



GRACE

**Godly Response to Abuse
in the Christian Environment**

Safeguarding Training - Part 1

Facing the Reality
of Abuse

Practice Self Care





How the Bible Speaks to Abuse



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The Bible speaks over and over
about God's heart for the
vulnerable and the oppressed.



"Whoever welcomes one of these
little children in my name
welcomes me; and whoever
welcomes me does not welcome
me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9:37






"The Lord is a stronghold
for the oppressed..."

Psalm 9:9





"...[God] does not forget
the cry of the afflicted."

Psalm 9:12



"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

Matthew 18:6



And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes...who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

Mark 12:38-40



God Speaks Against Violence

- Psalm 11:5 The Lord hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.
- Psalm 73:6 For the wicked pride is their necklace; violence are the clothes they wear.
- Prov. 3:31 God says "Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways"
- Prov. 24:2 The hearts of the wicked devise violence





Basic Definitions and Prevalence



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What is abuse?

Abuse is not a sin like other sins.



Abuse occurs when a person, holding power and trust, uses that power and trust to exploit or violate a person who is more vulnerable.

Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, financial, etc.



Jesus and Power



US Child Abuse Statistics

- Sexual Abuse: 1 in 4 women, 1 in 6 men
- Physical Abuse: 1 in 4
- Emotional Abuse: 11%
- Emotional Neglect: 15%
- Neglect: 10%
- Spiritual Abuse

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html>

US Abuse Statistics

- Intimate Partner Violence: 1 in 3 women (American Medical Association)
- Clergy Sexual Abuse: over 10% (*Sexual Abuse by Clergy: A Crisis for the Church* by Marie M. Fortune and James N. Poling)



Clergy Sexual Abuse
is not "an affair" but
an abuse of power.

There is a perpetrator
and a victim.



Critical distinction in all abuse:
sinning and being sinned against
or
a perpetrator and a victim






Our Role in Safeguarding: Out of Denial into Education



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Effective prevention
and response
requires coming out
of denial into
education as a
community.



Common Myths:

- "Not here."
- False reports of abuse are common
- "If he/she had _____, this wouldn't have happened."
- Victims need to forgive and move on



Recognizing Common Abuse Dynamics

"They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

Matthew 7:15



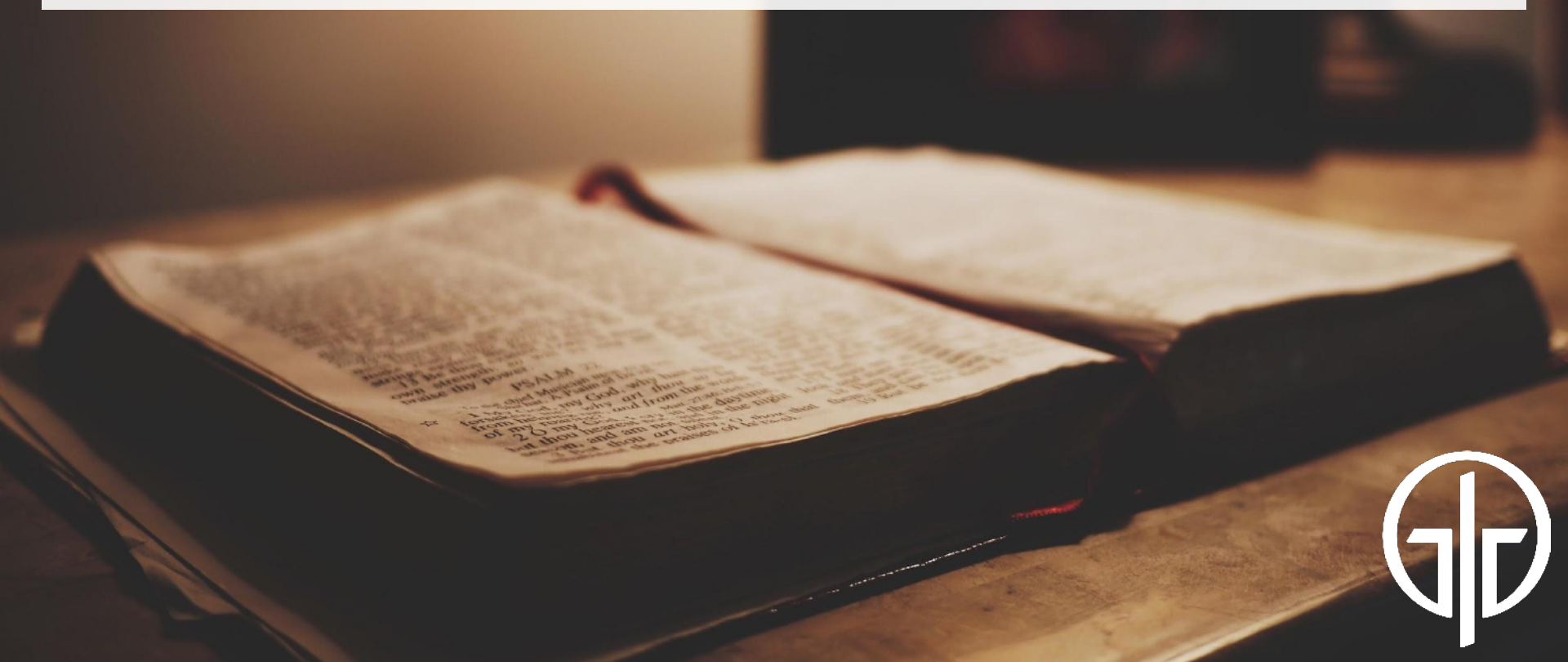
Common Abuse Dynamics:


- Power and Vulnerability
- Someone Known and Trusted in the Community
- Entitlement and Dehumanization
- Deception and Manipulation
- Isolation and Secrecy
- Fear, Shame, and Silence



Recognizing Common Abuse Dynamics A Story from the Bible

2 Samuel 13:1-22



A close-up photograph of a person's hand placing a gingerbread cookie onto a dark baking tray. Several other gingerbread cookies are already on the tray. In the background, a metal spatula and other kitchen items are visible on a countertop. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the main text.

Over 90% of
Victims Know
Their Abuser

(Finkelhor, 2012 and Whealin, 2007)



Most Abuse Occurs in the Home

Percent abused by biological parents or
non-biological parent or partner:

- 100% of neglected children
- 93% of emotionally abused children
- 91% of physically abused children
- 60% of sexually abused children

(Huot, 1999)




Over 80% of child sexual
abuse is perpetrated in one on
one situations

(Finkelhor, 2012)



Child sexual abuse is often
perpetrated in close
proximity to others.




A photograph of four children playing soccer in a grassy field with many trees in the background. A yellow soccer ball is in the air. One child in a green shirt is jumping high to head the ball. Another child in a red shirt is also jumping. A child in a blue shirt is on the left, and a child in a red shirt is on the right, both looking up at the ball. A large white circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text.

40% of
Child Sexual
Abuse is
Perpetrated by
Minors


(Finkelhor, 2012)



A man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark turtleneck sweater, is shown in profile, looking out over a sunset landscape. The background features silhouettes of mountains and a warm, orange glow from the setting sun. The text "Many Victims Never Disclose" is overlaid on the right side of the image.


Many
Victims
Never
Disclose





False Reports
of Child
Abuse are
Rare





"Although we need to be mindful of the possibility of false allegations, multiple studies conclude that these instances are rare, and that when children do lie, it is usually done to protect the perpetrator, not to get anyone in trouble."

Victor Vieth



Break





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Safeguarding Training - Part 2

Responding to the
Impact of Abuse



Common Impacts of Abuse



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Common Emotional Impacts

- Anger
- Confusion
- Betrayal
- Grief
- Guilt
- Shame
- Humiliation
- Fear
- Powerlessness



Common Physical Impacts

- Loss of Sleep
- Loss of Appetite
- Loss of Focus
- Increased Stress Levels
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Injury



Common Mental Health Impacts

- Anxiety (e.g. Panic Attacks)
- Depression
- PTSD
- Substance abuse
- Self-harm
- Loss of Motivation



Common Spiritual Impacts

- Loss of Safety in Church
- Feeling Betrayal by God, the Church, and Spiritual Leaders
- Feeling Distance from God
- Spiritual places and practices can be triggering.



Common Spiritual Impacts

In a review of 34 studies, encompassing 19,090 victims of child abuse, scholars note that most studies found abuse damaged the faith of children, often damaging the child's view of and relationship with God.

On This Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse of the Life and Words of Jesus by Victor Vieth






Godly Response to Survivors



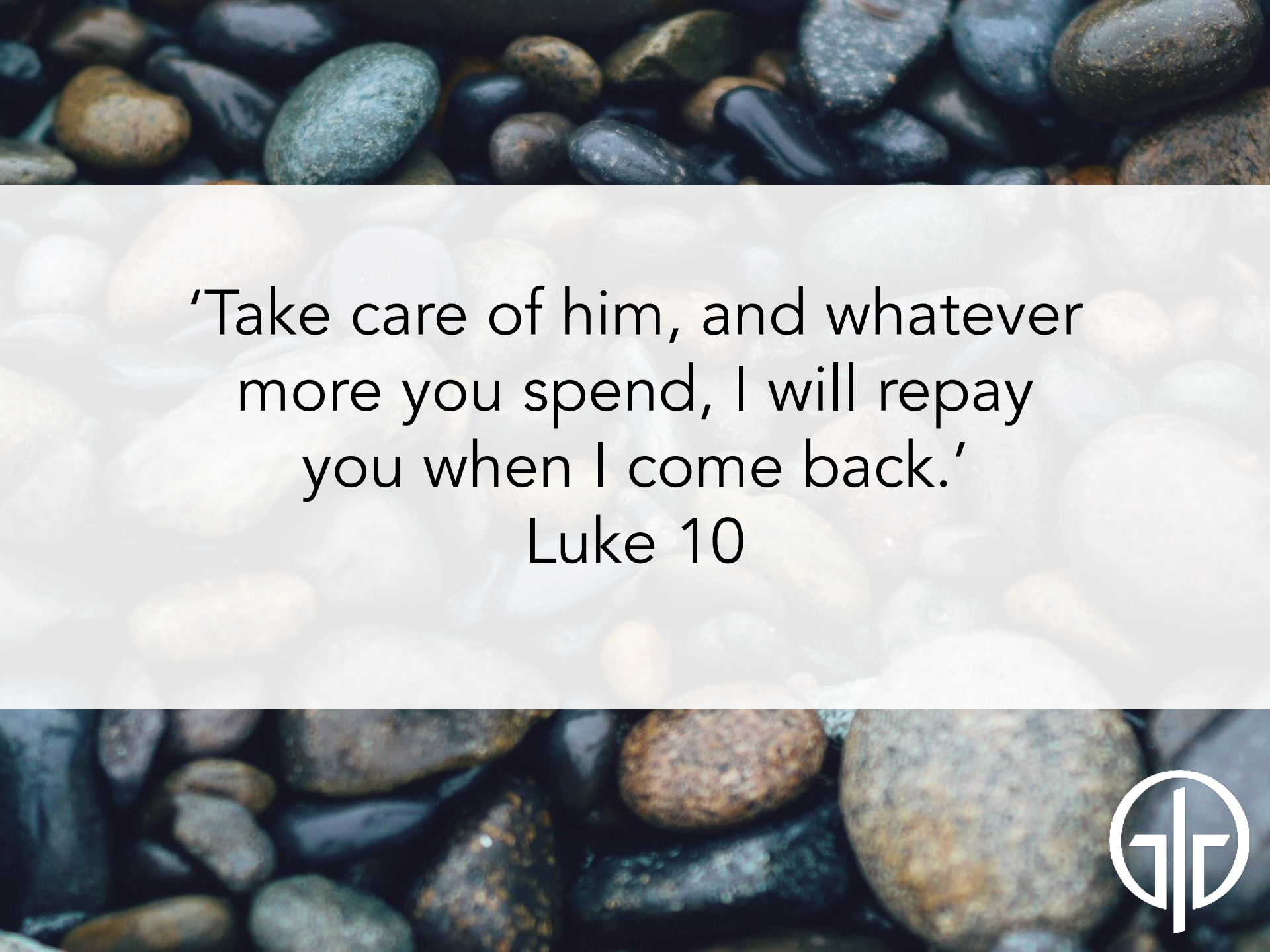
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As Christians, we are called to
expose deeds of evil and bind
up wounds.






'Take care of him, and whatever
more you spend, I will repay
you when I come back.'


Luke 10





We have to get over our
discomfort so we can
understand and help victims.





The Church must reject a culture
of silence, disbelief, and blame
that re-traumatizes victims.



Harmful Responses:

"He doesn't seem like a person..."

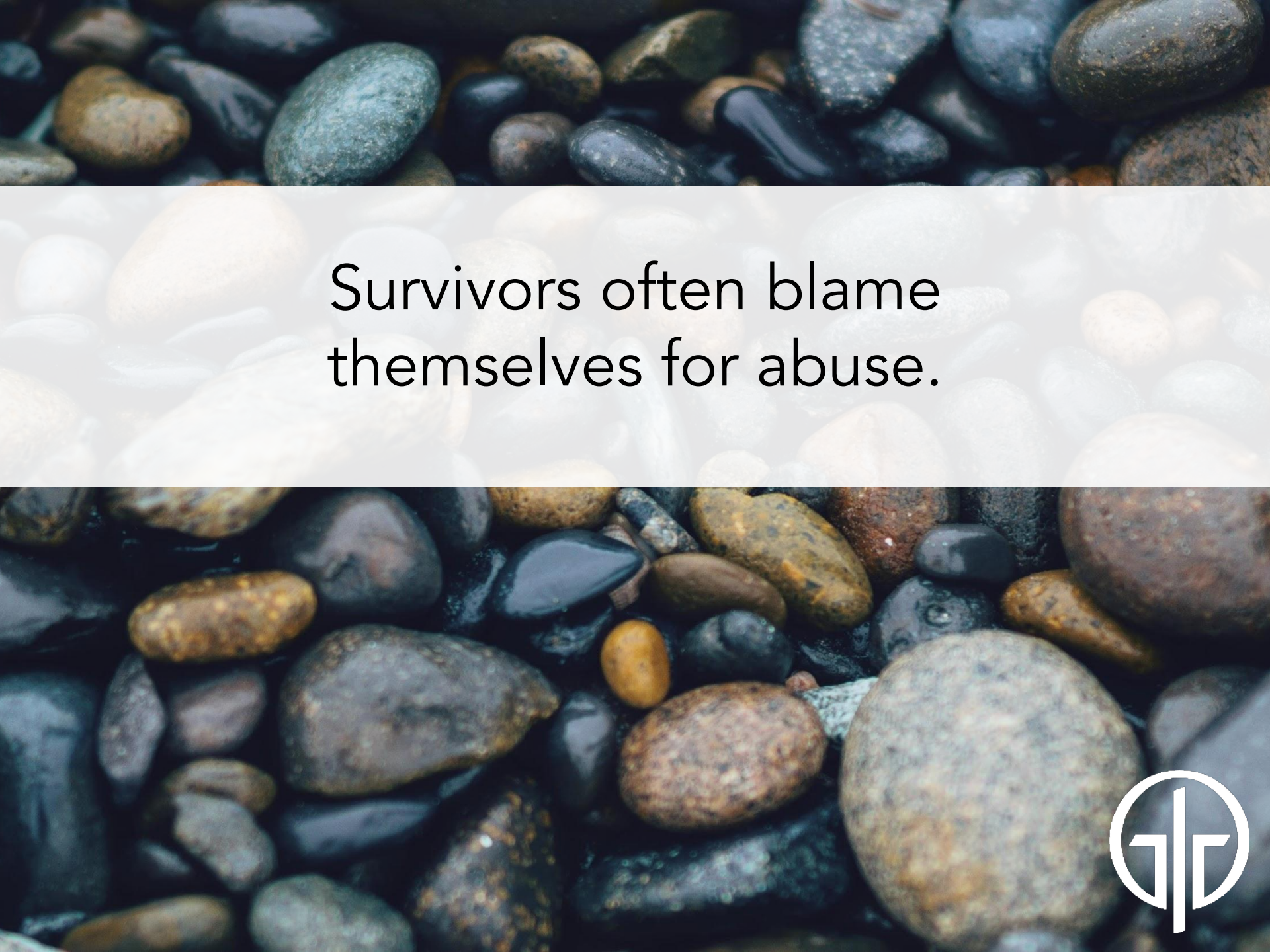
"Don't talk about that."

"Why were you there?"

"Did you text them first?"


"You need to trust God
and move on."





Survivors often blame
themselves for abuse.





It is critical to focus on
staying calm and listening.

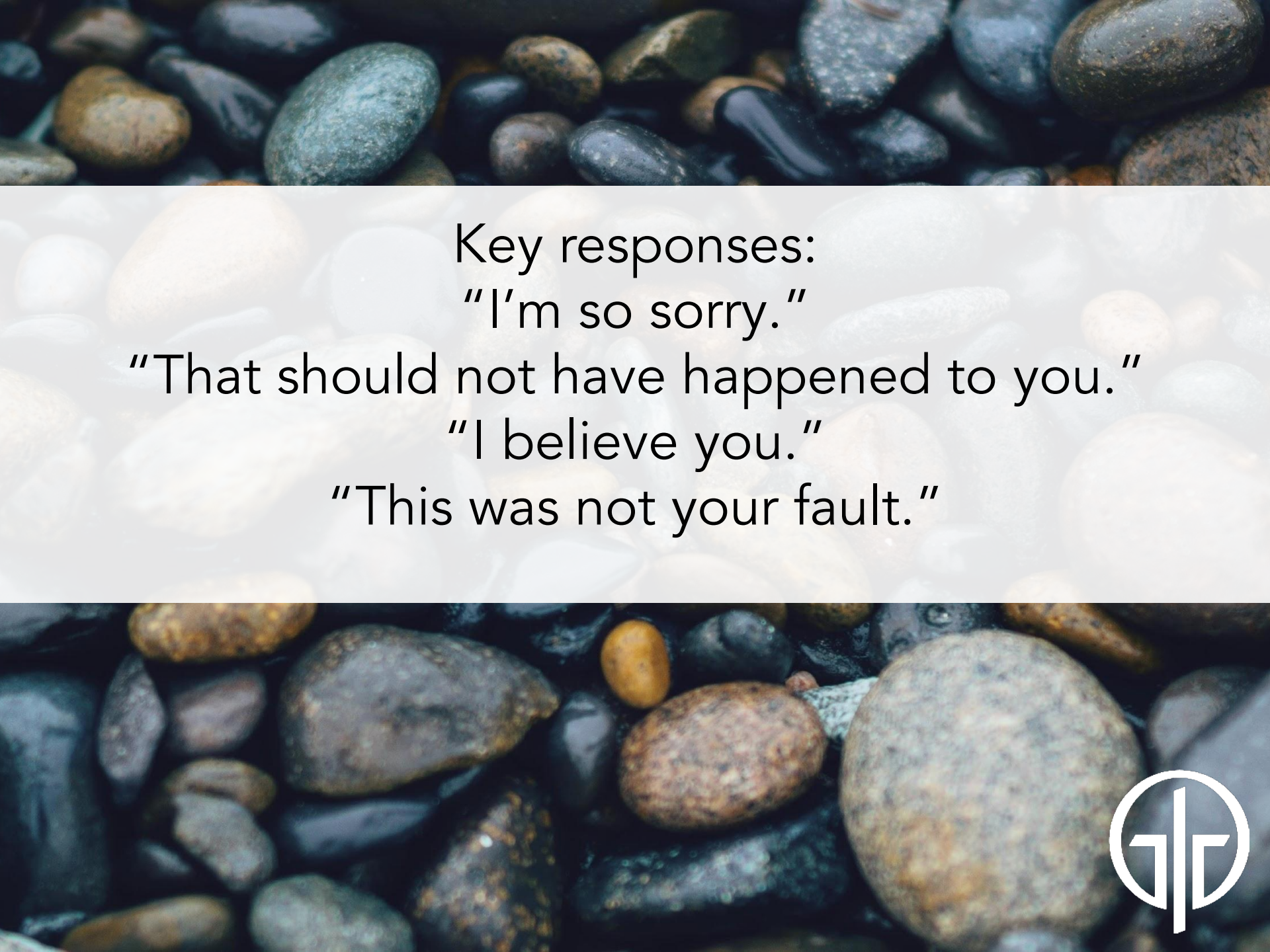




Don't try to "fix it."

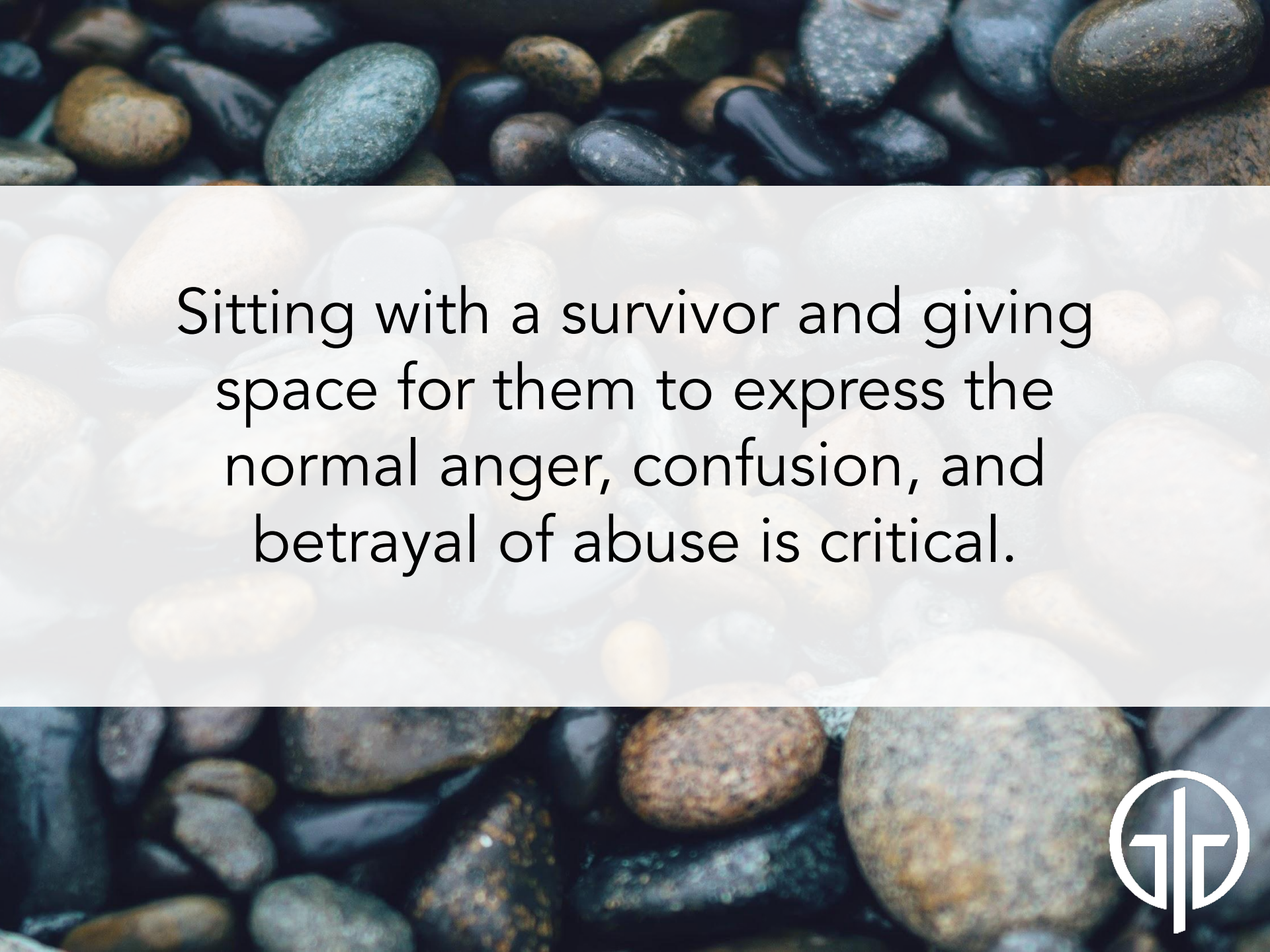
Most survivors don't need Bible verses
or platitudes when disclosing abuse.





Key responses:
"I'm so sorry."
"That should not have happened to you."
"I believe you."
"This was not your fault."





Sitting with a survivor and giving space for them to express the normal anger, confusion, and betrayal of abuse is critical.





Key Question: "Do you feel safe at
_____ (work/church/home, etc.)?"

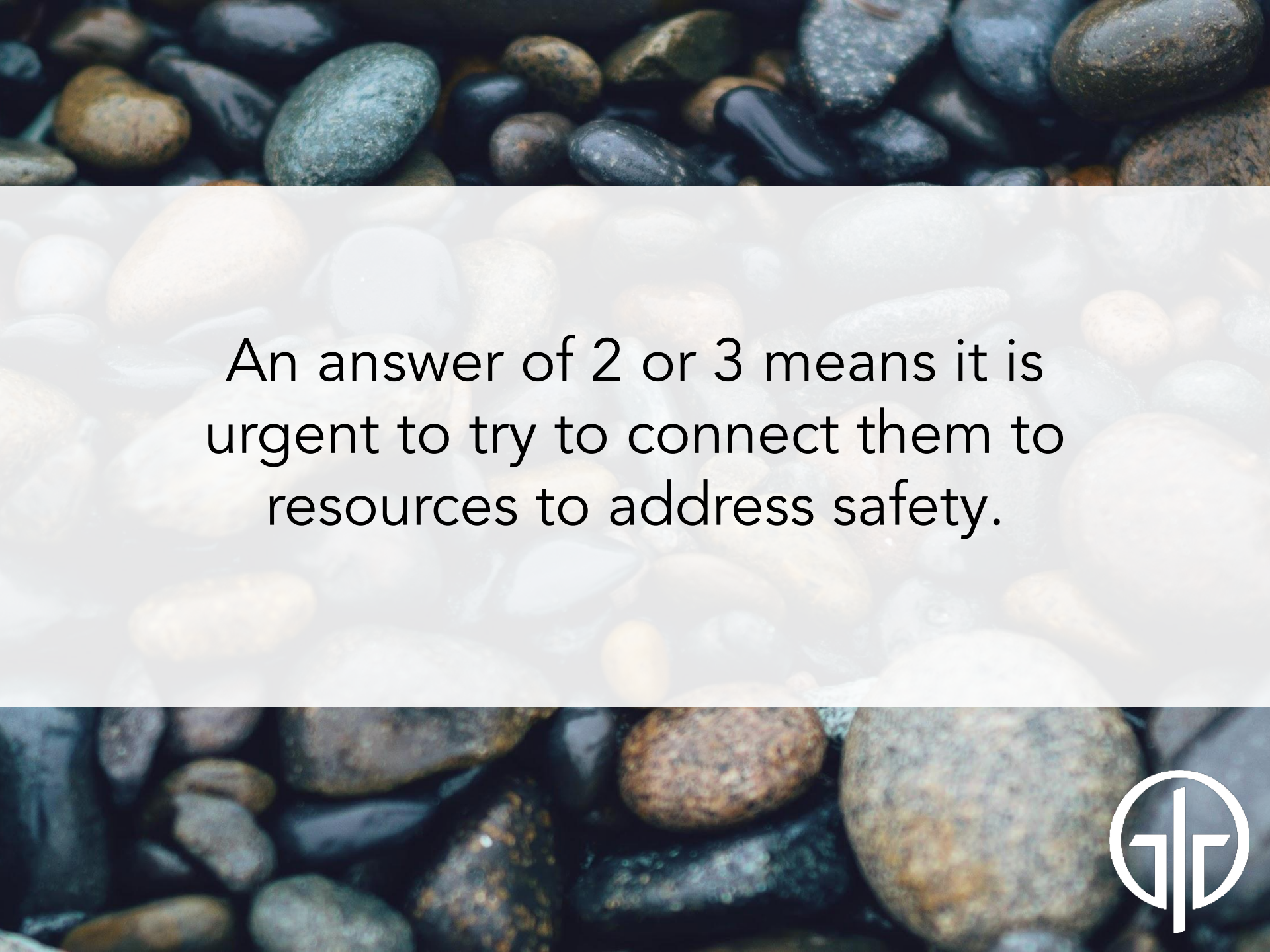




Intimate Partner Violence:

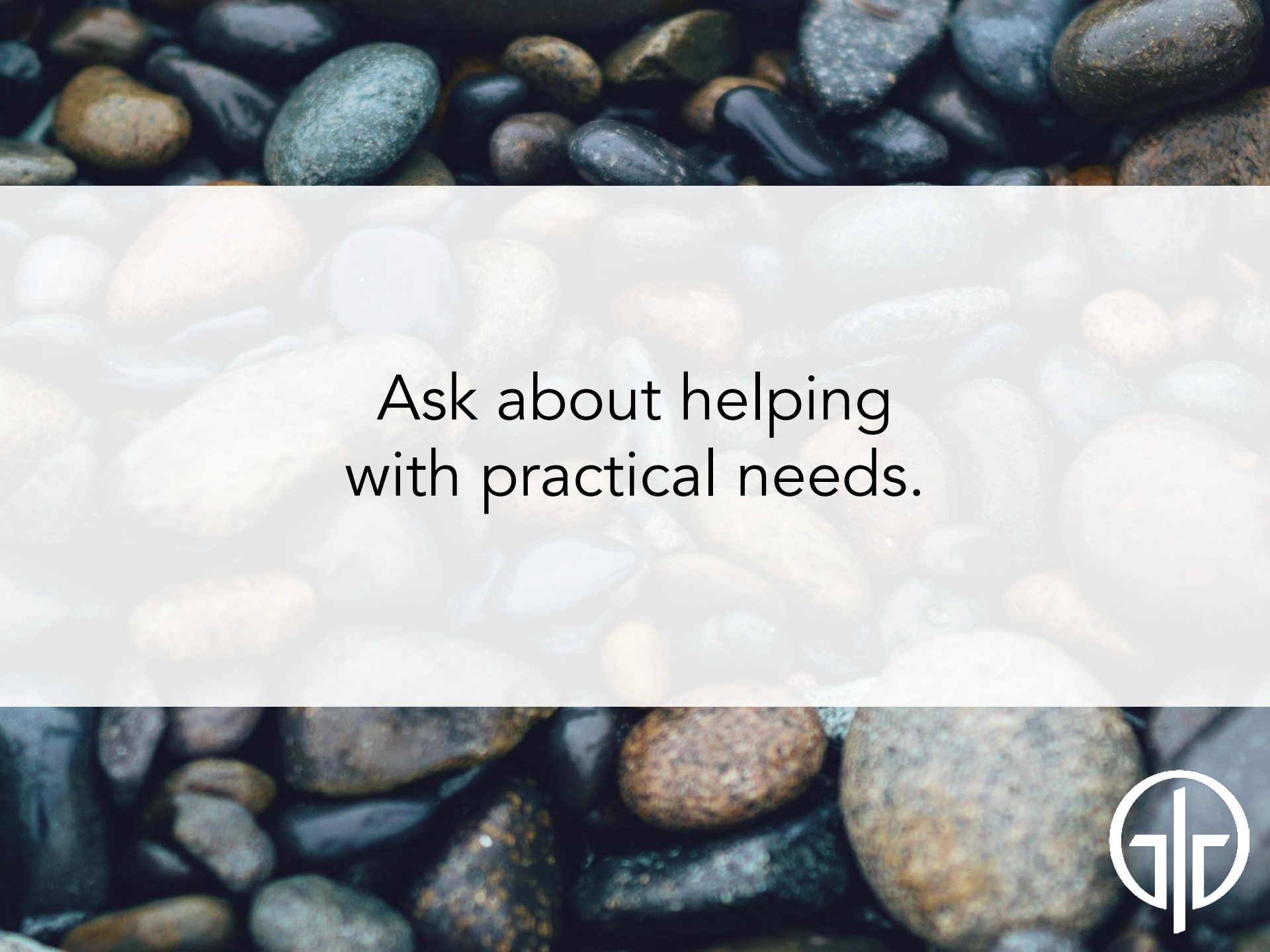
"On a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 being things aren't great but I feel safe, and 3 being I am afraid for my life, how safe would you say you feel right now?"





An answer of 2 or 3 means it is urgent to try to connect them to resources to address safety.





Ask about helping
with practical needs.





A Myth about Survivors

“Survivors of childhood abuse are far more likely to be victimized or to harm themselves than to victimize other people.”

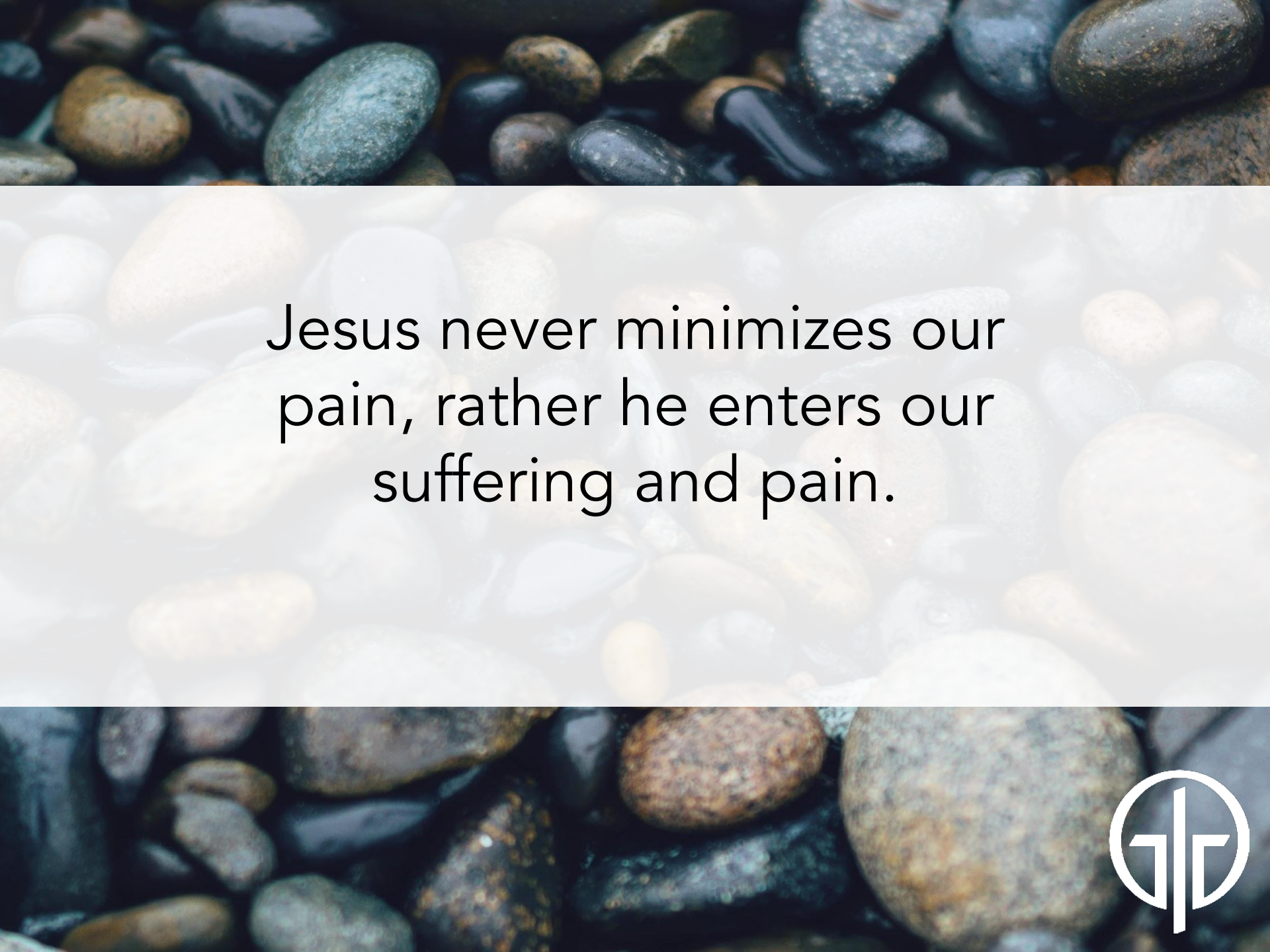
- Judith Herman



Resources for Male Survivors

- Improving the Response to Male Sexual Abuse by Christopher M. Anderson
- MaleSurvivor - <https://malesurvivor.org/>
- 1 in 6 - <https://1in6.org/>





Jesus never minimizes our
pain, rather he enters our
suffering and pain.





Trauma-Informed Communities and Caring for Survivors



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Adverse Childhood Experiences

Abuse and Neglect

Household Dysfunction



Impact on Child Development

Brain, Body, Immune System

Risky Health Behaviors



Long-Term Consequences

Increase in Health, Mental Health, and Social Problems

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html>



What is Trauma?

God created us with bodily systems to keep us safe and respond to danger.



What is Trauma?

Our brains do amazing things to protect us.

The brain can get “stuck” in a fear/stress response.



What is Trauma?

The terror of the past can break
unexpectedly into the present.

Triggers
Stress Hormones



What is Trauma?

The Three "E's" of Trauma

1. The Event
2. The Person's Experience of the Event
3. The Ongoing Effects of the Event

After the Event, you cannot change 1,
but 2 and 3 change over time

*SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a
Trauma-Informed Approach (SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice
Strategic Initiative July 2014)*



What is Trauma?

Our nervous systems are constantly seeking safety and connection.

Even one-on-one, calm, non-judgmental support can help another person's nervous system begin to regulate.



What is Trauma?

Our Trauma-Informed Communities
Prioritize:

1. Safety
2. Dignity
3. Agency
4. Trustworthiness



What is Trauma?

The Role of Your Community
AND
The Role of Licensed
Trauma Counselors



Supportive People:

- Believe victims and take practical steps to establish safety
- Never blame survivors or minimize abuse
- Never press for details about the abuse
- Never urge the survivor to meet the abuser, "reconcile," or push forgiveness
- Ask if you can help with any practical needs



Q & A



Practice Self Care

