

Journey To Joy Ministries

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Sally* was a straight A student until her absent father arrived on the scene. Because she so longed for her dad's love, she was vulnerable to his subtle approaches. At thirteen, in her father's van, Sally lost her virginity and her sense of worth. Her life plummeted until, at the age of twenty-one, she found Jesus Christ as her Savior. But she wore a mask. Her big question was, "What if the people in my church ever found out?" At a Journey to Joy group meeting the first tear trickled slowly down her cheek, opening the door to the release of twenty years of pain.

Jenny* was pregnant at fourteen and her parents pushed her into having an abortion. Mother's Day always brought back the shame and sorrow, even though she had a happy marriage and other children. One day in a small group, with her hands covering her face, she blurted out her experience. Instead of rejection, she found love and acceptance and healing. Now she ministers to others in the church with an abortion in their past.

Donna* was beaten and sexually abused by her alcoholic mother. Sandra* was the victim of Satanic ritual abuse and had been forced to sacrifice her child, the product of her being raped by "Satan". Nina* had a super critical mom and was still trying to find acceptance. Deb* felt like the family reject. Angie* blamed herself for "seducing" her father when she was only five. The list goes on, and on, and on. And that is only in one church!

If it is true that one child out of four has been sexually abused, it is also true that many of these children grow up and become a part of Christ's Church. Besides those who have experienced sexual abuse, people have been damaged in other ways. There are many wounded and hurting in the Body of Christ. They may be so weighed down with the pains of the past that they are unable to be all that God plans for them to be. They may even pass their pain on to their families and to the church they attend. God calls us to minister to them, but how do we do this? One answer is small group ministry in a safe setting. The good news is that these ladies have found healing and freedom through the Journey To Joy Ministry. Those who were unable to function now lead other ladies in many areas of our church. Other churches have also found that this ministry works.

The *Journey To Joy Manual* and accompanying 20-lesson workbook outline a step-by-step approach to filling this need. From leadership skills to promotion to lesson plans and ministry techniques, this manual covers the implementation and facilitation of a small group ministry to the hurting. Written over a span of thirteen years, and based on our own experiences, it addresses the difficult issues and outlines the tools that work. It could even be used in a one-to-one situation.

The *lesson plan section* covers such topics as “Who Is God?”; truth versus lies; Tamar, David’s daughter, who was raped by her brother; Noah, a woman of God who learned the correct way to confront; Nehemiah and his rebuilding project; anger; and forgiveness. It follows a progression of healing that puts God at the center and deals with the hard questions. Most of all, it offers hope to those who believe they are the outcasts of God’s family.

The purpose of the Journey to Joy manual and program is to prepare God’s people to minister to the crippled ones in His Body. The language is simple and the format easy to follow. The directions are complete enough to allow any Christian who is solid in their faith to present the lessons.

This material would also be helpful in Bible colleges in preparing young men and women to face the next generation and its needs, as well as to find their own healing. When I presented this material in a college class two years ago, several came up afterwards to share their own pain and how that was keeping them from realizing their potential in Christ. Current statistics at that college show that one out of four students comes from a broken home and 13 per cent of the freshman class have been sexually abused.

These issues are not unique to our country. Sexual and physical abuse runs rampant in most of the world. Last year as I was presenting a workshop on healing for hurting children in South America, my interpreter burst into tears. “That’s me,” she sobbed between the tears.

The need for reaching out with Christ’s compassion knows no boundaries. It is simply the Body of Christ accepting and helping the hurting ones.

Galatians 6:2 tells us, “*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ*” (NIV).

The daughter of missionary parents, I grew up with a desire to touch people’s lives and make a difference. I am an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God, a registered nurse, and a teacher. Currently I serve our local church as Women’s Pastor. I have worked extensively with hurting people in the church for over thirty years. I have also worked in a variety of nursing positions including health teaching and supervision of psychiatric patients in medical facilities. I also belong to the American Association of Christian Counselors. My passion is to bring hope and healing to the hurt and broken.

I am available to do training seminars and to speak. I am convinced of the benefits of this ministry because I have personally seen women shed their ashes and shame for God’s beauty and the confidence of who they are in Him. One of the ladies who sometimes travels with me shares a dynamic testimony of God’s healing through the Journey To Joy program.

* Names have been changed.