

Wounded Women

Sex in the Forbidden Zone Part III

By Barrington H. Brennen, June 25, 2003

Question: Dear Sir: Last night I confirmed my suspicion that our pastor is having an affair with our choir director. She is a single woman with three young children for two different men. He spends long hours with his "sweetheart" in the pastor's study after church service. I saw them holding hands and kissing last week while I was on the beach. It was not a friendly, pastoral kiss. How can a spiritual leader, or any decent man do such a thing? How terrible! What can we do about this? Why do men do such terrible things?

Answer: Dear friend, for the past three weeks I've been answering this very intense question. It is true that many spiritual and political leaders exploit women. The questions are always asked: Why do intelligent men allow themselves to be so exploitive, sex hungry, and promiscuous? Why do beautiful, educated, intelligent women allow themselves to be exploited over and over again by power hungry men?

WOUNDED WOMEN

In my last article on this subject I listed four patterns of feminine woundedness, according to psychiatrist Dr. Peter Rutter, that put women at risk for sexual-boundary violations:

(1) **Overt sexual psychological invasion in childhood.** Many women are recovering memories from childhood sexual molestation. "Others are finding that the effects of continual psychological intrusiveness can also be devastating. The danger for these women lies in repeating their loss of control over physical and psychological boundaries." (Rutter, P. 85) This point then brings out the imperativeness of parents providing the proper wholesome environment for their children. It is clear also that exploitation of a child during childhood, whether it is psychologically or physically, covertly or overtly, can put the child at risk to being unable to keep the boundaries clear during adulthood. Thus, the vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

(2) **Profound childhood aloneness.** This is a very serious point in the Caribbean. "Many women were not emotionally or physically exploited during childhood, yet they were left so alone during the childhood years that they become unselective about the quality of intimate attention they receive as adults." The danger for such women is that any attention at all becomes hard to refuse. This reinforces the importance for a caring, loving family life during the childhood years. Parents who refuse to provide the attention, time, and loving affection for their children are putting their children at risk to being exploited during adult life.

(3) **Exploited compassion.** According to Dr. Rutter, these women were neither invaded nor left alone. "They were highly involved in the emotional life of their families but were given the role of healer to the wounds of their parents and siblings." However, this made these women vulnerable to engaging in forbidden-

zone sexual relationships as a way of taking care of the wound in the man. Dr. Rutter in his book, "Sex in Forbidden Zone," also explains that "when children are treated as extensions of the needs of their emotionally injured parents, they are so used to being exploited that it becomes a way of life. Because children are vulnerable and close to their own injuries, they can be highly attuned to their parents' emotional status. They have a natural capacity for developing compassion for their parents' injuries. Parents can exploit this by allowing their children to assume the role of healer. They may explain the reason so many women think of themselves or act as if they are "saviors" to men. They feel they have the power to prevent the men from messing up politically, socially, or emotionally. They often feel they can change their men from a life of smoking, drugs, and illiteracy to a "cleaner life." These very women are highly susceptible to engaging in forbidden-zone sex.

(4) **Devalued outer potential.** This is a wound that is not only inflicted on women by family and friends but by national culture and spiritual misguidedness. It results from younger women being told that they "belong" in the home, as the center of family life, and not out in the world. "Such women become especially vulnerable to forbidden-zone relationships with male teachers and mentors who hold out the promise of helping them develop their intellectual, artistic, and vocational talents and ask them to pay the price sexually." This is not to suggest that women cannot or should not choose to stay at home as a full-time parent. However it does suggest that if that choice is based on a thwarted belief system of who she is, her role as a woman, wife, or mother, she is at risk to being sexually exploited by men.

Next week we will examine the wounds of men and their vulnerability to forbidden-zone sex. This article and others are available on the web site www.soencouragment.org. Our email address is encouragement@coralwave.com .