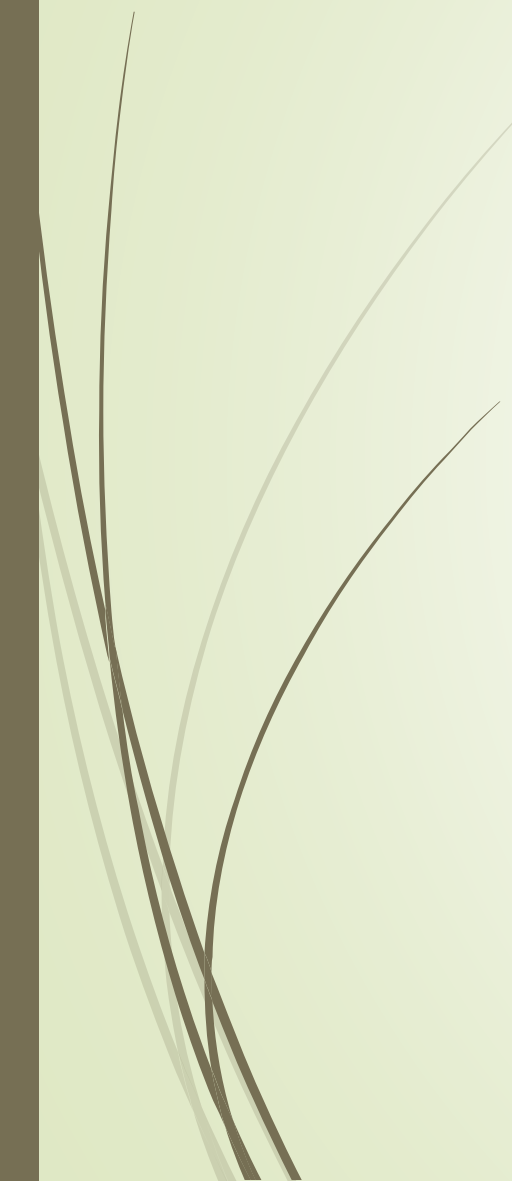


How do we respond? Develop a plan for safety and sanity

- Plan for client's physical and emotional well-being
- Help her feel empowered and make own choices; don't rescue or push
- Help client develop support network
- Encourage small steps
- Encourage personal counseling (NOT marital/relational) with a trauma-informed counselor
- Follow up with client and keep in touch



The Issues of Change

- ▶ Kindness is not an indicator that an abusive person is changing. A much better indicator is that the person behaves *respectfully* and *non-coercively*
 - ▶ An abusive person cannot change without relinquishing the *attitude of entitlement*
 - ▶ Change takes time to validate
- 



IV. Pay Attention to Boundaries

- ▶ Boundaries as Helpers
- ▶ Boundaries for Clients



What are boundaries?

- Physical world: Define where one person's property ends and another person's begins (fence, hedge)
- Emotional world: Define where we end and where someone else begins.
 - Establish who we are/who we are not
 - Establish what we will do/what we will not do
- Boundaries protect (keep the good in, keep the bad out)



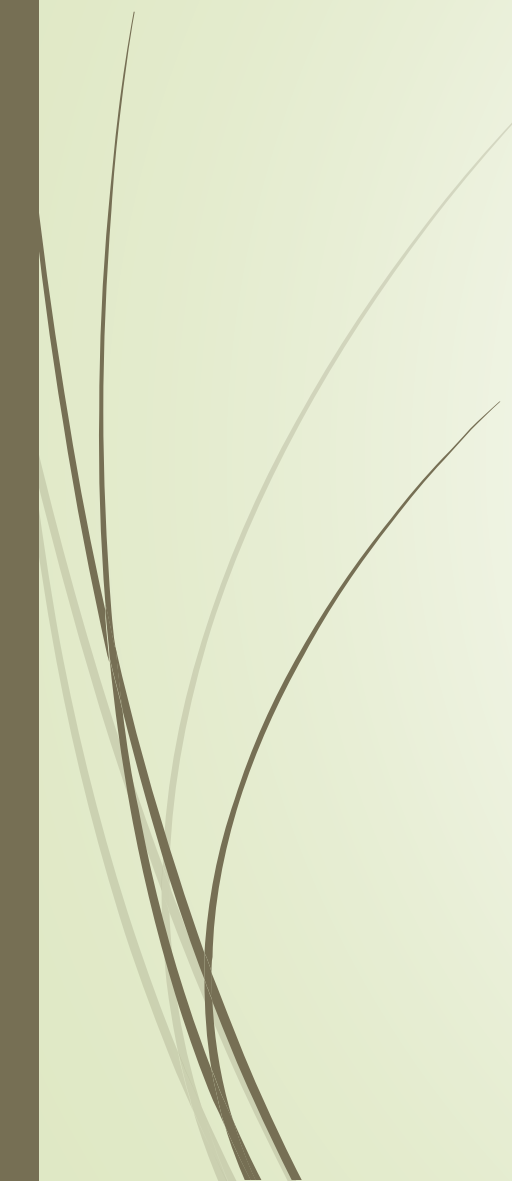

Elements of Boundaries

- Removing yourself physically and/or emotionally from unhealthy situations
- Taking time off from a person or situation
- Reaping and sowing: choices have consequences.
- Owning responsibility for our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, behaviors and values (Others don't "make" us)
- Allow/express feelings without acting on them in unhealthy ways (self-control without repression)
- Being able to SAY "no" and being able to HEAR "no"
- Being **inter**dependent with others, not **de**pendent or **in**dependent



Boundaries as Helpers

- We are affected
- Balance: Don't end up drowning!
- Don't work harder for the client than he/she works for him/herself
- Know what is our role and what is God's: Show care & compassion, provide support, encourage resources
- Cannot force someone to be where they aren't: freedom to make own choices



“Do not confuse the
ability to influence
with the power to
determine the
outcome” – Letting Go:
Rugged Love for Wayward Souls



Boundaries as Helpers

- Self-care is important: Establish things that renew and replenish
- Be aware of what is going on with yourself
- Can't help someone else beyond what we've gained victory over ourselves
- Do emotional/spiritual work re suffering and a good God



Boundaries for Clients

- John 5: Jesus asks invalid at Pool of Bethesda, “Do you want to get well?”
- Issues are complex; factors in client’s control and not in client’s control
- Learned helplessness
 - Powerlessness from repeated negative experiences outside control
 - Don’t maximize opportunities to alter circumstances/find solution
- **Steps client can take** for issues client can control; **coping mechanisms** for issues client can’t control



Mandatory Reporting

- **Who?** “Persons employed by any private organization responsible for care, custody and control of children or public or private facility working with adults in an administrative, supportive or direct care capacity”
- **What?** Evidence of abuse, neglect, or exploitation by caretaker for children under age 18 or incapacitated adults over 18 and all adults 60+
- **When?** Within 24 hours of first suspicion of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- **To whom?** Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services (abuse, neglect, exploitation)
- Failure to report: prosecution/confidentiality protected

Summary

- Think in terms of principles, not rules
- Became educated about abuse
- Be a safe person by focusing on the client's need
- Pay attention to boundaries

He has sent me to bind up the
brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for
the captives and release from darkness for
the prisoners, to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve; to
bestow on them a crown of beauty instead
of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a
garment of praise instead of a spirit of
despair. They will be called oaks of
righteousness, a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.
Isaiah 61



Resources



- ▶ *Why Does He Do That: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* by Lundy Bancroft
- ▶ *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* by Leslie Vernick
- ▶ *Is It Abuse?* by Darby Strickland
- ▶ *Should I Stay or Should I Go* by Bancroft & Patrissi
- ▶ *Letting Go: Rugged Love for Wayward Souls* by Harvey & Gilbert
- ▶ *Boundaries* by Cloud & Townsend
- ▶ *Changes That Heal* by Henry Cloud
- ▶ *Divorce & Remarriage in the Bible* by David Instone-Brewer