



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.

