

Summer 2018

Mutuality

Men and women serving and leading as equals

THE AGE OF THE **Silence Breakers**

Gender, the Church, and #MeToo

CONTENTS

4

A Crisis of the Highest Order: #MeToo and the Church

While the hashtag may be new, the abuse epidemic is not.
Eugene Hung

8

Why #MeToo Is Good for Men Too

Four ways that breaking the silence about abuse helps men.
Ashley Easter

12

Vindicating the Vixens: How We View Bible Women Shapes Our Response to #MeToo

Opening our eyes to the truth about women in the Bible and today.
Sandra L. Glahn

16

Long Overdue: 4 Ways Men Can Combat Abuse in the Church

Calling Christian men to a higher standard in order to end abuse.
Gricel Medina

20

When Churches Aren't Sanctuaries: Why Churches Shouldn't Respond to Abuse Alone

Trained victim advocates, not pastors, can best serve victims.
Mark Kubo

23

The Paradox of Power: 7 Leadership Strategies in the Age of #ChurchToo

A leadership consultant's best practices for churches to prevent abuse.
Jeanne Porter King

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DEPARTMENTS

3 From the Editor

If Anyone Can Abuse, Why Are We Still Talking Gender Roles?

27 Reflect with Us

#ChurchToo

28 Ministry News

29 Giving Opportunities

30 President's Message

Ending Abuse: Four Steps for Churches

31 Praise and Prayer

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If Anyone Can Abuse, Why Are We Still Talking Gender Roles?

Over the last year, many of us have watched in dismay as the #MeToo and #ChurchToo campaigns have exposed the sexual harassment and assault rampant in our society. Evangelicals have been quick to denounce men like Harvey Weinstein and Larry Nassar, but the stream of revelations against pastors has been harder to swallow.

As Christian leaders wrestle with how we got here and what to do now, views on gender have taken center stage. Egalitarians and complementarians alike have been quick to argue that their own view protects women while the opposing view endangers women.

Others have said that gender theology isn't an issue at all. In a January 2018 interview with NPR, Kelly Rosati, vice president for child advocacy at Focus on the Family, argued that "it's important to separate the evangelical belief about distinctive gender roles in the church from the exploitation of power differentials between a pastor and his flock" and that "what you saw in that [Andy Savage] incident was a conflating of those two issues."¹

It's true that men harass and abuse women regardless of gender theology. The abuse epidemic transcends the gender debate, but we're fooling ourselves if we think our gender theology is irrelevant.

Abuse stems from a power imbalance

Humans weren't designed to rule over one another (Gen. 1:26–29). We were designed to live in community characterized by shared leadership and mutual submission. Regardless of our views on gender roles, we all behave in ways we shouldn't, sometimes unwittingly. In a power-balanced relationship, either person can—without fear—freely express that a line has been crossed.

In a power-imbalanced relationship, speaking out is a huge risk. If you challenge a boss who is harassing you, you could lose your job while they lose nothing. If you speak out about a popular pastor or politician, the public is more likely to believe them than you. When a wife with an abusive husband knows that her church leaders will side with her husband, she risks putting herself or her children in more danger by revealing the truth. Power imbalances make it easier for the powerful to get away with everything from crude jokes to sexual violence.

Why our views on gender still matter

If it's a power problem, then what does the debate about gender roles have to do with it? Put simply, our views on gender and authority grow out of and reinforce our philosophies on power.

Egalitarians believe that the Bible recognizes that we are created for communities built around mutual submission and shared leadership—we call this "mutuality." We believe that God recognizes that sinful humans (men and women) are prone to abuse power. We see that God did not simply serve from a position of power (though Jesus was a servant leader), but emptied himself of power to become one of us (Phil. 2:5–11). We are to pursue mutuality in our friendships, our marriages, and our churches.

A complementarian view of gender embraces a power imbalance between men and women. In fact, it makes that power imbalance the very definition of manhood or womanhood. A man is created to lead, protect, and provide (positions of power) while a woman is created to obey, submit, and nurture (relatively less power). Men are expected to use their power self-sacrificially, like Jesus. In practice, this often looks like building a power-balanced relationship. Is it a coincidence that imitating Christ makes us functionally egalitarian? I think not.

Do egalitarians abuse or harass? Yes. That doesn't change the fact that mutuality is a more biblical model for relationships. Views that argue for a power imbalance feed, consciously or not, our sinful desire to have power over others. The Bible calls us to a radical unity where human hierarchy no longer defines our relationships (Gal 3:28). Let's make this our goal.

Our views on gender are a symptom of our theology of power. A chorus of courageous women stretching from the Old Testament to today's Twitter feed calls us to do better. Let's honor them. Let's structure our organizations responsibly, let's hold leaders to account, let's believe survivors, let's challenge men do better than avoiding contact with female colleagues. And let's embrace a theology that undermines power inequality between men and women. Only then can we do the hard work of transforming our families, churches, and communities.

In Christ,
Tim Krueger

1. Tom Gjelton, "Amid #MeToo, Evangelicals Grapple With Misconduct In Their Own Churches," NPR, Jan. 24, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/24/580193284/amid-metoo-evangelicals-grapple-with-misconduct-in-churchtoo>.

A Crisis of the Highest Order: #MeToo and the Church

Eugene Hung

I sometimes have trouble explaining to folks my career path. I studied at Dallas Seminary for four years and pastored Baptist and Alliance churches full-time for twelve. Then a few years ago, I worked for a women's rights organization, and now I'm with a California public university serving in the field of sexual and relationship violence prevention.

Even I recognize that it has been a major shifting of gears. In fact, for the longest time, sexual harassment and assault were, in my mind, "women's issues." Don't get me wrong, I felt bad that such things happened, especially for my friends who were women, and even more so when women I knew experienced them. But I was hardly motivated to do more about sexual and relationship violence; I just saw those things as a very unfortunate part of life in a sinful, fallen world.

Then, eleven-and-a-half years ago, my first daughter was born, and that event rocked my world. For the first time in my life, I began to seriously reflect on the particular challenges girls and women face in our world, the one in which my daughter would grow up. And I realized that it wouldn't be enough for me to simply be the best dad I could for her (and, later, for her younger sister as well). It became one of my life's core missions to do my utmost to make the world better for my girls than it has been for the women and girls of my generation.

It shouldn't have taken becoming a dad to daughters for me to care about sexual and relationship violence. After all, women make up more than half of the human race, so it's hardly just a "women's issue;" it's a human issue. Yet fatherhood is what it took for God to jolt me out of my apathy, and I'm thankful that he did.



When you think about it, the vast majority of perpetrators of sexual misconduct against women are men (research indicates that it's at least 92%), so it must really become a "men's issue." We men need to own the problem and lead the effort to solve it.

It must also become the church's issue. Sexual and relationship violence, harming millions of women and girls and men and boys, are among the most prevalent and damaging problems in society, and the church is no exception. A quick review of the massive number of #MeToo and #ChurchToo tweets gives us, in our social media age, quickly accessible evidence of this.

The Crisis that Doesn't Feel Like One

While the hashtags may be new, the reality is not: abuse and assault are pervasive in both society and the church. My friend Boz Tchividjian, who leads the organization Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE), says that while the Catholic sexual abuse scandal revealed widespread problems among Catholic congregations, Protestants may have an even larger problem.¹ The decentralized nature of many Protestant denominations makes sexual misconduct harder to track.

When it comes to sexual misconduct, sadly, the problem is not "out there"—that is, outside the walls of the church—but "in here," something the church must reckon with as much as anyone in our world.

Just a few of the tragic, heartbreaking statistics:

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in five American women will experience rape in her lifetime. To put it another way, there are 23 million American women alive today who have been or will be raped.
- Also according to the CDC, 45% of American women will experience some other form of sexual violence in their lifetimes. That is, 53 million American women either have already, or will in the future, experience a non-rape form of

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sexual violence. (Some women experience both rape and some other form of sexual attack.)

- These statistics merely represent averages. Black women encounter sexual violence at higher rates than whites, while Native American women are victimized at a rate higher still. LGBT-identifying persons experience some forms of sexual assault at higher percentages than the non-LGBT population.
- Of course, sexual violence doesn't just affect girls and women. One of every six boys is sexually abused, and according to the Department of Justice, nine percent of rape victims are men.
- If all this weren't enough, we also need to consider that, while estimates vary, approximately two of every three acts of sexual assault are never reported to authorities.

If other kinds of crimes were happening to girls, boys, women, and men in our churches at these rates, would we be doing anything differently? Of course we would! We would see it as a crisis of the highest order. Unfortunately, it's a crisis that's been happening for so long that it doesn't feel like a crisis anymore.

But the #MeToo moment presents a huge opportunity. We are witnessing, I believe, a seismic shift. For seemingly the first time in American history, there is a public expectation that powerful people who have committed sexual violations against others will be held to account.



So what then? What do we as the church of Jesus need to do in response?

Speaking God's Truth

For one thing, ministry leaders can embrace #MeToo as an opportunity to address the issue. Preachers and teachers can address sexual assault from a biblical perspective, including lessons on the accounts of rape and sexual assault in the Bible (like David and Bathsheba, Amnon and Tamar, and the attack on the Levite's concubine in Judges 19).

Leaders can also show from the Scriptures what a Christlike masculinity looks like—one that expresses the full range of human emotions and doesn't suppress any of them in the interests of appearing strong. Here, I often think of "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). The Bible encourages us to embrace that ourselves. After all, no one in the Lazarus narrative rebukes Jesus to say, "Be a man!" or, more coarsely, "Grow a pair!"

Preparing to Support Survivors and the Entire Church

When preachers and teachers address these matters, they'll need to have counselors and resources available, including phone numbers for relationship violence crisis centers, in case assault survivors respond by coming forward to tell their stories, perhaps for the first time. In fact, these occasions may also be the first time that some of them hear that God cares about what happened to them, that it's not their fault, and that God wants to heal their deep hurts.

Church leaders also need to prepare for such conversations by putting in place a crisis management team, along with a plan for what to do when survivors tell their stories. If a victim is a minor, abuse must be reported to the authorities by mandated reporters, and even if it's not required by law, it is a church management best practice to do so. If a victim is eighteen years of age or

older, leaders need to give him or her the prerogative of choosing whether to file a complaint with law enforcement officials or not. But that's only one piece of what the shepherds of God's flock need to consider.

Often, sadly, the perpetrators of such crimes are longtime, respected members of their churches. Should accusations become public, other church members usually take sides, adding another dimension to the already tragic and horribly painful things the church is going through. A crisis management team consisting of both staff and lay leaders can help to support victims and their families, answer questions and correct inaccurate information circulating among the congregation, and serve as a liaison with law enforcement and attorneys.

Avoiding Common Missteps

Beyond these corporate-focused actions, clergy and lay leaders owe it to their churches to get educated about the dynamics of abuse and assault. One particular mistake leaders often make is to try to treat both accuser and accused with equal amounts of validity. While false reports do happen on occasion, I believe it's vital to begin by giving accusers the benefit of the doubt. Research consistently indicates that 92–98% of all sexual assault accusations are true; similar to other major categories of crime. Much, much more often than not, those who report assault are telling the truth.

One reason leaders sometimes doubt accusers is that they don't understand the variety of victim responses to abuse and assault. As a result, they often ask victims, "Why didn't you run or fight?" Assault victims sometimes do attempt to flee or fight their attackers. But very often, they freeze, so paralyzed by fear that they either can't move or they

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simply do what their attackers tell them to do, hoping that it will help to “get it over with” and protect them from further harm.

Perhaps the most fundamental mistake in this area is for children’s and youth ministry leaders to fail to run criminal background checks on every volunteer. Doing so doesn’t guarantee that abuse incidents will never happen on their watches, but it is a simple step that can weed out some dangerous people.

Leaders can learn these and other crucial lessons before bad things happen in their own congregations by getting trained by organizations like GRACE or by educating themselves with solid resources. Pastors and other church leaders can do a world of good for their faith communities, and especially for survivors, by doing so, even as they break the silence and open up the Scriptures to proclaim God’s compassion for victims.

1. Josiah Hesse, “Billy Graham’s Grandson Says Protestants Abuse Kids Just Like Catholics,” *Vice*, Aug. 24, 2017, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xwwd3w/billy-grahams-grandson-says-protestants-abuse-kids-just-like-catholics.

2. John Ortberg, “Observations on the Chicago Tribune article re: Willow Creek Leadership” [johnortberg.com](http://www.johnortberg.com/observations-on-the-chicago-tribune-article-re-willow-creek-leadership/), Apr. 2, 2018, <http://www.johnortberg.com/observations-on-the-chicago-tribune-article-re-willow-creek-leadership/>.

3. “I Was Assaulted. He Was Applauded,” *New York Times*, Mar. 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/opinion/jules-woodson-andy-savage-assault.html>.

This article is adapted from the author’s presentation to the Evangelical Press Association’s 2018 convention in April 2018.

Being All the Church Can Be

Pastor and author John Ortberg recently wrote, “Anyone who may have been victimized by people in power needs to know that the church of Jesus is their refuge and champion.”²

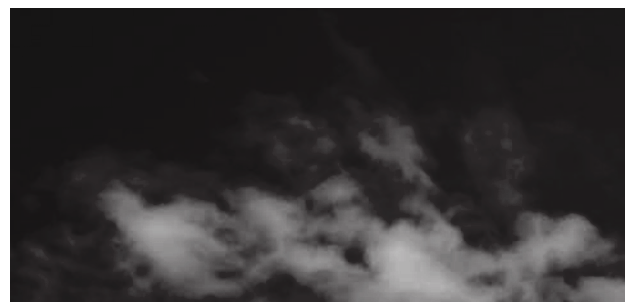
My own journey from seminary and the pastorate to a vocation in violence prevention has convinced me that we Christians fail God’s calling when we aren’t a safe, healing community that advocates for victims. I would even say that there is no issue more important for the church to address than sexual and relationship violence. There may be issues that are just as important, but none greater.

So I completely agree with sexual assault survivor Jules Woodson, who was attacked when she was seventeen years old by her youth minister. She told the *New York Times*, “We as a church, of all places, should be getting this right. It’s unfathomable to me that the secular world, Hollywood, are taking a stand. The church should have been the first group to stand up and say, ‘We will not allow this.’”³

Psalm 34:18 tells us, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit” (NRSV). When it comes to those whose hearts are broken and spirits crushed by sexual and relationship violence, can we say the same?



A former evangelical pastor and Dallas Seminary graduate, Eugene currently writes and speaks on a freelance basis about issues of gender, race, and parenting. He has also served as an educator for relationship and sexual violence prevention at UC Irvine, as well as a movement organizer and digital communications manager for the nonprofit Man Up Campaign. He blogs at FeministAsianDad.com.



Why #MeToo Is Good for Men Too

Ashley Easter

Will 2018 be “The Year of the Woman”? That’s the question US pundits are asking as women’s political engagement grows and women are elected to public office in record numbers. But women aren’t just rising in the political sphere. The women’s justice movement that has been brewing for hundreds of years is now surfacing full force in ways never before seen in history.

As a victim advocate, I’ve seen the number of survivor stories in my newsfeed and inbox greatly multiply. Survivors and advocates are persistently calling out powerful men in both the secular and religious world. And, where these men were once enabled and protected, they are now being held accountable for abusive misconduct. Female survivors are also gaining camaraderie online and uniting to topple oppressive structures. We’re finding the courage—together—to reach out for help and support.

Commentators are apt to name 2018 “The Year of the Woman.” With the Silence Breaker, #MeToo, and #ChurchToo movements, women are declaring that we will no longer keep quiet about abuse, especially in the church. Yet, I believe this powerful cultural shift is just as necessary and potentially healing for men. Together, we can prophesy a better way forward for women and men, a path that ends at justice and freedom for us all. Here are four ways the #MeToo movement is vital to the healing of men.

Men grow in their understanding of God

Healthy theology affirms the full, equal humanity of women. Scripture illustrates—from the creation narrative on—the extraordinary alliance made possible when men and women are both respected and have equal dignity. In mutual male-female relationships, men benefit from the spiritual partnership,



strength, wisdom, creativity, and accountability of women.

This is clear from the Bible. Apollos benefitted from the teaching of Priscilla (Acts 18:26). The prophet Hulda delivered God's word to Josiah, who responded by tearing down the idols across Israel (2 Chron. 34:14–33). As the one to deliver (and most likely explain the contents of) Paul's letter to the Romans, Phoebe partnered with Paul to the benefit of the Roman church (Rom. 16:1–2).

Women suffer when their full humanity isn't honored. But men also suffer spiritually—both because they're deprived of women's "strong rescue" and because women image the feminine qualities, and thus the fullness, of God. Without women, men lose out on key theological and social insights. They become trapped in an echo chamber and miss out on all the amazing things women can show them about God. With women as equal spiritual partners, men grow in their understanding of God.

Men benefit from social stability

Men benefit when women are seen as fully equal humans, because societies are more stable; peace is more sustainable; and economies improve. According to the 2012 World Development Report, "gender equality matters instrumentally, because greater gender equality contributes to economic efficiency and the achievement of other key development outcomes."¹ Research also shows that gender-equal societies are less violent and citizens, men included, are less likely to die violent deaths.

Gender diversity also has a direct impact on organizational performance, according to the Peterson Institute for International Economics.² The Global Leadership Forecast found that companies performing in the top 20% financially had twice the number

of women in leadership roles as the bottom 20%.³ Clearly, as the UN states: "Women's economic equality is good for business."⁴

Further, where countries embrace gender equality, they will likely also embrace other social policies that benefit men, like paid paternity leave. In more gender equal societies, men tend to be more involved with their children. Men's lives and relationships are improved when laws and policies exist to encourage them to participate equally in family life, and when they do not see childcare as solely women's work.

Even Jesus benefitted from women's economic success. As a traveling teacher, his ministry was funded, at least in part, by wealthy women like Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:1–3). Then there's Lydia, a successful businesswoman whose home was the first meeting place for the church in Philippi (Acts 16). She provided safety and stability for the growing community of believers—men and women.

Men are held accountable, allowing personal and emotional growth

The #MeToo movement aims to hold abusive men accountable for their actions. It might not be obvious how this practice benefits men who don't abuse women, but it is actually good for all men. When we hold men accountable, it is clear that we believe men are able to control their actions. In both Christian purity culture and in secular media, men are painted as sexual animals unable to control their behavior toward women. This understanding of masculinity short-changes our brothers in Christ. It is also a central tenet of rape culture, which endangers women.

If we say that men can't control their actions because their sexual instincts are too consuming, we imply that men are more animal than human.

Because women image the feminine qualities, and thus the fullness, of God. Without women, men lose out on key theological and social insights. They become trapped in an echo chamber and miss out on all the amazing things women can show them about God. With women as equal spiritual partners, men grow in their understanding of God.

We communicate that men are unable to morally discern right from wrong or sexual abuse from healthy sexual intimacy. That men have no choice but to give in to their sexual urges even when they hurt and violate women in the process.

This is the extreme end of statements like "boys will be boys" or "I couldn't help myself," or "I just had to have

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Men are freed too—free to be human and free to be vulnerable.
When women and girls speak up about abuse, men and boys are
able to do the same without stigma or shame.

her.” We love to romanticize aggressive masculinity, but it’s a cheap, insulting take on men’s capacity for self-control, empathy, and connection. Further, it leaves men without the necessary tools to understand and regulate their own sexuality and identify healthy versus unhealthy expressions of it. If real men don’t cry, Jesus failed the test (John 11:35).

In holding men accountable, the #MeToo movement actually affirms men’s humanity—their ability to know and then choose right from wrong and to have healthy, mutual relationships with women. It also honors the good men who choose to treat others with equality and respect.

Men are freed to speak up about abuse

Patriarchy is a system in which true masculinity means having power and control over women and natural femininity means submitting to men. In this culture, truly masculine men are never in a submissive role, lest their manhood be questioned. As mentioned, abuse is always motivated by a lust for

power and control; an abuser wants to dominate a submissive victim. Men and boys who are abused are forced into that submissive role.

That women are asked to willingly take on a submissive role in their relationships is very dangerous. But if men are supposed to be strong leaders, then abuse is evidence of their social and spiritual failure. This is why it’s monumentally difficult for men and boys to speak up about abuse—not only because of the weight of the trauma itself but because of how they may be perceived by their communities. Male victims are often afraid of being shamed for “not being man enough” or of being disbelieved by those around them because “men can’t be abused.” Further, men are four times more likely than women to commit suicide.⁵ Many believe that’s because they’re encouraged to ignore emotional trauma and be strong.

#MeToo subverts these manhood myths. When men and women are equal, it’s not only women who are freed. Men are freed too—free to be human and free to be vulnerable. When women and girls speak up about abuse, men and boys are

able to do the same without stigma or shame. And, their manhood is no longer defined by maintaining constant power over others.

With #MeToo, women are taking back their voices and power. They have rejected the idea that men are entitled to power over women. But we are experiencing God’s revival through this movement, and it’s for women and men. God’s heart is for the full humanity and equality of men and women. And when God’s dream for humanity is restored, everyone, men included, will reap the benefits.



Ashley Easter is a Christian feminist, writer, speaker, and abuse-victim advocate who educates churches and secular communities

on abuse, introducing them to safe practices and healing resources. She is also the founder of The Courage Conference and author of *The Courage Coach: A Practical, Friendly Guide on How to Heal From Abuse*. Find her online at ashleyeaster.com, thecourageconference.com, and on Twitter @ashleyeaster.

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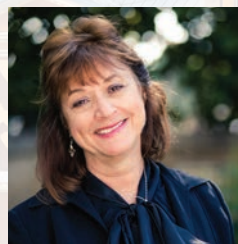
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Kevin Giles



Mimi Haddad



Timo Lehtikainen

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Vindicating the Vixens: **How We View Bible Women Shapes Our Response to #MeToo**

Sandra L. Glahn

In the fall of 2017, the name “Harvey Weinstein” made headlines. The #MeToo movement gained momentum, #ChurchToo soon followed, and the stories of sexual abuse in the church poured in. Thousands of women made it clear that the practice of sexualizing and silencing victims was not unique to the culture at large. Such abuse has been part of church subculture for centuries. The pattern hasn’t just shaped the way we’ve viewed events that unfold in our own time, either. It has tainted our understanding of the Bible.

Soon after, my publisher released *Vindicating the Vixens*, a book I worked on with thirteen other scholars. The timing couldn’t have been more fitting. The book recovers the true stories of the Bible’s women, especially those we’ve made into villains and seductresses. We (myself included!) have made a habit of turning honorable women into villains.

We need to set aside our assumptions and revisit the women of the Bible. When we do, it will change the way we see women today as well.

Vindicating the “Vixens” of the Bible

After spending years reading diverse perspectives on the Bible’s women, I’ve come to see how blind I was to their stories and to the way the Bible actually portrays them. Here’s a glimpse of (a few of) their stories.

Hagar.¹ When was the last time you heard about Hagar the exemplar of faith? Normally, we hear about Hagar the uppity servant who thought she was better than Sarah, God’s chosen mother of his people. Until reading the work of an Arab seminary professor, I missed the fact that the Bible presents Hagar as a hero of the faith. Hers is a story of God hearing the cries of the oppressed and delivering them. The Angel of the Lord appears to her, a clear sign of favor, and God reveals himself to Hagar (not to Sarah) as “the God who listens.” Ultimately, God delivers Hagar from Abraham and Sarah and blesses her with countless descendants, much like the blessing given to Abraham himself.

Bathsheba.² It's common to hear about how Bathsheba seduced David, and God punished him for his adultery. But that's far from what the text says. The text describes the story like this: David, pacing the roof of his palace, sees Bathsheba bathing. Her husband, Uriah, a leader in David's army, is away at war. David rapes Bathsheba. Upon learning she is pregnant, David calls Uriah home from battle and orders him to go home and sleep with Bathsheba. (This way, people will assume that he is the father, not David.) Uriah refuses to take part in the cover-up, so David sends him back to the front lines and orders his general to ensure Uriah dies in battle. After his death, David plays the part of a noble hero, marrying the newly widowed Bathsheba. He almost gets away with it, but God sees his actions and sends the prophet Nathan to deliver judgment.

Scripture places full responsibility on David. This is not a story of a seductress and a man who can't resist her. It's the story of a king abusing his power for sex, and then engineering a cover-up. We're too often blind to the truth of the text because we're so accustomed to assuming the best of men and assuming the worst of women.

Esther.³ In a Bible study I wrote on Esther, I assumed she was complicit in joining Xerxes' harem and becoming his queen. I completely missed the power differential between the gentile king and the orphaned Jewish girl. But then an African-American friend pointed out the history of African-Americans "passing" as white, typically in contexts of injustice. She spoke about the pain and loss caused by denying one's family and culture in a carefully maintained deception, adding to the pain of oppression. The backdrop to Esther's story is a context of such injustice that she would do just this—conceal her Jewish identity and name, Hadassah, from her husband. Her membership in Xerxes' harem was not by choice. She was not a seductress who set out to woo the king, but a girl forced into the sexual service of a king—a king who

had deposed his last wife for refusing to give up her dignity. She learned quickly and used not only her beauty, but her courage and political savvy to save her cousin Mordecai and the Jewish people.

The Samaritan woman at the well.⁴

I had always heard this woman described as one who divorced five husbands and didn't bother marrying the sixth. She is the picture of sexual promiscuity. A serial adulterer. It makes for a powerful story of transformation, but is it true? Likely not. Consider that in her world, girls were often married to much older men (Mary was just a girl when she married Joseph). And, the main cause of death for men was war, so they often died young. Consider, too, that women were rarely economically self-sufficient. They depended on their father's family, then their husband's. Knowing this, it should not surprise us if the woman at the well was not an adulterer, but simply had the misfortune of marrying husband after husband who died, or perhaps divorced her, until eventually no one would marry her, and she had to settle for concubine status in order to eat. Our lack of historical knowledge and our tendency to sexualize women has caused us to see this woman as someone she likely was not.

The women of Jesus' genealogy. Every Advent, I hear about how the women in Jesus' genealogy were included to demonstrate God's willingness to forgive sexual sin (never mind the sexual exploits of Judah, David, Solomon. . .). By making these women's sex lives the focus, preachers vilify their actions and blame victims for their abusers' actions. And ultimately, we miss the actual reason these women are included in Matthew's genealogy—because they are faithful "outsiders."

Accepting cultural and racial outsiders into the community of faith through belief is a major theme of the book of Matthew. He uses the genealogy, including these women, to set this up.

When we wrongly sexualize and marginalize women in the Bible, it gets easier to blame and disbelieve female victims today, while protecting male abusers and minimizing harassment and abuse. In short, by distorting Bible women's stories, we provide a "biblical" rationale for rape culture.

So why was it overlooked that Tamar was within her legal rights; Bathsheba was a victim; Ruth did not proposition Boaz; and Joseph's desire to send Mary away quietly suggests she was not even "showing" let alone publicly shamed? Why does our focus so often come back to women's sex lives?

When we wrongly sexualize and marginalize women in the Bible, it gets easier to blame and disbelieve female victims today, while protecting male abusers and minimizing harassment and abuse. In short, by distorting Bible women's stories, we provide a "biblical" rationale for rape culture. We can do better.

Our response to abuse

When we recover the truth of the Bible's women, it changes how we see godly women in our own time, too. They are no longer divisive troublemakers, but holy role models. They don't thirst for power, but for justice. Their stories challenge us all confront our own biases. They call us to change the way we see women who are abused and the men who abuse them. They inspire us to actively build a Christian church that is faithful to God and to the most vulnerable in our midst.

I've had the chance to hear from people who have experienced this transformation. One pastor, after learning more about Bathsheba, began his next sermon with, "I was wrong." He then re-preached a sermon he'd delivered on Bathsheba. This time, he focused on how David went from a humble shepherd to a king with

immense power. He told how David abused that power, and how we are all vulnerable to doing the same. He told his congregation how God saw the victim and brought Nathan to speak to power. Like this pastor, we must have the humility to admit wrong and strive to do better. Here are three ways:

Seek out diverse voices. We don't recognize our blind spots, and often, neither do people just like us. Learning from a diverse community helps us see more clearly. This is why our translation teams need men and women from multiple continents. We also need men and women from diverse backgrounds partnering to read, interpret, and preach. Put your money where your mouth is on this. Support organizations that help members of underrepresented populations get biblical training and teaching positions. Buy books by women. Buy books by people of color. Share their work. You can help drive the movement.

Believe differently. We tend to blame victims, even in the face of solid evidence that they are telling the truth. The knee-jerk response of the powerful is to believe the high-profile person's denial over the less powerful accuser. Research suggests that only two to eight percent of rapes are falsely reported. That means more than more than ninety percent of accusers are telling the truth. When we fail to see the Bathshebas and Esthers among us as victims of power differentials, we dull our ability to empathize with victims who experience similar trauma.

Speak up. Proverbs 31:8–9 tells us, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute . . . defend the rights of the poor and needy." Part of our calling as Christ-followers is to give voice to those deprived of justice. The apostle Paul called on the recipients of his epistle to the Ephesians to "expose the deeds of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). If we know of abuse happening—whether it's a David with a Bathsheba or a Potiphar's wife with a Joseph—we must advocate for the defenseless and take appropriate action. If crimes have been committed, we need to seek justice even if we fear it will tarnish the reputations of our churches.

The #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements have highlighted widespread injustice in the culture at large as well as within Christian subculture. As believers, we must recommit ourselves to "doing justice" by listening well, reaching out, removing blinders, exegeting carefully, interpreting faithfully, and speaking rightly as we labor shoulder-to-shoulder in God's vineyard.



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1. These insights are taken from Tony Maalouf, "God Names Adam, Hagar Names God," in *Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible*, ed. Sandra Glahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017), 171–88.

2. For more, see Sarah Bowler, "Bathsheba: Vixen or Victim," in Glahn, *Vindicating the Vixens*, 81–100.

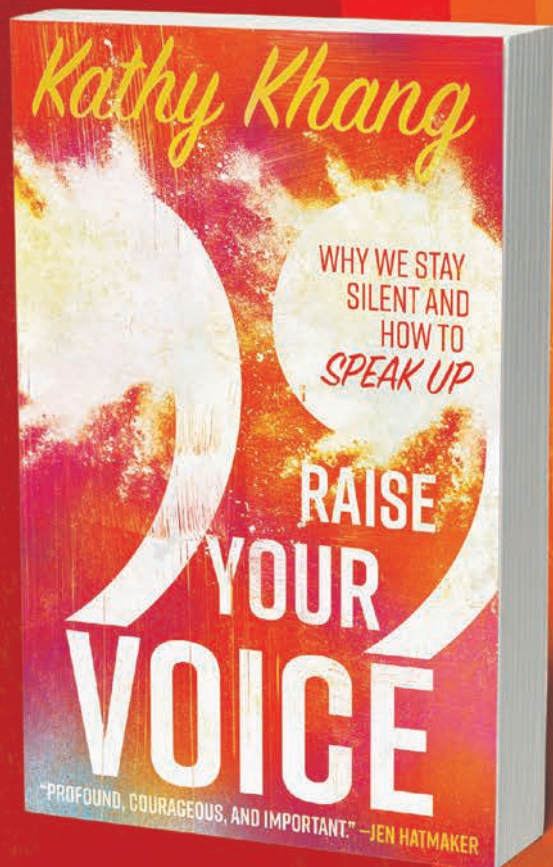
3. For more, see Sharifa Stevens, "Vashti: Dishonored for Having Honor," in Glahn, *Vindicating the Vixens*, 235–48.

4. For more, see Lynn Cohick, "The 'Woman at the Well': Was the Samaritan Woman Really an Adulteress?" in Glahn, *Vindicating the Vixens*, 249–54.

THE WORLD NEEDS YOUR VOICE



KATHY KHANG is a speaker, journalist, and activist who has worked in campus ministry for more than twenty years. She is a columnist for *Sojourners* magazine, a writer for *Faith & Leadership*, and a coauthor of *More Than Serving Tea*.



"As I read *Raise Your Voice* I remembered the times I needed a book like this! I needed its invitation to discover my voice when I felt invisible and voiceless. . . . Kathy Khang has crafted a gift for us—receive every page she offers you!"

—Jo Saxton

author of *The Dream of You*,
cohost of the *Lead Stories* Podcast

Long Overdue:

4 Ways Men Can Combat Abuse in the Church

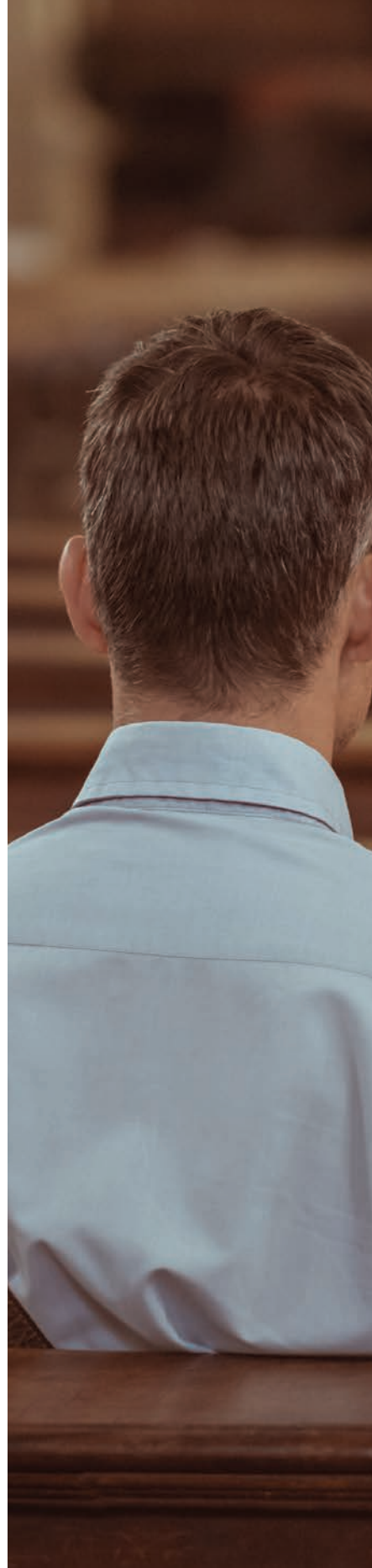
Gricel Medina

Responding to accusations of sexual misconduct against actors James Franco and Aziz Ansari, *Huffington Post* cultural commentator Amarís Acosta wrote, “We’re still asking too much of women and too little of men.”¹ When the famous men were accused of misbehavior, they and others, including a prominent *New York Times* writer, claimed they were only guilty of misreading women’s ambiguous sexual signals.² Acosta goes on, “Both men and women have been complicit in gently defending men’s inability to read minds, saving their harshest criticism for the women at the receiving end of insensitive or abusive encounters.”

Acosta’s observation may be even truer of the church than society at large. #ChurchToo and #SilenceIsNotSpiritual have proven that, too often, our instinct is to blame the victim and assume the best of the abuser. Men receive standing ovations in some churches just for responding to

allegations; whether they confess or deny misconduct appears almost irrelevant. It might be because Christians love a story of repentance and forgiveness more than the hard work of justice. Or, it might be because we want to believe the best of our leaders. Whatever the reason, we give accused men the benefit of the doubt and pat them on the back for even acknowledging that women have spoken. And, we easily question the integrity of women who speak out—though they have nothing to gain and everything to lose.

It’s no wonder that many women keep silent about abuse; they see that the church’s first instinct is to dismiss and explain away their trauma. Dramatic ovations also further victimize women who do dare to come forward, especially women of color. When you’re both a woman and a person of color, you often get the most blame and the least sympathetic ear. As a Latina pastor, I know the pain and rejection of





being invisible and unheard. Of being viewed with suspicion while the actions of white male colleagues are judged as boyish mistakes.

Acosta concludes: “It is long past time to hold men accountable for failing to do the simple task of regarding a woman’s personhood and seeking not just enthusiastic, but affirmative consent. We cannot continue to baby the accused men by believing them to be incapable of thoughtfulness and emotional intelligence by nature.”

Men, I am calling you to step into your full humanity. To carry your weight in this movement toward the kingdom Jesus pronounced. Here are four ways you can start.

Change the way you talk about abuse

It’s time to stop diminishing the severity of abuse by calling it a “mistake” and treating it like an accident. Buying the wrong brand of bottled water is an accident. No youth pastor accidentally drives a teenage girl to a remote place and coerces her to have sex. When a spiritual leader or any adult takes advantage of a young girl who is vulnerable and naïve, that’s always assault. It’s criminal. It’s immoral. When we simply call abuse a “mistake” of the past, abusers are let off the hook and the truth is minimized. And, the steps the church take when a victim comes forward will determine if other victims will feel safe to do likewise.

We also need to check how we talk about forgiveness. After her testimony in the trial of serial abuser

Larry Nassar went viral in Christian circles, Rachael Denhollander spoke to *Christianity Today*:

I have found it very interesting, to be honest, that every single Christian publication or speaker that has mentioned my statement has only ever focused on the aspect of forgiveness. Very few, if any of them, have recognized what else came with that statement, which was a swift and intentional pursuit of God’s justice. Both of those are biblical concepts. Both of those represent Christ. We do not do well when we focus on only one of them.³

Forgiveness—even when freely given—should never negate the legal ramifications of abuse. It’s counterproductive and harmful to force victims to make amends with abusers or forgive before they’ve had time to process the trauma. And, the pace and process of healing should not be determined by anyone but the traumatized person. Abuse must be reported to the proper authorities: law enforcement and hospitals.

It’s heartbreaking enough that Christian women and girls endure abuse by those they should be able to trust. We add to that heartbreak when we push them to forgive—either for the sake of our own comfort or so we can celebrate an abuser’s redemption. We demand forgiveness for the sake of everyone but actual victims. Instead, we must demand justice. We must prove—by what we say and how we respond to what others say—that we can be trusted with victims’ trauma.

It’s time to stop diminishing the severity of abuse by calling it a “mistake.”

Practice mutuality instead of patriarchy

Some Christians teach that patriarchy is God's design. That God made men to lead and women to submit. But in the Garden of Eden, God created men and women to steward the earth together. There was no hierarchy between them until sin entered the story. We must arise with divine resolve against unbiblical narratives that fuel injustice.

Don't buy into patriarchal views, but instead challenge them with mutuality. Ask questions about your theology and seek out spiritual mentors who see mutuality as God's design in Scripture. Then, live out what you believe about Scripture.

Don't insist on having the last word as the husband or being the sole decision-maker in your marriage. Think carefully about why you respond the way you do to women who challenge or differ from you. Is it because their position makes you uncomfortable? Would you respond the same way if a man said or did the same thing? If

you're a leader, give up the stage to make space for women. If you're a pastor, teach mutual leadership and submission instead of gender roles.

In mixed gender groups, intentionally ask women for their opinions when they aren't speaking. But also, consider why they may not feel comfortable sharing. Affirm women's ideas and credit them. Don't restate their ideas as your own or the group's. It's crucial to verbally recognize women's creativity and ingenuity.

These are some of the everyday symptoms of patriarchy. Learn them and change your behavior. Challenge others to change theirs.

Learn from and elevate the voices of women (especially women of color)

As a Latina pastor, I've often been excluded from the decision-making table in the church. Because of that rejection, it took me a long time to be comfortable in my own skin. After much prayer and reflection, I realized

that my story needed to be told. I found my authentic self and broke the chains of silence on my soul. My voice is important to God; it should also be important to my male colleagues.

Many women of color are no longer measuring their words or comparing themselves to their white siblings in Christ. They know they too have anointed stories to tell—stories of pain, stories of victory, stories of struggle, stories of strength, stories of valor, stories born in the trenches. Stop and listen their stories. Instead of becoming defensive when the stories of women challenge your experience and assumptions, allow yourself to be convicted.

Women are preaching and doing theology, too. Are you sitting at their feet and learning from them? Or is it easier for you to trust men (especially white men) because you feel like women and people of color are biased? In reality, the bias of white, male theologians is just as strong, and it's even more dangerous because it comes from a place of power.

Abuse thrives and grows stronger when women are silent. When they speak

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and the world listens, sin is exposed; abusers are held accountable; and cultures are transformed. Encourage women to be tenacious in breaking the silence. Don't look for reasons to ignore the truths women speak. Learn from women about Jesus and what it means to follow him, especially from women of color.

Hold men (including yourself) accountable

The church needs to hold men accountable—no matter how much influence they have. For centuries, the church has judged the sins of those outside our walls, yet we've ignored the sins within our own walls.

Let's learn from the story of David and Bathsheba. David's actions mirror the actions of abusers today in many ways. And, our attitude toward abuse is reflected in how we often tell this story, in that we blame the victim and fail to see the abuse.

Bathsheba is often portrayed as the villain, but she was the victim. She didn't seduce David; he spied on her from his palace, then used his power to force her to sleep with him. When she got pregnant, David called her husband Uriah home from war, and told him to go home and sleep with Bathsheba (so that people would assume he was the father), but Uriah refused. So David sent him to the front lines, where he would be killed.

God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. Nathan told him a story of "a man" who did exactly what David had done. But David was so blind to his abuse of power that he was unable to identify himself in the

Abuse thrives and grows stronger when women are silent. When they speak and the world listens, sin is exposed; abusers are held accountable; and cultures are transformed.

story the prophet told him. Men, have you been guilty of blaming Bathsheba? Have you believed that David's only sin was having sex outside of marriage? Have you treated modern women's stories of trauma and abuse by powerful men with the same disregard?

Have you supported leadership models that put all the power in the hands of a few men and make them accountable only to other powerful men? These male-only structures are dangerous for women. Work for gender-balanced leadership in your church, company, and organization. Promote accountability whether you're in the office, locker room, or sanctuary.

It's not enough to be outraged by the abuse around you. That's a good first step, but your next move should be to examine yourself and those in your circles. Are you blind to the role that you, your leaders, your church, or your theology might be playing? Are your words or actions reinforcing a kind of manhood that treats women as less than men, whether with patriarchal theology or with sexist jokes and gender

stereotypes? It's time to confront not just the men "out there" but yourself and the men around you.

My call to men in the church is this: Don't deny your own brokenness. Don't reframe costly sins as mere boyish mistakes. Let us instead bring a prophetic word to abusers as Nathan did to David.

God, give us humble, open, and pure hearts. Empower us to work together for a better future. May we take responsibility for our own comfort with and complicity in the sin of abuse. May we, as one body, repent of our David-like blindness and take action to correct our assumptions and oversights. Amen.



Rev. Grisel Medina is ordained to Word and Sacrament in the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). She was the first Hispanic to chair the ECC's Commission on Biblical Gender Equality. She has planted three churches and is a tenacious leadership and community developer. In 2017, she received CBE's Lifetime Achievement Award for her gender equality advocacy.

1. Amaris Acosta, "We're Still Asking Too Much Of Women And Too Little Of Men," *Huffington Post*, Jan. 24, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-acosta-metoo-accountability_us_5a689b9be4b0022830087d5a.
2. Bari Weiss, "Aziz Ansari Is Guilty. Of Not Being a Mind Reader," *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/15/opinion/aziz-ansari-babe-sexual-harassment.html>.
3. Morgan Lee, "My Larry Nassar Testimony Went Viral. But There's More to the Gospel Than Forgiveness," *Christianity Today*, Jan. 31, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/january-web-only/rachael-denholander-larry-nassar-forgiveness-gospel.html>.

When Churches Aren't Sanctuaries: **Why Churches Shouldn't Respond to Abuse Alone**

Mark Kubo

Another day, another sexual misconduct allegation against a prominent and influential church leader. This seems to be the way of things since #MeToo and #ChurchToo opened the public's eyes to the epidemic of abuse in our world. When incidents are made known to church leadership, the pattern usually goes something like this: deny, minimize, circle the wagons, hold an investigation, dismiss. Only when the victims have spoken out publicly have the churches and the perpetrators acknowledged any wrongdoing and suffered consequences.

I wish I were surprised. I am both a pastor and a trained victim advocate. I also serve as a board member for a victim advocacy organization. As part of the local ministerial association, I am in frequent contact with most of the pastors in my community. In my personal experience in both capacities, it has become clear that churches

are not equipped to respond well to reports of abuse.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that churches don't want to do the right thing. They do. Churches vary a lot on their approaches to and responses to abuse. Still, no matter how well-meaning, and regardless of their views on gender, leadership, theology, etc., they are almost never prepared to meet a victim's needs. This is why, as both a pastor and a trained victim advocate, I encourage churches not to go it alone when it comes to helping victims of abuse.

When someone in the church—the pastor, one of the leaders, or any church member—learns that someone in their midst is a victim of domestic violence, abuse, or sexual assault, the best thing they can do for the victim is to encourage them to connect with a legally recognized victim's advocate. If they agree, provide what is needed to get

them to the advocate. (If the case falls under mandated reporting laws, be sure to follow them. But it is also important to secure advocacy and support.)

Why can't the church handle this through its own personnel and resources? (I should note that my experience is limited to the US state of Alaska. None of what follows is legal advice, but guiding principles that should be checked with a qualified legal expert in your locality.)

1. Divided interests

A pastor is always in a position of divided interests. The pastor must care for the entire congregation, and if the perpetrator is part of it, their care is also the pastor's concern. The pastor's interest is also tied to the organization and, if part of a denominational structure, to that also. No matter how well-intentioned the pastor may be toward a victim, there will always be

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conflicting pressures. For this reason alone, it is unwise and not in the best interest of the victim for the pastor to be handling abuse and assault claims.

An advocate, however, has only the victim's interest, safety, and well-being in mind. The advocate always believes the victim's claims. The advocate never tries to judge the victim's claims. The advocate is there to be with the victim, listen to their story, and offer support, however long it takes. If the victim wants to take action against their perpetrator, the advocate is there to support the action. The entire mission and funding of the advocate and their organization is to support the victim.

2. Lack of expertise

A pastor is also likely not familiar with the intricate laws and processes in these cases. Does a pastor know about emergency protective orders, short term protective orders, and long-term ones and how each one is obtained? When should law enforcement become involved, and does the victim have a choice in whether or not law enforcement becomes involved? If a crime was committed, must the victim report it?

An advocate is trained to guide the victim through the legal processes. The advocate is there to offer options to the victim and to guide them to make their

own choices in how to work through the crisis that they are in. The advocate knows that the victim needs to regain agency and self-determination and does not make choices for them. This may be one of the most difficult aspects of advocacy: not making decisions for the victim, even when they ask for it.

3. Temptation to focus on behaviors

What if an assault victim reveals that they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when the assault took place? What if they told you that they are regularly use alcohol and drugs? What would be the response of a pastor or church members to these revelations? Would they be able to ignore these behaviors? Would they still be supportive of the victim? Unfortunately, I fear that the response is typically negative.

Advocates are trained to be supportive of whatever has kept victims alive up to this point, even if that includes negative behaviors. Advocates do not judge nor do they pressure victims toward behavior changes. Trauma often pushes victims into coping behaviors that they use to survive and maintain a sense of normalcy. Personal safety consumes so much mental and physical energy that addiction recovery becomes

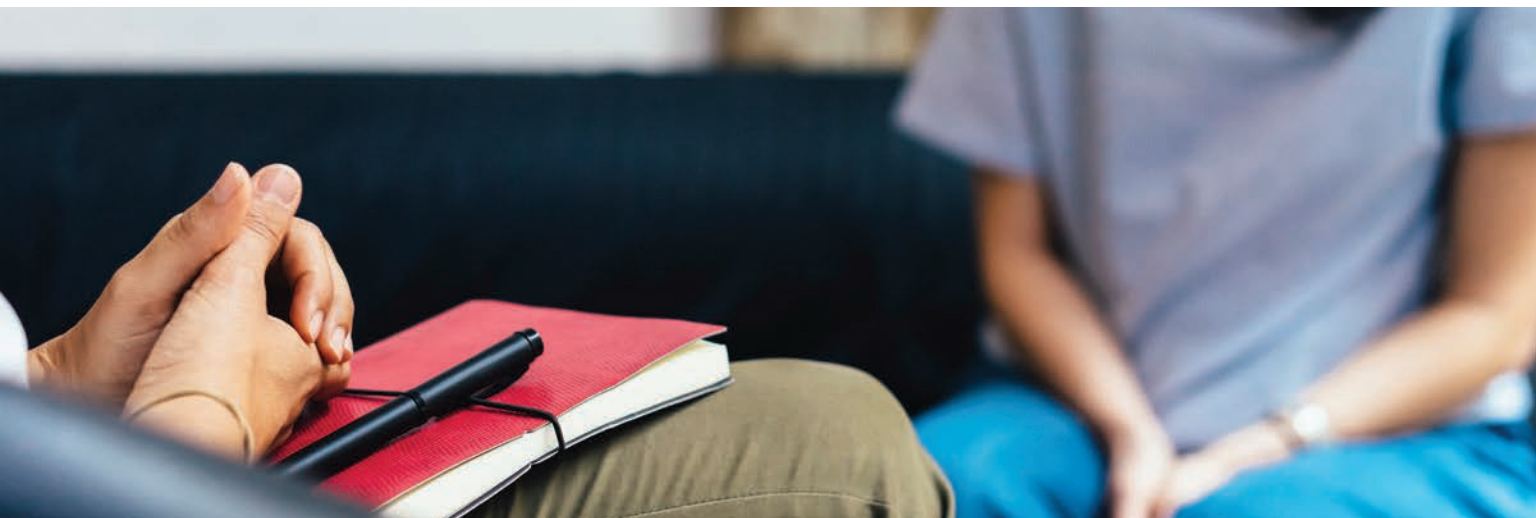
a lower priority for victims. Many people don't realize that abusers often coerce their victims into substance abuse as a control mechanism. A change toward positive behavior is something that cannot be undertaken until the immediate crisis is resolved, extended safety is established, and the victim is able to choose change.

4. Misunderstanding Scripture

A lot of Bible verses get thrown around when abuse is discussed. People point to verses on conflict in the church, church leadership roles, and so on. Unfortunately, in the effort to find simple, concrete instructions in the Bible, churches sometimes misuse the Bible and miss its emphasis on protecting the vulnerable. Let me briefly address two passages that often come up.

Matthew 18:15-17 reads:

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the



church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

It is critical to remember that abuse stems from a power imbalance. The context makes it clear that these principles are not intended for someone with a grievance against someone with more power. In fact, this passage is surrounded by texts that speak on the importance of protecting the vulnerable and powerless. First Jesus condemns causing children to stumble. He then he tells the story of the servant whose debt was forgiven, but who refuses to forgive his own debtor. Both are clear examples of abuse of power, and are roundly condemned.

First Corinthians 6:1–8 reads:

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

This text, at first glance, seems to be more explicit in advising churches to not take their disputes to the secular legal system. But Gordon Fee, in his commentary, notes that Paul was likely against the church taking cases to Roman courts, precisely because the civil courts were influenced by power and privilege. If Paul saw some of the churches today and the power and privilege leaders wield, he might very well write the opposite of what he wrote to the Corinthian church.

Throughout Scripture, there is a clear mandate for those with power to imitate Jesus in giving up their power for the benefit of the oppressed and marginalized. Because churches are organizations with structures and hierarchies that often include the victim and abuser, the best way to obey the Bible's mandate to protect the vulnerable is to enlist the aid of trained victim advocates.

This all makes it sound like churches shouldn't be involved or can't help, but that isn't the case. Churches aren't the best avenues for primary crisis intervention and for guiding the victims through safety planning and legal procedures. But there are many other ways in which churches can be

part of the solution to addressing abuse and assault.

By proactively establishing that abuse and assaults are evil and by holding to account any (however influential, wealthy, and powerful) in the church who abuse and assault, churches can become places of safety and healing. Churches must not demand, require, or even encourage victims to forgive their perpetrators.

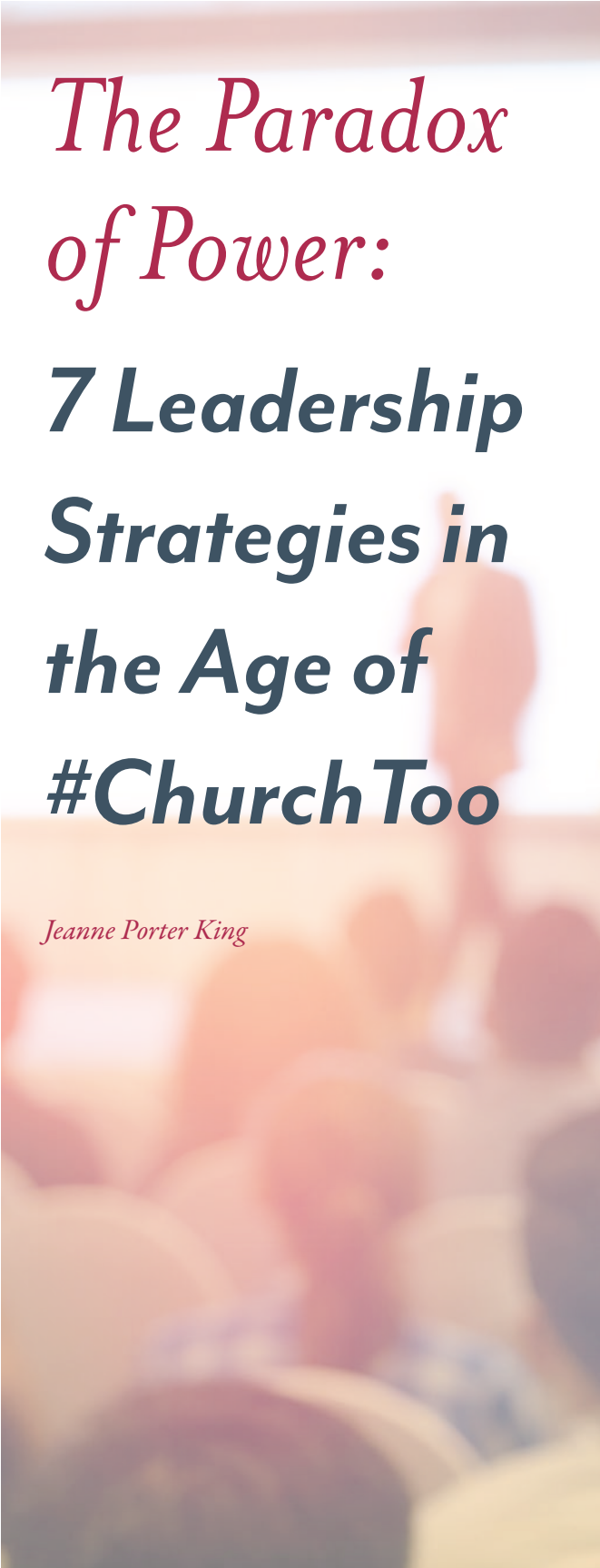
Churches must show that they are living the actions of Jesus, who always advocated for the powerless and the victimized, and who confronted the powerful even when it meant death on a cross. The Christian gospel can be good news for victims of abuse and assault, but only if churches are willing to give their lives in defense of them. Churches that seek to retain their power and influence by minimizing and protecting abusers, compromise the gospel and communicate that victims are second-class citizens.

I pray for the day when all churches are safe places for the powerless.



Mark Kubo resides in the grandeur and beauty of the rainforests of Southeast Alaska, on an island reachable only by air or water. He is part-owner of an art gallery, serves as a part-time pastor, and volunteers for mental health and domestic violence agencies. He is married to his wife, Elise, for 26 years and has two adult daughters.

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The Paradox of Power:

7 Leadership Strategies in the Age of #ChurchToo

Jeanne Porter King

As a leadership consultant, I've helped many women find and own their voices. Yet, for a long time, I didn't recognize my own power to help women speak up about abuse and harassment in the church. Over the course of forty years of ministry in multiple states, I've been on the receiving end of unwanted sexual advances in church. I've also been in a position of leadership and failed to respond adequately to reports of abuse or advocate for those who were harmed.

But we can do better than this. Those of us with power have a responsibility to ensure that power is shared, not hoarded. And when power is abused, it's up to us to make sure victims are heard and protected.

Activist Hannah Paasch started the #ChurchToo hashtag after learning of Tarana Burke's #MeToo movement. Paasch courageously shared her own story of rape, and the silencing and shaming she experienced in the evangelical church. She then invited others to share their stories of sexual abuse and harassment in the church.

In reading these stories, it's clear that there's a power paradox in the church. God gave the church the power to do a lot of great things—to make positive change—for the good of all people. But instead of allowing power to flow freely among believers for the benefit of all, as it should, many churches funnel power into the hands of a few people or a single group. Often, those people or that group use that power to control and withhold power from others. And unfortunately, this controlling power is usually gendered, leaving women as victims of or silent colluders with powerful men.

What is power? Simply put, it's the ability to get things done, or to influence or persuade others. There are many different ways to gain and use power. Those with formal positions or ranks in the church have power (e.g. senior pastor, youth pastor). Those with informal positions in the church exercise power (e.g. opinion leader, member of founding family). Church leaders with interpersonal power amass influence (e.g., due to their teaching ability or charisma or due to their religious "brand," perceived spirituality, or social media footprint). We all have power, but some of us have more than others.

According to the Pew Research Center, women comprise 55% of Evangelical Protestant churches, 59% of Historically Black Protestant churches, 55% of Mainline Protestant churches and 44% of Orthodox churches.¹ Women hold far less than half of the structural power in all of these traditions; men have dominated leadership positions in each of these denominations for decades or more. But instead of

Power belongs to all in the body, not just a select few or a single group. We need to take practical steps to rebalance power in our churches and make them safer for those among us who, as of now, have less structural power and are more vulnerable to abuse.

sharing their power or using it to positively influence the world, some men use power for their own ends or to control and restrict others. Sexual harassment and violence are an abuse of power and they're symptoms of this gendered power imbalance in the church.

The way we use our power shouldn't place other believers at risk. Power belongs to *all* in the body, not just a select few or a single group. We need to take practical steps to rebalance power in our churches and make them safer for those among us who, as of now, have less structural power and are more vulnerable to abuse.

Church leaders can use the structural power they already have to develop, implement, and enforce policies that prevent harassment and abuse; protect congregants from abusers; and provide care and justice for victims of abuse and harassment. I invite all church leaders to seek additional legal and professional guidance on how to create safe places for women and men in your church. Here are seven initial suggestions to consider.

1. Repent

I was serving as a youth leader when a teen girl from outside our ministry accused one of my teen boys of inappropriate sexual conduct. My first inclination was to protect the young man in my charge, not to truly hear the young woman. Twenty-five years ago, many churches, including mine at the time, had no policies or guidelines on how to handle such cases. I was on my own. To this day, I do not know what happened. I never got the full story, but I still vouched for the accused young man with law enforcement. None of us heard this young woman. For that, I am deeply sorry.

Over the years, I've witnessed many churches handle reports of sexual abuse with an embarrassingly informal and cavalier attitude. The church should be a space of refuge, care, and transformation for victims. But for far too many

girls, it's a battlefield where injuries and trauma go unnoticed and untreated.

I urge churches to repent of a clear preference for protecting our sons over hearing and empowering our daughters. We must repent of incomplete policies and overlooked trauma.

2. Form Partnerships

Some churches are affiliated with denominations that already have comprehensive sexual misconduct policies and denominational resources on abuse. But sadly, most churches today still aren't equipped to handle harassment and abuse. Church leaders should establish partnerships with trained advocates who can help guide congregants through the process of finding safety after abuse and navigating the legal system. Resources available in each region or country will differ, but for US readers, here are some agencies and professionals that can help:

- RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1800-656-HOPE (4673)
- Behavioral Health Departments of Hospitals
- Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Some YWCA's offer support for sexual abuse

Make brochures/pamphlets with contact information for counselors and social services available to your congregation. These services should be provided for women, men, and children who have suffered abuse. Now is the time to seek these partnerships and clarify church abuse policies (next on our list), not after a violation has occurred.

3. Establish Policies and Procedures

Take a good look at your church operational policies. Do you have an explicit statement that defines sexual harassment and abuse? Does it outline

the consequences for violating the policy? If you answered no to either of those questions, it's time to establish a policy and put guidelines in place for accountability and enforcement. All paid and volunteer leaders should be informed of the policy.

Additionally, leaders need to establish protocols for reporting and investigating abuse. As we've seen in recent cases of high-profile leaders accused of abuse or misconduct, leaders hold power over and with staff, elder boards, and even personnel boards. Unless the church is large enough to have a separate human resources department, those conducting the investigation often have long-term relationships with alleged offenders. Those relationships will likely jeopardize their neutrality.

Many churches now mandate background checks of all staff and volunteers who serve in youth ministry. In the age of #ChurchToo, we should probably consider conducting background checks of all volunteers and leaders.

4. Mandate Sexual Harassment and Boundaries training.

For my first formal corporate consulting assignment in the late 1990s, I was asked to develop a sexual harassment training program for a client. The training consisted of defining sexual harassment and providing scenarios that depicted various forms of sexual harassment. That was almost thirty years ago. The need for such training hasn't changed, but too often leaders in churches have overlooked the need for it.

Years later when I was in seminary, students were required to attend a workshop on boundaries. It provided clear guidelines on the boundaries clergy should maintain to avoid impropriety and for the safety of congregants. These types of training are needed for all leaders and volunteers for the same reasons: to educate, inform, and protect against abuse.

5. Establish "Safe" Reporting Protocols

When conducting leadership training for churches, I sometimes hear volunteers complain that they don't want their church to become too "corporate." But this is one area where you can never get too

"corporate." Congregants and staff must have a safe and confidential place to report sexual abuse and harassment in the church. Those reports need to be turned over to an objective and neutral investigating team that likewise maintains the confidentiality of the reporter. For churches that do not have a formal human resources department, leaders must seek professional services outside of the church. This might mean partnering with larger churches or seeking references from local attorneys who provide support and guidance to churches.

6. Provide Counseling and Care

Church is supposed to be a place of healing and hope. Congregants and staff who have been violated in church or by church leaders often experience deep hurt and dissonance. In some cases, such hurt can lead to a crisis of faith. It can also cause a person to question his or her identity, voice, and worth. Many of these individuals would benefit from counseling and care that acknowledges these deep, layered wounds. If a church doesn't have a licensed counselor on staff, it should develop partnerships with Christian clinicians to whom church leaders can refer victims. Again, now is the time to seek these partnerships, not after a violation has occurred.

Furthermore, members who have experienced harassment, rape, or other forms of sexual violence outside of the church, should be able to come to the church for healing. We must hear their stories and walk through the healing process with them—without imposing another layer of shame or silencing.

7. Continue Educating Leaders on Gender and Power

Both men and women can be harassed and abused. But poor theology and bad leadership practices often specifically endanger and hurt women. According to Peter Scazzerro in *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, "Navigating the issue of power is a true test of both character and leadership" (p. 239). Likewise, navigating the issues of gender and power will be a true test of the church's character and leadership. Specifically, will churches work to create safe places

Church is supposed to be a place of healing and hope.

of worship and work for all? Will they equally value the experiences and voices of women?

Every church leader who desires to create safe place and lead in the age of #ChurchToo should do the following:

- Read through the entries of #ChurchToo on Twitter. Identify with the voices of those who have been abused, harassed and pained.
- Conduct your own “power inventory” to identify the types of power you hold.²
- Pay attention to whose voices get heard in your congregation and

whose are overlooked.

- Take a class or workshop on sexual violence and seek to understand how violence affects your congregation.
- Form an educational groups of church leaders to unravel the myths and stereotypes about gender that run rampant in our churches.

For too long, church leaders have been silent on the sexual harassment and sexual violence that occurs in the church. If we’ve kept quiet in the past out of naiveté, ignorance, or woeful neglect of process, we are now without

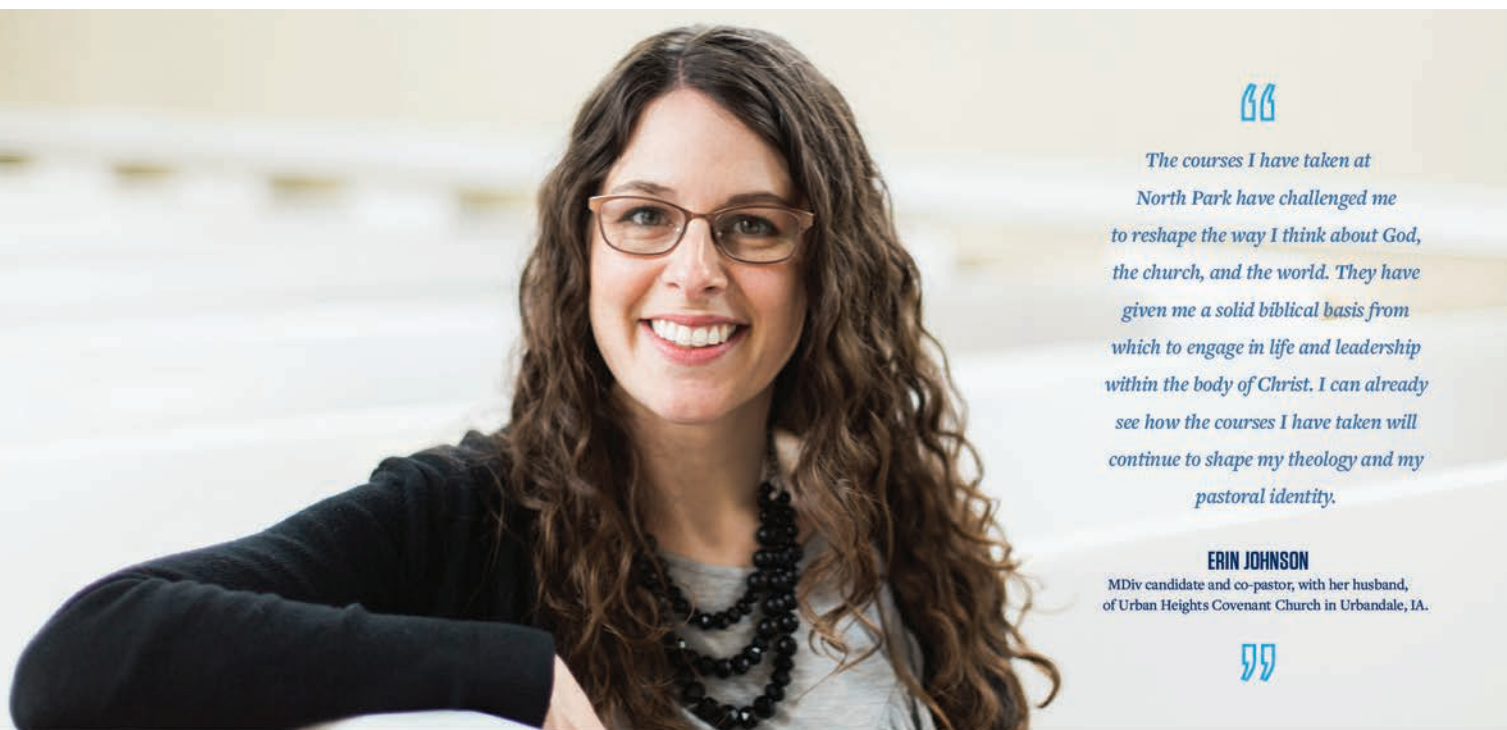
excuse. In the age of #ChurchToo, church leaders have a responsibility to address the gendered power imbalance that gave birth to and mandated this redemption movement. May we work to make the church a space of healing, transformation, and empowerment for all.



Dr. Jeanne Porter King serves an associate pastor in Illinois and runs an organizational and leadership consulting practice. Follow her on Twitter @JeannePKing or her blog at JeannePorterKing.com.

1. “Religious Landscape Study,” Pew Research Center, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/gender-composition/>.

2. Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015). On pages 248–249, Scazzero defines a power inventory and provides examples on pages 249–252.



“

The courses I have taken at North Park have challenged me to reshape the way I think about God, the church, and the world. They have given me a solid biblical basis from which to engage in life and leadership within the body of Christ. I can already see how the courses I have taken will continue to shape my theology and my pastoral identity.

ERIN JOHNSON

MDiv candidate and co-pastor, with her husband, of Urban Heights Covenant Church in Urbandale, IA.

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#ChurchToo

Hide this under a bushel
and the bushel will burn.
The building will burn.
The block. The body.



Amid #MeToo, Evangelical Leaders Call on CBE

As the #MeToo movement exposes rampant harassment and abuse in society and the church, evangelical leaders are calling on CBE for help in understanding the problem and how to overcome it.

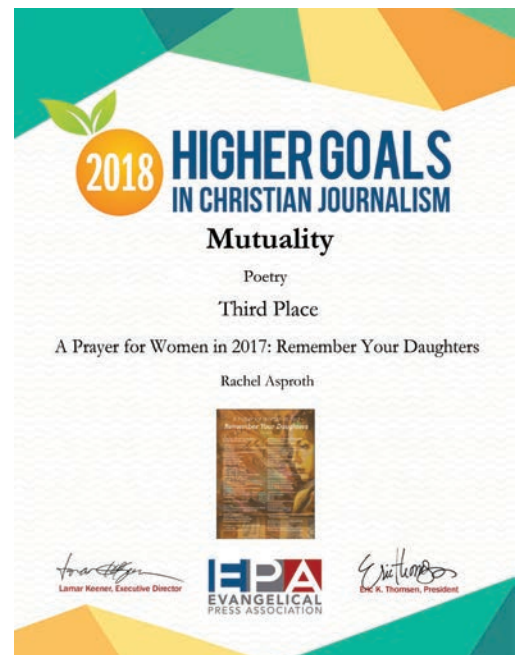
Every year, CBE attends the Evangelical Press Association convention, and this year's was extra special. In addition to winning three awards (read more below), our president, Dr. Mimi Haddad, spoke on a panel on the Christian response to sexual harassment (read the President's Column of this issue for a summary of her presentation). The panel was moderated by Dr. Sandra Glahn of Dallas Theological Seminary and also included Kate Shellnutt (*Christianity Today*) and Eugene Hung, blogger and violence prevention coordinator at the University of California-Irvine (read an adaptation of his presentation on pages 4–7).

Dr. Haddad has also been invited to present a paper on the topic of abuse, gender, and power at the November meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. Also presenting will be prominent abuse survivor and advocate Rachael Denhollander! We are pleased to see that leading evangelical theologians are wrestling with this pressing issue and recognizing the value of CBE's voice in creating a church that reflects God's ideals for women and men

CBE Wins 3 EPA Awards

This year, for the very first time, *Arise* blog posts were submitted to the Evangelical Press Association's Higher Goals in Christian Journalism contest, and CBE earned three awards:

1. "The Crushing Burden of Bearing Authority Alone," by Amanda Fowler, earned 5th place in the Single Blog Post category
2. "Wonder Woman in the Pulpit," by *Arise* editor Rachel Asproth, placed 3rd in Editorial
3. "A Prayer for Women: Remember your Daughters," also by Rachel Asproth, was awarded 3rd place in Poetry (the poem first appeared in *Arise* and later in *Mutuality*)



Change Lives through International Partnerships

#MeToo is a global movement—women are using the hashtag in multiple languages and at least 85 countries. Sadly, the church, as an irreproachable authority and social gatekeeper, has impeded efforts to advance gender equality and sometimes even justified the subjugation of women. Their lives are constrained and endangered by a few mistranslated and misinterpreted Bible verses. That's why CBE collaborates with pastors and lay leaders around the world to challenge gender inequality and fight gender-based violence.

Through the generosity of the CBE community, ministry partnerships are expanding in Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Just this spring, pastors in eastern Uganda hosted a CBE-sponsored conference where adults and youth gathered to explore gender equality through a biblical lens. The response was enthusiastic!

Women thanked us and CBE very much for the gender equality teachings and they said that they believe if we continue teaching them about gender equality, their husbands will change . . . By the time we finished up the married program, men no longer saw their wives as lesser and inferior human beings but saw them as close partners with potential, skills, and ability to work with at home, church, in government, and community.

It costs over \$48,000 each year to collaborate with pastors in these African countries.

Please stand with CBE and our African ministry partners by making a generous gift at **cbe.today/africa**.



Men break social norms by cooking and serving dinner to their wives at a gender equality conference in rural Uganda, where cooking is considered exclusively “women’s work.”



Ending Abuse: Four Steps for Churches

In his *Washington Post* article, “What makes some men sexual harassers?: Scientists are trying to explain the creeps of the world,” Illinois State University psychologist John Pryor offers insight into why some men harass while others do not.¹ His research, which has since been developed into the “Likelihood to Sexually Harass” scale—now a cornerstone tool for researchers—identifies four key characteristics common among harassers:

1. A tendency toward power, dominance, and authoritarianism
2. A lack of empathy
3. An environment that fosters impunity
4. A belief in traditional gender sex roles

For those who have been hearing women's stories for decades, these come as no surprise. Prepare/Enrich, the most prominent premarital inventory in the world, has over four million data points on marital satisfaction and abuse. Their data has shown that partner dominance is a key indicator for physical and sexual abuse.

We also know that people in power are likely to perceive sexual signals from subordinates, even where none exist. In the words of Jonathan Kunstman of Miami University of Ohio, “Power creates this perfect mental storm for misconduct.”²

Those in power are also more self-focused, more inclined to objectify others while lacking an awareness or concern for how their actions impact others. In short, they lack empathy. And, they often operate in environments where they can get away with abuse. Without the fear of justice, perpetrators believe they are untouchable, removing one more obstacle to predatory behavior. Communities who do not require training, certification, and accountability of leaders *unwittingly* collude with predators.

Traditional gender roles (men lead, protect, and provide; women submit and nurture) give men positions of power and authority by virtue of their gender. These roles enshrine male dominance as God's will. Even when men do not use this power to hurt others (many don't), the system still defines male-female identity by a hierarchy of power. Can this be the will of the God who created male and female in his image and commanded them both to fill and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:27–28)?

How can we address these problems?

Power, dominance, authoritarianism. In all four gospels, Jesus taught his disciples that “the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke 22:26). We hear a lot about servant leadership, but too often “servant leaders” live like royalty or wield enormous, unchallenged influence over their community. Yet, the Bible depicts leadership as service, not celebrity.

Lack of empathy. As churches push back on power and dominance, they create space for empathy. What else can build empathy? Churches can discuss porn and its impact from the pulpit, during premarital counseling, in adult education, and in seminaries. Why? Because porn enforces, often violently, gender roles of male dominance and female submission. Porn feeds and glorifies the abuse of women while silencing victims and protecting perpetrators. It also dulls empathy by fueling an erotic association between abuse and sex.

Impunity. Prominent survivor Rachael Denhollander calls for church leaders to “apply the same level of intellectual honesty and scrutiny that we apply to groups outside our own community.”³ Pastors and leaders need better education and certification on abuse, beginning in seminary. Churches need training on how to screen for potential predators and build accountable leadership teams that report all abuse to authorities. And, we can add women to leadership teams, which reduces unethical practices.

Gender roles. Humanitarian organizations recognize that gender equality (not gender roles) advances education and economic growth while helping end abuse, illiteracy, disease, and corruption. Where women are on leadership teams, workplaces are more productive and ethical. Marriages where authority is shared are happier and less abusive, with healthier children who flourish through adulthood. What is more, gender equality is a biblical ideal, as egalitarian scholarship has shown for years!

For far too long, we have allowed gender to eclipse the moral qualities required of leaders. Scripture teaches that leaders should demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, which is not gender-bound (Gal. 5:22–26). The church has elevated masculinity, power, and celebrity above character. In doing so, we have unwittingly colluded with predators and have failed to hold leaders accountable. The time for change is now.

1. William Wan, “What makes some men sexual harassers? Science tries to explain the creeps of the world,” *Washington Post*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/12/20/what-makes-some-men-sexual-harassers-science-tries-to-explain-the-harvey-weinsteins-of-the-world/>.

2. Ibid.

3. Rachael Denhollander, “Response to Sovereign Grace Churches,” Facebook note, March 1, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/rachael-denhollander/response-to-sovereign-grace-churches/1720170721396574/>.

Praise

- Thanks to the generosity of CBE donors, rather than one \$5,000 Alvera Mickelsen Memorial Scholarship, we'll be able to award two this year, at \$6,000 each! If you or someone you know wants to apply, do it fast! The deadline for 2018 is June 20.
- Our partners in Uganda and Zimbabwe recently hosted egalitarian events. Both reported high attendance and growth in people's understanding of and commitment to the egalitarian view!

Prayer

- Our Finland conference, "Created for Partnership," hosted in partnership with RaTas (CBE's Finnish partner organization), is coming soon. Registration is still open! Visit cbe.today/finland. Pray for good attendance, final preparations, travel, and an impact on the Finnish church.
- EFOGE, one of our long-standing partners in East Africa, will be holding a conference in Uganda in August. Pray that a lot of people will attend and that the message of mutuality will make a lasting impact.

CBE INTERNATIONAL

Mission Statement

CBE International (CBE) exists to promote biblical justice and community by educating Christians that the Bible calls women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world.

Statement of Faith

- We believe in one God, creator and sustainer of the universe, eternally existing as three persons in equal power and glory.
- We believe in the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are only possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
- We believe the Holy Spirit equips us for service and sanctifies us from sin.
- We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- We believe that women and men are equally created in God's image and given equal authority and stewardship of God's creation.
- We believe that men and women are equally responsible for and distorted by sin, resulting in shattered relationships with God, self, and others.

Core Values

- Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice.
- Patriarchy (male dominance) is not a biblical ideal but a result of sin.
- Patriarchy is an abuse of power, taking from females what God has given them: their dignity, and freedom, their leadership, and often their very lives.
- While the Bible reflects patriarchal culture, the Bible does not teach patriarchy in human relationships.
- Christ's redemptive work frees all people from patriarchy, calling women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership.
- God's design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a man and a woman, celibate singleness and mutual submission in Christian community.
- The unrestricted use of women's gifts is integral to the work of the Holy Spirit and essential for the advancement of the gospel in the world.
- Followers of Christ are to oppose injustice and patriarchal teachings and practices that marginalize and abuse females and males.

To learn more about CBE's values, history, and ministry, visit cbe.today/info.

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CBE is proud to offer all of our digital resources for free online! Find every *Mutuality* article ever published, the full archive of CBE's academic journal, *Priscilla Papers*, hundreds of book reviews, and hundreds of video and audio recordings of lectures given by world-renowned scholars like N.T. Wright, Gordon Fee, and more!

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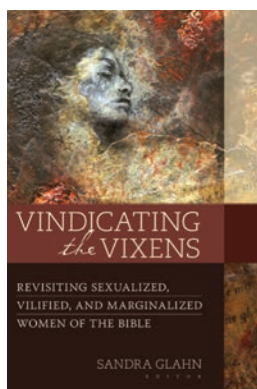
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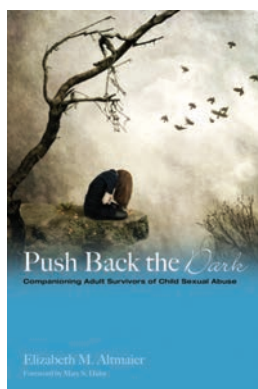


Vindicating the Vixens

Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible

Sandra Glahn, editor

Did the Samaritan woman really divorce five husbands in a world where women rarely divorced even one? Did Bathsheba seduce King David by bathing in the nude? Gain a greater understanding of gender in the Bible through the eyes of a diverse group of evangelical scholars who assert that Christians have missed the point of some scriptural stories by assuming the women in them were "bad girls."

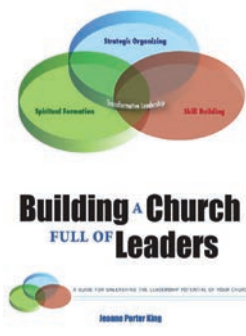


Push Back the Dark

Companioning Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

Elizabeth M. Altmaier,
Mary S. Hulst

Adults in your church, small group, or other Christian organization are silently suffering the tragic consequences of having been sexually abused as children or youth. In these pages every reader will find helpful content that will take you from feeling out of your depth to knowing you are empowered to be an effective companion in God's transforming work in the lives of survivors of abuse.



Building a Church Full of Leaders

A Guide for Unleashing the Leadership Potential of Your Church

Jeanne Porter King

In *Building a Church Full of Leaders*, Porter King helps pastors and ministry leaders develop strategic and transformative systems for organizing ministry, recruitment, training, and ongoing development that aims to help church members see themselves not just as volunteers but as servants and co-laborers of ministry.



The Courage Coach

A Practical, Friendly Guide on How to Heal from Abuse

Ashley Easter

Through her book, *The Courage Coach*, Ashley Easter brings her life experience and training to those who have lived with harmful relationships. This book is a space where victims and survivors can be heard, affirmed, and equipped, and answers questions such as, "Is this abuse?" "Why was I abused?" "What should I do now?" "What are my rights?" "What should I expect from others?" and "How can I move forward toward healing?"