

Calendar of Events

April 2005
Date: April 1-3
Kettering, OH—*Being There* Conference
(for abuse survivors, all types)

June-July 2005
Date: June 29-July 9
St. Louis, MO—General Conference Session
(Exhibit)

We are continually scheduling both victim/survivor and pastoral conferences throughout the U.S. If you'd like to schedule or sponsor a conference in your area, please call (530) 675-3608.

Please check our web site for the most up-to-date conference information and schedule.

www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

Current Project Needs...

- ◆ Printing our materials in Spanish.
- ◆ The development and printing of topical Bible studies for victims.
- ◆ The production of training videos for pastors, churches and victims.
- ◆ The production of a general introductory video.
- ◆ The development & implementation of public service announcements to be aired on TV/cable.
- ◆ General and administrative expenses.

Donations are the primary source of funds that make it possible for The Hope of Survivors to maintain its ministry. Since The Hope of Survivors receives no denominational subsidies, your gifts are vitally important. Thank you for considering a tax-deductible donation to further the work of this ministry and bring hope and

THE **Hope** of Survivors
P.O. Box 187, Clipper Mills, CA 95930

HopeSPEAK

Dear Readers:

Welcome to the premier issue of *HopeSPEAK*, the official newsletter for The Hope of Survivors! I hope this issue will encourage, uplift and inform you. It is our desire to give you a knowledge of God's plan for those who are hurting due to the devastation of clergy abuse, and are left with doubts of God's love and care.

It is always amazing to see how God can turn despair into hope and tragedy into our greatest blessing! Today we can rejoice in how wonderfully He has turned sorrow into joy in so many lives. He heals the brokenhearted and exalts those who humble themselves before Him. The Bible states in Matthew 23:12, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." We are warned in Proverbs 29:23, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." We are encouraged in Isaiah 57:15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Praise God for His love toward us!

As we begin our quarterly newsletters, we plan to provide inspiring articles to encourage you, insightful articles for reflection and, always, words of comfort and hope. You won't want to miss an issue!

For those of you who don't already know, The Hope of Survivors is a ministry dedicated to assisting victims of clergy sexual abuse and misconduct, as well as providing educational and informational materials and seminars to pastors and churches nationwide.

We are seeing amazing things happen through the ministry of The Hope of Survivors, and we praise His name for it all! Here are some of the highlights...

- ◆ Upcoming articles in the U.K. *Marie Claire* magazine (with a circulation of 400,000-500,000) and *ASI Magazine*.
- ◆ A 22-minute radio interview which will be aired repeatedly on KCGS in Marshall, AR.
- ◆ The *Hope & Healing* victim's conference in Cincinnati afforded us the opportunity to connect with a small group. The Holy Spirit was there, blessing and bringing hope, healing & comfort to all.

◆ The *Faith & Fidelity* pastor's conference in Alaska went very well and the material presented was well received. The ministerial director and the conference president have offered to recommend our seminar to other conferences in the U.S. and Canada.

◆ Distribution of our brochures throughout the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Africa, India, the Philippines and to leaders within four districts of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

◆ Our initial meeting with conference officials in Northern CA was very productive and we look forward to continuing our dialog on procedures for handling sexual misconduct cases and how the conference can utilize our services.

We truly believe that God is using The Hope of Survivors ministry to reach many individuals—both on the pastoral side and the congregational (victim) side. Glory be to Him as we all work together!

In His care,
Steve Nelson

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The Hope of Survivors is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization funded by individuals who support the mission and goals of the organization; survivors of clergy sexual abuse who are now thriving and desire to use their means to help others; and by grants from private foundations whose values are similar to those of The Hope of Survivors. All contributions are tax-deductible. Your support is greatly appreciated.

The Subtlety of Satan & Pastors Who Prey

We read in Isaiah 14:12-14 and in Revelation 12 the account of Lucifer in Heaven and how, because of his pride and his love of self, he became discontent and sought for greater honor. His devices were clever and cunning, subtle yet powerful, as he was able to win one-third of the angels in Heaven to his side. What was it about him that could gain such sympathy? How could one-third of the heavenly angels turn from God to Lucifer (Satan)?

Those are questions that victims of clergy sexual abuse often ask themselves. No, they are not asking about Lucifer, but about their pastor. *How could I have allowed this to happen? How could I have turned from God? How could I have become intimately involved with my pastor?*

There are a few simple, yet very profound, principles to address here. One question we often ask is, *Why didn't God kick Lucifer out of Heaven sooner? Why didn't He just get rid of him before he took one-third of the angels with him?* God was certainly aware the moment that Lucifer's heart changed and he began to harbor jealousy, pride and resentment toward Christ, God's own Son. But had God destroyed Satan at that moment, would the remaining angels have served God out of love for Him, or fear of Him? I dare say their service from that point forward would have been partly for fear. That is not what God wants. God wants us to serve Him because we love Him, not because we fear Him. No, God must allow Lucifer to make his choice—God must give him time to fully manifest his character. There can be no doubt that Lucifer was greatly loved by all in Heaven. Yet, when he ever so subtly began to create doubts in the other angels' minds as to God's order, those doubts began to sink in and some of the angels began to sympathize with Lucifer, believing that he was, indeed, being treated unjustly. The problem here, in part at least, is sympathy. Not that sympathy in itself is bad, but we must carefully guard our sympathies.

I'm sure you've read or heard on the news the comments people make when they find out that their neighbor or someone they knew was a mass murderer. *He was such a nice man. He needs help, he's sick.* I wonder, could those sympathetic statements have been similar to those in heaven? Was it, *Poor Lucifer, God doesn't understand*

him. Poor Lucifer, he should be made equal to Christ? When we place our sympathies where they ought not to be, we are asking for trouble.

Lest you think I'm preparing a sermon or a discourse on doctrine here, I will move on to address what I see as the similarities between what happened in Heaven with Lucifer and what happens on earth when pastors prey on their flock. *[Acknowledging, of course, that there are very few pastors who prey. The majority are godly men who deserve our respect. However, there are a few (a few too many) who are wolves in sheep's clothing. We must not ever look at the role of pastor as being a hateful or despised position. God has ordained many to stand as His representatives. The problem comes when there are those who are professing to be Christ's representatives but who are, in actuality, representatives of Satan, wittingly or unwittingly. We would encourage God's pastors to take active spiritual steps to protect themselves from falling prey to Satan and to protect their flock!]*

One of the first similarities we find between pastors who prey and Satan is pride. The pastor, like Satan, often feels that he is not receiving enough recognition; he is not honored, as he would like to be. *[Never mind the fact that we are all to be humble. See Isaiah 57:15.]* Luke 14:11, as well as many other texts, gives a strong reproof to those who would seek to be exalted: *"For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."* Satan sought to be exalted above Christ in Heaven. The pastor seeks to be exalted within the church and community. It is the pastor's pride that compels him to move forward in his quest to obtain another man's wife, or another woman who is not his own wife. It is not love.

The second correlation we see is the subtle deceitfulness of the pastor. Just as Lucifer went about planting seeds of discontent and doubt, without the angels being aware of what he was doing, the pastor goes about planting seeds as well. He plants doubts as to what God expects of His children and as to whether sin is really as bad as the Bible says. But worse, he moves stealthily throughout the congregation, deceiving them of his true character and playing upon their sympathies. I've heard countless times about the pastor who was so "powerful," "loved," and "godly." Yet, this same pastor had ulterior motives. Quite often, the pastor who abuses his power is a "lone ranger" type, one who likes to call all the

shots and one who controls and manipulates others who serve under him. No one dare question the pastor. By doing so, he is able to control the church. He is also able to do things without question that he would never have been able to do otherwise. He plants doubts in a counselee's mind as to whether she should remain in her marriage or "follow her heart." By this time, of course, he has tried to convince her that "following her heart" means leaving her husband for him. So, in his subtlety, he cunningly convinces his victims that he loves them, that he has their best interests in mind, and that God looks favorably upon their union. But, what happens when the church finds out? Inevitably (in the majority of cases), the uninformed, or misinformed, church body align themselves with the pastor. They sympathize with him. They feel sorry that he has lost so much (if, indeed, he is terminated) due to this presumed "temptress." Honestly, is this sympathy appropriate? We don't think so. Could the church members be like the angels who followed Satan, rather than God, out of sympathy instead of right principles?

The pastor was in the role of authority, and not just any authority, but *spiritual authority*. He has an accountability to God and to others that the average congregant does not. *The pastor bears the weight of the responsibility.* It is *always* his responsibility to keep the flock in his care safe from harm—even from himself. It is his duty to nurture them, to feed them the Word of God, to give godly counsel. He is never to use or abuse them to gratify his own selfish lusts. That behavior is deplorable and is *not* of God. Thus, we see how sympathy, wrongly placed, can cause great damage. Now the pastor, rather than being forced to examine himself and his motives, confess and repent, boldly goes forth believing he has done no wrong, and continues to enjoy the sympathy and fellowship of his congregants.

Where is the woman (and her family), the victim, in all of this? Left alone, on the outside, full of shame, guilt and remorse, without a hand to help her and without a hope to cling to. That is part of the third similarity between Satan and pastors who prey. Often the abusive pastor will seek to turn the congregation against the one whom he has abused, just as Satan seeks to turn God's children away from God, toward himself. So, why does the pastor so often seem to "get away" with this crime? One answer is that, just like with Lucifer, God must allow the pastor's character to be fully manifest so people will be able to see

the truth—the fruits of the character. Matthew 7:20 reminds us that, *"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."*

As I reflected on the scenario in Heaven and compared it to what I've seen happening in so many clergy sexual abuse cases, I became more acutely aware of the verity of Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes 1:9, *"...there is no new thing under the sun."* Satan has used the same tactics for millennia, and pastors who prey will follow his example.

May God help us to cling to Him in faith, pray for the purity of ourselves and our leaders, and seek our healing, comfort, love and wholeness in Him.
—Samantha Nelson



Steve and Samantha Nelson are co-founders of The Hope of Survivors. Together, they share how God brought them through the devastation of clergy sexual abuse. By God's grace, they seek to bring hope and healing to those who have been affected by this trauma.

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*"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."* —Psalms 34:18, 19