

## ABUSE SPECTRUM ASSESSMENT

Abuse is defined as "to treat with cruelty or violence, especially regularly or repeatedly." Abuse can be physical, sexual, financial, emotional, verbal, and even reputational. It can occur through action or inaction, assault or neglect. It's such a broad, pervasive, and common thing that we often miss it just because we're so used to it. But identifying and handling abuse appropriately is part of our duty as followers of Jesus: "Deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor" (Jeremiah 22:3).

Often in the process we learn that the victim of abuse may have committed their own sins during the experience of being sinned against. This shouldn't surprise us. Jesus made it clear to Simon that he'd led Mary Magdalene into sin; but He also said, "Her sins are many" (Luke 7:47). Too often we dismiss abuse and protect the perpetrator on the grounds that the victim sinned, too. This thinking falls short of the "righteous judgment" God wishes us to exercise (John 7:24).

Abuse, like so many things, runs a long a spectrum from zero victim culpability to high victim culpability. Rape and child abuse are both on the "zero" end of the spectrum. A common type of case toward the other end of the spectrum is clergy abuse, where the pastor or other spiritual leader utilizes his or her power advantage to lure the congregant into a sinful (but apparently consensual) encounter. These apparently consensual relationships may include sin on both sides, but are still categorized as abuse due to imbalance of power.

Use this assessment tool to discern where the victim may plot along the ABUSE SPECTRUM.

This will aid your conceptualization and dialogue with others regarding the case.

Consensual sex with a subordinate

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GIVE ONE POINT to each question answered "YES."

If every question is answered "yes," it is not likely abuse. If any are answered "no," there may be elements of abuse in the relationship.

- Was the alleged victim over 25?
- Was the alleged victim mentally sound (free of mental illness)?
- Was the alleged victim in a stable emotional state (free of anxiety, depression, not vulnerable due to recent grief)?
- Was the alleged victim an equal of the alleged perpetrator in the work place?
- Was the alleged victim free of extreme social pressure to yield to the wishes of the alleged perpetrator?
- Was the alleged victim within five years of the same age as the alleged perpetrator?
- Was the alleged victim informed of all the facts about the alleged perpetrator's legal and relational status?

- Was the alleged victim equal to the alleged perpetrator in religious knowledge?
- Did the alleged victim consent physically to the sexual encounter?
- Did the alleged victim consent verbally to the sexual encounter?
  - Did the alleged victim express verbally or in writing, a desire for the sexual encounter?
- Did the alleged victim contribute (initiate?) to arranging for the sexual encounter?

**TOTAL SCORE** (0-12 POINTS)

2

Forcible rape or child abuse