

Fall 2012



AVA'S CALL

Advocacy for Victims of Abuse



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AVA Director

AVA'S CALL is a quarterly publication of the Department of Women Ministries' program Advocacy for Victims of Abuse.

AVA's Goals are to:

- Provide resources to bring healing to victims of abuse
- Equip the church to minister to victims of abuse
- Promote preventative measures to combat abuse

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**National Domestic
Violence Hotline**
800-799-Safe (7233)



October was National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Every time this observance occurs we hear the news media and various community organizations highlighting the issue of domestic violence. I am grateful that this happens so that some light is shed on this blight in our world but also saddened by the reality that this issue is a year-round problem that occurs every single day on this planet! The fact that every 14 seconds a woman is battered, and millions of children witness or experience violence or sexual violation in their homes, as routinely as rising in the morning, is more than a travesty, it is outrageous. I am sickened by how long domestic violence against women has been around. As far back as 753 B.C. during the reign of Romulus in Rome, wife beating was accepted and condoned under the Laws of Chastisement. Even in the Middle Ages (900-1300) in Europe, squires and noblemen regularly beat their wives and the Church sanctioned the subjection of women. This treatment became so ingrained in the thinking of men that it even showed up in a medieval theological manual, giving man permission to castigate his wife and beat her for correction. Although there have been many societal movements within this country and others to begin to abolish some of this treatment and call for a kinder more humane treatment of women, the maltreatment persists to this day.

Within the Covenant Church, AVA (Advocacy for Victims of Abuse) was started approximately eight years ago to address the issue of domestic violence in our faith community. In this short period we have witnessed changes in the lives of many who have struggled and suffered in silence from abusive tactics within their homes, churches and even those overcoming childhood sexual assault. Every time these topics are raised within churches, retreats or gatherings we find that the statistics of domestic violence are no different for people of faith. However, what AVA has provided for our sisters and sometimes our brothers, are hope and a welcoming community that does not judge or blame them for their suffering. This is what AVA is all about.

Recognizing that awareness and education is not enough, this year AVA entered into a partnership with Mending the Soul, a faith-based organization that uses a solid biblical and user-friendly psychological approach to enable those who have been impacted by abuse (women or men) to begin a journey of healing. Designed as a small group with a peer facilitator, individuals are experiencing wonderful results. (See the Mending the Soul website at: <http://mendingthesoul.org> for more information.)



***"If you would like to be added to our Newsletter e-mail list,
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This newsletter highlights a story from a participant of a Mending the Soul small group and provides some insight into what she experienced and what the AVA ministry is doing in Colombia.

WHAT LEAD ME TO “MENDING THE SOUL” BY MARY DESHAW

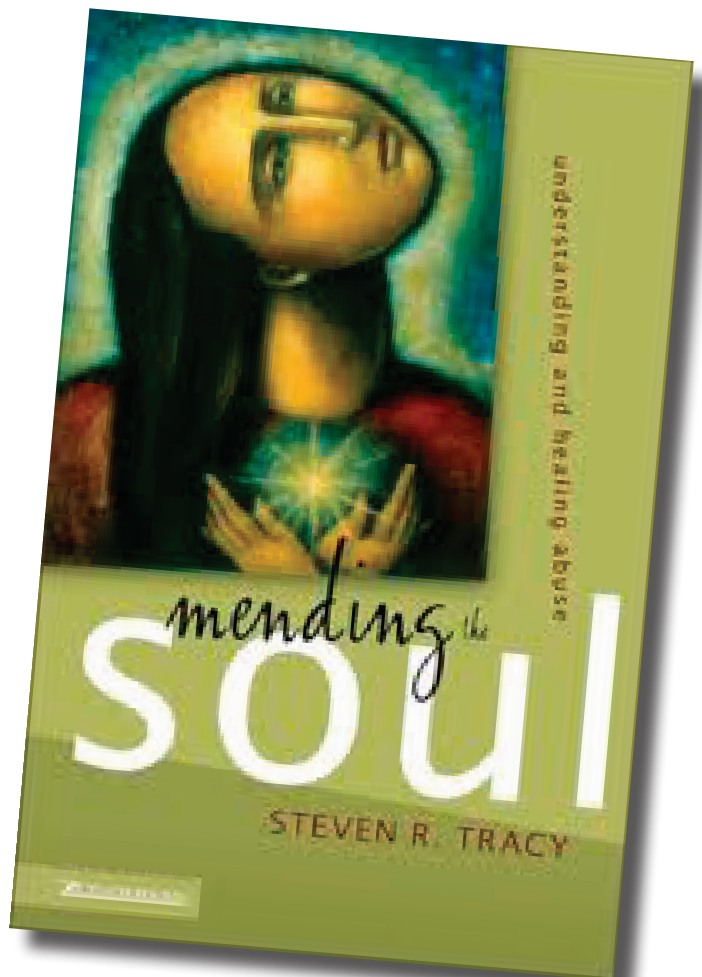
It hasn't even been a year since I took the Mending the Soul journey with two wonderful women. When I began, I was only focused on the traumatic experience of learning my trusted husband had been sexually grooming our daughter, our only child, to be his companion and soul mate. I had known that something wasn't right, but thought it was all about me, my weight, or my time away taking care of my own mom, or the time I had to spend in an extremely demanding job to support our family. Looking back, all the clues were there. He confided in her things that were totally inappropriate, things he never confided in me. In short, he made me out to be her enemy.

But the symptoms of the abuse I suffered, and more than that, the dismay over what my daughter had suffered, played out in so many ways. One tearful day I called my good friend who had always been so supportive, and who had been through sexual abuse herself. She told me that she had been through the Mending the Soul process, and that she would be glad to go through it again with me. She invited one other woman to join us so that we could have more robust sharing.

What began as a process of healing from one traumatic event turned out to be a revealing of many events in my past that lead me to the unhealthy place I was struggling to get out of. Preparing a timeline of my life was particularly helpful because I could see how one situation and my reaction to it set the stage for my next reaction to the next situation. I was shocked to discover so much about how the destructive aspects of relationships and events from decades earlier affected the way I thought about myself, and my own value (or lack thereof). Through the process I was able to sort out so much, the things I need to account for, and maybe more importantly, the shame and humiliation I didn't need to carry around like millstones because they were for others to bear. I saw for one thing that my value and right

to be loved are not dependent on others, only my relationship with my heavenly Father, and I also saw the many ways in which I had been and am loved by others, and that God knows our need and it is our job to be willing to receive and give love in the ways He outlines for us.

This process was a giant turning point in my life on many levels because it got me over some walls that seemed impenetrable. Facing the truth and dispelling distorted thinking has allowed me to move forward without fear.



INTRODUCING MENDING THE SOUL IN COLOMBIA, SOUTH AMERICA

Mónica Velásquez, Psychologist and Director of the Human Rights Project for Women, Children and their Families, along with Co-worker and Social Worker, Gloria Laverde, were invited to teach a conference / workshop to 140 women during the National Women Ministries Retreat held in Tenjo, outside of Bogotá, Colombia.



As they prayed about what to share, it became obvious they should share some teachings / activities from the Mending the Soul Book and Workbook, especially since they had been using the book and the workbook with several women who have suffered from childhood abuse and domestic violence. They wanted to begin to introduce this material to the women at the retreat, sensing in their hearts that as women, we all need to mend our souls, and that Jesus Christ is the best and only true Redeemer and Healer of our hearts!



They began with an exercise called *My Chronology/ My Story*, an exercise that involves three levels:

1. Working alone: taking a look at one's own story, identifying five positive and five negative events and reflecting on them.
2. Working with another person: sharing some of the positive and the negative aspects of one's story.
3. Working in a Group: sharing in the group about one's life, both the positive and negative aspects, using the guidelines for facilitated dialogue. Within the context of respect and confidentiality, the sharing and expressing of one's story is very therapeutic, as is the skill of listening.

Many women shared their histories of pain, abuse, and abandonment. The listing of emotions from Mending the Soul was used to help facilitate the recognition and expression of emotions. Through this series of exercises the women understood that when there is a history of abuse in their lives, relating to others could be difficult, as the abuse has left its consequences of low self-esteem, bitterness, lack of confidence in relationships, and other psychological problems.



A Jewish Adoration Dance was shared and taught at the beginning and at the end of the workshop. This dance signifies the desire to stand together in unity recognizing the pain of the women and praying, asking God to heal and bring freedom to those suffering abuse.

AVA TEACHINGS AND MENDING THE SOUL WORKSHOPS – COLOMBIA.

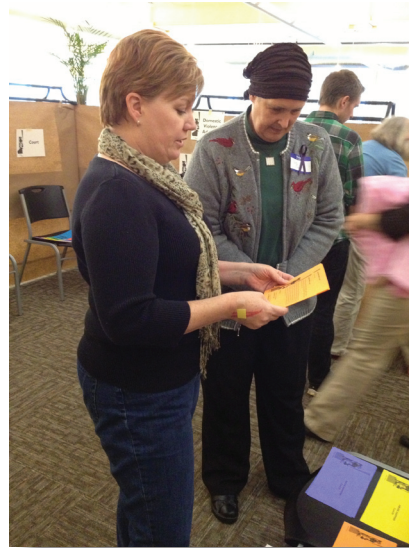
In the months of June and July, the AVA team in the city of Barranquilla, located on the Northern Coast of Colombia had a series of AVA training Workshops in each of the churches there and the responses were positive, with many people wanting to learn more and to share what they had learned with others. Thank God for this excellent group of AVA Coaches who continue to share and walk alongside those who have and are suffering from abuse.

Presently in the city of Medellín, the AVA materials are being presented and shared in four of the Covenant Churches and to three social ministries. The AVA coaches, who were trained by Yvonne DeVaughn last November, are the people leading these training sessions. The people from the churches are responding well to the materials, asking good questions and desiring to raise awareness, to help prevent abuse, and to walk alongside those who are suffering from abuse. SEE THE PHOTO BELOW - of several of the AVA coaches, as they also meet together for prayer and encouragement and for planning schedules.



In Bogotá, there was an AVA /Mending the Soul conference-workshop held on October 27th at the largest Covenant Church in the country, the Covenant Christian Church. Mónica Velásquez and several of the AVA Coaches lead the teaching to approximately 200 women.

AVA AWARENESS DAY FIRST COVENANT CHURCH SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



It was a cool, fall day on Saturday, October 13, 2012 in Seattle, Washington where women and men gathered at First Seattle Covenant to experience what it is like to advocate for victims of abuse. Billed as an AVA Awareness Day, PowerPoint, video clips, and simulated exercises were

used to help participants delve into the difficult and sobering issues of domestic violence and childhood sexual assault. One of the most meaningful experiences was a simulation exercise called “In Her Shoes” which are scenarios based on true stories—the real-life experiences of women with abusive partners. This simulation helped the participants understand, in a very compressed period of time, the ups and downs a battered woman experiences over the course of many years. Following the simulation, the afternoon ended with candid discussion and debriefing which hopefully will lead to more compassion and support for these issues within their community.



The Evangelical Covenant Church