

WHAT ELDERS CAN SAY TO ABUSE VICTIMS

The apostle Paul said to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls." (1 Thess. 5:14) So, in line with James 5:13-15, elders want to use God's Word in helping victims to heal, as stressed in *The Watchtower* of April 1, 1990, pages 13 and 14, paragraphs 12-14, under the subheading "The Bible's Counsel—Uniquely Wise." In addition, becoming well acquainted with fine Bible-based articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* is also vital. In fact, one of the reasons for the articles on sexual abuse in the October 8, 1991, issue of *Awake!* was to aid elders in giving more effective Scriptural assistance to abuse victims. The response, as described in the April 8, 1992, *Awake!*, shows how effective and acceptable these articles proved to be to the victims. The article "Help for the Victims of Incest" in the October 1, 1983, issue of *The Watchtower* explains that victims often are filled with shame, anger, and frequently an overwhelming sense of guilt because of such abuse. Thus, strive to help such ones see that they were not at fault; they were being victimized.

Help such ones to see that their worth as individuals is not diminished by the shameful way they were treated. The important thing is how Jehovah views them. By means of the ransom sacrifice, Jehovah purchased such ones with the "precious blood" of Jesus. (1 Pet. 1:19) Surely, if Jehovah paid such a price, he must love them dearly as he loves all who put their faith in that valuable shed blood. (John 3:16) Jehovah considers desirable all of the "great crowd," who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Despite any past abuse, they now have a clean stand-

ing as God's friends and are assured that "God will wipe out every tear from their eyes." He is not insensitive to their suffering but will help them heal their emotional scars as they call upon him in faith. He guarantees to heal the wounds completely in the future.—Rev. 7:9, 14, 17; Isa. 65:17; Hag. 2:7; see "Will You Benefit From Undeserved Kindness?" in the February 15, 1990, issue of *The Watchtower*.

By earnest prayer and by considering upbuilding, wholesome things, the excellent 'peace of God will guard the heart and mental powers' of these ones. (Phil. 4:6-9) Remind them of the value of keeping their mind on maintaining fine works. When followed, this divine counsel can be most beneficial, enabling them to move forward and find joy. (Titus 3:8) When an individual fills his mind with the many lovable things in God's Word, he is strengthened and refreshed. (Ps. 19:7, 8, 14) Not only can this lessen the pain of any past abuse but it can also restore one's spiritual health.

In some instances, emotional pains of this nature simply have to be endured. Yet, such endurance produces "an approved condition." (Rom. 5:3-5) As "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort," Jehovah promises to give us sufficient strength so that we are not overwhelmed by grief. (2 Cor. 1:3, 4) The apostle Paul contended with "a thorn in the flesh." Although this made it harder for him to carry out his ministry, he was able to endure faithfully with the strength provided by Jehovah. (2 Cor. 12:7-10) Today, too, a depressed person needs to keep as active as he can with field service, meeting attendance, and close association with the congregation.