

## Biblical Themes in Safe Church Ministry

*Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness, prevention, and response. We help build communities where the value of each person is honored; where people are free to worship and grow free from abuse; and where abuse has occurred, the response is always compassion and justice that foster healing.*

Safe Church arises out of a call to be a community that reflects our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It's a collective calling; so our relationships are critical. The Bible provides the foundation:

- Genesis 1:26-28 – **Created in God's image** – ALL people are created in God's very image, giving all of us inherent dignity and worth. There is an important connection between honoring God and honoring one other. There is no place for abuse as we value and respect each person as God's image bearer.
- Philippians 2 – **Use of power in abuse** – See also Matthew 20:24-26. Misuse of power is at the heart of all kinds of abuse. It's a power over others, power used for selfish gain, to harm, diminish, or control. Power used in this way leads to languishing and death. In stark contrast, we see how Jesus used his infinite power. He gave himself in love and service to others, even dying on a cross. He shared power, empowering others through the Holy Spirit. Power used in this way multiplies and leads to flourishing and life. If we want to see the kingdom of God revealed, we must pay close attention to how power is used. We simply cannot reflect our Lord when we misuse the power that he's given us, or when we allow abuse to continue in our midst. We are called to follow in the way of Jesus.
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – We are **One Body**, the Body of Christ. When one part hurts, the whole body hurts. If there are many hurting parts in our Body, and statistics tell us that there are\*, our Body can't function properly. We must not ignore these wounded members; we need each part. Therefore, we actively care for each one and pursue healing and wholeness. There are healing resources that are only available in union with Christ and with his people.
- Matthew 18:1-14 & Mark 9:33-36,42 – **Jesus loves children** – Jesus has harsh words for those who would cause little ones to stumble. As much as many of us love our own children, or our grandchildren, we can't even imagine how much Jesus loves them. Nor can we comprehend his love for each one of us. As we follow Jesus, we are called to love children, and those who are vulnerable among us. This means advocating for them and protecting them from harm. Our efforts to protect send a message of love to them. Children had little value in Jesus' culture, and little more in ours. We shine like stars in the darkness when we value, love, and protect our children.
- Matthew 5:13-16 – **Light and salt** – we are called to be different from the world around us where disrespect, sexual immorality, abuse, and neglect are common in relationships; where certain people are devalued and marginalized. In our Christian communities we are salt and light when we treat each and every person with love, dignity, and respect; when our relationships are open and honest; and when we are quick to acknowledge our own wrong doing, but slow to judge another. (See also James 2:1-13).

\*According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused by the time they reach the age of 18 (<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>) 1 in 5 women have been raped. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical abuse by an intimate partner. [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/summary\\_reports.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/summary_reports.html) These statistics represent a LOT of people, and a LOT of people in our congregations.