

# ***The Psychology and Methods of Sin*** ***-contrasted with-*** ***The Mindset and Fruits of the Spirit***

***“The heart is deceitful above all things...who can know it?” (Jer 17:9)***

## ***“Dealing With the Abuser – First Deal With Yourself”***

**November 7, 2010**

**Sermon Text:** 1 Corinthians 5

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew  
20:17-28

### **Introduction**

*It shall not be so among you.* These are our Lord’s words – His command! There is no place in Christ’s Church for “lording it over” another person. Greatness in Christ’s kingdom is measured in servanthood – with Jesus Himself as the supreme model, becoming obedient even to death for us.

The abusive man, of course, knows nothing of this – or what little he may know, he abhors. Lording it over his victims is what he is all about. He controls his victim by –

- using jealousy
- withholding love

- ignoring her feelings or belittling them
- calling her derogatory names
- telling her she is worthless and stupid, lazy, or ugly
- telling her that other people say the same things about her
- humiliating her in front of others
- denying her reality, perceptions, beliefs, and values

And in many, many more ways.

*“Victimizers have no firm sense of boundaries and thus feel entitled to whatever they can take by force or persuasion. Right or wrong has little to do with it. People with this style care only about their own well-being and advantage and are quick to justify their ruthless and opportunistic actions. Viewing the world as a jungle in which survival of the fittest is the only enduring principle, victimizers cannot afford the luxury of loyalty or other emotional distractions. Their script is to get what they can from others and, to the extent possible, inflict pain on them along the way.”*  
[Toxic Relationships and How to

Change Them, Dr. Clinton W. McLemore]

*“This is how Shannon discovered how volatile her new boyfriend could be. He yelled at her, called her names, and even threatened to hit her. Although she was rattled and told herself that it might be best to find another boyfriend, Shannon found Lewis attractive and was reluctant to put an end to an exciting romance.*

*Then she discovered, through a friend at work, that Lewis was married. When she confronted him, he said that he’d been separated for months and that, since obtaining a divorce was a mere technicality, he hadn’t seen any reason to mention that he was married ‘on paper.’ God, he assured her, understood his heart and knew that Lewis was completely committed to Shannon. In God’s eyes, Lewis insisted, they were already married.*

*A few weeks later, Lewis didn’t show up for dinner at a restaurant where they had agreed to meet. After waiting for an hour, Shannon drove by his ‘ex-wife’s’ house and noticed his car parked in the driveway. She waited for 35 minutes until the front door finally opened and, after a warm embrace and a lingering kiss, Lewis bid the woman good-bye.*

*Shannon, who had parked down the street, drove back to her apartment. Lewis showed up 5 minutes later. She asked where he had been and why he had missed their dinner appointment. He replied that he had had to stay at the office to finish some work. When Shannon confronted Lewis about his lies, he became enraged, called her an obscene name, not the first time, and slapped her.” [McLemore]*

The abusive man. He lord’s it over his victim and feels entirely justified in his abuse. Even when Lewis slapped Shannon, he felt justified in doing so – after all – hadn’t she been guilty of spying on him? She had NO right to intrude upon his privacy like that!

**NOTE:** Girls, young women. Notice this very carefully. Lewis claimed to be a Christian. He was so nice and charming! He would convince you that his marriage problems were all his ex-wife’s fault entirely. *You must never detour from the Lord’s plain instruction to us about marriage!* Shannon was not wise. She was even sinful in allowing herself to continue in a relationship even after she knew Lewis was still married. And the probability is very high that Shannon and Lewis were involved in immorality with one another as

well. *“To the extent that Shannon tolerated such abuse, she was actually inviting and rewarding it.”* [McLemore]

*“Whitaker is merciless to his wife, Janet. They have gone to see their pastor, but nothing has changed. He tells her she’s stupid, makes fun of how she talks, and routinely yells at her when he comes home from work. When this happens, Janet begins to whimper, and the more she cries, the angrier he gets. It is as if her suffering spurs him on to further aggression. He always feels bad about what he’s done – until the next time, when the cycle starts again. Whitaker is a major-league verbal abuser. And the more Janet pouts and whimpers, the more she is going to get abused. Victimizers are sharks who become even more predatory when others bleed.”* [McLemore]

Well, this morning we want to continue to discuss this matter of *how to deal with the abusive person.* We are going to attempt to cover a number of points in answering this question, so apply yourselves and let’s move right through it. It is all VERY important material.

### **I. What Am I Getting Out of it?**

Shannon was getting something out of the relationship – Lewis was so

handsome and this was such an exciting romance. THE VICTIM’S ENABLING BEHAVIOR IS WRONG – EVEN SINFUL AT TIMES. BUT IT NEVER JUSTIFIES THE ABUSER AND HIS ABUSE! NEVER! The responsibility for the abuse is his alone.

Listen to these words of instruction from Christ Himself and let’s see how we can apply them to the victim of abuse and how they can help her deal with her abuser in a right way -

#### **Matthew 7:1-5 ESV**

- (1) "Judge not, that you be not judged.
- (2) For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
- (3) Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
- (4) Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?
- (5) You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Now, we know that Jesus was speaking to hypocrites who judged

themselves to be holy and harshly condemned others – while inside they were full of rotten sin themselves. The log in their own eye blinded them to their own sin, all the while they were quick to point to some smaller flaw in someone else.

Now, the victim of abuse is not necessarily or even commonly such a hypocrite as this – though I suppose it could be possible in some cases. But there is a valuable principle here for the victim of abuse and it is this –

***“Before you can properly deal with your abuser’s sin, you must examine yourself. You must ask yourself such things as, ‘Why did I choose an abusive spouse/partner?’ ‘Why have I been putting up with his abuse?’ ‘How have I been enabling him in his abuse?’ ‘How might I have been rescuing him from the consequences of his abuse? In what ways have I been minimizing or even denying the fact that I am being abused by him and that this abuse is taking a terrible toll on me and on the children?’”***

As Joanna Hunter says [But He’ll Change], “As long as I put up with emotional abuse, he will continue to do it. Even though I have told him that it hurts my feelings, he

*continues. This shows he lacks empathy for me.”*

Understand? Before the victim can deal with the abuser, she must first get the log/blindness out of her own eye. Most victims are blind to the real nature of what is happening to them and to the real nature of the person abusing them. That blindness must be replaced with sight.

***“MUCH of what people call ‘love’ is not love at all. It is rooted in self. Enabling, rescuing, co-dependent behavior is self-seeking in the end. It helps no one. It is ALWAYS wrong to help a sinner escape the natural consequences of his/her sin.”***

*“Being needed can make a woman feel valued, even when the person who needs her does harm to her. Their relationship gives her a purpose – to love him enough to heal his pain. Her partner tells a sad story about his horrible life, how no one has ever understood him, how everyone has let him down, how he was mistreated. She, being a nurturer, rushes in to ‘save’ him. She wants to show him that the world is not a terrible place and that she will always stand steadfastly behind him. Her partner reinforces this behavior as a way to hold on to*

*her. He occasionally indulges her with kind treatment or gifts to support her belief that her efforts are not in vain, motivating her to continue to seek his undying devotion. Meanwhile, he is mentally keeping track of his ‘good deeds,’; she owes him for his extra attention. She will pay for it when he returns to his former abusive behavior. She lives between ‘if I can just hang on long enough, he will change’ and ‘if I leave and he changes, I will miss out.’” [Joanna V. Hunter]*

Lundy Bancroft, at a recent seminar, noted how even society in general is very reluctant to impose proper consequences on abusive people. *“We refuse to impose just and proper consequences on the abuser. Abusers get off more lightly for domestic assault than they would if they assaulted a non-domestic victim. Jail DOES have an impact on the abuser and reduces recidivism. A longer sentence IS better. Diversion programs are a disaster. The abuser should be held to accounts and be required to pay all costs of therapy and for the consequences he has created. We must make him know that he will have much less time with his children now, and that it is going to be a long process before he proves he is safe and really repentant. In*

*churches, the abuser must go, so the victim can be safe.”*

ALL of us, therefore, including the victim, need to get the log out. We need to examine ourselves and ask the Lord to reveal to us *what we are getting out of tolerating abuse.* What were the Corinthians getting out of tolerating men who hit them in the face and lorded it over them? Why did they gladly receive such men? Why does a Diotrophes come to power in a church? How is it that ONE man can dominate so many?

Why do we do what God never does – *show favoritism?* Why don't men in the church confront abusive men in the church? Why are our pulpits silent on the matter? Are we respecters of persons? Do we selfishly protect reputations? Why?

### **James 2:1-9 ESV**

(1) My brothers, show no **partiality** as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

(2) For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in,

(3) and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to

the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet,"

(4) have you not then made **distinctions** among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (5) Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

(6) But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

(7) Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

(8) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

(9) **But if you show partiality, you are committing sin** and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Before we can deal with the abusive man, we first need to get the log out and face up to some hard truths about ourselves. Once we can see clearly, then we are ready to take action.

For victims of abuse, here are some more examples of denial and minimization that you may well

have to face up to in yourself – [Taken from But He'll Change, by Joanna Hunter] -

- He's not all bad, or, He has a really sweet and wonderful side
- We have had some good times together
- He only yells at me because he loves me
- My children need their father
- He isn't hurting the children
- He doesn't mean to hit me
- At least he doesn't hit me
- He doesn't lie to me
- At least I don't have it as bad off as others
- He must love me because he gets jealous when I talk to or spend time with other people
- He must love me because he wants to be with me all the time
- It isn't really a big deal that he made me quit doing things that I enjoy
- It doesn't matter that he flirts with other women.
- He has learned his lesson by my leaving – now we can get back together and everything will be ok.
- Sooner or later he will see what he is doing and stop

Every one of these statements is a “log,” and it needs to be replaced with the truth. Incidentally, it won’t take too much “tweaking” of these statements to apply them directly to the abuser within the church who seeks power and control over others. We in the church can have the very same kinds of logs in our eyes. One of the biggest can be partiality and favoritism as we make excuses for the abuser, help him or her avoid the consequences of their sin – and thereby very often make our own lives more “pleasant.”

*“I was terribly confused about the meaning of compassion. I thought it meant making excuses for the sinner – like covering his or her bad checks. But I have come to find another word for this kind of behavior – enabling. I have learned that when I clean up the consequences of sin, I enable the sinner to continue sinning comfortably without having to pay the price. A more compassionate way to respond to those whom I truly love is to allow them to face the consequences of their sin, even when it will cause them pain.” [Adapted from the Al-Anon book Courage to Change].*

***“The fact is that, as I have been learning in this study of abuse, unregenerate, unsaved people very***

***often have a more truthful understanding of these things than most Christians do.”***

*“As caring, compassionate people we naturally and instinctively want to protect and help our loved ones...But there is a fine line between being part of the solution or being part of the problem. So why is it so hard to do – even when we know that rescuing our loved one is truly detrimental to not only their well being, but to ours as well?”*

*Rescuing makes us feel wanted and needed. (selfish motivation) It is a momentary adrenaline rush when for a brief instant we are the center of someone else’s world. They thank us, are grateful and chances are someone else has said ‘no’ to them, so YOU are their Hero...and that is just a really warm and fuzzy feeling. The ADDICTION of enabling and rescuing others over and over again is usually found holed up somewhere in the mentality of people that might not have much going on in their own personal life, or what they have is not as fulfilling as it might be. A wonderful way to fill that void is to enable and rescue someone that you think is screaming out for a life preserver. You think you know best. By donning your superhero rescue cape, your hope is that not only will you be praised for your efforts,*

*insights, and sensitivity, but you will take a well-deserved bow. Enabling and rescuing can range from lying and covering up their sin to throwing what you think is a life line. And yet that well-intended (selfish) helping hand is not going to have a good outcome.*

*Here are some more reasons (all bad ones) why we continue to rescue and enable –*

- 1) We hope against all hope that tomorrow will be different*
- 2) Ego. We are the ones that saved the day.*
- 3) We want to be liked.*
- 4) What if they die and we could have stopped it?*
- 5) They are sick and therefore not responsible for their actions.*
- 6) We fear their anger, punishment or retribution if we refuse*
- 7) We fear that they may do something bad and blame us for their actions.*
- 8) We will be perceived poorly for not caring about our family or friends*
- 9) It's somehow "different" this time*

Self is at the root of it all. [Addiction, Alcoholism, and Medical News Blog, March 2010]

## **II. Recognize and Reject wrong uses of Scriptures.**

We have noted in this series that *the Christian church has not done a very good job in helping victims of abuse. In fact, we have often harbored abusive people within our walls. How can this be?*

One of the chief reasons is that we misuse, misapply, and misunderstand the Word of God. Our own sin causes us to distort God's truth – for selfish motivations.

***“Whenever we distort and misuse God’s Word, self-serving sin is at the root of it. Even our ignorance is more culpable than we realize.”***

The Pharisees were rebuked by Jesus for their misuse of the Scriptures –

### **Matthew 19:3-8 ESV**

(3) And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"

(4) He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,

(5) and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife,



and the two shall become one flesh'?

(6) So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

(7) They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?"

(8) He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

And again –

### **John 5:39-45 ESV**

(39) You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

(40) yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

(41) I do not receive glory from people.

(42) But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.

(43) I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

(44) How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

(45) Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope.

Sin blinds us to the truth of God's Word. And there a few areas that demonstrate how sin leads us to distort the Word of God more than this matter of abuse and how the Scriptures are often cited to justify it or to keep a victim in bondage under it.

*“One of the reasons abusers are so often permitted to continue in the Christian Church, all the while continuing in the abuse of their victim(s), is because Christians misuse the Word of God in its application to the sin of abuse. We do this out of favoritism to the abuser, out of fear of the consequences to ourselves if we confront him, and out of a lack of the hunger and thirst for righteousness that Christ calls us to. Zeal for God's House consumed Christ – it should consume us as well.”*

Ironic, isn't it? That the last place sin should be permitted to thrive – the church – is often the abuser's greatest ally and hiding place.

Let me just cite some Scriptures that have been so often used to tell

victims – a wife of an abuser, for example – *that she is obligated before God to remain in that abusive relationship.*

**Matthew 5:38-42 ESV**

(38) "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' (39) But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (40) And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

(41) And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

(42) Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

**Matthew 5:43-45 ESV**

(43) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

(44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (45) so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

**1 Peter 2:19-23 ESV**

(19) For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

(20) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

(21) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (22) He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. (23) When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

**1 Peter 3:8-11 ESV**

(8) Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

(9) Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

(10) For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit;

(11) let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.

### **2 Timothy 2:8-12 ESV**

(8) Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,

(9) for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

(10) Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

(11) The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

(12) if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;

### **Philippians 4:11-13 ESV**

(11) Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

(12) I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

(13) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Now, ALL of those are direct quotes from the Word of God. We are to endure suffering patiently. We are to be content in all things. *And I didn't even quote any of the Scriptures that speak of the husband being the head of his wife and of the wife submitting to her husband* (that topic is yet to come). Don't all of these verses make it plain that a woman who is suffering abuse must patiently endure, live a holy life, submit to her husband, and trust the Lord for the outcome?

### **1 Peter 3:1-2 ESV**

(1) Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,

(2) when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

Therefore, obviously – right? – an abused wife is to remain in that marriage and submit, if anything working on making herself more Godly because, after all, doesn't Peter say that her husband's salvation depends on seeing Christ in her?

What do we say to these things? Let me propose just a few responses – we don't have the time to do a detailed examination of each one of these passages.

- Whatever is wrong here is not to be found in the Scriptures – God's Word cannot err. The error has to lie in us.
- Whenever our interpretation of Scripture leads us to a ridiculous and illogical conclusion, we must re-examine our interpretation.
- There are MANY other Scriptures which must be consulted, that apply to this subject of abuse. We must NEVER interpret Scripture in isolation from the rest of Scripture. We hold to the doctrine of the analogy of Scripture – that God's Word agrees with itself.
- We have concluded that 1 Cor 7 teaches us that abuse is desertion. And that Scripture clearly gives the victim the right to depart from the abuser.
- Notice that all of these verses cited *deal with the victim – with the person suffering*. But surely we must also examine the many Scriptures that

directly address the sinner, the culprit, the oppressor of the innocent.

*“Any interpretation or application of Scripture that maintains that an abuse victim must continue in that abuse, patiently enduring it, and that somehow that kind of suffering is a participation in the suffering of Christ and therefore meritorious before God – must be rejected flatly by us. The Church is called to action in such cases. The wicked man is to be confronted. The innocent victim is to be defended. And God even promises us His chastisement if we fail to do so –*

#### **Luke 18:3-8 ESV**

(3) And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, **'Give me justice against my adversary.'**

(4) For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, (5) yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" (6) And the Lord said, **"Hear what the unrighteous judge says.**

**(7) And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?** Will he delay long over them?

(8) I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

**Exodus 22:22-24 ESV**

(22) You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.

(23) If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry,

(24) and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

**Deuteronomy 27:19 ESV**

(19) "'Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

**Isaiah 1:17 ESV**

(17) learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

**Jeremiah 22:3 ESV**

(3) Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.