Emotionally Abusive Marriages: Restoring the Voice of God to the Oppressed.
Our Goal

- The Heart of an Oppressor
- Emotional Abuse - What is it?
- The Effects of Oppression on the Suffer
- What Does God Say about Oppression
- Helping the Wounded Draw Near to God
Oppression in marriage is a pattern of coercive, controlling and punishing behaviors, whereby, one spouse seeks to control and dominate the other.
Oppressors

• Relate to Others
  1. Entitled
  2. Dominate
  3. Threaten

Enslave others

• Self Deceptions
  1. Blind
  2. Lack Remorse
  3. Blame-shift

Self justifying
Oppressors take control.

- Branches are control
- Trunk is entitlement
- Roots are self-worship
The Entitled usurp God’s position & live out life as if they are the one to be worshiped and obeyed.

1. It is only their rules that need to be followed.
2. It is only their words that need to be heard & obeyed.
3. It is only their emotions that are under consideration in relationships.
4. It is only their physical and sexual needs that need to be considered and fulfilled.
Enforced Worship

- I have a right to the things I want, and I will *punish* whoever stands in the way of my desires.

  “Serve me or *suffer* the consequences.”

In oppressive marriages, punishment is the ruling force.

**Punishments are perpetually utilized to keep control.**
Emotional Abuse
(mental, verbal or psychological)

is a pattern of behavior which promotes a
destructive sense of
fear,
obligation,
shame or
guilt.
• Rejecting
• Neglecting
• Degrading
• Terrorizing
• Isolating
• Exploiting
• Belittling
• Gas lighting
• Deceiving
• Blaming
• Ignoring
• Shaming
• Threatening

What it Looks Like
Spiritual Abuse

When *control and domination* are established by using Scripture, Doctrine, or One's 'leadership role' as weapons.
Spiritual Abuse can be subtle as it can mask itself as religious practice.

- Exhibiting control-oriented leadership
- Lording power over you
- *Demanding* submission
- Using scripture to shame or punish

“To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize.”
- Voltaire
The Effects of Oppression on the Sufferer

I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?”

Ps 42:9
Again I looked and saw all the *oppression* that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed—and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors—and they have no comforter. And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun. **Ecclesiastes 4**
Confusion
- Blamed
- Peace
- Fog of coercion
- Empathy
- Knowing I sin

We need to be clear about what is true & wrong.
What does God say about oppression?

What we and the church should be saying to those who suffer.
It is not your fault.

• Abusive behaviors are inexcusable.
• Nothing you could have done makes you deserving of abusive treatment—nothing ever.

"What comes out of a person is. . . from within (them), out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside (them).” - Mark 7:20-23

• Your oppressor will blame you for his anger and rage. But God clearly says it is never your fault.
You do not deserve this.

• In suffering, a common cry of our hearts is to try to understand why something bad is happening to us.
  – Sometimes we turn inward and search ourselves “What did I do to deserve this?”
  – Sometimes others make insinuations. “Maybe if you….”

• Your oppressor hurls accusations at you and these relentless attacks can make you prone to feeling that you deserve heinous treatment.
• Grace is underserved. It is for the unlovely and the broken. Grace is based, solely, upon what Jesus has done. Jesus' work is complete and so you are forgiven—completely.

"Your sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more!" (Heb 10:17)

• If God does not remember your sins and failings, why would he punish you for them?

God is not punishing you.
It is not a marriage problem.

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good,

and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil,

for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Luke 6:45
Oppression violates God's design for marriage.

- God designed marriage to be a place of mutual trust, sacrifice, care and honesty.
- Oppressors make it a place of domination.
  - To get their needs met they use manipulation and unrelenting pressures. Oppressors are willing to wound you to preserve their position of power.
- Your calling is not to submit to and accept rampant destructive behavior. The opposite is true.
  - You are supposed to help your spouse know, serve, love, and be more like Jesus by limiting their ability to sin against you, resisting their domination, and exposing their sin.
God sees your suffering.

- Oppression is isolating, and it can feel like no one, not even God sees or cares what is happening to you.
  - "For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" - Ps. 43:2
  - Take comfort in knowing he sees you and what is done to you. Jesus not only sees, he know what it is like because it happened to him, "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . He was oppressed, and he was afflicted." - Isa. 53:3, 7

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God cares about your safety.
Sin intensifies over time.
Continual & unrepentant sin causes hearts to grow hard.
Desensitized hearts not only perpetuate sin, they magnify it.

Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,
From the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!
For you are the God in whom I take refuge… Ps 43:1-2
God's desire is to rescue you.

- When God talks about oppression, he talks about rescuing his people,
  - "I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey." (Ez 34:22).
  - "I have surely seen the affliction of my people... and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them (Ex 34:3).
  - Jesus says he has "He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives... to free those who are oppressed, (Luke 4:18-19).
  - God encourages you to cry out to him for deliverance, "Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men" (Psalm 140:1).
In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. Ps 18:6
Speaking to God

- Oppression often leaves you feeling like God is far from you. One of the psalmist's biggest fears is the God has turned his face from him.

- Even when you are upset with him and feel abandoned, God invites you to speak to him: "Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Ps. 10:1).

- God does not ask us to forget our suffering. He invites us to lament.
Speaking to God

• God understands the deep betrayal that comes from a close companion.
  
  − "For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bare it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. . . Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart." (Ps 55:12-13,15).

• God understands when we are angry, resentful & without hope. He knows our hearts and he knows the unique suffering and wounds of oppression.
  
  − Ps 18, 22, 55, 56 & 57, are particularly relevant.
Our relationship with God is VERTICAL.

Our relationship with others is HORIZONTAL.
Remember who God says you are.

- Treasured possession (Deut 7:6)
- Chosen, holy (Col 3:12),
- Beloved (Deut 33:2),
- His child (1 Jn 3:1),
- A friend (Jn 15:15),
- Holy, blameless (Eph 1:4)
- Redeemed (Eph 1:7)
Remember who Jesus is.

- Jesus came into the world sacrificially. He was willing to empty himself, even to the point of death to display his love for you.

- He does not hold his power and position over you but instead is devoted and sacrificing for you.

- He does not rule over you, demand your affections, or subject to his majesty but woos you with his gentle and forgiving love.

- Because of his love for us, Jesus was willing to be wounded and give up power.
The words of the reckless pierce like swords.  
But the tongue of the wise bring healing.  
Proverbs 12:18