

Where is God in the Midst of the Suffering of Abuse?¹

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Introduction

The question, "Where is God in the midst of suffering caused by evil abuse?" is one of the most painful and personal questions imaginable. No doubt many readers have endured pain and suffering, and 100% of us *will*. Many of us have also experienced what can only be labeled "evil."

At the outset of this article, I'd like to acknowledge that I hardly consider myself an experiential expert on this subject. I haven't spent my adult life having reoccurring Post Traumatic Stress Disorder nightmares resulting from chronic childhood abuse; I don't live with intractable, debilitating physical pain caused by abuse damage; I haven't been gang raped, and I haven't lost loved ones due to genocide. But I work with many individuals who have had these experiences. In this article, I'd like to give articulation to their voices and to the voices of the writers of Scripture.

One of my first published book chapters was on this very subject of how a good and loving God could allow a world of evil and pain.² I wrote that as a talk just over a decade ago. Since then my wife was diagnosed with an incurable genetic disorder which has led to eighteen major surgeries; we began a Christian nonprofit to provide training and resources on abuse and healing;³ our daughter moved to East Africa, where she lives in the slums of Kampala and cares for street boys and prostituted girls, 100% of whom have experienced horrendous abuse; we have worked for several years with rape and trauma survivors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the rape capital of the world, and I have been to Rwanda and seen the genocide sites. I have seen the shattered skulls of those slaughtered like dogs. I have spent time with individuals who watched their entire family slaughtered in front of their eyes.

In the past decade I have become more aware of my own inadequacy to answer why God allows a given act of evil, but I am more confident than ever before that a loving God is present and working powerfully in the midst of the most atrocious abuse and the most intense suffering.

The Problem

I'd like to restate and personalize the preceding question in the most basic, jarring fashion as it was articulated by a young woman I will call Mary, a woman I know well and love deeply. One day she came to me, filled with so much emotion she could barely contain it, and blurted out, "Where was God when my cousin was raping me? Where was he?" What did I as a Christian leader, as a theologian, say to Mary? What could I say?

Common Religious or Philosophical Responses

There are numerous ways people from varied religious traditions would answer Mary.

A. Reject the existence of a good God

Many atheistic philosophers argue that the presence of evil, abuse, and suffering give powerful evidence that God does not exist.⁴ Some theists, on the other hand, maintain that evil and suffering

1 This is a slightly modified form of a paper delivered at the Veritas Forum, Arizona State University, West Campus, October 13, 2010.

2 "Theodicy, Eschatology, and the Open View of God," in *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 295-312.

3 Mending the Soul Ministries, www.mendingthesoul.org.

4 J.L. Mackie has given one of the classic articulations of this in "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 (1955): 200-212. Mackie argues that religious beliefs do not lack all rational support, but rather they are positively irrational in view of conflicting postulates regarding God and evil (God exists and is omniscient and omnipotent; a perfectly good being would

are best explained not by denying God's existence, but by denying his goodness. For instance, Richard Rubenstein declares that the Holocaust has rendered the "Father-God" of traditional theology dead, yet he affirms the existence of a divine "Holy Nothingness" which is described as a "cannibal mother."⁵ So these individuals might tell Mary something like this, "I'm sorry for what you've suffered. Your rape shows clearly that we are alone in the universe. There is no God, or if there is one, he (or it) isn't good and can't be trusted. You must heal yourself."

This model, however, goes against most people's innate sense of the universe. Often those who reject the existence of a good God end up arguing against this God in such a manner that their protest appears to be a very personal wrestling with a God they say they don't believe in. Nor can this model explain the hope filled, transformed lives of countless individuals who have experienced overwhelming pain and suffering.

B. Reject or redefine evil and suffering

In some religious traditions, matter is understood to be illusory, and hence pain and evil are not real. So these individuals might tell Mary something like this, "I'm sorry for what you've suffered, but you need to understand that evil and pain are not real enemies to destroy you because they aren't real at all. They are merely an illusion. Your growth will come when you experience enlightenment, realizing that everything in the cosmos is the same, including what we often call 'good' and what we call 'evil'."⁶

This model cannot adequately account, however, for the universal, intractable presence of the "illusion" of pain and evil.

C. Redefine God's goodness

Some deterministic religious traditions redefine goodness as whatever God does. They reason that, since God is good and everything that happens is caused by Him, what we call evil must actually be good. So these individuals might tell Mary something like this: "I realize the rape you experienced was traumatic and painful, but you must understand that you do not determine what is ultimately good or bad. God is utterly in control of the movement of every atom in the universe. So your rape was part of his predetermined, sovereign plan and it is thus good. To heal, you must correct your view of good and evil."⁷

This response, however, goes against most people's deepest moral intuitions. If we make the concept of "good" so elastic that it can encompass God causing rape, torture, and mass murder, then surely "good" is no longer a serviceable term to describe the painful world we live in.

D. Reject or redefine God's power

Some religious traditions point to God himself as the reason evil exists—he is powerless to stop it. Rabbi Harold Kushner holds this position. Once God created the world, while he loves his creation, he cannot intervene to stop evil. Once the trigger has been pulled and the bullet is speeding down the barrel of the gun, God himself cannot stop it, "for God cannot intervene to stop

eliminate evil as far as possible; there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do; evil exists). William Rowe modifies this argument by asserting that a good God would eliminate all pointless suffering, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979): 335-41.

⁵ Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 198. See also Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Avon Books, 1972), 42.

⁶ While there is complexity to the concept of evil in Eastern religion, this is essentially the Hindu understanding of evil and suffering. See, for instance, Stephen Kaplan, "Three Levels of Evil in Advaita Vedanta and a Holographic Analogy," in *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, ed. William Cenkner (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997), 116-26.

⁷ Some staunch Calvinist theologians (many would label them "hyper Calvinists") hold this type of view. For instance, Gordon Clark states "I wish very frankly and pointedly to assert that if a man gets drunk and shoots his family, it was the will of God that he should do so," *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1961), 221, cited in Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 442. Clark goes on to argue that since God is the cause of everything that happens in the universe, and whatever God does (causes) is good, then whatever happens is good.

the inexorable laws of nature.”⁸ So these individuals might tell Mary something like this, “I grieve for you and what you have suffered. More importantly, so does God. He hates it that you were raped but simply couldn’t stop it from happening. So pray to him to give you comfort and strength in a world filled with abuse and suffering that neither you nor he can eliminate.”

This model certainly takes suffering, evil, and God’s goodness seriously. But, in denying God’s power to stop evil and suffering, it seriously limits God’s ability to redeem and overcome suffering and evil.

E. Reject the concept of abuse “victim”

Some religious traditions, particularly Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, explain suffering in terms of the law of karma. Suffering is the result of bad karma from previous negative behavior, particularly in a previous life (reincarnation). Thus, we are ultimately responsible for the evil abuse and suffering we experience in the present because of our own past actions. Hence, those who suffer abuse are never really “victims.” They are simply reaping what they have sown. From a Buddhist perspective,

No suffering occurs that is not deserved, although the world is sufficiently opaque and our ignorance is sufficiently deep that we usually feel otherwise, and we feel justified, albeit wrongly, on protesting the suffering that happens to us on the grounds of our innocence. The law of karma, like the process of digestion in our bodies, does not require a god or any other agent to administer it. It is a causal process that is conceptualized on the analogy of other natural processes, and just as we become sick when we eat tainted food, so when we do an evil action we and we alone must suffer the results.⁹

So these individuals might tell Mary something like this, “I’m sorry you are so hurt and angry at your abuse, and you may not understand or be able to accept this right now, but ultimately you are not a victim. You must have done something in this life or a previous life to cause abuse and suffering to happen to you. You only add to your suffering when you try to live as if you were not subject to the law of karma. Accept this, enlighten yourself, and learn to let go of all desire. Then you will no longer suffer.”¹⁰

The Best Explanation

The best answer to the question, “Where is God in the midst of the evil and resultant suffering of abuse?” is not found in a theoretical model but in a person—the person of Jesus Christ. I’d like to break this down in three ways in terms of what Jesus has done to address the evil and suffering of abuse.

8 Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 118. Recent “open view” Christian theists somewhat move this direction in arguing that evil occurs because God is limited in how he can respond to evil. He cannot foresee the future and hence some evil occurs that he didn’t know would occur. Most evil takes place because God chose to take risks when creating the universe. Thus, Gregory Boyd argues that we should view this world as one in which God is at war with evil, rather than one in which God controls evil. This cosmos is one which should be pictured as a vast society of free moral agents who have significant power to thwart God’s will and inflict suffering. Satan is so powerful, in fact, that at first even Jesus could not cast out some demons, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 291; 141-2; 192-3.

9 Charles Hallisey, “Buddhism,” in *Evil and Suffering*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 58-59.

10 *Ibid.*, 47. Sadly, all too often Christians grope to “explain” the suffering of abuse causally in terms of a victim’s own sinful actions (in this life) which precipitated, and thus in some manner caused, the abuse. For instance, Beth Impson asserts that the woman is often partially responsible for date rape by dressing immodestly and by making poor choices (such as inviting her date to her dorm room), and thus she “may also be sinful, contributing to the man’s desire to sin.” Impson concludes that it is wrong to say the woman bears no responsibility for date rape and if we are going to be “helpful” to the woman we should hold her accountable for the way she “contributed” to the rape, *Called to Womanhood: The Biblical View for Today’s World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 142-4. Similarly, often one of the first things naive pastors sometimes ask a battered woman is “what did you do that made him so mad,” implying that her actions in some manner caused the assault.

1. Jesus Came

If we simply start by looking around us at the pervasive amount of abuse and suffering, we naturally ask, “Where is God?” and “Why would he create a world like this?” Recently, I wrote a chapter for a new textbook on sexual abuse and surveyed the latest abuse prevalence rates.¹¹ They are very grim:

Forty percent of girls and thirteen percent of boys experience childhood sexual abuse.¹²

Sexual abuse among adolescent and young adult women has risen dramatically.¹³ One recent general population study of women found that thirty-eight percent of all respondents reported at least one experience of sexual abuse in their lifetime, but for the women thirty-one years old and younger, almost forty-two percent reported sexual abuse.¹⁴

Alarming high sexual assault rates are also being seen among high school age adolescents. In one major study of dating violence, twenty percent of American high school girls report being physically or sexually assaulted by a male partner.¹⁵

Intimate partner violence is a particularly wide-spread problem. The National Violence against Women Survey reported that almost twenty-five percent of women and 7.6% of men were raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabitating partner, or date at some time in their lifetime.¹⁶

Globally, the picture is even more disturbing. One major survey found that in Liberia's recent civil war, seventy-five percent of the women had been raped, most having been gang raped.¹⁷ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where we minister to trauma survivors, tens of thousands of women and children, and many men, are estimated to be raped annually in just one single eastern province, and in just over a decade over five million have died due to conflict related causes.¹⁸

There is far more abuse and resultant suffering in our world than most people can imagine. It is thus essential to recognize that, according to the Bible, God did not create a world of abuse and suffering. The creation account in Genesis shows God creating a perfect world with no sin, evil, death, or suffering. God made the first couple, Adam and Eve, and they reflected God's character and love in their relationship: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Gen 2:24-25).¹⁹ It was only when sin entered the universe through human disobedience that the human race was plunged into death and suffering. In fact, after the first human sin in Genesis three, we find that, by Genesis four, humans are already committing fatal domestic violence

11 Steven R. Tracy, “Definitions and Prevalence Rates of Sexual Abuse: Quantifying, Explaining, and Facing a Dark Reality,” in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, forthcoming).

12 R. M. Bolen and M. Scannapieco, “Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse: A Corrective Meta-analysis,” *Social Service Review* 73 (1999): 281–313. Other more recent studies of childhood sexual abuse rates for women have revealed prevalence rates from twenty-four to thirty-two percent: J. Briere and D. M. Elliott, “Prevalence and Psychological Sequelae of Self-Reported Childhood Physical and Sexual Abuse in a General Population Sample of Men and Women,” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 27 (2003): 1205–22.

13 Erin A. Casey and Paula S. Nurius, “Trends in the Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence: A Cohort Analysis,” *Violence and Victims* 21 (2006): 629–44.

14 *Ibid.*, 635–7.

15 Jay G. Silverman et al., “Dating Violence against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Abuse, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 286 (2001): 572–9.

16 P. Tjaden and N. Thoennes, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey* (Washington D.C.: Department of Justice, 2000).

17 Nicholas D. Kristof, “After Wars, Mass Rapes Persist,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2009.

18 Jeffrey Gettleman, “Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War,” *New York Times*, October 7, 2007; Nicholas D. Kristof, “The World Capital of Killing,” *New York Times*, February 7, 2010; “Sexual Violence Increasing in Democratic Republic of the Congo,” *The Lancet* 371 (2008): 15–16.

19 Unless otherwise stated, Scripture citations are from the *New International Version*.

(in this case brother killing brother). Just a couple chapters later, physical violence has spread to the entire human race (Gen 6:13). This was not God's plan, but a corruption brought about by human sin. Scripture tells us that our world is out of order; things are not "the way they are supposed to be." Scripture not only attributes this disorder and suffering to human sin, but to spiritual, demonic forces. In Scripture, Satan is called "Apollyon," the "destroyer" who promotes abuse and suffering (Rev 9:11). Yet God does not sit back passively while abuse maims and harms families, children, men, and women of every nation in every period of history. Rather, Jesus came to earth to bring healing, forgiveness, and victory over sin and evil.

Unlike the impassive gods of the Greeks and Romans who cavorted on Mt. Olympus with the nymphs, drinking ambrosia while people on earth suffered, the Bible tells us that Jesus, the Divine Son of God, voluntarily chose to take on human flesh and enter the vortex of human suffering, abuse, and evil. Furthermore, Jesus came into the world in the most humble, weak, and vulnerable manner imaginable. Philip Yancey describes well the shocking manner of Jesus earthly incarnation:

The God who came to earth came not in a raging whirlwind nor in a devouring fire. Unimaginably, the Maker of all things shrank down, down, down, so small as to become an ovum, a single fertilized egg barely visible to the naked eye, an egg that would divide and redivide until a fetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager... The God who roared, who could order armies and empires about like pawns on a chessboard, this God emerged in Palestine as a baby who could not speak or eat solid food or control his bladder, who depended on a teenager for shelter, food, and love.²⁰

Some of the greatest torments of abuse survivors are their feelings of shame, vulnerability, and isolation. This makes Jesus' humble earthly incarnation an incredibly powerful redemptive event to abuse survivors. In Matthew 1:23, which describes Jesus' advent, he is called "Immanuel," which means "God with us." Where is God in a world of abuse and suffering? He is here with us—Jesus came.

2. Jesus Died²¹

The prophet Isaiah declared that Christ would be a man of sorrows who, because of experiencing abuse, would be well acquainted with grief (Isa 53:3-5). Thus, Christ personally understands the horrors of abuse. He was verbally abused, mocked, slapped, beaten, spit on, violated (publicly stripped and hung naked), shamed, tortured to death, and experienced a hideous sense of separation from God the Father. Christ understands what abuse victims suffer because he was abused. Amazingly, he did so voluntarily that he might deliver sinners from death. Thus, abuse survivors can look to Christ for mercy and grace. He understands, cares, and relates to the pain of abuse. This truth is often overlooked by abuse survivors, but it is extremely helpful.

Corrie Ten Boom was a young Dutch Christian who was imprisoned by the Nazis because her family had sheltered Jews. She and her sister Betsy were eventually shipped to Ravensbruck, a Nazi death camp. Corrie recounts the humiliation of regular "medical inspections" in which she and the other prisoners were forced to strip naked and walk slowly, single file, past a "phalanx of grinning guards." In the middle of one of these abusive ordeals, God brought to her mind the precious truth that her savior was crucified naked. He personally understood the abuse she was suffering.²² This gave her great strength and comfort.

Jessica is a woman my wife Celestia and I have been blessed to come to know this year. Jessica's childhood sexual abuse created tremendous internal damage that made her vulnerable

20 Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 36.

21 Portions of the sections of this paper dealing with "Jesus Died" and "Jesus Rose" are drawn from Steven R. Tracy, *Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 175-8.

22 Corrie Ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1971), 196-7.

to exploitation. As an adolescent, she was approached and wooed by an older man who turned out to be a pimp. Jessica thought he loved her. He manipulated her into what turned out to be a three year descent into the hell of prostitution. The first “john” paid her (as a vulnerable teenage girl) essentially to rape her, stole her purse, and ran over her with his car when he finished with her. Jessica has suffered more than most of us can imagine. So I asked her a few days ago how she would answer the question, “where is God in a world of abuse and suffering?” Her answer is insightful and poignant, “God is in the same place He was when I was being raped and beaten as He was when his Son was hanging on the cross.” Several years ago, Jessica began to read the Bible and discovered that Jesus loves the world and gave particular care to the broken and marginalized, such as prostitutes. Jessica came to understand that Jesus came to die for the world so that we might be freed from the bondage and power of sin, including abuse. In other words, Jesus entered our suffering, abusive world for a very specific purpose. Paul, writer of much of the New Testament, put it this way: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

Thus, we now have an answer to Elie Wiesel's haunting question, posed as he watched a young boy slowly choke to death in a Nazi death camp: “Where is God now?”²³ The answer is that God is on the cross. The cross does not answer all of our questions about human suffering, but it assures us of God's active compassion for human misery. As the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was eventually murdered by the Nazis, wrote from his prison cell, “only the suffering God can help.”²⁴ In the cross of Christ, we see a suffering God who can help those who suffer evil and abuse.

3. Jesus Rose

The message of Christianity is that Jesus not only came and died but rose again on the third day. This is the greatest miracle in human history. It assures us that there is life after death and hope when abuse has stripped away all hope. It also assures us that there will ultimately be justice for abuse survivors.

For abuse victims, it feels as if evil has won and hope is lost. But Scripture declares that, through his death on the cross, Christ broke the back of Satan and triumphed over evil. Paul tells the Colossians, regarding the crucifixion of Christ, “When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities [demonic spirits], He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him” (Col 2:15, NASV). In Greek, this is language of a triumphal military procession in which the defeated enemy is forced to march through the streets. In other words, through the cross, the demonic forces have been defeated and publicly humiliated. John makes a similar claim about the power of the cross over Satan: “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). But our challenge is that, from a New Testament perspective, while the cross marks the beginning of the end for Satan and his demonic legions, the final triumph of God over evil is yet to come. But the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ assure us that the final triumph over evil will come. Through the cross, it has already begun.

What is most amazing is that God used evil itself (the abuse of the Son of God by crucifixion) to triumph over evil. Henri Blocher states:

Evil is conquered as evil because God turns it back upon itself. He makes the supreme crime, the murder of the only righteous person, the very operation that abolishes sin. The manoeuvre is utterly unprecedented. No more complete victory could be imagined. God responds in the indirect way that is perfectly suited to the ambiguity of evil. He entraps the deceiver in his own wiles. Evil, like a judoist, takes advantage of the power of good, which it perverts; the Lord, like a supreme champion, replies by using

23 Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), 61-62.

24 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition* (London: SCM, 1953), 361; see also Charles Ohlrich, *The Suffering God: Hope and Comfort for Those Who Hurt* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982).

the very grip of the opponent...It is exactly this, the sin of sins, the murder of the Son, which accomplishes this work.²⁵

Thus, in the greatest reversal in the history of the world, in the cross of Christ, evil and abuse were used to secure the utter defeat of evil and abuse. We can now see why the cross was of such singular importance for the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 2:2). The cross demonstrates God's mercy. It connects Christ with human suffering. It broke the back of Satan. It spells the eternal defeat of evil.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude with the voices of some courageous abuse survivors. Other than Mary and David, the rest of the voices below are from former Ugandan street children our daughter Abby has, by God's grace, been able to redeem from the streets and bring into her residential home in Kampala. All of the children they minister to have experienced extreme abuse and suffering, often including disfiguring beatings, life threatening assaults, rape, and forced prostitution. David Kakeeto is a young Ugandan man who ministers full time in the slums of Kampala to street children, homeless youth, and severely handicapped adults.

Mary: When I look back on my journey, it is hard to believe that I am the same person I was a few years ago. Last year, I finished graduate school and now serve as a social worker to homeless and impoverished families. I recently married an amazing Christian man, and all of my anger and bitterness toward God has been replaced by a sweet, sincere relationship with him. I now view God as my redeemer and rescuer. Hearing songs such as "Amazing Grace" never fails to bring tears to my eyes. I have turned my energy towards helping needy women and children, many of whom are abuse victims. I feel that I can help them on a level that someone who has not been abused could not, because I can literally step into their shoes. I will never cease to be amazed by the way God uses evil for good if we let him.

Monday: "All problems come in life, but, if you hold onto the Lord, a time will come when he will set you free."

[When Abby rescued Monday he was dying and was literally sprawled out in the mud, with people stepping on top of him. Abby says he has experienced more pain and trauma than any child she has ever known.]

Emmanuel: "There is no problem that is permanent. In my life, I've been through troubles and many challenges, and, as time went on, those troubles became more and more bearable until I was able to overcome with God's help."

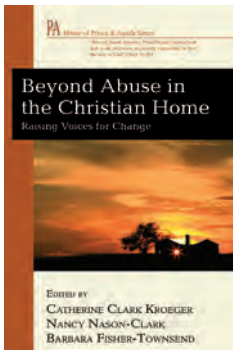
Muwonge: The reason why there is suffering in the world is because the devil knows as long as he can bring troubles and problems to people that it will be hard for them to believe in God because some will understand it to be God's abandonment of them. His word of encouragement is to believe because only a lot of faith can bring them through.

David Kakeeto: I felt closest to the Lord when I was on the streets and had nothing, because He was my only place to run to. For 1 1/2 years, I slept with no roof and woke up and had no food or way to get it, but every single day God provided. I really believe that God is everywhere, even in traumatic situations. God is even closer when we suffer, because our heart is opened up. We don't want problems in our life as humans, but, whether we like it or not, problems are good at increasing our faith, because it makes us need God. I don't want to lack basic needs in my life, but it was when I had nothing that I was closest to God. Problems prove to us that we are inadequate and only God can save us. In a problematic world, people can learn to trust in God

²⁵ *Evil and the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 132.

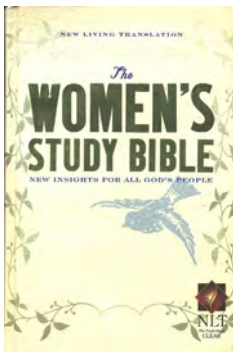
even more. “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all” (Ps 34:19).

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Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change presents an accurate, faith-based analysis of abuse in the Christian family context. As it provides resources to deal with this problem, the contributors come from various faith traditions, work in different contexts, and see the issue in part based on their own narrative and training. Yet, despite their differences, they are unanimous that violence has no place in the home.

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The Women's Study Bible explores questions that have special relevance for women. What was daily life like for women in biblical times? Each biblical book is accompanied by an introduction, running annotations that highlight passages that specifically address women and women's issues and clarify lessons that women might draw from more general passages. This edition uses the New Living Translation and includes New Oxford Bible maps and a helpful index. It is edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans and has many contributors from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (professors and alumnae).