

Eastern European Woundedness and the Resulting Response to Abuse

Can one survive the totalitarian oppression and constant persecution of communism and yet keep one's personality intact and integrated? Over forty years of devastation in the souls of people have produced shame-based minds. People were conditioned to be led, to be dictated to, to be dependent, and to be cautious. Moreover, communism left an infection of suspicion and mistrust, and an image of a mocked, distant, or absent God.

Because of the continuous spiritual and emotional abuse, Christians confuse biblical self-sacrifice with the tolerance of abuse. They are filled with shame and thus have no strength to protect themselves and no guidelines to live with their own rights. How can we liberate the minds of Christians still paralyzed by intimidation and abuse and how can we teach them responsible independence? How can the church teach people to think, act, and live shame free? How can we help people restore the image of God who is loving and protecting?

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I. Introduction

Memories of surviving a totalitarian oppression and persecution

II. Consequences:

- 1) Distorted self-image:
 - a. Loss of dignity and self respect
 - b. Rejected “For ye are bought with a price” (I.Corinthians 6:20.)
 - c. Powerlessness – cannot bring positive change
 - d. Powerful - to be partial cause of evil –*“It must be me! It must be my fault!*

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” (John 17:15.)

- e. Shame based identity – false convictions of self

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9.)

2) Distorted image of God:

- a. “*God is indifferent,distant*”

“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.”
(Psalms 27:10.)

- b. “*God’s love is based on our obedience*”

- c. “*God’s love is based on our self-denial*”

“My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you. ” (Job 42:5.)

- d. “*God is only a thinking God not an emotional God*”

“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” (Jeremiah 31:3.)

3) Distorted image of relationships:

- a. Trust: Communism left an infection of suspiciousness and mistrust →Need for control “*Life depends on me!*”

- b. Emotions: Difficulty to **feel** →Disconnectedness

- c. Intimacy: “*Community is only surface. Only I desire for a deeper connection!*” → denial of the desire for **intimacy**

 - d. Thinking: Unspoken **truth** → inner confusion of reality → need for rules for security → dependent thinking
- 4) Unhealthy residues of abuse:
- a. **Dependent thinking**

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth.” (John 14:16.)

 - b. **Unhealthy boundaries**

 - c. **Emotional distancing**

 - d. **Anger**

III. The task of the church

1. Identify the lies and replace them with truth

“I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.” (Rev. 2:17.)

2. Create healthy, genuine and safe communities

3. Encourage self expression

4. Practice and encourage critical thinking

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3.)

5. Teach forgiveness

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Mt. 6:14-15.)

6. Encourage Hope

“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten ... You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.” (Joel 2: 25-26.)