



How Spiritual Instruction Helps Women Recover from Abuse and Confusion

Dr. Carrie Kitay

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Domestic abuse does not wound only the body, emotions, or daily life of a woman. It often reaches into the deepest places of belief, conscience, identity, and spiritual understanding. A survivor may leave an abusive environment physically, yet still carry inside her a painful confusion about God, herself, love, authority, forgiveness, submission, and responsibility. She may wonder whether she failed as a wife, whether God is disappointed in her, whether her suffering was somehow required, or whether her desire for safety is selfish. These questions are not small. They reveal how abuse can disturb the soul and how essential careful spiritual instruction becomes in the process of healing.

Empower's work with women survivors recognizes that spiritual instruction must be more than the repeating of Bible verses or the offering of quick religious encouragement. A woman who has been abused often needs patient, compassionate, and biblically grounded teaching that helps her separate God's truth from the distortions that were used to control her. She needs instruction that restores clarity instead of increasing guilt. She needs teaching that explains God's design for dignity, safety, responsibility, and healing in a way that can be understood and applied to real life. When spiritual instruction is handled wisely, it becomes a source of freedom rather than pressure, hope rather than shame, and strength rather than fear.

In Christ-Centered Reality Therapy, truth is central to healing because reality is not defined by fear, manipulation, or the abuser's version of events. Reality is defined by God. Abuse creates confusion by repeatedly training the victim to doubt what she sees, silence what she feels, and accept responsibility for what someone else chose to do. Spiritual instruction helps interrupt that confusion by bringing the survivor back to objective truth: God does not approve of oppression, God does not require a woman to deny harm, and God does not define love as control. Carefully taught biblical truth becomes a steady light in a place where the survivor has often been forced to live in emotional and spiritual fog.

Abuse Often Creates Spiritual Confusion

One of the most painful effects of domestic abuse is the way it can make a woman uncertain about things she once believed with confidence. Before abuse, she may have understood prayer, forgiveness, marriage, and faith in a hopeful way. After repeated control, intimidation, manipulation, and blame, those same concepts may feel heavy or frightening. Words that should bring life may have been used against her. Scripture may have been quoted at her, not to lead her toward God, but to keep her quiet, compliant, or afraid of leaving danger. Over time, spiritual language can become tangled with the voice of the abuser.

This is why spiritual instruction must begin gently. A survivor does not need to be scolded for feeling confused. She needs to understand that confusion is often the result of prolonged distortion. When someone repeatedly tells a woman that she is the problem, that her pain is rebellion, that her boundaries are unforgiveness, or that her request for safety is a lack of submission, the mind and spirit absorb the pressure. The woman may begin to interpret her own survival instincts as sin. She may feel guilty for needing distance. She may hesitate to name abuse because she has been conditioned to believe that doing so dishonors God.

Biblical instruction helps restore clarity by teaching the whole counsel of Scripture rather than isolated verses misused without context. The Bible does teach forgiveness, patience, humility, and faithfulness, but it also teaches justice, protection, accountability, truth, and deliverance from oppression. Psalm 34:18 says, 'The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.' That verse does not present God as distant from the wounded. It presents Him as near. Spiritual instruction helps the survivor see that her brokenness does not repel God. Her pain matters to Him, and her need for safety is not contrary to His heart.

Recovering the Difference Between God's Voice and Abusive Control

A major part of recovery is learning to distinguish God's voice from the voice of abusive control. Abuse often speaks with accusation, urgency, fear, shame, and punishment. It demands compliance and calls that compliance peace. It pressures the woman to ignore danger and calls that ignoring faith. It may insist that her needs do not matter and call that humility. God's truth does not operate this way. God corrects, but He does not manipulate. God convicts, but He does not coerce. God calls people into righteousness, but He does not require one person to become the object through which another person satisfies entitlement, rage, or domination.

Spiritual instruction gives language to these differences. It teaches that authority, when it is godly, is connected to responsibility and care. In Scripture, leadership is never permission to dominate. Jesus said in Matthew 20:25-28 that the rulers of the Gentiles exercised dominion, but that it should not be so among His followers. Instead, greatness in His kingdom is connected to service. This matters deeply for women recovering from abuse because many have been told that authority means control and that submission means silence. Biblical instruction corrects that falsehood. Godly authority protects; abusive control exploits. Godly leadership serves; abusive power demands. Godly correction leads toward life; abusive accusation traps the soul in fear.

This kind of teaching is not merely theological. It is practical and stabilizing. A survivor who can recognize the difference between conviction and condemnation is less likely to return to patterns of self-blame. A woman who understands the difference between humility and erasure can begin to rebuild her voice. A woman who learns that God values truth does not have to pretend that evil was merely a misunderstanding. Christ-Centered Reality Therapy supports this process by helping the survivor align her thoughts with reality as God defines it, not as abuse distorted it. The goal is not to make her angry or bitter. The goal is to help her become clear.

Replacing False Guilt with Biblical Responsibility

Many survivors carry a burden that does not belong to them. They feel responsible for the abuser's anger, mood, choices, reputation, repentance, and future. They may have spent years trying to prevent the next explosion, soften the next accusation, or manage the household atmosphere so

that no one would be hurt. This survival pattern often continues long after the immediate danger has passed. A woman may still feel that if she had been more patient, more loving, more spiritual, more quiet, or more careful, the abuse would not have happened. That belief can become a prison.

Spiritual instruction helps by making a careful distinction between personal responsibility and false responsibility. Every person is responsible before God for her own choices, attitudes, and actions. But no woman is responsible for another person's decision to intimidate, threaten, manipulate, degrade, or harm. Ezekiel 18:20 says, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' While the full passage deals with individual moral accountability before God, the principle is vital: guilt is not to be transferred from the wrongdoer to the person who suffered the wrong. The abuser is responsible for the abuse. The survivor is responsible for walking toward truth, wisdom, healing, and safety as God gives her strength.

This is one of the reasons Christ-Centered Reality Therapy is so helpful in domestic abuse recovery. CCRT does not remove agency from the survivor, but neither does it blame her for the abuser's choices. It helps her identify what belongs to her and what does not. She may choose to seek help. She may choose to set boundaries. She may choose to accept support, rebuild her life, grow in wisdom, and care for her children. But she does not have to carry the moral weight of another person's violence or control. That separation can feel unfamiliar at first. It may even feel wrong to a woman who has lived under constant blame. Over time, however, accurate responsibility becomes one of the great instruments of healing.

Teaching Boundaries as Wisdom, Not Rebellion

Many abused women have been taught, directly or indirectly, that boundaries are unloving. They may have been told that saying no is disrespectful, that asking for space is unforgiving, or that seeking protection is evidence of a hard heart. Spiritual instruction must correct this with both compassion and conviction. Boundaries are not the opposite of love. Properly understood, boundaries are part of moral order. They help define what is safe, what is healthy, what is responsible, and what cannot be allowed to continue.

Scripture is full of boundaries. God gives commands. He establishes moral limits. He separates light from darkness. He warns, corrects, protects, and sometimes removes people from danger. Proverbs 22:3 says, 'A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.' Wisdom sees danger and responds. It does not walk blindly into harm and call that faith. When a survivor learns this, she may begin to understand that a safety plan, a legal boundary, a counseling boundary, or a relational boundary can be an act of prudence rather than rebellion.

This teaching must be delivered carefully because survivors are often already exhausted from being told what they must do. The purpose of spiritual instruction is not to pressure her into immediate decisions, but to give her truth that strengthens wise decision-making. A woman who is still in danger may need practical support before she can make major changes. A woman who has recently left may need reassurance that distance is not spiritual failure. A woman rebuilding her life may need help understanding how healthy boundaries can protect her peace, her children, her finances, and her relationship with God. In each situation, spiritual instruction should steady the heart rather than rush the process.

Restoring a Biblical View of Identity

Domestic abuse often attacks identity. A woman may be called names so often that those names begin to echo inside her own thoughts. She may be told that she is weak, crazy, selfish, unattractive, ungodly, rebellious, or incapable of surviving without the person who is harming her. These words do not simply disappear when the relationship changes. They can settle into the heart as false beliefs. Spiritual instruction helps expose those beliefs and replace them with truth rooted in God's Word.

A survivor does not need shallow slogans about self-esteem. She needs a sturdy, biblical understanding of personhood. She is made in the image of God. She is not an object to be controlled. She is not the sum of what happened to her. She is not defined by the abuser's accusations, the community's misunderstandings, or her own trauma responses. If she belongs to Christ, she also needs to be reminded that her identity is not reduced to her wounds. Ephesians 2:10 says, 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' The word workmanship carries the sense of God's purposeful creation. Abuse may have damaged her sense of worth, but it did not erase God's design.

In CCRT terms, this restoration of identity is part of restoring normal reality. Abuse teaches abnormal beliefs: that love must hurt, that fear is normal, that control is care, that silence is safety, and that dignity is selfish. Biblical instruction helps a woman recognize those beliefs as distortions. She begins to see that healthy relationships should not require constant fear. She learns that her voice can be used wisely. She begins to understand that God's design for her includes responsibility, but not servitude to someone else's sin. This truth may not arrive all at once. Sometimes it comes slowly, through repeated teaching, patient counseling, prayer, and safe relationships that demonstrate what words alone cannot fully repair.

Helping Women Understand Forgiveness Without Pressure

Few subjects are more tender for survivors than forgiveness. Many women have been pressured to forgive quickly, reconcile immediately, stop talking about the abuse, or prove their spirituality by restoring access to the person who harmed them. This pressure can create deep confusion because the survivor may genuinely want to obey God, yet also feel unsafe, angry, numb, or afraid. Spiritual instruction must handle forgiveness with great care. It must tell the truth without using truth as a weapon.

The Bible does command forgiveness, but forgiveness is not the same thing as denial, trust, reconciliation, or removal of consequences. Forgiveness does not mean a woman must pretend she was not harmed. It does not require her to return to danger. It does not cancel the need for repentance, accountability, or safety. When Jesus taught forgiveness, He never redefined evil as harmless. He never told the oppressed to protect the image of the oppressor. He never made victims responsible for creating the appearance of peace while injustice continued beneath the surface.

Healthy spiritual instruction gives the survivor room to process. It helps her understand that forgiveness is not a performance for others. It is not a deadline imposed by those uncomfortable with her pain. It is part of a deeper work of the heart before God, and it must be distinguished from decisions about contact, trust, living arrangements, church involvement, or legal protection. This

distinction often brings relief. A woman can desire a heart free from bitterness while still maintaining a boundary. She can pray for someone's repentance without pretending repentance has occurred. She can obey God without surrendering wisdom.

Spiritual Instruction as a Pathway from Confusion to Clarity

The ultimate goal of spiritual instruction is not simply to give a woman more information. It is to help her live in truth. For a survivor of domestic abuse, truth may need to be rebuilt in layers. She may first need to understand that what happened to her was real. Then she may need to understand that it was wrong. Then she may need to understand that it was not her fault. Then she may need to learn that God is not the author of that oppression. Later, she may be ready to explore how to rebuild a life of faith, responsibility, purpose, and hope. Each layer matters.

This kind of instruction works best when it is steady, relational, and compassionate. Some women need teaching about God's protection. Others need help untangling misused verses. Others need a biblical view of authority, repentance, boundaries, grief, or parenting after abuse. Some need to rediscover prayer without fear. Others need to learn that lament is not unbelief. Psalm 62:8 says, 'Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.' The invitation to pour out the heart is important. God does not require survivors to speak in polished religious language. He invites honesty.

As clarity grows, choices often become more grounded. The survivor may begin to choose supportive relationships instead of isolating. She may begin to ask better questions. She may recognize warning signs sooner. She may stop confusing spiritual strength with emotional numbness. She may begin to feel grief, anger, hope, and courage in ways that are no longer overwhelming. Through CCRT, these changes are understood as part of the restoration of agency. The woman is not being pushed into someone else's plan for her life. She is being helped to see reality more clearly so she can make wise, responsible, God-honoring choices.

Conclusion

Spiritual instruction is essential for many women recovering from domestic abuse because abuse often damages the very beliefs that should help a person heal. When Scripture has been misused, when authority has been distorted, when guilt has been misplaced, and when a woman has been taught to distrust her own perception of harm, careful biblical teaching becomes a ministry of restoration. It gives language to what was wrong. It restores the character of God where that character has been misrepresented. It helps the survivor understand that truth, safety, dignity, and responsibility are not enemies of faith.

Empower's commitment to spiritual instruction is therefore not an added religious feature. It is central to helping women move from confusion to clarity and from fear to hope. Grounded in biblical principles and guided by Christ-Centered Reality Therapy, spiritual instruction helps women identify distorted beliefs, reclaim agency, establish wise boundaries, and rediscover a faith that is not rooted in fear. It does not rush healing. It does not shame the wounded. It does not use the Bible to silence pain. Instead, it patiently brings truth into the places where abuse created darkness.

A woman recovering from abuse needs to know that God has not abandoned her, that her suffering is not invisible, and that her desire for safety does not make her unfaithful. She needs to hear, perhaps many times, that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and that His truth does not require her to deny reality. With compassionate spiritual instruction, the fog can begin to lift. Hope can become more than a distant idea. It can become a path forward, one truthful step at a time.