



Hope and Healing

Bible Study



 THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod
Life Together



Hope and Healing

Bible Study



Copyright © 2017 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-THE LCMS (843-5267)
lcms.org/social-issues/domestic-violence

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, hymn texts are from *Lutheran Service Book*, copyright © 2006. All rights reserved.

All Small Catechism quotes are taken from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, copyright © 1986, 1991 Concordia. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



INTRODUCTION

In the U.S., more than one in six women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime, making sexual assault an issue that affects all our families, communities and churches. Yet there is a lack of Gospel-centered, Lutheran resources for helping women through the emotional and spiritual devastation that follow rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. Also needed are clear, easy-to-follow and comprehensive materials to assist pastors in providing pastoral care for women following an attack. This study and its companion materials are intended to help fill this need in churches.

Sexual assault, rape and domestic violence are difficult topics to address. They are emotionally volatile and heart-breaking life events, and for women who are suffering and trying to heal, the perfect peace of the Gospel is vital. In Christ, there is hope and healing for survivors of sexual assault.

Most sexual assaults in the U.S. are not committed by a stranger but by a trusted friend, family member or acquaintance. In addition to the trauma of the assault, this extra layer to the betrayal of trust can result in the destruction of familial relationships or the end of friendships. It is especially important to prioritize Christ-centered healing when the abuser or attacker is not a stranger. Christ-centered healing addresses more than physical or mental healing, and includes spiritual healing, forgiveness and the reconnecting of the individual to her church.

This study, by and large, assumes that the survivor currently has a church home. If you are a survivor who does not, please look for a local church to care for and help you emotionally and spiritually heal. Find a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) with a strong emphasis on grace and forgiveness. Call and ask to speak with a pastor. You don't need to tell more details about your current situation than you are comfortable with, but just ask to receive pastoral care. Tell him how he can best meet with you to help you as you work through spiritual and emotional healing after experiencing rape, sexual assault or domestic violence. Expect him to invite you to church, because that is where God helps us.

A note on language.¹

Sexual assault, rape and domestic violence are emotionally volatile topics, and this makes the choice of terminology incredibly hard. Words describing violence and sexual violence can be graphic, triggering painful imagery, and their impact can vary from person to person. For clarity,

this study uses the words *rape*, *sexual assault* and *domestic violence*.

In addition, while this study was written by and for women, the sad truth is that men also are raped. If you are using this as a resource for a man in need of support and healing, please substitute man/he/him as needed.

Also, please note that this study contains a great deal of repetition. This is purposeful; the more you read encouraging and Gospel-centered words the more they will settle in your memory.

¹ Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence, accessed 12/9/2016.

SESSION ONE

Out of the Darkness

MEDITATION:

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4).

“Was it really rape? Was it rape? Did I say no? Did I say it clearly enough? Did I fight? Was this all a mistake? Is there something I could have done differently? Have I lost my worth? Does this make me a bad person?” Have you heard any of these questions, or perhaps asked them of yourself?

After the initial sin and wrongdoing that take place during a sexual assault, there is a more insidious and lasting evil that can follow. This evil is the survivor’s self-doubt and internal questioning, coupled with the all-too-common prying questions and skepticism of those who learn about the assault.

After experiencing sexual assault, a survivor will often seek help and comfort from close friends and family. But the stress of the attack can cause people around you to react in less than ideal ways, just when they are needed most. Sometimes those closest to you inadvertently say or do things that hurt you further.

Remember, you are not in control of the responses of others, and their less-than-helpful responses do not mean that what happened to you was in any way acceptable, your fault or not sinful. The opposite is true. Rape is not about sex. It is about power, control and violence.² Rape is not about what you wore, how much you drank, who you dated or even who you are. Rape is a sin on the part of the rapist, a sin committed against you. It is not your fault.

When you’re in the midst of juggling your reactions to the traumatic event and dealing with those of the people around you, the future can terrify you. You may be left wondering if you’ll ever heal, and what that healing will actually look like. It might seem like the world will never make sense again. Though the future is frightening and the past is painful, you can find rest in the present moment, right now.

Your soul is safe. God loves you. This love is shown in that God sent His only Son to die for you, for your pain and for your grief. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his

only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (JOHN 3:16). Jesus came to die for you to pay the price for all the sins and hurts that touch your life. His sacrifice for you makes you holy and pure.

The psalm quoted at the beginning of this chapter contains some of the most familiar and comforting imagery found in the Bible: Jesus as your Good Shepherd, comforting you and protecting you. While sexual assault is always evil, that evil event does not define you, nor does it control you. In Baptism, God put His own name upon you and made you His beloved child. Rape can feel overpowering and all-consuming, but because you are a child of God you are not alone in your healing and will not be destroyed or overrun by the evil that came into your life.

You are a lamb — you are Jesus’ lamb. You were attacked and hurt, but you are still a lamb, precious to your Savior. You need extra care and love, and He delivers that care and love to you and for you in His gifts — namely, Baptism, the LORD’s Supper and the comfort of the Gospel to be had in church.

Christ’s love is not something you need to earn, nor is it something you can lose, because Jesus died on the cross for you. Jesus has kept you, and He will always keep you. When the pain and darkness feel like they are too much to bear, cling to the comfort of Christ: “He will wipe away every tear ... and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (REV. 21:4).

HYMN:

I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb

I am Jesus’ little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
For my Shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my need and well provides me,
Loves me ev’ry day the same,
Even calls me by my name.

Day by day, at home, away,
Jesus is my staff and stay.
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,
Into pleasant pastures leads me;
When I thirst, He bids me go
Where the quiet waters flow.

Who so happy as I am,
Even now the Shepherd’s lamb?
And when my short life is ended,
By His angel host attended,
He shall fold me to His breast,
There within His arms to rest.

LSB 740: 1–3

² Groth, A.N., Burgess W. and Holmstrom L.L. *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 134 (11): 1239–43. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/910975. Accessed 5/12/2016.

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have people in your life who are supporting you? Who? Remember, you don't have to feel comfortable sharing every detail of the assault with someone to have them support you.
2. What makes you feel safe? What makes you feel unsafe?
3. Have you been able to attend church? Have you been able to talk to your pastor?
4. Stress can affect you physically. How are you sleeping?
5. Re-read the hymn, "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb" above. Which illustrations of His care and love for you bring you the most comfort? Underline these.
6. Your Baptism identifies you as God's child, one under His loving care. What day were you baptized? Write down the date here. If you do not know the precise date, consider asking a family member or a sponsor. Just as you remember your birthday and anniversaries to mark their significance, remembering and celebrating the date of your Baptism can help you find comfort in your identity as God's own.

PRAYER:

O LORD, You are the Good Shepherd, and in Baptism I am your lamb. You know my pain and my fears. You know how others have sinned against me. Grant me peace under Your tender care. Give me good friends and supporters who will faithfully love me, listen to me, and comfort me. Guard and keep me from despair, and protect me from all evil. When sadness comes, remind me of how my tears will not last forever because You wipe away all tears in Your time. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- Your worth as a child of God is not diminished.
- Christ's love for you is not abstract; it is personal and eternal and given to you in the preaching of His Word and in the LORD's Supper.
- Jesus lived a perfect life for you, and He died for you. This means you are enough because of Him, not because of anything you do or don't do.
- The love of God is not something you earn or something you can lose. This is Good News!
- You were chosen by God in your Baptism. This means you are precious and important to Him.

SESSION TWO

Coming to Terms

MEDITATION:

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (JOHN 14:26-27).

Rape is a violation of more than the physical body. It attacks your mind, your relationships and your view of yourself. It sneaks into every aspect of your life, including your faith. How do you trust the promises of God when your trust in the people around you has been so violated? How can you be safe in the spaces that once felt so comforting when you weren't safe in your own body?

Emotions after rape can vary wildly, and you may wonder if what you are thinking, feeling and experiencing is normal. Some emotions you may feel are shame, guilt, fear, avoidance of the memory and people, anger, mood swings, distrust, a feeling of loss of control, numbness and reliving the trauma.³ No matter where you are in the process of coping with what happened to you, in healing and forgiving there is lasting peace to be had with Jesus.

In case you have not heard this yet: it was not your fault. Not at all. You are not to blame, and you didn't cause this to happen. Violence committed against another is outside of God's plan, and being raped cannot remove you from the love of Jesus.

It may sound impossible to keep your heart from being afraid — especially now. But there is Good News here for you: You are not alone. Christ died and rose again so that you will never be unreachable by God and so that the pain and shame you carry can be laid on Him. This Good News is for you, right now. God in His infinite mercy sends Jesus for you. He knows you are hurting and need help, and that help is yours in His word, in Baptism and in Communion. These gifts from God help you by making you His child, reminding you of His love and giving you peace.

Rape is a violation of God's plan and His commandments. In the explanation of the Fifth Commandment in the Small Catechism Martin Luther explains: “We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.” The attacking of another person, especially in the intimate

and devastating way that happens in sexual violence, is a violation of God's clear words to not hurt or harm others. In addition, the explanation to the Sixth Commandment states, “We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.” Sexual assaults are a violation of God's plan for marriage and love. Jesus Himself was mistreated and hurt by others, and He knows your pain.

When you were raped, you were sinned against. Whether the attack was committed by someone you knew and trusted or by a stranger, that person broke the laws of both God and man. At its core, this is a breaking of the First Commandment, as well: “You shall have no other gods.” Violence against another person pits the choices and desires of one person over the bodily autonomy of another, as well as over God's perfect plans for His creation.

The answer is to turn back to Christ. In Christ's death and resurrection, you were given a wonderful gift — the ability to lay your hurts and heartbreaks on Christ. You were made God's beloved child in Baptism. You have not been left alone in this pain and shame. Christ became human and knows what it is to suffer, too, as He lived a human life and knew pain and suffering. This Good News is for all of God's children, and it is for you! Jesus is present for you today, too, with full compassion for you. He knows you are hurting and need help, and He gives you that comfort and aid in His Word read and preached to you, in your Baptism, and in the nourishment He provides you with His own body and blood in the LORD's Supper. He has sent you your pastor to give you all these gifts on His behalf.

In addition to coming to terms with the turmoil of all that has happened, you may be experiencing apprehension about receiving care from a male pastor. If this is the case, please be honest with your pastor and have him work with you, by having a family member, an elder or someone else keep you company as you rebuild trust with another man. This fear is normal, but it should not be a reason to avoid the comfort God has for you through your pastor. You might also benefit from care from a female counselor or a deaconess.

HYMN:

Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me

When life's troubles rise to meet me,
Though their weight May be great,
They will not defeat me.
God, my loving Savior, sends them;
He who knows All my woes
Knows how best to end them.

³ Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, 2006. barcc.org/information/facts/reactions. Accessed 5/13/2016.

God gives me my days of gladness,
And I will Trust Him still
When He sends me sadness.
God is good; His love attends me
Day by day, Come what may,
Guides me and defends me.

LSB 756: 2–3

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the emotions often experienced after a rape resonate with you? Here is that list again: shame, guilt, fear, avoidance of the memory and people, anger, mood swings, distrust, a feeling of loss of control, numbness and reliving the trauma. Your feelings are not wrong and there is no time limit on emotions.
2. An important part of healing is taking care of yourself. This includes getting enough sleep, eating regular and healthy meals, taking care of personal hygiene and exercising. This week, pick one part of self-care to focus on.
3. Are you attending church, or is the pastor visiting you as a shut-in? Are you praying daily?
4. When reading about the First, Fifth and Sixth Commandments, did any of them make you feel guilty or angry? Why?
5. Write down what you are most struggling with right now.
6. Read Deut. 31:6: “Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.” Re-read this as needed this week.

PRAYER:

Gracious LORD, Your Word promises that I am not alone. Be with and assure me of that promise as I begin to come to grips with everything that has happened to me. I am Your child, a blessed creature who is provided all that I need to support this body and life, even and especially when things are so chaotic. Calm my heart and give ear to my plea for grace, for unconditional love and salvation. Grant me faith that trusts Your care for my body and soul. Grant me that peace which surpasses all understanding and trust that Your unfailing love attends me. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- Rape is never, ever your fault.
- Violence against another is outside of God’s plan.
- Being raped does not remove you from the love of Jesus.
- Peace and healing are given to you in God’s Word. See Rev. 21:4, Ps. 23:4, Ps. 147:3, Is. 40:1, Matt. 11:28 and 2 Cor. 1:3. Write down any of these verses that especially appeal to you.

- The love of Jesus is not impersonal. It is for you, specifically, and He will never abandon you.
- You have been made God’s beloved child in Baptism.
- You can lay all your hurts and heartbreaks on Christ.

SESSION THREE

From Depths Of Woe

MEDITATION:

“Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you” (Ps. 55:22A).

Stressed. Afraid. Alone. Nervous. Depressed. Anxious. Despairing.

Huge, difficult-to-handle emotions can creep up at any point in the healing process, even months or years later. You feel like finally you have a handle on your pain and have forgiven and moved on, only to be unexpectedly thrust back into the turmoil of the initial emotions you felt after (and maybe even during) the assault.

Some sorrows and burdens are just too heavy to carry alone. Pain and despair wear you down, and after a while of trying to manage large emotional burdens, dealing with small things can become surprisingly overwhelming. You may be used to being self-sufficient and able to manage the daily stressors of life with relative ease, and now you suddenly find yourself unable to cope with even minor setbacks. You pride yourself on being strong and able to manage your own life, and losing control over that is yet another blow to your system. Losing the ability to function normally without help or support feels like another way that the violence someone else brought into your life has destroyed everything that you knew about yourself.

It can also seem daunting to share your need for comfort and help with those in your support system, especially if you're concerned they may not understand the problem. When you are struggling to understand what happened and how to handle it, it can feel almost impossible to describe the situation to another person. How do you put into words something that can be painful or hard to even remember?

As a Christian, you have the opportunity to lay your cares and hurts on someone who can always handle them, no matter how difficult the details and situations might be. That someone is Christ. He already knows what you are feeling and remembering, both the good and the bad, and Scripture promises clearly to you that you can cry out to the LORD for help and He will answer. There are no limits on this promise. There's no burden so large and no sorrow so deep that Jesus will not be there to sustain and keep you. This is true even when you don't have the words to express your sorrow clearly. This is one of the ways that Christ is your perfect companion in suffering, because He knows your grief and thoughts without your having to try to explain them. Before you even pray, God knows what you

will say. The Holy Spirit translates the groans of your heart into prayers before the Father.

You were never meant to be alone. At the very beginning of creation God made humanity to be in companionship with one another: “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’” (GEN. 2:18). Just as God created Eve as a helper and companion for Adam, He has placed people in your life to help and love you. At your church, this includes your pastor.

It can be scary and intimidating to begin to examine all the emotions and memories that you are carrying around. Worry and concern over whether your pastor and support network can handle the feelings you're barely enduring increases this fear. Your pastor is still there to care for you. As you feel comfortable, you can let him know that you are reading this and provide him with the pastoral companion resource to help him understand what you are going through and how to help you so you don't have to explain it all yourself. Churches are not there for people who have perfect lives and everything under control; they're for sinners and those who are hurt and hurting by the sins of others against them. The Church is for you.

You are not alone. No matter how dark and painful some moments are, you are not alone. You're a baptized child of God. This means that He will never leave you, never hurt you and never give up on you. This promise is one that He will never break and that you can never lose. It's as sure as Christ is risen from the dead.

HYMN:

From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee

From depths of woe I cry to Thee,
In trial and tribulation;
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,
LORD, hear my supplication.
If Thou rememb'rest ev'ry sin,
Who then could heaven ever win
Or stand before Thy presence?

Therefore my hope is in the LORD
And not in mine own merit;
It rests upon His faithful Word
To them of contrite spirit
That He is merciful and just;
This is my comfort and my trust.
His help I wait with patience.

LSB 607: 1, 3

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What helps you feel calm? What doesn't?
2. Prayer is important always, but especially so when we are hurting. Are you praying daily? If not, start with praying the LORD's Prayer every day.
3. When you read the hymn "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" could you relate to the idea of crying out to God from a place of suffering?
4. Were you able to attend church this week? Why or why not?
5. If you were unable to attend church, list the obstacles that you're facing.
6. Have you contacted your pastor to let him know you are reading this book? Have you asked him to read the pastoral companion?
7. Do you have people in your life who are helping you heal? If not, would you like to have someone help?

PRAYER:

LORD Jesus, You know how it is to be hurt by others. I am afraid of how badly I hurt and how long I may continue to hurt. Help me know and believe that You are my friend and Your Spirit is my Comforter. Help me to receive care from my pastor and my family in Christ. Grant them patience, grace and wisdom in helping me. Spare me from sinning in anger from this hurt, and be gracious to me and hear my cries for mercy. Grant to me the peace which surpasses understanding and which You only can give. In You I put my trust. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- You are not alone. Christ is with you.
- The grace and love of God shown to you in Christ are more powerful than anything bad in this life.
- Christ knows suffering. God isn't removed from you and what it means to be human.
- God has promised to sustain you.
- God has given you your pastor to be there to care for you.

SESSION FOUR

Processing The Hurt

MEDITATION:

“You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?” (Ps. 56:8).

Sexual violation is a betrayal of the mind as well as the body. It is an act against the whole person. This betrayal often leads to anger and hatred as the initial shock wears off. Questions about “how could this have happened?” can shift into “how could this have happened *to me*?” With this shift comes the anger that someone was willing to so violate you, putting their evil desires and ideas over your life and body to the point of hurting you.

Anger is a normal part of the healing process, but dwelling in this anger doesn't help you move past this phase into a healthier future. Perhaps you've read this quote by Esther Lederer, who was better known as Ann Landers: “Hanging onto resentment is letting someone you despise live rent-free in your head.” You cannot change other people or what they did to you, but you can pray for them, forgive them and work to remove their deeds from being central in your memory and life.

The Bible has a lot to say about anger, and God knows that His children will experience it. The anger and hurt you feel may be stronger than your normal emotions. Strong memories and feelings can become consuming, and their intensity make it seem even more difficult to forgive.

Handling such powerful emotions, especially if you're trying to do it alone, is overwhelming. The psalms are full of words from faithful people crying out to the LORD in grief and anguish at various points in their lives. The psalms are helpful and comforting to read in these kinds of situations because they're also full of reminders that no matter how bad things are, no matter how deep the pain or suffering is, God will never leave you alone in your pain. The psalms also contain many words of joy and hope to remind you that today's sorrow will pass away.

Christ is with you for every tear you cry. More than that: “He will wipe away every tear from [your] eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (REV. 21:4). Just as He heard the suffering of His saints, He hears that you need His love, comfort and help. And just as He never left His children, even when they ignored what the LORD wanted them to do, He will never leave you. He will be with you for every moment of your life, including as you mourn and heal.

Jesus was also with you when you were hurt. There might be anger about this point: where was God when you needed Him then? He was with you, and He sorrowed with you. The question of why God doesn't stop bad things from happening is one there isn't an earthly answer for, but you do know that this same God gave you Jesus.

As you work to put all your emotions back into their proper places, it may be helpful to journal, draw or otherwise give them a healthy creative outlet. If you're not crafty, consider exercise. It will also be beneficial to talk to a pastor and a counselor, if possible, about your feelings. It might seem easier to ignore the pain, guilt, anger and all the other emotions you are facing, but ignoring them does not remove them forever. God has put people in your life to help you face your feelings and memories and place them properly on Christ, who can handle all these things while He helps you heal from your past.

What happened to you does not define who you are, nor does it define your future. Just like the tears in Psalm 56, your sorrow will pass or become easier to bear. Let Christ comfort you.

Read the psalms when you can't find the words to pray with. In the times where you are weakest and when the pain inside is hardest to cope with, let the comforting words of God for you bring you peace.

HYMN:

Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense

Jesus Christ, my sure defense
And my Savior, now is living!
Knowing this, my confidence
Rests upon the hope here given,
Though the night of death be fraught
Still with many an anxious thought.

Jesus, my Redeemer, lives;
Likewise I to life shall waken.
He will bring me where He is;
Shall my courage then be shaken?
Shall I fear, or could the Head
Rise and leave His members dead?

No, too closely I am bound
By my hope to Christ forever;
Faith's strong hand the Rock has found,
Grasped it, and will leave it never;
Even death now cannot part
From its LORD the trusting heart.

LSB 741: 1–3

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have a counselor in addition to your pastor? Why or why not?
2. Both the psalm and the hymn referenced here talk about sorrow, and they also remind you that God knows of your pain and will comfort you. How would you like God to comfort you? How can other people comfort you right now?
3. Have you tried journaling? Creating crafts or art? Do these activities help you process your emotions?
4. Read the rest of Psalm 56. Write down three phrases that comfort you or capture how you feel right now.
5. Have you been able to connect to your church this week, receiving the comfort of hearing God's words preached to you and the LORD's Supper put in your mouth? If you haven't, list three ways to try to be able to attend.
6. Read Ps. 56:8–13. Write down three words from these verses that speak to how you feel right now. Keep this with you all week.

PRAYER:

O LORD Jesus Christ, You endured the violence and anger of men, and You even forgave those who hurt You. Be with me in Your grace and mercy. Help me. Guide me. Grant me wise friends and counselors. Remind me that through this whole life, You have delivered my soul from death, and You keep my feet from falling. Help me to trust Your Word, which reminds me that I walk before You in the light of life, both now and into eternity. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- You are a child of God. He baptized you.
- You are not defined by the actions of others. You are defined by God's relationship with you in Christ Jesus.
- When Jesus lived His earthly life, He wept. Jesus understands your pain.
- God will heal you and give you His peace.
- God will help you through every part of this.

SESSION FIVE

Not Alone

MEDITATION:

“The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” (Ps. 9:9).

The word stronghold might be a little unfamiliar. Some of its synonyms, like fortress and castle, are more commonly used. It’s especially appropriate to think of the LORD as a stronghold for us, though, because a stronghold is more than a building; it is a place where beliefs are defended and maintained. When bad things happen in life, they shake you, sometimes all the way to your core. Remember, being shaken doesn’t mean you’re broken, and when others hurt you, it’s because of their sinfulness, not yours.

Rape and sexual assault are acts contrary to God’s plan for relationships and marriage. These acts that were committed against you are sinful, and they are wrong.

You are not alone as you heal from being hurt. It can be tempting to isolate yourself, to withdraw from the world around you, in an effort to make sure nothing bad happens to you again. Unfortunately, isolating yourself also cuts you off from the people who love you and the people who can help you recover. It removes you from the fellowship of the Church.

The desire to be safe is an understandable one. True safety is not found within ourselves, though; it is found in Christ. Retreating from the world and being alone will not help you, nor will it let you go back in time to prevent the assault from happening.

Not being not alone can be a frightening prospect, because it requires you to let go of some control. When other people are present, there will always be the possibility for unexpected situations. This is where faith comes in. You trust God to have control, because you can’t. And the best part about this is that God is in control whether you ask Him to be or not.

There is nothing you can do to manage every aspect of the world around you. Christ came to the world, defenseless as a helpless baby, and even though He knew some of the people around Him would not receive Him well, He still willingly took on humanity.

You are not alone, because Christ is with you. You are not alone, because you have a church that loves you. You are not alone, because in your Baptism you have the certain promise from God that He has never — and will never — leave you.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you” (DEUT. 31:6). When you’re afraid to trust those around you, remember Who is always with you. A beautiful truth of your life as a Christian is that you are never, ever left to suffer alone.

Having Christ go with you as you live life means that even when hurtful and bad things happen, you don’t have to handle it by yourself. While it can be hard to trust those around you, even those whom God has given to help you, it’s trusting people and letting them help you that enables you to move forward.

You are not alone. Even if you’re not ready to share the anger and fury with the people around you, know that you can share it with Christ through prayer. In Christ that anger can be cleansed away along with the feelings of shame and grief.

You are not alone.

HYMN:

Through Jesus’ Blood and Merit

Through Jesus’ blood and merit
I am at peace with God.
What, then, can daunt my spirit,
However dark my road?
My courage shall not fail me,
For God is on my side;
Though hell itself assail me,
Its rage I may deride.

There’s nothing that can sever
From this great love of God;
No want, no pain whatever,
No famine, peril, flood.
Though thousand foes surround me,
For slaughter mark His sheep,
They never shall confound me,
The vict’ry I shall reap.

LSB 746: 1–2

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Is the idea of being alone comforting, or frightening? Is it sometimes both?
2. Who have you talked to about what happened to you? A trusted friend? A counselor? A pastor? If you have not opened up to anyone, what might be holding you back? Identify one or two people you can confide in, and seek them out this week.

3. Have you been able to connect with your church yet? If not, call or email the pastor today to talk about how you can receive pastoral care.
4. What situation in your life feels most out of control right now?
5. Read Deuteronomy 31. This chapter is about Moses and Joshua, and how the Israelites had to accept changes of leadership before entering the Promised Land. Write down how you think the Israelites felt about God being in control of them.

PRAYER:

LORD Jesus Christ, in Your agony You were forsaken. Help me to know and trust that I am never alone because You promised to be with me, to never leave me or forsake me. As You are ascended into heaven and rule over all things, help me to remember the love and grace You have shown for me by dying for me. Help me to reach out and be with others, especially in the Church. Because You have promised, help me in my fear and lack of control by giving me courage and trust. In You I put my trust. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- God's love is more powerful than your fear.
- You are not the bad things that happen to you; you are a child of God.
- Christ, when He was on earth, wept in sorrow.
- God knows all your pain.
- There are people God puts in your life who want to help you.

SESSION SIX

Closed Off

MEDITATION:

“For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him” (Ps. 22:24).

While it would be nice if healing followed a predictable and timely path, life is rarely so simple. Yesterday might have been a great day, today unbearable and then tomorrow tolerable again. Dark days and setbacks are discouraging, but they don't mean you are never going to heal. Rather, they just mean you are human and need help.

Psalm 22 served as Jesus' prayer to the Father when He was on the cross, and from that comes Good News for you: even when you can't reach out to others and you feel like things are going in the wrong direction, Christ knows how you feel and is present with you in your distress. It's tempting, and entirely possible to push away friends and family, avoid church and even stop leaving the home for a time. It is not possible to isolate yourself from God. He is always there with you, even when it feels like you are totally alone. There is no place where you can go nor any event in your life where your cries for comfort and help are outside God's hearing.

Since God hears every thought and plea for aid, this also means He knows everything you need. He provides you with perfect help. This help for you is concrete and real, given through the people already around you in your life, like family and friends, through pastors and trained counselors, and even through resources like the Bible and your hymnal. God's help also comes when you attend church, where you hear the Word of God preached for you and receive the LORD's Supper for the strengthening of your faith. Attached to these physical means is the certain promise from God that He is present, and that the forgiveness and hope offered by Christ are real. This hope is especially for you. Just as God knew you before you were even born, He knows everything that you could possibly need in this life, and He has planned for how to provide those things to you.

This point is so important it bears repeating. God has known you, specifically, and He has always had a plan for how to care for you in Christ, because He loves you. His love is never something you've had to earn, and it isn't related to doing the right things. It's something that has already been completed for you, when Jesus died on the cross.

His death and resurrection mean that you, here and today, have been given the full love of God in your Baptism. It means that no matter what has happened to you, you are

seen by God covered by Christ. In His eyes, you are nothing but holy and pure. You are innocent and beloved. You are perfect, beautiful and worth dying for.

The ugliness and despair of sexual assault, rape and domestic violence cannot make you an object of scorn or disgust to God. The opposite is true! You are loved, and He will never stop loving you.

HYMN:

Be Still, My Soul

Be still, my soul; the LORD is on your side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide;
In ev'ry change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; your best, your heav'nly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul; your God will undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul; though dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in this vale of tears;
Then you will better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe your sorrows and your fears.
Be still, my soul; your Jesus can repay
From His own fullness all He takes away.

Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on
When we shall be forever with the LORD,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

LSB 752: 1–4

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What situations trigger the most stress and anxiety for you right now?
2. We talked about days being easier or more difficult. What pattern have you noticed that can make a day better or worse?
3. If you have not been yet able to attend church, try entering it into your phone calendar. Are there barriers that keep you away? If so, what are they?
4. God knows you specifically. How do you think God sees you?

5. Have you ever felt abandoned by God? When you hear that God will never leave you, how do you feel?
6. Luther's Evening Prayer is a comforting way to end the day, and has excellent reminders of Christ's care for us. Consider writing down or printing this prayer to pray at night.

From Luther's Small Catechism:

Evening Prayer

In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the LORD's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.

PRAYER:

O LORD, You prayed even while being forsaken. As Scripture says, You came for the sick and the suffering ones. You know that's me. Help me to see Your care and provision of all that I need in this life and in eternal life. Help me to remember that You knit me together, You came to redeem me, and that in Baptism You called me by name. You have placed me into Your Church. I am not alone, for You are with me. Grant me patience for the day, no matter how good or bad it is. Help me to see each day as a new day because Your mercies are new each morning. Hear my cry, O God my help. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- God loves you, and He has promised to never leave you. You Baptism is proof of this.
- You don't have to earn the love of God.
- God sees you as holy and blessed because of Jesus.
- There is help available to you. God will help you through others.
- In Christ you are able to have peace and a quiet soul.
- For more, please read all of Psalm 22 and meditate on Christ's crucifixion for you.

SESSION SEVEN

Beginning To Heal

MEDITATION:

“For the LORD will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men” (LAM. 3:31–32).

The book of Lamentations is all about sorrow and lamenting. The city of Jerusalem had been destroyed, and God’s chosen people were mourning its loss. Their experience presents a picture of how you can grieve in faith and have that grief be answered by God. This passage specifically reminds you that God will not leave you in grief forever, but rather He loves you and wants to help you. He has compassion for you and cares about the pain you are experiencing, and this compassion and love means He doesn’t want you to be in pain or upset.

He also doesn’t want you to stay angry, because anger can lead to sin: “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger” (EPH. 4:26). What happened to you was wrong, and there’s no excuse that can or should be made for it. When something bad happens to you, anger is a normal response. While it’s normal and expected, staying angry makes it difficult to heal and move forward with your life.

You will heal from the pain that you’ve faced, and that healing is starting to happen already. There are times when brokenness and sin creep up and make it seem like you will never feel better, but that’s just not true. The past has no power over you, and Christ will not let sin and hopelessness overwhelm you. He has infinite and boundless mercy, and this means that when you falter, God is there for you. He is strong for you when you can’t be, and He forgives you when you stumble.

Similar to the healing of a physical wound, emotional healing can scab and later scar. Healing does not mean you will forget all of what happened, or that it will suddenly stop hurting completely. Instead, healing means that with time and the help of God, the pain will fade, just like the pain of an old injury. You can expect the weather or exercise to make old injuries act up, but you will still experience unexpected pain when life situations reopen old emotional wounds. Your heart, just like your body, might be a little different after it heals, but it’s still yours.

Instead of expecting yourself to heal in a day, a week, a month or even a year, think of healing as a process. This will allow you to see the progress being made and avoid

becoming discouraged that you aren’t fully healed already. It is also helpful, as you think about healing, to remember one of the names for God is the Great Physician (MARK 5:25–34, LUKE 17:12–19) and for good reason. Just as He created every part of you, He can heal every part of you, including your feelings and memories.

You are healing. The LORD, in His compassion and His steadfast love, will help you as you continue to heal.

HYMN:

O God, Forsake Me Not

O God, forsake me not!
Your gracious presence lend me;
LORD, lead Your helpless child;
Your Holy Spirit send me
That I my course may run
O be my light, my lot,
My staff, my rock, my shield —
O God, forsake me not!

O God, forsake me not!
Take not Your Spirit from me;
Do not permit the might
Of sin to overcome me.
Increase my feeble faith,
Which You alone have wrought.
O be my strength and pow’r —
O God, forsake me not!

LSB 731: 1–2

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of your goals for healing?
2. We talked about anger. How does anger affect your daily life? What are you doing to handle it?
3. Healing is a process. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. Where do you think you are on this path today?
4. Read the rest of Lamentations 3. The first half of the chapter talks about suffering, but by verse 22 there are some beautiful words of comfort: “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; great is your faithfulness.” Pick one of the verses in this chapter and write it down to keep with you this week.
5. If attending church is still difficult, review the list of obstacles you’ve written down previously. Identify three strategies for helping you to receive pastoral care.
6. Keep praying Luther’s Evening Prayer at night. Consider memorizing it. As you pray this prayer, remember Christ loves you.

PRAYER:

Gracious LORD, You are immeasurably patient and long-suffering. You have promised to care for me. Help me to trust Your timing in my healing. Grant me the strength to endure, and do not let me sin in my anger. Have compassion upon me according to Your steadfast love. In You I take refuge. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- Healing of the heart and emotions is a process which God guides, just like healing of the body.
- Christ loves you and died for you, and because of this you can trust He will also heal you.
- You will heal, and you are healing right now.
- God will never forsake or leave you.
- God the Holy Spirit creates your faith, and He sustains it.

SESSION EIGHT

Seasons And Times

MEDITATION:

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace” (ECCLESIASTES 3).

You’ve probably seen this chapter of Scripture before. The idea of seasons of life is a very familiar one for many people. You watch the change of the seasons around you, with warmer weather changing to cool, and the coming and going of holidays. The season of the year dictates when things can be planted to thrive and guides the clothing you wear. Seasons are part of your life.

Just as the weather seasons are a perpetual part of life, the seasons of your life have distinct patterns. You are a child, you become an adult and then you grow old. This chapter is about more than just aging, though. It talks about some less predictable seasons that are very important for you right now. You survived a season of trauma. There is a time to heal — and that time is now. There is a time to mourn. You do not expect to live your whole life without grief or pain. This chapter covers the range of emotions that happen during the healing process after sexual assault, rape or domestic violence, both the ones that feel negative and the ones that lead to healing.

You are blessed to have a God who fully understands all the human condition, in all its seasons. When He came to earth in human form, as a tiny baby, He grew and learned just like all people do. He changed and matured. He suffered sorrow and pain. In Christ, God fully understands where you are today, in this season. He also knows where you will be tomorrow.

Today might be a time to weep, but soon it will be a time to laugh. You are promised that there is a time or season for every part of life, and that means that no matter how terrible a situation is, it will not last forever. It will end, and the next season will not be the same.

You will laugh and dance and love again. Just as a tree in winter loses its leaves and waits for the spring, you might be waiting for happiness to bloom again in you. God promises that it will, and He never lies. Christ endured the pain of the cross to make that sure for you. Because He died on Good Friday and rose on Easter, you know how things will end for you. They end in new life, where there is no more suffering or tears.

As you heal, consider reaching out to friends and family for support. Even if they struggled to know how to appropriately respond in the initial aftermath of the assault, they can be a source of comfort and be better able to provide a listening ear now. Just as you are going through different seasons, so are they.

Grief and sorrow do not last forever. Eternity in Heaven will be without pain and hardship, and the joy there will last forever. So also will the love God has for you.

HYMN:

I Walk in Danger All the Way

I walk in danger all the way.
The thought shall never leave me
That Satan, who has marked his prey,
Is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares
May seize me unawares
If I should fail to watch and pray.
I walk in danger all the way.

I walk with angels all the way,
They shield me and befriend me;
All Satan’s pow’r is held at bay
When heav’nly hosts attend me;
They are my sure defense,
All fear and sorrow, hence!
Unharm’d by foes, do what they may,
I walk with angels all the way.

LSB 716: 1, 4

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Think of three people in your life who you love. Write down how they can help you as you heal.
2. Reread the seasons listed in Eccl. 3. Which season(s) are you in right now?

3. Attending church and receiving God's gifts for you in Word and Sacrament is helpful and important for you no matter what season in life you are in. Are you attending church? If it's difficult to attend alone, ask a friend or family member to drive with you and sit with you.
4. Some of the feelings associated with the described seasons are intense. What emotions do you feel reading some of the more intense seasons?
5. After reading Ecclesiastes, read Psalm 23. Consider how Jesus as the Good Shepherd leads you through life.
6. If you haven't started memorizing Luther's Evening Prayer, try to memorize the first two lines this week.

PRAYER:

LORD Almighty, my Shepherd, I know there is a time for hurt and pain, yet also a time for healing and peace. I know there is a time I will feel alone and adrift, and a time I will feel anchored by love and friendship. Yet now my soul is cold in a winter of sorrow, and I seek that warmth of summer. Please, Almighty, grant me the patience to wait for that warmth and provide me comfort as I count the days, knowing Your strength given through Your Word will sustain me until I mend and feel whole again through the miracle of Your Son, Jesus Christ my LORD and Savior. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- There is a limit to all things on this earth, including sorrow and pain.
- Christ and His love has no limits and will never end.
- Satan and his power will never be able to overcome you, because Christ is with you and for you.
- Rape, sexual assault and domestic violence are never your fault.
- In the face of all the changes and challenges in this life, your Triune God doesn't change.

SESSION NINE

Picking Up Pieces

MEDITATION:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1).

Right now, there may be days when you don't feel very strong, and the pain and weakness you are experiencing can make you wonder if you'll ever feel strong again. Control over your own body is something so intrinsic to your sense of self that losing your autonomy makes your whole life feel out of control. With such a basic sense of control violated, it's easy to feel weak and powerless.

It might be difficult to believe, but God will put your life back together, piece by piece. The vulnerability and fear that can follow violence or an assault do not have to define the rest of your life. He has provided help for you in every step along the way. In Psalm 46, God promises He will help you in trouble. He is your refuge, a place to go when you can't be strong. And since He's all powerful, His strength can never fail.

In the second verse of the psalm, God promises even more to you: “Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea” (Ps. 46:2). Even when your whole world falls to pieces around you, you will never be abandoned by God. He will never leave you be completely alone, and you will never be without help. This means when your strength fails you and you don't know what to do, you don't need to despair that things will never improve. They will improve, because God has promised to be your help and refuge in every situation in your life, including rape, sexual assault and domestic violence.

Your life will always be a little bit different than it was, but it *will* come back together. In 2 Cor. 5:17 God promises, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” In Christ, you are a new creation. All the pieces of your life have been put back together, and you have been made whole and new again. This promise to you is a blessing from God and as sure as Christ is risen from the dead.

Social taboos have unfortunately made certain life situations even more difficult by attaching ugly stigma and shame to them. But these taboos are man-made and mean nothing to God. What wonderful news that is for us! God treats your need for comfort and aid after rape the same as He treats any other need you have, and there is no shame or guilt in needing His help to heal.

Every broken piece of you and your life will be healed. That healing is found in the places God has promised He will be for you. In your Baptism, in the LORD's Supper, and in church where you hear His Word, God will strengthen, heal and help you put the pieces of your life back together again. God created you; He knew you before you were born (JER. 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you”), and in Christ you are already living a new life without sin, pain and death through faith in Him. In Him there is no violence or assault, and there is safety forever. You don't have to wait until Heaven to live by faith.

The broken pieces of your life will be put together in a perfect way; and all the pain and hurt of this life has died with Christ.

God promises to be the strength you need, and He promises to help. He will always help you and He will always love you in Christ.

HYMN:

I Lay My Sins on Jesus

I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all and frees us from the accursed load.
I bring my guilt to Jesus to wash my crimson stains
Clean in His blood most precious Till not a spot remains.

I lay my wants on Jesus; All fullness dwells in Him;
He heals all my diseases; My soul He does redeem.
I lay my griefs on Jesus, My burdens and my cares;
He from them all releases; He all my sorrows shares.

I rest my soul on Jesus, This weary soul of mine;
His right hand me embraces; I on His breast recline.
I love the name of Jesus, Immanuel, Christ, the LORD;
Like fragrance on the breezes His name abroad is poured.
LSB 606: 1–3

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Think of yourself as a puzzle, with many different pieces. Some of these pieces are your body, some of them are your relationships, some of them are your mind and mental state, etc. A major life trauma can scatter all these pieces so that the puzzle needs to be reassembled. Where are you in the process of reassembling your puzzle? Are there parts of the puzzle that you are avoiding?
2. A foundational part of the puzzle of your life is church. Consider this the border of the puzzle. Are you keeping this border in place by attending church?
3. Just as a puzzle comes together, piece by piece, healing happens stage by stage. How do you feel that you are healing today?

4. Read the rest of Psalm 46. Write verses 10 and 11 on a piece of paper to keep with you this week.
5. If you noticed the instructions about making the sign of the cross before the Evening Prayer and you're unfamiliar with the practice, you might have wondered why it's there. Have you made the sign of the cross before? The purpose of it is to remind you that you were baptized, and that in your Baptism God claimed you as His own.
6. Keep praying the Evening Prayer, and work on ways to continue memorizing it.

PRAYER:

Almighty and merciful LORD Jesus Christ, my life is in pieces, and my hope feels scattered. Put back together all the parts of my life as only You can. Renew my hope and surround me with your love and comfort. Be my fortress and my refuge, and bless and keep me. In You there is peace and healing. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- God loves you. Jesus is proof of that love.
- In Baptism God claimed you as His own and He will never leave you.
- Rape, sexual assault and domestic violence are never your fault.
- Peace and healing are given to you in God's Word. In session two, you read Rev. 21:4, Ps. 23:4, Ps. 147:3, Is. 40:1, Matt. 11:28 and 2 Cor. 1:3. Do any of these sound different to you now?
- Reread Psalm 46 this week.

SESSION TEN

Forgiveness

MEDITATION:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 COR. 5:17).

Forgiveness isn't something you do because the other person is sorry, or because he deserves it. Sometimes the other person won't or can't apologize, but the lack of an apology does not give you permission to withhold forgiveness. You don't forgive because the other person apologizes to you; you forgive because Christ first forgave you (COL. 3:13).

These can be hard and painful words to listen to and apply to your own life. Forgiveness is a wonderful comfort when you are the one in need of it for a wrong you have committed, and it is a difficult word of Law when you are the one withholding it from someone who has sinned against you.

You are not the old you, and the new you is here because of Christ. The old is not just gone, it has passed away.

Forgiveness also doesn't mean the other person wasn't wrong. In fact, it affirms that a sin was committed. Breaking the Fifth and Sixth Commandments are sins against God that carry both temporal and eternal consequences. This book isn't about the other person's sins, though; it's about you and your healing and the love Christ has for you.

Forgiveness also doesn't mean you must forget, or that forgetting is always possible. Remembering doesn't mean that forgiveness wasn't given, and it doesn't mean that you won't continue to heal. When you don't forgive, you grant continuing power to the one who hurt you to become even more frightening in your mind.

Christ came to earth to live perfectly in your place. He took all your sins on Himself, and you are fully forgiven by Him. This forgiveness is complete.

It is also this perfect forgiveness that means that you forgive those who hurt you. These are difficult words, and the idea of forgiving is even more difficult. In this, too, Christ will help you and forgive you if you fail. When you are struggling to forgive, remember Christ's forgiveness. It has never failed you.

As a Christian, you have forgiveness for your neighbors. This forgiveness isn't a feeling, and it's never something that is deserved. It's delivering what Christ on the cross has already done for you. Forgiving means that Christ will bear the burdens of your trauma and pain. These emotions will

still come around, but when they do, you will have a pastor sent by God to forgive you for your resentment and to calm your fears with the Gospel.

Forgiving the one who did this to you means that you're not going to let what happened drag you down into the depths of despair, but that you're going to live the rest of your life in the shadow of the cross and in the waters of your Baptism. It means that you have been set free from the slavery of sin that creates victims. Forgiving makes you a survivor because you have died with Christ — and now you live in Him alone.

Forgiveness does not remove the consequences of sin, and forgiving the person who hurt you does not exclude appropriate legal consequences. The decision on when and how to seek legal help is complicated and personal, and should be considered carefully with the help of legal representation. Please also involve your pastor in this, and let him help support you as you navigate a process that can add additional stress to an already hard situation.

HYMN:

Jerusalem the Golden

Jerusalem the golden, With milk and honey blest —
The promise of salvation, The place of peace and rest —
We know not, oh, we know not What joys await us there:
The radiancy of glory, the bliss beyond compare!

Within those walls of Zion Sounds forth the joyful song,
As saints join with the angels and all the martyr throng.
The Prince is ever with them; The daylight is serene;
The city of the blessed Shines bright with glorious sheen.

Around the throne of David, The saints from care released,
Raise loud their songs of triumph To celebrate the feast.
They sing to Christ their leader, who conquered in the fight,
Who won for them forever Their gleaming robes of white.

O sweet and blessed country, The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessed country That faithful hearts expect!
In mercy, Jesus, bring us To that eternal rest
With you and God the Father and Spirit, ever blest.

LSB 672: 1–4

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Write a list of things that you forgive your abuser for. This can be as detailed or vague as you're comfortable with. You do not need to share this list with anyone.
2. When you think of yourself as a new creation, how does this make you feel?

3. Consider the words of the hymn, especially “the place of peace and rest,” and imagine your place of peace. Where is it? What makes it peaceful?
4. Luther’s Evening Prayer has been a focus for the last few weeks. Keep praying it, and see if this repetition makes it easier to remember.

PRAYER:

LORD Jesus Christ, You earned forgiveness for sinners by Your life and death, and I know this is true because You rose from the dead. Your Holy Spirit daily and richly gives that forgiveness to me and all believers in Christ. Help me to forgive as You have. Help me to continue to forgive as You do. Let me be a new creation in my Baptism, and strengthen me each day by the same. Let Your steadfast love surround me, for I trust in You. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- Jesus has earned forgiveness for every sin, even the very worst of them.
- Jesus forgives all your sins.
- In Baptism, you were made new.
- New life in Christ is yours and because of Christ you can forgive others.

SESSION ELEVEN

The Long Term

MEDITATION:

“I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live”
(Ps. 116:1–2).

When you picture someone inclining an ear to another person, what is the mental image you see? This turn of phrase talks about listening, but it’s a little more than that. It’s also about physically turning and bending to listen to another. The image here is of God bending to humanity to listen to our needs for mercy and help. God’s listening is active and involved, and He promises repeatedly in the Bible, including in the LORD’S Prayer, to listen to you when you cry out to Him.

God promises to listen to you during the good parts of your life, when you sing for joy, and during the difficult, when you weep and struggle. He is holy and perfect, and He will always be exactly what you need, every day of your life.

Your holiness is not an internal, intrinsic part of you. It’s not something you do, or something you don’t do. It’s also not something you earn by any of your actions. You are holy because you are the Bride of Christ. This is good news, because it also means there is nothing about you powerful enough to lose God’s love. Rather than God’s tabulating your wrongs over the course of your life and finding you lacking, He sees you through the perfect life and death of His beloved Son.

The long term is the rest of your life. It is every day with which the LORD blesses you, every moment from this point forward. The future, as an unknown, is hard to think and talk about. Your hopes and plans may have completely changed, and those changes aren’t necessarily a bad thing. Perhaps the dreams you have tomorrow will also be different than the ones you have today.

For many women, the future, and possibly the present, includes marriage and children. Both marriage and motherhood require a level of intimacy which can be daunting after sexual assault, rape and domestic violence. Also frightening is the idea of life alone, especially if you don’t feel a call to celibacy.

Whatever the future holds, there is a truth that is certain. Whether married, separated, single, a mother, a mother of children never held, childless ... all people need Christ, and you need Him in every situation the future will bring.

You’re not sent off alone to face the future, either. You are with all the company of heaven, and all the saints who

have gone before you. You’re also with all the Christians still living, and there’s the hope of those who will come after you. As a Christian you are not alone. This promise is especially easy to remember during Communion, where you celebrate with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven. This includes the people next to you at the Communion rail.

The long term includes a God that loves you, and people who will help you. The long term has hope.

HYMN:

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev’ry high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

LSB 575: 1–2

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Are you a long-term planner? What do you picture the future being like?
2. When you pray, how do you picture God as He listens to you?
3. Before you pray Luther’s Evening Prayer this week, pray the LORD’S Prayer. How do these two prayers complement each other?
4. In this hymn, Christ is compared to a few items: a solid rock and an anchor. Which of these is easier for you to connect to God? Which is more comforting for you?

PRAYER:

LORD Jesus Christ, You are the beginning and the end. Throughout my days, You have loved me and been the Holy One when I could not be. Help me in the present and in the future, for each and every day You give me. Remind me of Your faithfulness from Your Word, even when my mind may try to contradict it. Bless me with contentment in the vocations You give me in this life and with the knowledge that I am never alone. Help me to have joy in being a member of Your Church. In Your name I pray. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- Christ has made you a part of His Church. Not only is He with you, but the Church is as well.
- The LORD who gives you your days is the same LORD who gave His life for the forgiveness of sins.
- Vocation is how God cares for you and provides care for others. It is a gift from God.
- Communion is a gift of Christ for you in many ways: the forgiveness of sins, life, salvation and an increase of love for your neighbor.

SESSION TWELVE

Christ And The Church

MEDITATION:

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (EPH. 5: 25–27).

The relationship between men and women in the Bible is described in multiple ways depending on the context. In Creation, Adam is alone in the Garden with the animals and God creates Eve from his rib — not to be mistreated, not as an object to be used for his desires, but rather as a partner, a helpmeet, a completion. It was not good for man to be alone, so God created Eve as a companion. The addition of woman to the Garden fixed the only part of Creation that, before the Fall, was not good. Think about this for a moment. Out of all the things He created, God said everything was good, except when man was alone without woman. It took the addition of woman for all of creation to once again be good. God created Eve for Adam to love, not hurt.

Later, the Bible offers a very different but strong picture of the perfect interactions between men and women. That picture is the relationship of Christ and His Church. In Eph. 5:25–27, as Paul describes the cleansing power of Christ upon His Church, “having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish,” we learn that Christ sees the Church — He sees you — in splendor, as perfect, beautiful and spotless. The Church is washed in the water of the Word — baptized — and she is holy and without any imperfections.

This is the same design God has for the interactions of men and women. Men are to honor and protect women, even at the cost of their lives, just as Christ laid down his life for the Church. Self-sacrificial love is not a love that seeks to hurt another person, but a love that tries to help, protect and comfort. It is clear from Scripture that rape, sexual assault and domestic violence are not good, but sinful. They are not part of God’s perfect plan for men and women. It is also clear from the Bible that marriage and sexuality can be the LORD’s good gifts to His children.

Just as there is a certain hope in the LORD for healing from rape, sexual assault and domestic violence, there is also the

hope of loving, non-abusive marriages modeled after the perfect example of Christ and His Church. Relationships between men and women are a gift from God, and the first miracle Jesus ever performed was at a wedding in Cana. Marriage is an opportunity for a relationship of mutual support, companionship and assistance.

Christ will heal every part of you, and that includes your ability to have healthy, Christ-focused relationships. This does not mean marriage is required to live a happy and complete life, but that the possibility of marriage in the present or future is a cause for celebration and optimism, not fear and despair.

Hope and healing bring with them optimism for all parts of your life, including the most intimate and personal relationships. Christ loves you, completely and wholly, and He will continue to love you throughout the rest of your life.

HYMN:

The Church’s One Foundation

The Church’s one foundation
Is Jesus Christ, her LORD;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word.
From heav’n He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

Through toil and tribulation
And tumult of her war
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

LSB 644: 1, 4

SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Have you been able to add the Evening Prayer into your life? If you have, what changes have you noticed it bring?
2. The foundation of the church is Jesus. He is also your foundation. Draw a house with you inside, and Jesus as the foundation. Or, write Jesus’ name and then your name on top to remind you He supports you.
3. Write down three things that come to mind when you think of marriage.
4. Copy the verse from this week to keep with you. Put it in your purse or wallet.

PRAYER:

LORD Jesus Christ, for Your bride, the Church, You laid down Your life. You have washed her, doing all that is needed to make her holy and without blemish. Help me to understand the healing Your forgiveness gives to me. Help me to see marriage as a picture of Your relationship with the Church. Help me to serve in the vocations You give to me. Grant to me a faithful view of marriage that is based upon Your Word, not the failings of sinners. Guide me by Your Word and Spirit, and let them lead me. Amen.

GOSPEL REMINDERS:

- Marriage is a good gift of God.
- Marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church.
- Christ gave up Himself for His Bride, the Church.
- You are cleansed, washed by water and the Word (Baptism).
- God gives you vocations, including those in marriage.

Appendix:

PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

Pregnancy and childbirth, whether they follow closely after a sexual assault, rape or domestic violence situation, can reopen healing wounds and can require additional assistance for helping the mother process and heal. While this need is well recognized, it can be difficult to access resources. It is even more difficult to find pro-life and life-affirming resources. Here are some places to start.

In addition, you may need hope and care as well as healing from an abortion. If this is the case, please contact Lutherans for Life. The Word of Hope ministry is for women who have had an abortion.

lutheransforlife.org/about/word-of-hope/

RAINN

RAINN is the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network and has a wide range of resources, from articles to live support, assistance with navigating the legal system and frequently asked questions. They are a secular organization.

rainn.org/after-sexual-assault

Early Trauma, Its Potential Impact on the Childbearing Woman, and the Role of the Midwife, by Penny Simkin, © 2009 Midwifery Today, Inc. All rights reserved.

midwiferytoday.com/articles/early_trauma.asp

Women's and Children's Health Network

cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=438&np=456&id=2829

National Alliance to End Sexual Violence

This organization has many helpful resources on a wide variety of topics, but they are a pro-choice organization. Please be aware of that as you read.

endsexualviolence.org/where-we-stand/victims-rights-following-pregnancy-as-a-result-of-rape

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

This resources contains mostly clinical information, but might be useful if you have health issues to address with a physician.

acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Health-Care-for-Underserved-Women/Sexual-Assault

When Survivors Give Birth: Understanding and Healing the Effects of Early Sexual Abuse on Childbearing Women, by Phyllis Klaus and Penny Simkin. Classic Day Publishing, First ed. (April 2004).

amazon.com/When-Survivors-Give-Birth-Understanding/dp/1594040222

TALKING TO FRIENDS & FAMILY

Talking to friends and family is a process full of many unknowns. It's difficult to know how those close to you will react, and this unknown adds significant stress. Sections of this study can be helpful in helping your loved ones understand what you are going through and how best to support you. If people do not react well, it is not your fault or a judgment on you; it is a lack of understanding on their part. They may need more time to be supportive and understanding.

ACCESSING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community resources vary wildly by geographical region and community size. RAINN has significant and in depth resources, including help in finding local care available on their website at rainn.org/after-sexual-assault.

In addition, the local police station, the local hospital and your church can help connect you to the local care that you need to be safe and to heal.

Pastoral Care Companion

INTRODUCTION:

From the *Pastoral Care Companion*⁴

“Empathy, compassion and patience will characterize the pastor’s approach in dealing with the physical, emotional and spiritual damage that may be present in victims of abuse. Because the effects of abuse often linger, the pastor will recognize the need for ongoing care marked by patient use of the Gospel to heal, to release from bondage to anger, shame and fear and to restore to a life of faith and love.”
The world is fallen.

This brokenness extends to issues of the Fifth and Sixth Commandments. Pastoral care for women after rape is important but can be intimidating to provide. Women need the love of Christ, the comfort of being reminded of their Baptisms, the LORD’s Supper and their pastor to be available and compassionate.

Pastors and the Church are important for helping women heal and move forward after rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. The pastor needs to always point a survivor to the Gospel, and keep in mind when and where the Law can be useful.

To frame the recommendations for care in this guide, the feelings of real women about their experiences in the Church are included throughout the study. As I talked to women about this subject, one of the most common and sad ideas that was shared with me was that they were ashamed and afraid to be honest with their pastor about what had happened to them. They were full of guilt and didn’t know how to find the words to address the topic with their pastor, and they were concerned that he wouldn’t understand. Women need to know that the Church is exactly the place that they need to be as they heal after a sexual assault, a rape or domestic violence.

In an ideal situation, pastoral care will accompany counseling and medical care, if needed, by a physician. Some communities have more resources than others to assist women as they recover from domestic violence, rape or sexual assault, and there may or may not be resources available for any children in the home. This is where the Church may need to assist in filling this gap.

It is impossible to discuss violence, whether that violence is sexual or not, without also discussing sin. This may be part of the reason why it is so difficult to locate Christian

resources to assist in the care and counsel of women who have been abused, raped or assaulted. Distinguishing between Law and Gospel is necessary for helping women as they heal. It may be helpful to address the sin of the violence or assault in the way we discuss other non-consensual acts that are less taboo, such as robbery.

Far too many Christian resources point people back to themselves, rather than to Christ, with a focus on what they can do to forgive, heal and cope. Pointing people back to themselves sets them up to fail, because on our own we will never be able to perfectly keep ourselves safe, just like we can’t perfectly keep the Law.

Prepare for the possibility of many intense emotions. Anger, grief, guilt, shame and feeling misunderstood and unsafe are common for someone who has been sexually assaulted.

It is sometimes very helpful to have your parishioner also work with a counselor. In this case, you will want to do your homework. You will want to talk to a potential counselor and see what their thoughts are about religion and spirituality. You will also want to talk to the parishioner about getting permission to coordinate with the counselor. This can be very helpful in continued pastoral care.

The gentleness of Jesus (Is. 42:3 AND MATT. 12:20, “a bruised reed He will not break”) provides a model for pastoral care of the violated soul. Extra time and patience may be required. In all things, show yourself a faithful shepherd who cares for his sheep.

In many cases, the victim of such sin will have powerful feelings of anger, which can manifest toward others and even toward God. The soul that is angered may be tempted to vengeance. While still respecting the legal process and the vocation of earthly authorities, you can help the soul in your care deal with anger in many ways. Remind her that vengeance belongs to the LORD, and teach her (by example, especially) the benefit of praying through anger, committing it to God’s care and control. This may involve teaching on the imprecatory psalms, which exhibit anger in a righteous way, commending the situation and the anger to God’s faithful care while not trying to hide it under flowery yet untrue words. This teaching, too, may require extra time and care.

When resentment towards God comes out of bad situations and experiences, it is still helpful to remind your parishioner of Christ. Jesus is living proof of the love of God. This is a sure and certain thing that can help be an anchor among the uncertainties of emotions and experiences that happen in this life. Help keep the focus upon Christ.

When others sin against us, a great sense of shame is often the result. This is especially true in such violent sins as

⁴ *Pastoral Care Companion*. St. Louis: Concordia, 2007.

rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. Here you can remind the one in your care of the cleansing (cleaning) that forgiveness is. Especially important is the washing imagery of Holy Baptism. Great care should be taken to make sure that Baptism is referred to as a present reality (you are baptized) rather than just a past event (you were baptized).

In some cases, it may be helpful to remind your parishioner that when we are sinned against it is not just against us, but against God Himself. In this way God becomes an ally. His name is not hallowed by sinful actions. He is also violated. This means that God is not a stranger to the experience but, in fact, understands the many things going on in the victim.

Often victims will develop a sense of guilt, blaming themselves and coming up with all sorts of reasons for how they are guilty of what was done to them in sin. You will want to gently care for this soul and lead her away from a false sense of guilt, showing the proper use of “consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments” (Small Catechism, Confession). Teach her the beauty of 1 John 3:20 and how God (and especially His Word) is greater than our hearts, which can often be misinformed and untrustworthy.

Often in our culture we find victims of crimes taking on the identity of those crimes. We are not the sins committed against us. We are also not our sins. Over and over you will want to gently remind your parishioner of who she is in Christ. Our identity is always safe and secure in Christ Jesus. Baptism is very important in relaying this point. Nothing takes that away from us.

In our time, experiences often become the authorities that make truth. Sometimes this includes pragmatism (whatever works). This will need to be guarded against because the fallen world is not trustworthy. Even Christians are subject to this problem and need to be reminded many times to instead look to the objective truth of God’s Word.

The LORD’s Prayer is a very valuable tool in pastoral care. In pastoral care of a person who has suffered the sins of another, the Fifth Petition will become a very important matter to teach and encourage. Forgiveness for others is rooted in Christ’s forgiveness of us. Here Christ’s forgiveness of those who crucified Him at the very time He was being crucified is the perfect example. Being forgiven by Christ means we can forgive others who sin against us. As the pastor, use the means of grace, especially private Confession and Absolution, to bring Christ’s forgiveness to your parishioner to help her forgive others.

The Sixth Petition of the LORD’s Prayer also is helpful in your care of souls that have been sinned against. The explanation in the Small Catechism will help a person

understand the evil things in this world and properly distinguish them from God. Obviously the most pointed part of this is that “although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.” The comfort of final victory is not to be understated here in helping produce hope for the parishioner in her prayers.

The final petition of the LORD’s Prayer may become a stumbling block for your parishioner. She may wonder how she can pray for rescue from evil when in her experience it has not proven true? Again, keeping the focus on Christ and His Word is going to be important here. Remember that even St. Peter himself did not entrust himself to his good experiences but instead to the “prophetic Word more fully confirmed” (2 PETER 1:16–21). Gentle instruction will help guide your parishioner away from experience-based to faith-based prayers.

No doubt people who are healing from such violating sins as rape, sexual assault and domestic violence will show great weakness. Your parishioner will. Many around her will be encouraging strength, which is not necessarily bad, but as her pastor you will want to show the strength of Christ when we are weak. St. Paul teaches about this in 2 Corinthians 12.

Rape, sexual assault and domestic violence are not only sins but also crimes. As the pastor, you will want to make sure that the parishioner understands the God-given nature of earthly authorities and their role in the punishment of evil. You will want to guard her against feelings of impiety for pursuing criminal action by teaching her the role of God behind the government in comparison to the role of God behind the Church. It will also be a helpful part in helping her forgive to understand how God works. In discussing these matters, remember your own role in caring for her soul. Also, should she choose to press charges and use earthly authorities, you may want to show your support by being at public hearings and the like to help remind her of God’s care for her.

Hebrews 12:15 teaches us that a root of bitterness can defile many. Indeed, misery loves company. Knowing this, let it help your pastoral care for your parishioner. There will be many people in her life advocating and encouraging bitterness. Warn against it. Remind her of the love of Christ and His regard for her. Never let a time go by where you don’t hold up Christ’s death and resurrection as proof of His love.

If the parishioner is married and her husband is not the one who sinned against her, he will also require special care and instruction. He will need to be encouraged in love and patience for his wife. Ephesians 5 and the example of Christ’s work for the Church will be helpful in laying

this out for him. This can be helpful for him in exhibiting patience, love, gentleness and even being longsuffering for his wife. Her anger will find its way toward him. He can bear it as a husband and baptized child of God. He will have to bear with his beloved as she is brought through everything that is happening. Their relationship will change, maybe for a time, maybe for the rest of their lives. Teach him the value of marriage and how his role of being husband is of Christ-like importance. The story of Joseph may be helpful here, too, in that Joseph would have born the public shame of Mary's pregnancy before he knew her. Joseph is a great example of a loving husband. The saints can serve as examples to us of faithful living. Much of the advice given for the parishioner you are caring for can also be useful for her husband.

Language Matters:

In some situations, there are no words that can guard against all offense. The difficult decision on how to talk about topics such as rape, sexual assault and domestic violence needs to be grounded in compassion, empathy and most importantly, the Gospel. When possible, mirror the word choices of the person you are providing care for. This book uses the words *rape* and *sexual assault* in line with the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. RAINN has extensive resources to assist both survivors of sexual violence and those assisting them in their healing and recovery. For more information, please see rainn.org/get-information.

Consider framing discussions around being a survivor instead of a victim to emphasize that this event, no matter how destructive and damaging, has not destroyed or ruined the woman you are caring for. She is surviving, and with the assistance of Christ Jesus, there is healing and relief more powerful than any assault.

Reframing is a technique commonly used in therapeutic settings to change the mental associations surrounding a negative idea or situation to less damaging or more positive ideas. Negative thoughts can be all-consuming, and it can be hard to break the patterns of guilt, blame and shame that accompany sexual assaults. While persistent or deeply held beliefs may need the help of a trained counselor or other mental health provider to re-pattern, kind and gentle reminders are an appropriate tool for pastors to use when caring for women in pastoral practice.

Hymns:

Our church has a rich and beautiful resource for pastoral care in the hymns. Hymns are often familiar, and this familiarity brings comfort and solace in times of distress.

Following is the list of hymns used in this Bible study. It may be helpful to use some or all of these in pastoral care for the sake of repetition and uniformity.

1. I am Jesus' Little Lamb, *LSB* 740
2. Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me? *LSB* 756
3. From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee, *LSB* 607
4. Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense, *LSB* 741
5. Through Jesus' Blood and Merit, *LSB* 746
6. Be Still, My Soul, *LSB* 752
7. O God, Forsake Me Not, *LSB* 731
8. I Walk in Danger All the Way, *LSB* 716
9. I Lay My Sins on Jesus, *LSB* 606
10. Jerusalem the Golden, *LSB* 672
11. My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less, *LSB* 575
12. The Church's One Foundation, *LSB* 644
13. For Me to Live Is Jesus, *LSB* 742

Bible Passages:

Many, many passages are used throughout this work. Each chapter is built around a specific passage, and those passages are listed below in order.

1. Ps. 23:4
2. John 14:26–27
3. Ps. 55:22a
4. Ps. 56:8
5. Ps. 9:9
6. Ps. 22:24
7. Lam. 3:31–32
8. Ecclesiastes 3
9. Ps. 46:1
10. 2 Cor. 5:17
11. Ps. 116:1–2
12. Eph. 5: 25–27

Prayers:

Merciful Father, the physical and emotional pain caused by the sin against [name's] body is deep and severe. You know what he/she has experienced and what is needed for healing, and You alone can provide it. Through Your promises to [name] in Holy Baptism, cleanse him/her from his/her shame, and make all things new, that he/she may be strengthened to live a fulfilling life in You; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our LORD, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.⁵

Almighty God, You are a fortress of defense in the time of trouble. We thank You for preserving [name's] life in the midst of the danger and violence [he/she] has suffered. Look upon [him/her] in mercy and grant [him/her] Your peace, that [he/she] may cling to You in faith and not be ashamed or afraid; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our LORD, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.⁶

Empathy, compassion, and patience will characterize the pastor's approach in dealing with the physical, emotional, and spiritual damage that may be present in victims of abuse. Because the effects of abuse often linger, the pastor will recognize the need for ongoing care marked by patient use of the Gospel to heal, to release from bondage to anger, shame, and fear, and to restore to a life of faith and love.

The pastor may want to suggest that the emotional scars from abuse may well require the assistance of other professional help as well.

Psalmody

PSALM 13

Will You forget me forever?
How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow
in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.
lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.
But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁵ Pastoral Care Companion, LCMS Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Task Force, P. 2.

⁶ Pastoral Care Companion. St. Louis: Concordia, 2007, P. 525.

I will sing to the LORD,
Because he has dealt bountifully with me.

PS. 31:1–4, 9, 15–16

My soul and body are in grief.

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!
Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily!
Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!
For you are my rock and my fortress;
and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;
you take me out of the net they have hidden for me,
for you are my refuge ...

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also ...

My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!
Make your face shine on your servant;
save me in your steadfast love!

ADDITIONAL PSALMODY

Ps. 6:4–10 The LORD has heard my plea.

Ps. 70 O LORD, make haste to help me!

Ps. 71:1–6, 12 You have given the command to save me.

Ps. 91 I will be with you in trouble.

Ps. 140: 1–4, 12–13 Deliver me from evil and violent men.