

Restoration of Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse: How Can Caregivers Contribute to the Process?

From *Priscilla Papers*, 20/1 (Winter 2006) 13–22

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In the United States, it is estimated that there are between fifty thousand to more than one million instances of child sexual abuse (CSA) each year. Research shows that one out of every four girls and one out of every seven boys has been sexually abused before the age of eighteen. This means that, “in any group of adults gathered together for ministry or another purpose, 15 to 20 percent of the people present may have been sexually abused by an adult before the age of eighteen.”¹ We may have relatives, friends, colleagues, and members of our church who are still haunted by the traumatic memories of CSA and tormented by its poisonous effects on their lives, but who choose to conceal their pain.² Churches and caregivers should not ignore the needs of this silent group of sufferers. This article discusses some of the major steps in the healing process of CSA survivors and how caregivers can be equipped to facilitate the process by adopting a multidisciplinary approach.

The Healing Process

CSA survivors have to be made whole both psychologically and spiritually. It is said that the healing process is like a spiral with different stages and that the survivors have to move up and down the spiral and go through the different stages repeatedly:

You go through the same stages again and again; but traveling up the spiral, you pass through them at a different level, with a different perspective. You might spend a year or two dealing intensely with your abuse. Then you might take a break and focus more on the present. . . . With each new cycle, your capacity to feel, to remember, to make lasting changes, is strengthened.³

1. The Decision to Heal

The first step toward recovery requires a CSA survivor to make a conscious decision to be healed. Time will dull some pain, but deep healing will not happen unless a person chooses to pursue it.⁴ Further, healing often takes years of commitment and dedication. The initial stages of therapy can be especially unbearable at times as CSA survivors have to recall the incidents of abuse in their childhood. Thus, caregivers should help them to appreciate the importance of the commitment required and support them to make the decision to gain wholeness.

2. Recalling the Past

It is common for CSA victims to suppress all or some memories of the abuse and/or their feelings at the time of the abuse as a means to cope with the traumatic experiences.⁵ At the beginning stage of the healing process, CSA survivors, therefore, have to try to regain memories of the abuse and their feelings relating

to those incidents. Reconstructing the past is necessary since it will help CSA survivors understand the chains of events that led to any consequent damages. This will then enable them to appreciate the real roots of their current problems.⁶ However, reliving the horrors of past abuses can be painful. Support for the CSA survivors is essential to help them get through this stage.

3. No More Denial—Believing and Acknowledging that the Abuse Did Happen

It is common for the sake of reputation and self-preservation for CSA survivors to deny both consciously and subconsciously that the sexual abuse really happened. Very often, “the pain (or fear) of admitting what a parent (or abuser) has done is so terrifying that children might block it out of their minds or create [an] illusory world.”⁷ Yet, denial makes CSA survivors live a life of lies and deny their true selves. In order for the CSA survivors to find healing, caregivers should encourage them to abandon their false reality and acknowledge that they were abused. Sadly, CSA survivors growing up with abuse may believe that what happened to them is normal. In that case, it may be necessary to help them realize that what they experienced was indeed sexual abuse and not what is expected in a healthy family.⁸

4. Breaking Silence

For most of their lives, CSA survivors live in secrecy and silence about the abuse. It is common for an abuser to silence a child with threats and lies, such as, “If you tell, you will burn in hell.” A threat like this may sound ludicrous to an adult, but it is sufficient to force a child into submission. In the book *Ultimate Judgment: A Story of Emotional Corruption, Obsession, and Betrayal*, Meg Clairmonte gives an account of how her stepfather abused her for nearly thirty years. Before his death, she seldom told anyone what had happened to her, not even her husband. Meg was asked once if her stepfather was sexually abusing her, but she denied it because “[t]he only thing [she] could think of was what Donald [her stepfather] had always told [her], the years and years of warnings he’d issued: *Bad things will happen if you tell anyone, Margaret. Very Bad things. And you know that’s true, you know it. You’ll burn in hell.*”⁹ Furthermore, CSA survivors may not disclose what happened because of shame. Worse still, it is not uncommon that, even if they do tell, no one believes them, not even their parents.¹⁰

Thus, if a person discloses that he or she is a CSA survivor, it is essential to treat what he or she said seriously. In fact, it takes a lot of courage and trust for CSA survivors to disclose their long-hidden secret of abuse. Give them a listening ear and encourage them to continue to break the silence since that is a powerful healing tool for CSA survivors. Breaking silence will

enable them to move through the shame and secrecy that have been keeping them isolated. It will help them come out of the cocoon of denial and acknowledge that the abuse did happen. It will also help them acquire understanding, support, and help from others. Most importantly, it may help them realize that they are not alone. Encourage them to join a support group for CSA survivors. There they may be surprised to discover that there are many others like themselves who have been sexually abused and are no longer willing to suffer in silence.¹¹

5. Dealing with Guilt—Understanding That They Were Not to Blame for the Abuse

CSA survivors also have to deal with the issue of guilt. Caregivers must appreciate that it is very common for CSA survivors to blame themselves for the abuse. This might happen because the abusers have justified their actions with inadequate excuses like “I can’t help myself because you are sexy,” or “You’re a bad, nasty, dirty girl. That’s why I’m doing this.”¹² Often, children who grow up with such lies cannot tell right from wrong or truth from untruth. They begin to see themselves as the cause for the abuse. Also, where the abuser is a person close to the child (e.g., his or her father), it will be more distressing for the child to accept that someone he or she loves does not have his or her best interests at heart. It is often easier to maintain the belief that the child was responsible for the abuse.¹³ Besides, it is “better to feel responsible than to feel vulnerable. Better to feel ‘in charge’ than to realize the truth that there was nothing [one] could do to stop the powerful adult.”¹⁴ Caregivers should help CSA survivors see things in the right perspective and place the blame on the abusers instead.

Sometimes, CSA survivors may feel guilty and shameful for their failure to fight off sexual advances because, as children, they needed attention and affection from the abusers. In that case, remind them that it is natural for children to long for affection and attention from those who care for them. In addition, it is quite possible that, as children, CSA survivors were simply unable to protect themselves.¹⁵ Often, they need to be reminded that this was not their fault. In some cases, CSA survivors may feel guilty for having allowed sexual advances to continue after they have grown up. Readers of a book like *Ultimate Judgment* initially may not be able to understand why a victim would allow her stepfather to continue abusing her sexually, even after she had been married and had a son.¹⁶ But, as Bass and Davis explain, the CSA survivors “may be an adult in age, but [they] are still responding from the perspective of a small, powerless child.”¹⁷ Their boundaries have been violated since they were young and they have never been trained to say no to the abusers. CSA victims, therefore, may not be able to resist the advances and protect their boundaries although they are grown adults.¹⁸ Thus, caregivers should help CSA survivors realize it is unfair to blame themselves in such circumstances.

6. Grieving and Mourning

As denial of the abuse is common among CSA survivors, most survivors may have never allowed themselves opportunities to grieve and mourn over their loss of innocence, betrayal by loved ones, and other damages they may have suffered. Yet, grieving and mourning are necessary in the healing process since they are ways to honor one’s pain, let go of the past, and move forward in the healing process.¹⁹ Thus, caregivers should assure CSA survivors that it is all right to mourn and should encourage them to do so.

7. Dealing with Anger

“Victims of abuse are often angry—very angry.”²⁰ It is natural for CSA survivors to feel anger for the pain they have suffered and the emotional paralysis that prevents them from functioning properly. It is, therefore, important for caregivers to reassure CSA survivors that it is all right for them to feel angry, and to encourage them to express their anger via healthy outlets (e.g.,

praying, journaling, writing angry letters, exercising, or becoming advocates for CSA victims), directing their energy at the right people (the abusers and those who failed to protect them).²¹ Otherwise, suppressed and unresolved anger may lead

to depression and anxiety. If not careful, CSA survivors may displace their unresolved anger toward other innocent people like their spouses or themselves.

The movie *Antwone Fisher*²² provides a case in point. Antwone, the leading character in the movie, was someone with an “anger problem.” On one occasion, he hit a colleague who had teased him for being a virgin. It turned out that he could not control himself because he had been sexually and physically abused as a child and his colleague’s remarks flamed anger that had long been burning inside him. On the verge of being kicked out of the Navy, he began to see a psychiatrist who taught him to direct his anger at the abusers and encouraged him to confront them. Eventually, he did, and it set him free.

8. Confrontations

Confronting the abuser can be a powerful healing tool. It is a means to confirm that one was deeply hurt by the abuser’s acts and to make clear to the abuser that the offence cannot be ignored.²³ It is also a sign of the CSA survivors’ ability to break away from the abusers’ control. Instead of being powerless abused children, they can now stand up for themselves. As the abusers grow weaker, the CSA survivors grow stronger. This happened to Antwone Fisher. At the end of the movie, he could move into a new phase of life after having confronted his abusers and those who had abandoned him. He became a grown man instead of a helpless child in an adult body.

Still, confrontation is not easy. Antwone Fisher was supported and accompanied by his girlfriend to confront the demons of

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his past. Likewise, CSA survivors will need much support from caregivers to complete this ordeal.

9. Forgiveness

Sometime during the healing process, caregivers may wish to encourage CSA survivors to forgive the abusers. Forgiveness is important as it allows CSA survivors to become liberated from the chains of the past and to experience a new freedom. It is also an essential step before CSA survivors can reconcile with the abusers and those who failed to protect them from the abuse (e.g., family members). Thus, the CSA survivors, instead of the abusers, are the true beneficiaries of this benevolent act. Caregivers have to remind victims that forgiveness is a choice. Forgiveness will not come naturally. A person chooses to forgive. It requires conscious choice on their part.²⁴ However, caregivers must be careful of the appropriate timing. Caregivers should never push CSA survivors to forgive the abusers at the beginning of the healing process because they will not be ready to do so until they have had a chance to articulate their pain. Pushing them to forgive when they are not ready to do so will make them feel that the caregivers are denying the validity of their feelings.

10. Spirituality—Returning to the Loving Embrace of the Abba Father

Dan Allender points out, “The devilishness of abuse is that it does Satan’s work of deceiving children about God’s true nature and encouraging them to mistrust Him. Fearing to trust God, the abuse victim will naturally choose other gods to provide her with life, whether alcohol, promiscuity, or approval-seeking.”²⁵ CSA has a devastating impact of deafening its victims’ souls and making them turn away from God. This occurs because, as the quotation suggests, CSA survivors may have a distorted image of God as a result of the abuse. Since parents are children’s first models of God, CSA victims may think that God is abusive and untrustworthy, if the abusers are their parents or parental figures who have betrayed and abandoned them.²⁶ They may also find it hard to believe that God is good and loving as they cannot understand why God allowed the abuse to happen. They may become angry at God as a result, which can drive CSA victims further from God.²⁷

CSA survivors may find themselves hiding from God because of guilt and shame. As mentioned earlier, CSA survivors often think they are to blame for the abuse. Therefore, abused children may fear that God will punish them. In the words of the author of *Survivor Prayers: Talking with God about Childhood Sexual Abuse*: “Abuse was a central part of my earliest pictures of myself and of God. I remember my vivid childhood fear that getting close to God would destroy me. I grew up thinking that God could never love me.”²⁸ CSA survivors may also avoid God because of shame. They may feel they are deficient and undesirable in God’s

eyes. Like Adam and Eve, “[t]heir capacity to feel shame did not lead to change or a return to the Creator. It led to the opposite attempt to hide behind a bush.”²⁹ Likewise, CSA survivors may hide from God for fear of rejection.

Finally, CSA damages its victims’ capacity to establish connections and intimacy with other people, let alone God. As one CSA survivor explained, “While children typically reach to others and learn basic lessons of mutuality, as abused children we learned not to connect with others, but to protect ourselves. All the dynamics of relationships, elements of separateness and connection, giving and taking, self-sufficiency and interdependence have been skewed by the abuse.”³⁰

Nevertheless, it is important for CSA survivors to rework their relationship with God since true healing can only come from returning to His loving embrace by the power of the Holy Spirit. When people turn away from God, they are just turning to idols which will never satisfy their souls or make them whole. Thus, caregivers must understand the common factors mentioned above which draw the abused away from God and help them find their way “home” into the Abba’s arms.

Caregivers may facilitate the process by helping reform the survivors’ image of God, finding out what they think God is like, helping them to realize that their image of God may have been tainted by the image of their abusive or negligent parents, clarifying the true nature and attributes of God according to the Bible, going through relevant scripture with them, etc.³¹ In particular, caregivers can help CSA survivors see God as a good parent with unconditional love who will accept them just as they are and find them precious since they were made in God’s image, assuring them that there is no need to hide from God because of shame, and pointing out that they are not responsible for the abuse they endured.

Caregivers may help survivors resolve some of their questions regarding the presence of evil and pain in this world. Books like Philip Yancey’s *Disappointment with God*³² and Chapter 6 of Timothy Kearney’s *Caring for Sexually Abused Children*³³ provide some useful answers to questions concerning the fairness, silence, and hiddenness of God. Yet, caregivers should understand that very often they may not be able to restore people’s love and faith in God, even if they can answer all of their questions brilliantly. Only divine love can truly draw people to God. Thus, it is important to help CSA survivors appreciate and experience God’s profound love for them.

Caregivers can try to achieve this by showing their love and understanding to those who are abused. As Yancey notes, “In the age of the Spirit, God delegates his reputation, even his essence, to us.”³⁴ God has assigned the job to all Christians to represent Him in this world. Through a caregiver’s loving support, abuse survivors may sample their first taste of God’s love. When they experience God’s love through the caregivers, God is no longer hidden.

Then, caregivers should encourage CSA survivors to break through their fear of intimacy and vulnerability to reconnect with God. They should also encourage them to pray and spend time with God and to be honest with God. This all means that they can talk to God about their abuse and even ask God the most difficult of all questions: Why did you allow this?

Opening up to God may be difficult for CSA survivors as they are so used to hiding their abuse and feelings, but, “[a]s [they] begin to experiment with telling God the truth about [their] abuse, about [their] feelings, about [their] terror, [they] can experience the reality that [their] feelings and [their] experiences will not destroy [them], nor will they drive God away.”³⁵ Ultimately, only through reconnecting with God will they experience God’s profound love for them.

CSA is an isolating experience. Most victims of abuse feel very alone. But they can experience life-transforming healing from abandonment and the ultimate acceptance they long for from an intimate relationship with God.

Relationship between Justice and the Restoration Process of CSA Survivors

“There cannot be healing without justice,” declared one CSA survivor,³⁶ recounting his journey of healing from being sexually molested by a priest when he was young and explaining how he had been denied justice for being time-barred to sue the abuser for compensation. Caregivers have often overlooked the relationship between the criminal and civil justice systems and the restoration of CSA survivors. I am not aware of any research study on this topic. Yet, I argue that a relationship exists between justice and the healing of CSA survivors.

As discussed earlier, breaking silence by disclosing the abuse, resolving one’s rage, and confronting the abusers are major steps in the healing process. Bringing the abusers to justice through the legal system can help bring closure when survivors disclose the abuse as a court case. It also calls abusers to account and helps the victims see that the abuse was not their fault. Adopting the legal recourse can help victims channel and resolve their rage at the abusers by publicly demanding and receiving restitution and monetary compensation from them. Besides, abuse survivors do need monetary compensation to receive therapy, which can be costly.

Sometimes, bringing the abusers to justice is also necessary to prevent them from abusing other children. It also will deter others from engaging in such acts. In ministering to survivors, caregivers should, therefore, have a basic idea of how the legal system may work to bring the abusers to justice. Caregivers should help survivors become aware of their legal rights against the abusers.

1. How Can the Legal System Help?

The legal system can bring the abusers to justice through criminal prosecution. Upon conviction, the abusers may be fined and sentenced to imprisonment. The criminal justice system, however, will not provide much monetary compensation to the survivors. Thus, victims of abuse may wish to commence civil action against their abusers for compensation. Additionally,

they may sue for damages from other entities that may also be held responsible for the abusers’ wrongful acts. For instance, schools may be held responsible for their teachers’ sexual abuses of students on the basis of vicarious liability (i.e., the abusers are their employees and they are committing the wrongful acts in the course of their employment). CSA survivors may also sue other people on the basis of their negligence in preventing the abuses from happening or for being conspirators to the acts. For instance, in *Ultimate Judgment*, Meg Clairmonte’s mother was held liable for having engaged in a conspiracy with her stepfather to abuse her sexually and emotionally.³⁷ Sometimes, CSA survivors may also wish to sue a third party, especially an entity, because they may be in a better financial position than the abusers to pay the compensation.

However, caregivers must be aware that there is usually a “limitation period” (i.e., a period of time specified by the relevant statutes) for initiating criminal prosecution of sexual offences against children and civil claims against the abusers. No legal action can be brought against an abuser after the expiration of the limitation period. While the majority of states in the U.S. have extended or even abolished the time limitation for the prosecution of sexual offences against children,³⁸ all states have laws limiting the time during which a person can bring a civil action against an abuser. The current state of the law governing this area is problematic.

2. Time Limitation for Civil Actions for Damages from CSA

The limitation period for bringing a civil claim may vary from state to state. In most states the general rule is that a person must bring a claim for personal injuries within one to two years from the date when the cause of action accrues (i.e., the wrongful act was committed). One exception is that, in cases where a child is injured, the limitation period for bringing the claims will only begin to run (i.e., start to expire) when the child reaches the age of majority (i.e., eighteen in most states). Thus, in accordance with this general rule, CSA victims will lose the right to pursue any remedy from the abusers once they reach nineteen or twenty.³⁹ This rule has created problems for CSA survivors. Since it is common that CSA survivors may not become aware of the connection between the psychological injuries they suffer and their earlier sexual abuses until some time in their twenties and thirties (e.g., due to their repression of the memories of abuse), they would have lost the right to sue their abusers for damages.⁴⁰ As a result, CSA victims began to advocate for extension of the limitation period for CSA claims in the early 1980s. This has resulted in the enactment of new statutes extending the limitation period for CSA cases in many states. By 2000, thirty-one states had enacted statutes which extend the time for filing a CSA claim to (i) two to seventeen years after the victims reach eighteen and/or (ii) a certain period of time after the victims discover or reasonably should have discovered the connection between their psychological injuries and the sexual abuse (“CSA statutes”). For instance, in Massachusetts, a CSA victim must bring a claim within (i) three years from the date the

abuse took place or (ii) within three years after the victim reaches age eighteen or “three years from the time the victim discovered or reasonably should have discovered that an emotional or psychological injury or condition was caused by the [wrongful] act.”⁴¹ Appendix A is a list of all the states which have enacted CSA statutes and the limitation period governing CSA claims in those states.⁴²

However, there are still many problems surrounding the issue of a limitation period for CSA claims. Firstly, a number of states still do not have any statute extending the limitation period for bringing CSA actions. For instance, CSA victims in New York State must bring their claims against the abusers within one year after they reach eighteen. Otherwise, they will lose their right to sue the abusers. No extension of the limitation period is allowed. Appendix B is a list of the states which have not enacted any statute extending the limitation period for CSA claims and the limitation period governing such cases.

Secondly, pursuant to most CSA statutes, the limitation period will start to run (i.e., begin to expire) as soon as the CSA victims know that their past abuses have caused their current psychological problems. These statutes do not apply to situations where CSA survivors have delayed in bringing an action because they are emotionally unsettled or unready to disclose the abuse to the public or confront the abusers. It is irrelevant whether the victims are emotionally incapable of initiating such claims. This is unfortunate since such emotional conditions are indeed common among CSA survivors. The CSA survivor noted earlier⁴³ discovered that his claim against his abuser was time-barred as it took place more than twenty years previously. But he could not bring the action earlier as the ghost of yesterday had haunted him for a long time and it took him more than twenty years to become emotionally stable and ready to confront his abuser.

Thirdly, the courts of many states have decided that CSA statutes will not apply to claims against non-perpetrators (e.g., the abuser’s accomplice). Thus, a CSA survivor in Massachusetts who was sexually abused thirty years ago may take advantage of the state’s CSA statute to sue the abuser today if she can prove that she only discovered the connection between her psychological injuries and the abuse recently. However, she cannot sue the accomplice of the abuser who set her up for the abuse at this late date because the Massachusetts CSA statute does not apply to actions against non-perpetrators. Pursuant to the general rule, her action would have become time-barred three years after she reached eighteen. This law has significant implications. As I noted earlier, it means that CSA survivors will be deprived of the chance to make claims from other parties who may have more money than the abusers to pay the compensation (e.g., the abusers’ employers). Besides, one reason for making entities like schools and churches responsible for their employees’ conduct is to require them to be responsible to educate their employees and ensure that no abuse will occur. This purpose, however, cannot be achieved if CSA survivors lose the right to claim compensation from the employers shortly after they reach eighteen.

3. Implications for Caregivers

When a caregiver is approached by a CSA survivor, he or she should be aware of the issue of limitation period, which may prevent the CSA survivor from receiving compensation from the abusers and/or third parties. Of course, litigation can also have a negative impact on the CSA survivors, as it can be prolonged, stressful, and expensive. But, I believe, caregivers should still advise CSA survivors of the option of legal actions rather than let the opportunity lapse. After all, CSA survivors should be given a choice and should not be deprived of any possible option. Thus, caregivers may wish to advise CSA survivors to consult an attorney about the possibility of legal actions and the limitation period for such actions. Furthermore, instead of serving individual CSA survivors, caregivers can serve CSA survivors collectively by becoming an advocate for legal reform in the area of limitation periods for CSA actions.

Who Will Go with Them?

The Bible asks us to “weep with those who weep” (Rom 12:15, NRSV). How can we ignore the needs of CSA survivors who have long been weeping in silence? Caregivers may better serve the needs of CSA survivors by adopting a multidisciplinary approach in their ministries. Caregivers should facilitate both the psychological and spiritual recovery of CSA survivors. Caregivers must not overlook how the legal system may serve their needs. They may wish to remind CSA survivors of their legal rights against the abusers and other parties. But most importantly, caregivers should be willing to spend time and effort to support and encourage them along the road to recovery, which will undoubtedly be a long and winding one. CSA survivors need companions and cheerleaders to walk with them through the valley of the shadow of death in their journey out of the ashes. Are you willing to go with them?

Notes

1. Timothy Keaney, *Caring for Sexually Abused Children: A Handbook for Families & Churches* (InterVarsity, 2001) 18.
2. CSA victims may suffer from long-term psychological problems such as low self-esteem, a sense of powerlessness, difficulty in handling one’s feelings, difficulty in feeling certain emotions as one is accustomed to suppressing them, hatred of one’s body, and difficulty in establishing trust and intimacy with others. One may also suffer from other damages such as a damaged sexual capacity and damaged relationships with families of origin. See Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, *The Courage to Heal* (HarperPerennial, 1994) 37–44. Yet, according to Dan B. Allender, “[t]he damage done through abuse is awful and heinous, but minor compared to the dynamics that distort the victim’s relationship with God and rob her of the joy of loving and being loved by others.” *The Wounded Heart* (NavPress, 1995) 13.
3. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 65.
4. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 24.
5. Allender, *The Wounded Heart*, 201; Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 77–78.
6. Allender, *The Wounded Heart*, 202.
7. Erwin W. Lutzer, *Putting Your Past Behind You: Finding Hope for Life’s Deepest Hurts* (Moody, 1997) 27.
8. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 100.

9. Meg Clairmonte and Aurora Mackey, *Ultimate Judgment: A Story of Emotional Corruption, Obsession, and Betrayal* (Health Communications, 2000) 203.

10. Meg Clairmonte recounts how she told her mother what was happening to her but her mother did not believe her. Neither did the senior pastor at the church which her family had been attending. *Ultimate Judgment*, 309–14, 325–28; see also Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 103–5.

11. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 106.

12. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 115.

13. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 116.

14. Catherine J. Foote, *Survivor Prayers: Talking with God about Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Westminster, 1994) 11.

15. Foote, *Survivor Prayers*, 116–17.

16. Clairmonte and Mackey, *Ultimate Judgment*, 223.

17. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 118.

18. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 117–18.

19. Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 65.

20. Lutzer, *Putting Your Past Behind You*, 73.

21. See Bass and Davis, *The Courage to Heal*, 135, 141.

22. *Antwone Fisher*, DVD, directed by Denzel Washington (Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003).

23. Alice Mathews, “The Role of Forgiveness,” lecture, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Oct 19, 2004).

24. Mathews, “The Role of Forgiveness.”

25. Allender, *The Wounded Heart*, 26.

26. Mark Yantzi, *Sexual Offending and Restoration* (Herald, 1998)

35. See also Allender, *The Wounded Heart*, 24–25.

27. “Why did my uncle do that? Why did God let that happen?” Those questions can pound in the mind and tear at the soul. For many of us [CSA victims], such questions and doubts have been significant blocks to a connection with God. We have felt the need either to reject our thoughts or to reject God,” said Catherine J. Foote, in *Survivor Prayers*, 10.

28. Foote, *Survivor Prayers*, 2.

29. Allender, *The Wounded Heart*, 65.

30. Foote, *Survivor Prayers*, 10.

31. Caregivers may refer to Sandra D. Wilson, *Into Abba’s Arms: Finding the Acceptance You’ve Always Wanted* (Tyndale House, 1998) 161. The author has provided useful information contrasting the characters of God and impaired parents.

32. Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God* (Zondervan, 1998).

33. Keaney, *Caring for Sexually Abused Children*, 93–119.

34. Yancey, *Disappointment with God*, 156–60.

35. Foote, *Survivor Prayers*, 42.

36. Anonymous guest speaker at Catherine Kroeger’s “Human Sexuality” class, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Jan 21, 2004).

37. Clairmonte and Mackey, *Ultimate Judgment*, 459.

38. Editor’s Note: The 2006 version of this article listed here the U.S. states that do not have any time limitation for the prosecution of most sexual offences against children. That list is not reproduced here because it has likely changed over time. The article then gave a link to the National Center for Victims of Crime (<https://victimsofcrime.org/>) and ended with the following comment: “Therefore, caregivers may wish to advise CSA survivors to contact the lawyers in their states to confirm the limitation period for prosecution of CSA cases and ensure that they will not lose their right to bring the abusers to justice.”

39. Rebecca Rix, ed., *Sexual Abuse Litigation: A Practical Resource for Attorneys, Clinicians, and Advocates* (Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma, 2000), 50.

40. Rix, ed., *Sexual Abuse Litigation*, 51.

41. 3 General Law c. 260, §4C, as inserted by St. 1993, c. 307. See Susan K. Smith, “Massachusetts Civil Statute of Limitations for Child Sexual Abuse,” available at: http://smith-lawfirm.com/sol_Mass.html.

42. Editor’s Note: The appendices and their endnotes are not included in this 2023 version of the article, since their data has likely changed over time.

43. Anonymous, see endnote 36.

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