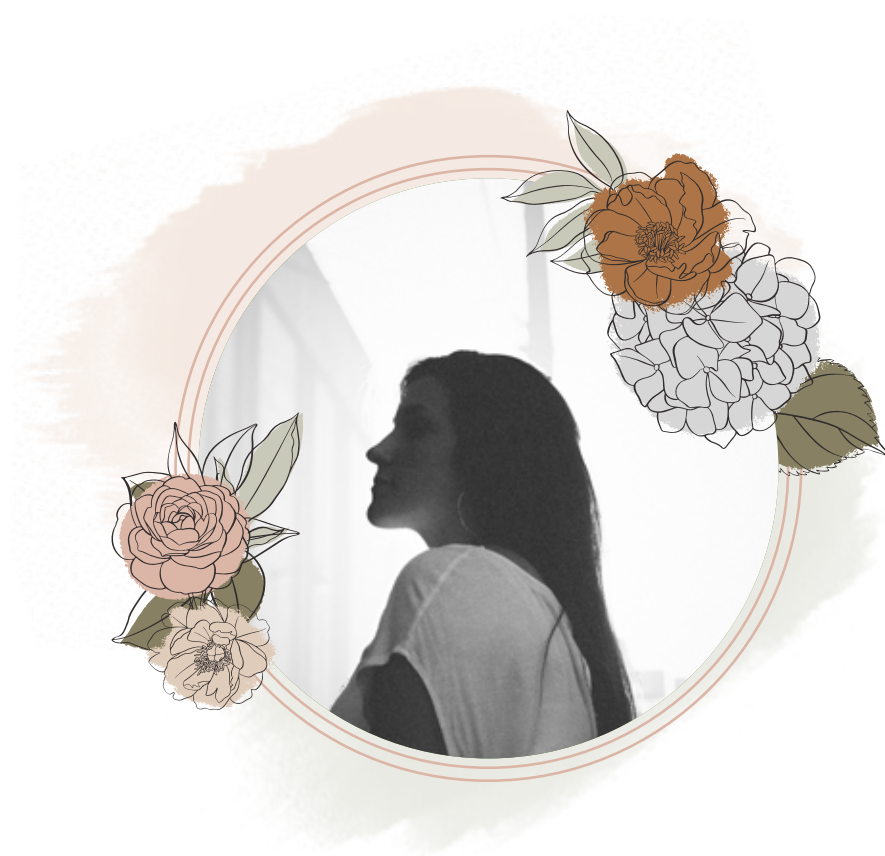


•RESPONDING. WELL



A Guide for Women's Ministry Leaders
TO HELP SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE



Dear Women's Ministry Leader,

In February 2019, when news broke of sexual abuse scandals in our Southern Baptist churches, our first thoughts were of heartbreak. Heartbreak for women, and men, who had endured such acts at the hands of those who were trusted individuals in local bodies of believers. We recognize and acknowledge these acts are sin. Our second thoughts in the wake of the information were for local church and association women's ministry leaders. Every day we work with women's ministry leaders who serve faithfully and diligently in Southern Baptist churches and associations across the United States. Most of these leaders serve in volunteer capacities as they seek to serve the Lord by discipling and equipping the women in their churches to be disciples who make disciples.

Our thoughts turned to women's ministry leaders because we knew immediately women would turn

to you for help, guidance and biblical counsel. Our heart and desire are for women's ministry leaders to respond well to the women who turn to them, who are hurting and seeking help from one they feel they can trust. This resource is designed for women's ministry leaders. It is not intended for use by one who has suffered sexual abuse as the contents cover policies and procedures, reporting, definitions of terms, how to listen well, how to train volunteers and the women's ministry contact at your state's Baptist convention.

You are in our prayers as you minister to, care for and support women who turn to you for help. Our prayer is that of Isaiah as he prophesied about the Lord Jesus. We pray our Lord Jesus, who brings good news, binds up the brokenhearted, proclaims liberty to the captives and frees prisoners, brings beauty from ashes:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." – Isaiah 61:1-3 NASB

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INTRODUCTION

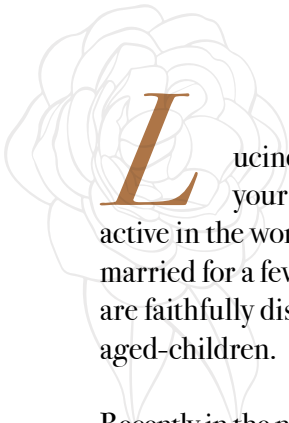
As a women's ministry leader, ladies in your church and association turn to you as a guide, mentor, counselor and confidant. You are well-acquainted with personal information about women, their marriages and their families. Women trust you for biblical wisdom, godly counsel, and to pray both with and for them. However, what is a women's ministry leader to do when the information a lady in her church shares has both spiritual and judicial needs? What if the lady talking with you shares she was sexually abused when she was a minor, or sexually assaulted as an adult?

This resource was designed so that you would know what steps to take – not only to provide counsel to a woman to whom you are ministering, but also what steps to take if the information that is shared with you is required to be reported by law.



Additionally, the authors of this manual have sought to provide you with tools to determine the classification of the information that is shared with you; how to report the information; how to listen and provide counsel; how to train the leaders within your women's ministry; and how to refer to a counselor.

The following information is provided as general suggestions for guidance and information. We highly encourage you to familiarize yourself with the laws in your state and the information in your church policy manual.



Lucinda is a woman who has attended your church for several years and is active in the women's ministry. She has been married for a few years, and she and her husband are faithfully discipling their two elementary aged-children.

Recently in the news, reports have emerged of childhood sexual abuse. One day Lucinda contacts you and asks if you can come over to her home to talk. This is not an unusual occurrence; you have been to Lucinda's home for coffee, chats and prayer before. As the volunteer women's ministry leader at your church, you drive to Lucinda's house ready to pray and enjoy a cup of coffee over good conversation.

As you and Lucinda begin to talk, she begins to share about the recent news reports of childhood sexual abuse. You are listening but aren't sure where the conversation is headed, until she says, "I have never told anyone this before, but when I was in middle school, I was sexually abused at my church." You sit there frozen, unsure what to say and unsure of what to do next. Lucinda continues to tell her story and explains how the recent reports have triggered memories and she felt she needed to share this with someone else. Where do you go and what do you say?

Many women's ministry leaders currently find themselves in this very situation. They want to help the women who are hurting and coming

to them for guidance and direction, but they are uncertain where to begin, what to do or how to help.

Your church should offer sexual abuse prevention/awareness training for all leadership,¹ whether paid staff or volunteers.

This should include all leadership beyond children's and youth ministry workers. Ideally, training should be conducted with a live audience and in person. According to MinistrySafe, sexual abuse awareness training should be part of a larger sexual abuse safety system. The system "should be designed to reduce the risk of sexual abuse" and include the following: sexual abuse awareness training; skillful screening; appropriate criminal background checks; tailored policies and procedures; and monitoring and oversight.² This manual will discuss policies and procedures, but as Ministry Safe founders Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris note, "[t]hrough awareness training, staff members and volunteers can be trained to better understand the purpose of policies, therefore serving more effectively within policy boundaries, and recognizing problematic behaviors before an abuser has made sexual contact with a child."³



1 If your church does not offer this type of sexual abuse/awareness training, talk with your church leadership about offering this type of training. Contact your state convention for resources, or even training, for which they can offer to help your church's leadership. Contact information for the women's ministry representative at your state's Baptist convention is listed at the back of this resource.

2 Gregory S. Love, Esq. and Kimberlee D. Norris, Esq., "Sexual Abuse 'Fire Drill': Put Preparation to the Test," MinistrySafe.com, 2016, 5-9.

3 Ibid., 5. Though this manual is designed for women's ministry leaders to help other women who have endured sexual abuse, possibly as children, it is imperative to keep in mind adult-aged women can also endure sexual abuse. It is for this reason this information is included.

Sexual abuse awareness training should be conducted to educate all church leadership. Love and Norris suggest this training should include the following:

- *a portrayal of facts and common misconceptions concerning abuse and abusers*
- *common abuser characteristics*
- *the “grooming process” (selecting and preparing a victim for abuse)*
- *common grooming behaviors*
- *peer-to-peer abuse*
- *short and long-term impact of abuse*
- *reporting abuse to supervisors and authorities⁴*

All leaders should be well-versed in the grooming process. Love and Norris identify four key components of this process. First, the predator seeks to gain access. Whether the individual is seeking a career in ministry or is a volunteer, the predator will gain the trust of the gatekeepers. This could include church staff leadership or other ministry workers. The predator knows what the child wants and needs, and is a skilled craftsman at age-appropriate communication. Second, the predator selects a child. Often the child is one who is not connected, is on the fringe of the group or society, or is in need. The child is one who is vulnerable and is looking for someone to trust and follow. This includes, but is not limited to, children from broken families or single-parent homes, or children who are already involved in alcohol or drugs or pornography.

4 Ibid.

5 Gregory S. Norris and Kimberlee D. Love. Ministry Safe Webcast. Webcast, 2019. Accessed 21 March 2019. <http://www.guidestone.org/MinistrySafeWebcast>.

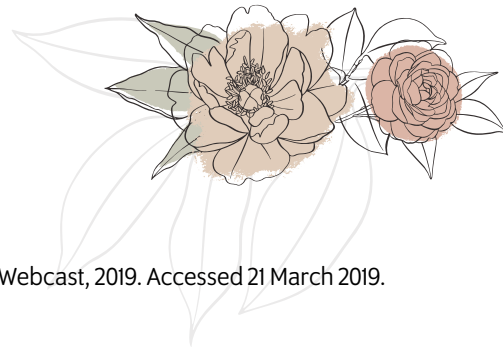
6 Ibid. Norris and Love note, “As the church sets barriers, they should be dependent on the age of the child and how abusers attack at that age.

7 Ibid. Norris and Love provide statements the predator might tell the child, including but not limited to, “no one will believe you,” “this would hurt your mother,” or “this would wreck our track team.

Love and Norris note the predator will “hook” the child with rule-breaking behavior and will “double-hook” with rule-breaking behavior that also impairs.⁵ Third, the predator will introduce nudity and sexual touch to the child. The predator will test barriers and determine barriers that are eroded. Additionally, the predator will begin engaging in sexual discussions and joking with the child, as well as playful touch and “accidental” nudity. In so doing, the predator begins fostering a culture where nudity is accepted and viewed as “cool.” The predator will begin showing images depicting nudity and sex to the child. This could take place via magazines, movies, text messages or social media.⁶ Fourth,

the predator will seek to keep the victim silent. This includes secrecy; shame and embarrassment; and threats, both dire and subtle.⁷

One of the first steps you should take is to examine the church’s policy manual. Whether the individual is an adult reporting to you about an incident that took place when they were a minor; an adult who experienced sexual assault or abuse as an adult; or an adult, teenager or child reporting the abuse or assault of a minor, your church needs to have a written policy for what actions need to be taken in such a situation.



Policies are crucial to the work and administrative ministry of the church. In *Management Essentials for Christian Ministry*, Mark Simpson provides an explanation of policies, procedures, and protocol, all of which are necessary for the church to do its work. A policy “is an explicit statement of a belief and/or attitude intended to shape and control ministry action.”⁸ Simpson defines a procedure as “an explicit statement of the appropriate and/or requisite progression of actions that must be taken in order to implement a stated policy.”⁹ Finally, protocol is defined as “an explicit statement of policy combined with an explicit statement of procedure.”¹⁰ All three of these – policies, procedures and protocols – work together and require “explicit documentation.”¹¹ A policy is not any good if it is not written down for all to see and know. This also aids in ensuring that policies and procedures are not altered situationally and are not arbitrarily applied.



A key element in understanding the policies of the church includes knowledge of the reporting laws for your state. You need to understand if the law in your state mandates reporting of adults who were abused as children. The law varies from state-to-state and it is prudent that you know the law for your state.

8 Mark Simpson, “Policies and Procedures as Planning Tools,” in *Management Essentials for Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 10.

9 Ibid., 106.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.



POLICIES SHOULD INCLUDE, *but might not be limited to, the following:*

a. If the allegation regards a minor (less than 18 years of age), contact the authorities, which may be the police and/or child protective services.¹² In many states, every adult is a mandatory reporter. You should report immediately if any allegation is made.¹³ Reports should be made if an adult “witnesses or learns about sexual abuse of youth by any of the following individuals: volunteer/employee; another youth within the organization; someone outside of the organization (e.g., caregiver).”¹⁴ If the allegation that is shared with you is regarding an adult who endured sexual abuse as a child, or an adult who endured sexual assault, you need to know the laws of your state regarding this information. Some states mandate, by law, reporting of childhood abuse, even if it is an adult who is sharing the account with another adult. It is crucial you know how the law in your state reads.¹⁵

¹² It is often mistakenly thought telling another adult, or someone in leadership, within the organization is “reporting.” However, this is not the case. “Reporting” entails filing a formal report with law enforcement and/or child protective services (CPS). If volunteers or lower level church staff members are the individuals who have heard the accusations, they are encouraged to engage in “dual reporting.” For dual reporting, the volunteer or lower level staff member would go to the supervisor or higher-level church staff member tasked with reporting to law enforcement or CPS. The two would then go together to report to authorities. Reporting should be done immediately and, in many states, by law must occur within 24-48 hours of the adult hearing of the allegations. Additionally, in some states even “suspect of abuse” must be reported by law. This varies state-by-state and it is the responsibility of church leadership to know the laws of their respective state. Secondary to the law of the land, the insurance policy of the church might mandate a timeframe for reporting. Often, not always, this works in tandem with the law in your state. It is the church's responsibility to know how both the law and the insurance policy read.

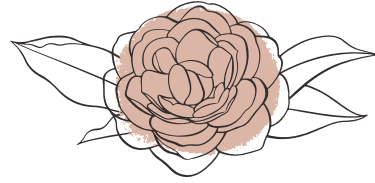
¹³ In a March 21, 2019, webinar sponsored by GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and Prestonwood Baptist Church of Plano, Texas, lawyers Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris of MinistrySafe stressed that false allegations are very “rare.” Norris says that false allegations are “2 to 5 percent of the whole.” Love and Norris explained most states operate on civil/criminal immunities for “good faith” reporting. This means there are protections from libel, slander or state prosecution if a person makes a report alleging abuse they did not know was false. This is considered “good faith.” The well-being of the child is the priority. In many states failure to report can result in civil and criminal liabilities.

¹⁴ Janet Saul and Natalie Audage, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures* (Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2007), np.

¹⁵ Gregory S. Love, Esq. and Kimberlee D. Norris, Esq., “Expanding Abuse Reporting Requirements: Texas, South Carolina, Colorado and National Trends,” MinistrySafe.com, 2016. This document notes that as of 2015, the law for mandatory reporters in Texas, South Carolina, and Colorado includes adults (older than the age of 18 years) who have another adult share their own childhood sexual abuse with them. The adult who is listening to the allegation is mandated by law in these states to file a report with authorities. This is because the well-being of minors who could possibly be in proximity and relationship with the accused is the priority.

b. If this accusation involves a minor, get the minor to a safe and secure location.

c. Contact the authorities in your church.¹⁶ This might include the pastor, the minister of education, the children's minister and/or the deacon chairman. In the case of a women's ministry leader receiving this information from another woman in your church, we recommend contacting the women's ministry response team.¹⁷



d. If the accused is in a position of authority or leadership within the current church, that individual needs to be suspended from that role while a church investigation is conducted.¹⁸ All investigations should be handled by the appropriate local authorities, especially if leadership is involved.

¹⁶ Contacting authorities in your church might be done in step one if your church uses dual-reporting. One of the common mistakes in reporting to authorities is falsely assuming an internal investigation must be conducted prior to reporting to authorities when a minor is involved or when the law mandates reporting of adults who endured childhood abuse. An internal church investigation should not precede, or be a condition, to a report being made to law enforcement or child protective services.

¹⁷ A women's ministry response team would be utilized and ideal for a situation such as this. A women's ministry response team would include the women's ministry leader, the church staff person to whom the women's ministry leader reports, the pastor (if he is not to whom the women's ministry leader reports), the deacon chairman, an individual who relates to the insurance company, an individual who can relate to the media, and someone to counsel the woman involved. Among this response team it should be pre-determined who will file the report with law enforcement authorities. The individuals who make up this response team should be clearly identified – there need not be any ambiguity or confusion regarding who is part of the women's ministry response team or the tasks of each person on the response team. The church should also have a pre-determined plan in place in the event the accusation is against the pastor.

¹⁸ This step is important so the accused is not in a position to harm others and there are not any future questions if more were harmed during the investigation. The safety of children and others is the priority. An example of this done incorrectly is with the USA Gymnastics scandal involving then-team doctor Larry Nassar. According to investigations, officials with USA Gymnastics knew of the allegations and accusations facing Nassar. For 14 months following their knowledge of the accusations, Nassar was allowed to continue practicing medicine and treating gymnasts in Michigan. More young girls were victimized during this period. Protection of minors and others is imperative. Jerry Moran and Richard Blumenthal, "Senate Olympics Investigation: The Courage of Survivors – A Call to Action," senate.gov, 2019, II.

e. Help the victim.¹⁹ The victim is most likely sharing something she has not shared with anyone else and that has been kept with her for many years.²⁰ Listen to her.²¹



DEFINITIONS

Definitions of abuse, assault and rape can vary from state to state depending on the law of the state.²² However, there are broad, overarching definitions provided below.

Sexual assault – According to the United States Department of Justice, sexual assault is “any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by Federal, tribal, or State law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent.”²³ The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) further elaborates this definition to include forms of “attempted rape; fondling or unwanted sexual touching; forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator’s body; [and] penetration of the victim’s body, also known as rape.”²⁴

19 This step is not necessarily placed in sequential order. The placement of this step reinforces the need for a women’s ministry response team. While those on the response team attend to the legal and reporting matters as their tasks, others on the response team can begin to provide support and counsel to the victim. *Victims need to be believed and not doubted, regardless of the name or stature of the accused. The woman listening to the victim share her story needs to reassure the victim and can do so with phrases including, “I believe you,” “It is not your fault,” “You are not alone,” and “I am so sorry.”* Included in this resource are more suggestions and tips to effectively listen to and help victims of sexual assault.

20 Statute of limitations exist in each state and vary from state-to-state. Regardless of whether an incident took place out-of-state, or the length of time that has passed since the incident, it is always best to report. In some cases the circumstances and law mandate reporting. It is not your responsibility to determine the statute of limitations.

21 The power of listening in cannot be underestimated. Women will need someone to hear what has been “bottled up” for years, if not decades. However, *there might be a point where the need exceeds your capacity to help and the woman you are trying to help might need professional counseling.* It is more than acceptable to seek Christian counseling for the lady you are trying to help. Check with your state convention because there may be resources available to Southern Baptist churches of which you are unaware.

22 The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) offers an online database that allows individuals to find definitions by state for rape and sexual assault. The database should not be viewed as legal counsel, but is provided as a resource to help with direction and clarity: <https://apps.rainn.org/policy/compare/crimes.cfm>.

23 United States Department of Justice: Office on Violence Against Women. “Sexual Assault.” United States Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/sexual-assault>. Accessed 17 June 2019.

24 Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN). “Sexual Assault.” RAINN, <https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-assault>. Accessed 17 June 2019.

Child abuse – Serious physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation of a child under the age of 18 by an adult or child at least 3-5 years or more older²⁵

Serious physical abuse – Non-accidental physical injury where marks and bruises are evident²⁶

Sexual abuse – Fondling, stimulation or touching inside, or outside sexual parts or kissing for sexual pleasure, indecent exposure and masturbation in front of the victim, and penetration of any kind²⁷

LISTENING WELL

“Doctors use [a stethoscope] daily because they’ve learned that listening well is a powerful tool for healing. Relationally, listening is equally as powerful for connecting people. People in our culture often interpret listening as love.”²⁸ Revelation can occur when one actively listens well. That is especially true when someone shares sensitive information such as sexual abuse.

Women who have experienced sexual abuse often say they don’t feel heard or valued. They suffer in silence, never allowing themselves to share their pain or struggle out of fear of rejection and shame. As the listener, it is crucial to create a safe environment for the person to be transparent and honest.

Here are some suggestions for being a good listener:

Be fully present and focused. While in the conversation, put your phone away, ignore external disturbances, make eye contact and lean in. Your body language can speak volumes and is vital to building trust and showing empathy. Do not think ahead to what you want to say, but listen intently to what they are sharing. In *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations*, authors Mary Schaller and John Crilly introduce the idea of relational listening and reflective listening.²⁹ Relational listening allows the listener to ask questions, which fosters an exchange of feelings between people building connection through commitment and trust.³⁰

Reflective listening is where the listener takes a learner posture by paraphrasing their general understanding of what the person has shared for verification which, in turn, shows genuine interest.³¹ These skills allow the listener to hear the person’s words and heart.

25 H. Robert Showers, Esq. “Child Protection Awareness.” 2019 Sexual Misconduct Summit, South Carolina Baptist Convention Presentation. 12 March 2019.

26 Ibid.

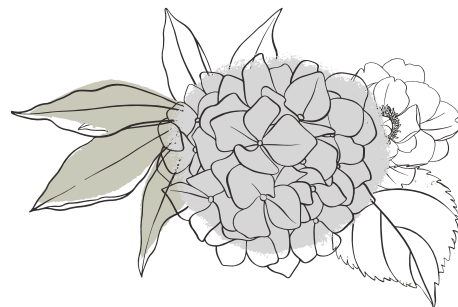
27 Ibid.

28 Mary Schaller and John Crilly, *Practicing the 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations: Complete Guide*, Q Place, 2017, 53.

29 Mary Schaller and John Crilly, *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations*, (Tyndale Momentum, 2016), 92-93.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.



Be prayerful throughout the conversation.

First Thessalonians 5:17 says, “pray continually.” Prayer will prepare our hearts and bring comfort to the listener as they potentially hear something difficult. Keeping an attitude of prayer will “put a guard over my mouth so that I would only say what He would have me say” (see Psalm 141:3).³² Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your responses with Scripture, wisdom and grace. We desire the listener’s response to come from the Lord so that it is appropriate and helpful, never rote or uncaring. Also, pray for the one sharing to have boldness in sharing the situation, to have freedom from the hold abuse often has on victims, and to get help and utilize available resources.

Talk less and listen more. James 1:19 says, “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”³³ When we listen more, our questions will come from a place of greater understanding and wisdom, which will allow the person to feel safe.

Come with a non-judgmental attitude. Victims of abuse often keep it a secret for a long time because they fear no one will believe them. If the person senses you don’t believe them, trust will be broken. To earn another’s confidence is a treasure. It may take years to earn, but only an instant to lose.

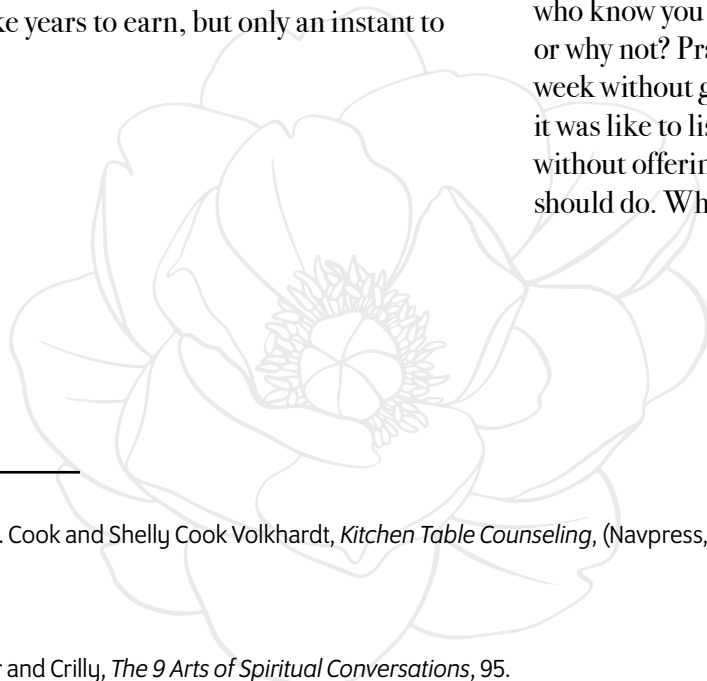
Don’t try to fix them. *While actively listening, it will be a temptation to try and “fix” the situation. Although this is an innate response for us as Christians and leaders, that present moment might not be the right time. There will be a time where sharing other’s stories, resources and advice will be pertinent, but at the onset of the survivor’s sharing may not be that time. Intently listen to her share with no agenda except to support, encourage and help.*

Practice listening with a partner. Would those who know you well call you a good listener? Why or why not? Practice makes perfect! “Try going a week without giving advice. Then think about what it was like to listen and participate in a conversation without offering any suggestions about what others should do. What was their response?”³⁴

32 Muriel L. Cook and Shelly Cook Volkhardt, *Kitchen Table Counseling*, (Navpress, 2006), 29.

33 Ibid.

34 Schaller and Crilly, *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations*, 95.



HOW TO ASK GOOD DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

One in five women will be raped at some point in their lives. In eight out of 10 cases of rape, the victim will know the person who sexually assaulted them.³⁵ “It’s not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you they have been sexually assaulted, especially if they are a friend or family member. For a survivor, disclosing to someone they care about can be very difficult, so we encourage you to be as supportive and non-judgmental as possible.”³⁶ Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, the person might be hesitant to open up, especially if the perpetrator groomed her. That is why listening and asking the right questions can make all the difference in showing you care.

In Schaller and Crilly’s book, *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations*, they outline characteristics of good questions. Good questions originate from curiosity, are open-ended, concise, and connected with what’s being discussed. Asking good questions is key to helping that person feel safe and understood.³⁷ It is essential to be patient after asking a question. The silence may be slightly uncomfortable but will allow her to think through her answer before responding.

Some questions that will help get the conversation started could begin with statements such as: “I couldn’t help noticing,” “I’m wondering” or “I’m curious.” These questions will show that you care and are genuinely interested in her story. Everyone has a story. Hearing her story will begin the process of unlocking years of pain and struggle and open the door to hope and freedom.

As you move through conversation use attentive phrases to help her feel safe to continue sharing. Some phrases that help in guiding conversation may be “Tell me more about that” or “That sounds difficult” or “How did that make you feel?” If someone shares that they have been abused, then it’s important to use phrases like “I believe you. It took a lot of courage to tell me about this” or “It’s not your fault. You didn’t do anything to deserve this” or “You are not alone. I care about you and am here to listen or help in any way I can.”³⁸

If someone shares that she was sexually abused or is being abused, be intentional to ask if she has told anyone. If not, encourage her to share with someone she trusts and to tell the authorities. Every state has mandated reporting laws. Be sure to read your state’s reporting process. You are a mandated reporter. Be sure to follow your state’s laws and go through the proper channels.

35 National Sexual Violence Resource Center. “Sexual Assault in the United States.” National Sexual Violence Resource Center, www.nsvrc.org. Accessed 11 June 2019.

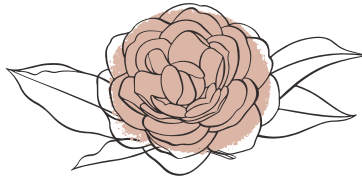
36 Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. “Tips for Talking with Survivors of Sexual Assault.” Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, www.rainn.org. Accessed 29 April 2019.

37 Schaller and Crilly, *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations*, 111.

38 Ibid.



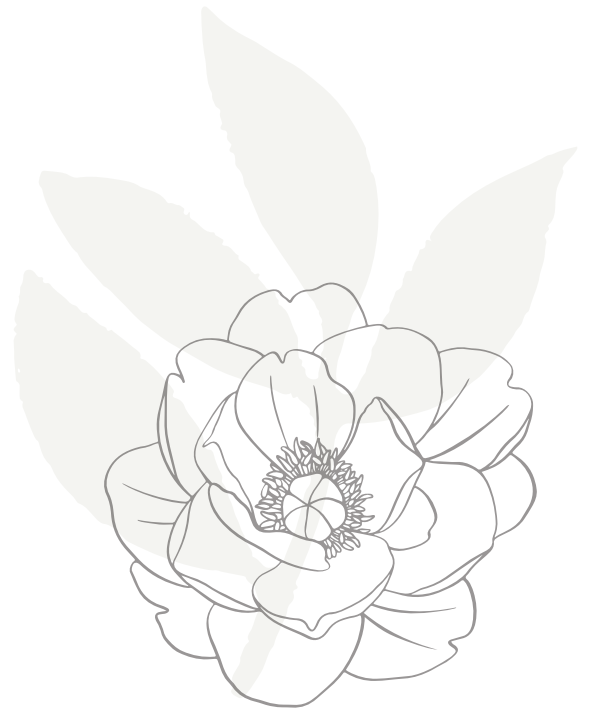
WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP



Listening to the pain and struggle this woman experienced is difficult to hear, but even more so, it was difficult for her to experience. Therefore, she will need to talk to a trained professional. When should you refer her to a professional doctor or counselor? In *Kitchen Table Counseling*, Cook and Volkhardt advise sending a woman to a professional if:

- *she threatens suicide*
- *has been raped*
- *has been sexually abused*
- *has signs of physical abuse*
- *has an eating disorder*
- *exhibits self-destructive behaviors*
- *has panic attacks*
- *is addicted to drugs or alcohol*
- *is severely depressed.*³⁹

Keep a list of reputable Christian counselors to whom you can refer women.⁴⁰ Cook and Volkhardt add, “When you send a woman to see a professional counselor, don’t stop meeting with her.”⁴¹ One of the most significant ways to help this woman is by praying with her and checking up on her to make sure she’s going to counseling and getting the help she needs.⁴²



³⁹ Cook and Volkhardt, *Kitchen Table Counseling*, 21.

⁴⁰ Focus on the Family has a National Referral Network for Christians and church leaders to call and find reputable counselors in their area at 719-531-3400 ext. 7700.

⁴¹ Cook and Volkhardt, *Kitchen Table Counseling*, 21.

⁴² Ibid.

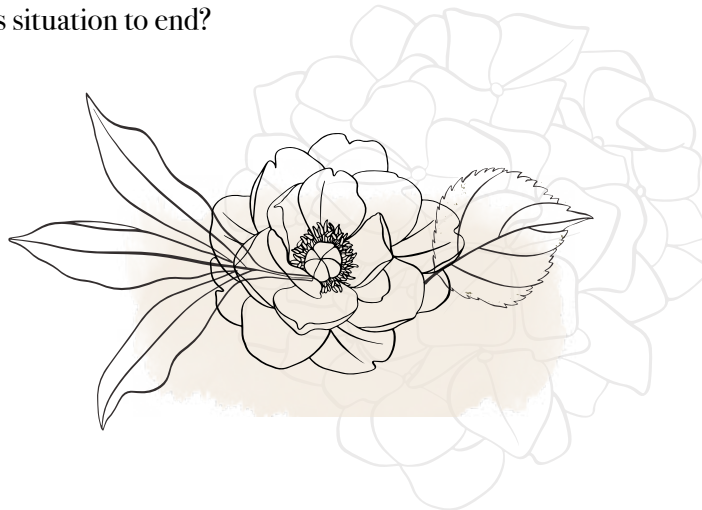
TRAINING FOR WOMEN'S MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

Ministry is never a solo endeavor. Hopefully, you have a team of women who serve alongside you as you all collectively serve your church or association. While each of you serves in a different capacity or ministry role on your team, you are all serving and ministering to women.

One of the foundational ministry opportunities within a women's ministry is Bible study or small group. Regardless of what your church calls it, no doubt you have some time set aside for women to engage in the Word of God, share prayer requests and learn from one another. When a group is a true "group," there is a sense of trust, respect and vulnerability that permeates relationships and time spent together. It is the ideal setting and similar to how the early church was "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer" (Acts 2:42). Biblical community is a wonderful thing.

However, what if you are leading a Bible study among a group of eight women? You are all discussing a passage of Scripture and a woman begins to speak up. The more she shares in the Bible study setting, you realize she is speaking of past abuse. It is evident others in the group are uncomfortable and are exchanging glances. Some ladies can't help but look at their feet, while others have that awkward smile that is a cross between a cringe and a look that expresses, "Is someone going to say something?" While the lady is speaking and seems to be pouring out her heart, one of the other ladies cuts her off and says, "Let's pray," and begins to pray. After the prayer the Bible study comes abruptly to an end and an eerie silence fills the room as ladies exit. You try to reach out to the lady who shared, but she is embarrassed, hurt and she never returns.

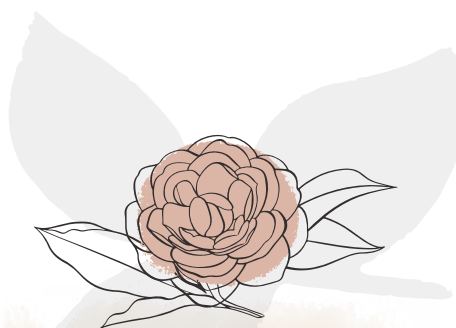
Is there a better way for this situation to end?



One of the foundations for Bible study among women is transparency and authenticity. It is a hallmark of biblical community and one of the characteristics a younger generation seeks. However, one of the phrases that is often said is “What is shared in here needs to remain in here.” Mostly this is given as a warning to deter group members from engaging in gossip and spreading information about one another. But, if something is shared that indicates a woman has endured sexual abuse, that is not information that can “stay with the group” or in secret. While gossip is not the answer, the Bible study leader will need to know when to report an allegation. The group needs to know and understand this up front.

Offering a disclaimer such as, “There are no secrets in this group. If you share information regarding a past or present sexual abuse incident, it will be reported” informs the group members about the parameters of the group and allows them to decide what they will and will not share.⁴³

It is imperative to train our volunteer women’s ministry leaders so they know how to navigate situations in a manner that helps the individual who is sharing and keeps them from feeling embarrassed and provides the right way for all involved.



WHO SHOULD BE TRAINED?

Statistics show that 1 in 4 women have endured some form of sexual assault in their lifetime.⁴⁴ This is 25 percent of the female population and includes women who attend our churches, are active in Bible study, and are in leadership roles. The topic of assault and abuse can surface at any time. Therefore, it is necessary for all our women’s ministry leadership to experience training that helps them know how to respond appropriately if a woman indicates directly or indirectly that she has been a victim of assault or abuse. Regardless of the role a lady plays in women’s ministry, all volunteers who work with women should be trained in how to respond and help other ladies who have been victims of sexual assault and/or abuse.

⁴³ There is a difference between privacy and secrecy. Drs. Tim and Tasha Leveret define the differences between the two as secrecy is “hiding certain behaviors to avoid accountability”; “an unbiblical, self-isolating strategy that ensures protection from accountable Christian community”; and “[an attempt] to keep certain things hidden in darkness” while privacy is “using appropriate discretion while still living in accountability”; “a biblical value that respects others while staying connected to community”; and “acknowledge[ing] that all things need to be brought into the light.” Tim Levert and Tasha Levert. “The SBC Sex Abuse Crisis: The Difference Between Privacy & Secrecy.” YouthMinistry.com, 14 Feb. 2019, youthministry.com/the-sbc-sex-abuse-crisis-the-difference-between-privacy-secrecy/. Accessed 2 April 2019.

⁴⁴ Greg Love, MinistrySafe.com webinar, March 21, 2019.

WHAT SHOULD THE TRAINING INCLUDE?

Hopefully, you offer training for the volunteers in your women's ministry.⁴⁵ In addition to the training you already offer the women who serve in women's ministry, volunteers should take part in the sexual abuse prevention training that is outlined at the beginning of this manual. However, their training should also include additional elements. For example, a volunteer will need to be a good listener and able to ask good questions. This is training that should be included in part of overall ministry training.

The volunteers in your women's ministry should also know the laws for your state and the process and procedures for reporting. Volunteers should be equipped with an understanding of how to make a report and who within the context of the church needs to know that information.

Additionally, your volunteers need to understand they are not trained counselors and, legally, cannot offer "counseling." ⁴⁶ If a women's ministry volunteer encounters a woman who has endured or experienced sexual abuse, she needs to know how to refer the woman to a trauma therapist and trauma therapists to whom the church refers.

45 The authors of this manual are strong advocates of training for all volunteers that serve in ministry, regardless of ministry role. Training helps influencers, whom we believe are the leaders, understand the vision, mission, direction and place where they fit into the ministry. Some of the training might be specialized to teach how to teach the Bible; how to lead teams; how to engage in gospel conversations; or how to disciple or mentor other women. In their book, *Building Leaders*, Malphurs and Mancini note there are four types of training: learner-driven; content-driven; mentor-driven; and experience-driven (152-6). If your women's ministry volunteers need training, contact the women's ministry consultant at your state Baptist convention. Many of them offer training for those who serve in women's ministry and would be glad to consult with your church to aid and help.

46 Counseling is a legal term and is a service provided by those with a license. A volunteer women's ministry leader without this type of formal training and licensure should not say she is offering "counseling." A women's ministry leader or volunteer will need to refer a woman who has experienced sexual abuse to a therapist for legal ramifications, but also due to the skill set a therapist has that will aid a victim.

HOW TO FIND A COUNSELOR

Before providing a referral to a counselor, a church needs to know about the counselor to whom they are possibly referring ladies.⁴⁷ Here are some questions to ask:

- a. Recognize women help women. First learn if there are counselors or therapists the women in your church already see. This is a starting point.
- b. Begin learning about the individual counselor. Visit their website. What are their beliefs and theology? Where did they go to school? How do they counsel? Are they spiritual or are they biblical? Who endorses them on their website?
- c. Call and interview them on the phone. Ask more questions and even provide scenarios for how they would counsel in various situations.⁴⁸
- d. Ask her to come and speak to some of your women's ministry groups. This could include small group Bible studies, a mother's group, a prayer group and your leadership team. This allows ladies to hear about this counselor's ministry and skill and ask questions.

Regardless of how a woman serves within the women's ministry in a local church or association, she should be trained in next steps in the event she hears of or suspects sexual abuse. Providing this to all of those who volunteer while working with women best serves women who have endured sexual abuse.

⁴⁷ A church can provide a list of licensed professional counselors (LPCs) to whom they have deemed credible and reputable.

⁴⁸ One licensed professional counselor (LPC) interviewed for this manual explained some churches ask her to complete an application, provide a statement of her theology, provide a copy of her counseling license and insurance, and have an interview with the pastor before she makes the church's list of counselors to whom the church will refer. This LPC explained fellow counselors are accustomed to this process and welcome it. They do not consider it an inconvenience or intrusion.



WOMEN'S MINISTRY, MISSIONS AND MINISTRY WIVES SOUTHERN BAPTIST STATE LEADERS

The women's ministry and mission leaders at your state convention are resources for you to contact if you need assistance or more information.

Below are the contacts at each state convention. For state conventions without a women's ministry contact, a general email or website is listed.

Alabama Baptist State Convention

Pat Ingram

Women's Ministry & Ministers' Wives
pingram@alsbom.org

Melanie Morgan

CNBC Ministry Wives
mmorgan@cnbc.ca

Alaska Baptist Convention

Jimmy and Kathryn Stewart

jimmy@alaskabaptistconvention.com

Colorado Baptist General Convention

Missy Kintze

Women's Ministry & Missions
mkintzel@applewoodbaptist.com

Arizona Southern Baptist Convention

Simone Lake

Women's Discipleship, Ministry and Ministers' Wives
simonelake3@gmail.com

Dakota Baptist Convention

Women's Ministry

garvon@dakotabaptist.com

Mirsa Amaro

Hispanic State Women's & WMU Hispanic
Consultant
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District of Columbia Baptist Convention

Starlette Thomas

startlette.thomas@dcbaptist.org

Arkansas Baptist Convention

Andrea Lennon

Women's Ministry & Ministers' Wives
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Florida Baptist Convention

Cindy Bradley

Women's Ministry, Women's Missions
& Ministers' Wives
cbradley@flbaptist.org

California Southern Baptist Convention

Eva De La Rosa

Women's Ministry & Ministers' Wives
edelarosa@csbc.com

Georgia Baptist Mission Board

Beverly Skinner

Women's Ministry
bskinner@gabaptist.org

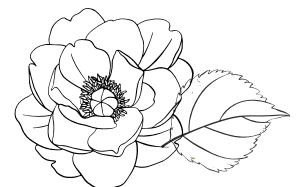
Canadian National Baptist Convention

Kathy Morales

CNBC Women
kmorales@cnbc.ca

Mary Cox

Ministers' Wives
mcox@gabaptist.org



Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention*Teresa McCain**teresa@hpbaptist.net***Illinois Baptist State Association***Carmen Halsey*

Women's Ministry & Missions, Ministers' Wives

*carmenhalsey@ibsa.org**Ana Melendez*

Hispanic State Women's Consultant

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Executive Director-Treasurer

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Ministers' Wives

*jamie@bscm.org***Minnesota/Wisconsin Baptist Convention**

Women's Ministry

*www.mwbc.org***Mississippi Baptist Convention Board***Tammy Anderson*

Women's Ministry and WMU

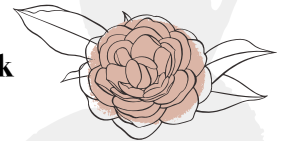
*tanderson@mbcb.org***Missouri Baptist Convention***Wanda Shellenbarger**wanda4womensministry@gmail.com***Baptist Convention of New Mexico***Krista Peterson**kpeterson@bcnm.com***Baptist Convention of New York***Cathy Meyer**cmeyer@bcnysbc.org***Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina***Amanda Martinsen*

Women & Ministers' Wives

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Hispanic Convention of Texas

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Women's Ministry/WMU

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Pennsylvania/South Jersey**

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Women's Ministry

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Baptist General Association of Virginia

www.bgav.org



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