

The Church is Perfectly Positioned to Minister to Those Suffering from Adverse Childhood Experiences

By Dave Lockridge

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The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study of 1997 removed the veil of secrecy from the extent and effects of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. A few states have risen to the challenge and implemented child abuse education and harsher punishments for abusers. The long-term effects of these measures have yet to be determined. One roadblock impeding these programs is the air of suspicion surrounding governmental agencies. Few of us feel comfortable when the government comes to inspect or oversee our private lives. Dr. Vincent Felitti, the principal investigator of the ACE Study, noted in his article, *The Origins of Addiction*, the necessity of developing a “**beneficial and acceptable intrusion**” into the closed realm of personal and family experience.

The Church- A “beneficial and acceptable intrusion”

The local church is perfectly positioned to minister in this closed realm. The local church is an authoritative community. Of all authoritative communities, the local church influences a greater number of people and a more varied age group than any other. The local church is accessible and accepted at nearly any time and on any occasion. There is an ongoing relationship that lends itself to accountability and encouragement.

The Church- A Healing Community

The local church has a unique place in society. It is primarily a healing community. Where sinners meet the Savior, where the brokenhearted are healed, where believers pray for and help believers and nonbelievers alike. It is a place that encourages one to rise above their difficulties and gives not only the motivation, but the guidance to make wise decisions.

The local church is a place where the elderly and the young interact. It is a place of love and encouragement, a place of deep interconnection and interdependence.

The Church Has a Mandate

The local church has more than an open door, it has a mandate to “bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” Isaiah 61:1 (King James Version). The church is uniquely positioned and must be equipped to reach, retrain, and edify those suffering from adverse childhood experiences.

More than ever, we need ministries that are passionate to help the emotionally wounded. We need ministries that understand both the scientific and scriptural foundation of overcoming a difficult childhood. Churches must recognize the severity of the problems and the issues involved. Churches must be equipped to provide biblically sound and scientifically accurate principles of overcoming. The local church must provide a strong social network to support the restoration of dysfunctional families and individuals. We must move away from addiction centered counseling to counseling that addressed the issues of adverse childhood experiences.

Considering that the Church, being an authoritative community, is a beneficial and acceptable intrusion; and when you consider the ability of the Church to provide effective life-changing teaching; and when you consider that the Church affects the family on every age level; one must be convinced that- the Church is perfectly positioned to minister to those suffering from adverse childhood experiences.

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