

CHILD ABUSE IS SERIOUS IN GOD'S EYES



The subject of child abuse is very sensitive as it almost always takes place where children are in the care of a person who is supposed to provide them with love, safety and care. To know and recognise the signs of possible child abuse is the responsibility of all adults, especially Christians.

The degrading of a child's self-respect, self-worth, confidence and basic need of feeling loved, may leave them with life-long feelings of low self-esteem and depression. Many children do not know that what is happening to them is abuse and often have nowhere to turn for help. Child abuse covers not only physical abuse, but can also be emotional, verbal or sexual. Neglect is another form of child abuse.

Signs of abuse to look out for

- 1. Physical health** – Look for minor injuries such as bruises or abrasions, or severe injuries such as deep lacerations, broken bones, or internal bleeding.
- 2. Mental health** – Child abuse can result in mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders well into adulthood.
- 3. Childhood trauma** – Trauma from child abuse can result in the child having issues with trust, behaviour, communication and relationships. Victims may be aggressive, violent, and prone to drug and alcohol abuse or suicidal thoughts. They may have difficulty learning or holding onto a job. They may also experience anxiety and constant fear.
- 4. Brain development** – Child abuse can affect a child's brain development and cognitive abilities, causing difficulties with speech and language. Victims may have learning disorders or regression of skills or development.
- 5. Social difficulties** – Abused children are often fearful and have trust issues, difficulty in expressing themselves and maintaining healthy relationships. They may also be insecure, anxious, withdrawn, or clingy.
- 6. Behavioural issues** – Look out for sudden behavioural changes: emotional outbursts, changes in mood, sadness, withdrawal, violence, hyperactivity, bed-wetting, low self-esteem, etc.

How to pray regarding child abuse

- Ask for parents to understand that their children are made in the image of God and that they are called to steward their children's well-being for His glory. *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* (Genesis 1:26-27).
- Ask for God's protection of children who suffer or witness violence and abuse at the hands of the ones they love and trust. Pray for them to find and be brought to a safe place, where they can begin to heal. Pray for their trust to be restored and their hearts to love again.
- Many survivors of abuse and neglect are in a state of constant loneliness and pain. Pray that God will be with them in their confusion and pain. Pray for their wounds to be healed and for them to be freed from fear. *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.* (Psalm 147:3).
- Pray for children who are in unsafe homes and environments. Lift these children before the throne of God and pray Psalm 127:3-5 over them: *Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.*
- Pray for these children to experience the Lord as a loving heavenly Father who takes care of them.
- Ask our heavenly Father, Who is the source of comfort and hope, to be the Refuge and Guardian of all who suffer from child abuse, rescuing them from bitterness and shame, and filling them with peace. *Be my strong refuge, to which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress.* (Psalm 71:3).
- Pray for God to surround and care for victims of child abuse and protect them from evil. May they experience His presence and be confident in Him. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* (Psalm 46:1).
- Abused children, because of deep inflicted emotional wounds, can fall into sin themselves at a young age. Pray for the healing and spiritual release of these captives by God's perfect love. *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."* (Isaiah 61:1).
- Pray for friends, neighbours and churches to recognise the signs of abuse and to intervene. Also, for the Church to teach biblical truths regarding all aspects of child abuse and how to deal with it.
- Pray for abusers to recognise how their own pain of what was done to them, affects their conduct with children and to be convicted of the evil they inflict.
- Pray for abusers to be brought to justice and given punishment according to the law.
- Pray for them to humble themselves before the Lord, to turn from their wicked ways and to be restored in Christ (2 Chronicles 7:14).
- Also pray for the healing of the abusers' thoughts, so they may turn to Jesus and seek His ways. Ask the Lord to reveal to abusers that every human being is a treasure to Him. *If we*

say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9).