

Heart to Heart

A quarterly newsletter of Open Hearts Ministry

Summer 2004

When Does "It Was Not Your Fault" Become Your Fault?

by Sandy Burdick, Ministry Director

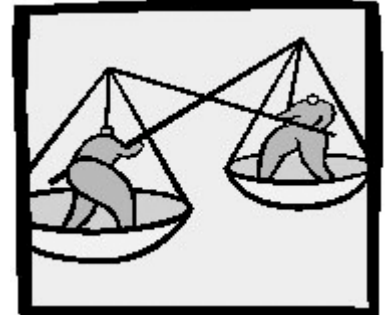
I have observed some confusion as to when this statement is true: "It was not your fault." In the right context this is a very important truth to hear about abuse that has happened to children and even adults. The abandonment, neglect, sexual abuse, spousal abuse, emotional and physical abuse caused pain, confusion, loss of innocence and affected the victim in life changing ways. This abuse was not their fault.

Our Mission:

"Ministering to the abused through the love of Christ and equipping others to do the same."

Children think like children; they don't know where to place the blame and usually carry it themselves. The result is shame based thinking, relational and identity struggles. When a child becomes a man or a woman (I Corinthians 13:11) they should put away childish speaking, thinking and reasoning. We can't love well when we are stuck in a child-like or victim mindset. The good news is that there is hope for change as we begin to look at the ways we act out false thinking that was planted in the abuse.

At some point of our growth (and who knows when: is it 13, 21, 30 or 70?) we hopefully recognize our childish thinking as just plain sin. Responding to life by acting out of our victimization is sin and what results from this is our fault. Regardless of how bad our past is, as adults we are responsible for the decision to change. The good news is that we can repent and receive forgiveness that produces joy in heaven...and on earth.



When we take responsibility for living immorally and unlovingly, we begin to experience freedom from the past. There is a lot of shame connected with abuse. Was it really my fault? No, but remaining silent, remaining the victim, being unwilling to take risks to find a safe place is my choice.

In a small group ministry, saying "it is not your fault" to a person who has made choices that are damaging to themselves and others is not helpful. This helps the person remain a victim. But realizing that wounded people do wound others, seeing it as sin and dealing with it, can produce a recovery marked by honesty, repentance and loving well. Why is it such a surprise that we are sinned against and then we, in turn, sin as well? It is the human journey. The spirit wants to make clear what is not our fault so that we can take responsibility for what is.

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Embracing Growth and Change

by Mark Bonham, Executive Director

I remember as a kid how we ordered new clothes for school from the Penny's catalog each summer. Shirts, jackets and pants would arrive in July or early August, giving us just enough time to exchange anything that didn't fit before September. It was a challenge to figure out in June how much you would grow over the summer. Things that were a little sloppy when school started were "high water" by the time school ended. My mom had to expect and plan for our growth quite carefully.

Similarly, a healthy ministry grows and this requires change or things don't look quite right. Over the years this ministry has gone from a focus on middle-aged women and sexual abuse to multi-generational men and women dealing with all types of abuse, wounds and scars. Groups that started out with paper over meeting room windows now promote themselves in newspapers, church bulletins, and from the pulpit.

Our first seminar in 1993 involved 40 women. In the past 12 months we have taken nearly 400 through training. People from 38 states and 21 countries have attended. While we are preparing for the October SALTS in Michigan, the team in Austria will be holding SALTS in Munich. This past weekend two Grace for the Wounded Workshops were going on the same day, one in Alaska and one in Canada.

While many of us are taking a break from group for the summer, it is winter in Argentina where Karen DeSmet is leading four groups a week using the new Spanish material. Groups are meeting in the suburbs of large cities and in remote villages in Alaska. Truly our diversity is growing and we celebrate that.

This has caused us to look at the needs such growth is creating. As SALTS events have gotten larger, the need for care has expanded. At one time every leader simply led his or her group with a co-leader. Now we have a care leader for every 4-5 groups who visits groups, meets with leaders, and is an advocate for participants. We have individualized care options for people who need to meet with someone outside



Andreja & Nadica
Stefanovski from Macedonia,
folk dancing at SALTS.

of group. Our presentations increasingly use more technology. We are offering advanced training to our active alumni who want more development (see Mary Jane's article on "ALTS"). Leader orientation at SALTS continues to offer new development. This year we offered extra training to our presenters, so that their skills will continue to grow.

The impact is evident. Long after our training events people call and write with messages that tell us about changes in their relationship with Christ, with family or friends, or in the way they see themselves. Today I received this one: "I saw the way I try to control my world, mostly by trying to leverage the amount of pain coming in...killing my longings, walking about in perpetual fear of making a mistake, ignoring wounds and pretending to be happy...just to let you know, I am now in the process of starting a group at my local church."

Over the months ahead you will begin to see more changes as we work on our logo and image, as we bring new design, color and reformatting to our materials, as we enhance and improve all our publications. Our goal is to be better able to invite people to a healing journey, where they can taste the grace of God, and where our resources are clearly enabling people to grow and change. It is no small task. It requires much wisdom from above. We need your prayers.

Growth is normal and natural. Growth is to be embraced and enjoyed. Growth and change can be painful, but we are ready for what lies ahead. We are getting tired of "high water pants".

SALTS Scholarship Fund Report

Thanks to your participation in the Meijer Community Rewards Program we have raised \$249.00 since January 2004. Thank you for taking the time to enroll and use your card at Meijers!

- Join Meijer Community Rewards at Meijer.com/rewards or pick up an application at your Meijer store.
- Use the code assigned to OHM: 378921.
- Swipe your card whenever you shop at Meijers.
- We receive a percentage of your purchase totals and these funds will be used for SALTS Scholarships.
- Encourage friends, relatives, local group members to join.
- Questions? Contact OHM (269) 383-3597 or Meijer (800) 962-7011.



What to do if...you want further leadership training beyond your initial SALTS experience?

by Mary Jane Hamilton, SALTS trainer and OHM mentor.

This is the first year we have offered an Advanced Leadership Training Seminar (ALTS) as part of SALTS. Three such groups were held in Alaska in January and four groups in Michigan in April. You may be wondering, "Who participates in ALTS?" The answer is, "It could very well be YOU." Following are some guidelines for ALTS participants and an overview of what the training would provide for you as a leader.



Peggy Critchfield and Mary Jane Hamilton's ALTS group.

Who is eligible for ALTS? Those who:

- Have attended a SALTS seminar.
- Are currently leading a local small group or at least led within the last year.
- Can offer and receive honest feedback from others...Ouch!
- Can tell their story or parts of it more than once, connect with their emotions and be able to talk about the damage they have done to others.
- Are able to express how they are feeling in the "here and now".
- Know their story well enough to be able to express how, "God has redeemed my story and used me in a redemptive way for others."
- Are considered to be a "safe" man or woman by others in their local ministry.
- Have read their SALTS manual through completely.
- Have the recommendation of their local leadership team.
- Are in a good place in their own recovery.

What can you expect if you are a member of an ALTS group?

- Each member has the opportunity to co-lead 3 groups and experience co-ed leadership if desired.
- An overview will be given to the members on how to prepare leading the lessons. Examples: writing thought provoking questions from the teaching prior to group, timing the 10 minutes stories, and thinking through the direction/vision/growth of the members after each session.
- The group will be intentional in processing the "here and now".
- The group will be taught the use of "time-out".
- Members will process one another. Opportunity will be given to have input as to how others experience them as a leader or group member.
- "Teaching Moments" will be addressed as questions surface about leading, resistance, ambivalence, shame, etc.
- The "Process Sheets" will be filled out as a group after each lesson.
- "Role playing" will be experienced and taught.
- Members will fill out their own end of week evaluation and share it with the group for feedback.
- Members will write their own "vision" for the next step in developing themselves as a leader.

There is always more that I want to develop in leaders (myself included). This is simply a "taste". An ALTS group will "raise the bar" for your leadership.

This is a hands-on experience that will challenge you to see/hear/feel how your leadership is experienced. Space is currently available for October, but we expect that it will fill quickly. Contact our office to register.

Quotes from ALTS Participants:

"I finally saw how to speak into lives in a loving way."

"Learning about myself as others held up a mirror for me was invaluable."

"The whole process of getting feedback and processing along the way was amazing."

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Whenever a person hurts himself or herself or others out of their own woundedness, we can weep with them. But we will also invite them to begin living life from their new identity in Christ. We are not ultimately victims. We are those who are redeemed and who use our story, our sin, and our shame to invite others to redemption. We believe that Christ in us is the hope of glory.

Notice to SALTS Alumni:

- Visit our website to order your materials for your small group.
- Check the "Locations" screen on our website to make sure your small group is listed and that your contact information is correct.

Website: www.openheartsministry.org

Important Dates to Remember

August 20-21, 2004 - Great Lakes Area Leaders Retreat, Bridgman, MI.

August 26-29, 2004 - Texas Leaders Retreat, San Antonio, TX.

September 27 - October 2, 2004 - SALTS, Munich, Germany

October 11-16, 2004 - SALTS, Maranatha, Muskegon, MI.

November 20, 2004 - Grace for the Wounded, Greensboro, North Carolina

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