

Church Executive

HELPING LEADERS BECOME BETTER STEWARDS.

AN UNTAPPED (AND UNSPOKEN) OPPORTUNITY

How to provide help, hope
and healing to sexual abuse
survivors in your church

Presented by:
Fearless Series for Women

An untapped (and unspoken) opportunity

How to provide help, hope and healing to sexual abuse survivors in your church



James Reeves, D.Min.
Producer / Founder
Fearless Series
for Women

Church Executive: Even now, it seems like sexual trauma incidents are treated like isolated incidents. Why?

Dr. James Reeves: Sexual abuse occurs in a subterranean place. In a secret place. Most of the public is living on one level; beneath that, there's a dark reality where the sexual abuse of children and young girls happens. And because the vast majority of women never actually talk about their

sexual abuse, it contributes to the idea that it's not something that's going on all the time. A minimum of 1 in 3 girls will be abused by the age of 18.

I often speak about the 'code of silence' which must be broken in the Christian community around sexual abuse. It begins with church leaders. Pastors aren't talking about the issue, even though there's plenty of biblical material — the story of David and Bathsheba is a classic case of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse always has an element of power. It can be physical, emotional, vocational or financial in nature.

Meanwhile, women who haven't had the experience aren't talking about it because it's not on their radar. So, for the women who *have* been abused, they're not going to talk about it because of shame and fear. This is how the perpetual circle of silence continues in the Christian community. At some point, it must be broken. Someone must step out and start the conversation in a safe way for survivors to access.

CE: In what ways is sexual trauma — whenever it happens to a woman — likely to manifest itself tragically in her life?

Reeves: Whether it's sexual, physical or emotional trauma, there are some commonalities. The individual enters immediately into pain; the trauma causes suffering.

Even as children, the first thing we start doing when we hurt is to look for medication, some way to escape the hurt. Without appropriate intervention to start the healing process, we find temporary relief in something else. Often, the suffering leads us into self-destructive behaviors.

Among children, this might manifest in isolation. As we get older, we might find pornography, affairs and promiscuity, because that's the only definition we have of what it means to be loved. We might also seek relief from the suffering with food, drugs and alcohol. As a result, we not only have the suffering related to the sin committed against us, but now there is the suffering from our own bad choices. So again, we look for medication. Around and around it goes in a circular motion. This is what I call the "sin-suffering cycle."

To break this cycle in a survivor's life, we must address the suffering. The survivor has probably confessed and repented a thousand times — and genuinely meant it — but by not addressing the suffering, the sin always comes back.

CE: Teens are also encouraged to participate in this program. How does the program differ for these participants?

Reeves: While the Fearless Series for Women [www.fs4women.com] was developed specifically for grown women to start addressing their trauma, we know that the average age of sexual abuse is 9. So, by the time students get into junior high and high school, many have already experienced sexual abuse, and it's already having a negative impact. Without intervention, it's bound to eventually damage their lives, their marriages, their homes, and their families. By inviting teens to participate in the Series, we're starting the intervention process while they're in the home and their care-givers can participate in beginning the healing process.

This can also be preventive. We pray a young boy or girl who hasn't experienced sexual abuse can learn to recognize it and avoid devastation.

CE: What does healing from sexual trauma look like?

Reeves: One of the major issues is shame. Children and adults will take shame on themselves and keep them from doing the very thing that they must do to start healing — talk about it.

Secondly, is confronting the lies that developed as a result of trauma about who they are and who God is. The healing process includes identifying the lies and replace them with the truth of God.

Eventually, the survivor must be able to forgive the abuser, but in the process, we talk about what forgiveness is and isn't. There are many misconceptions about what forgiveness is and isn't. Often, pastors jump right to the forgiveness piece, but most women aren't ready to do that in the beginning and just need to be heard.



CE: What is required of a church that wants to offer the Series?

Reeves: I developed this Series so that it would be easy for the church to implement.

Thirty years ago, I took my passion to help survivors and developed a "hospital church"-style ministry in the local church. Our churches can and should be a place of healing for those who are hurting.

From this core, I created The Fearless Series for Women to provide a safe place for women to gain healing from their past. The Series is developed in two parts. The first is made up of five videos and intended for everyone. It helps the survivor to recognize that they can get help and for others it serves to open their eyes to the enormity of the problem. The second part is a workbook study to help actual survivors in a safe place format.

The Church needs to talk about this subject. We have mothers, daughters, sisters and neighbors who need healing from this trauma. It is time for women to stand up and say respectfully to male leadership — "we no longer will be silent about this." This must be seen as priority and be addressed in the local church. **CE**

— Reporting by RaeAnn Slaybaugh

Learn more about Fearless Series For Women!

How it works plus facilitator training below.

How the Series Works



Fearless Series for Women Small Group Facilitator Training



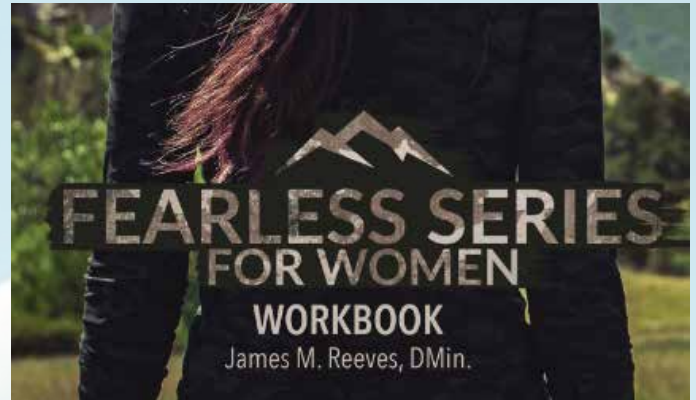
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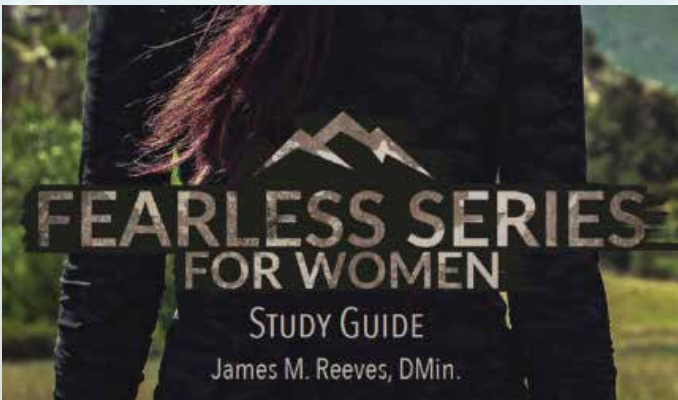
The Fearless Series for Women is a 5-week video series that is available for digital access for 8 weeks after purchase. It also has an accompanying Study Guide. Additionally, there is a follow-up Workbook for women who want to enter a deeper, small group experience.



Fearless Series for Women Digital Series Access
\$74.95



Fearless Series for Women Workbook
\$17.95



Fearless Series for Women Study Guide
\$12.95



Refuge — How "Hospital Church" Ministry Will Change Your Church Forever
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Life Change For Every Christian
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