

2nd Opinion: Confront and prevent child abuse

February 16, 2007

Posted: 2/16/07

2nd Opinion: Confront and prevent child abuse

By Denton Lotz

Jesus taught us, "Whoever receives one in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:5-6). He also admonished, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them; for to such belong the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

Baptists always have affirmed children. A Baptist deacon, William Fox, began the Sunday School Society in 1785 to remedy the horrors of the Industrial Revolution, which forced children as young as 10 years old to work underground in mines 12 hours a day, six days a week.

Today, the situation of children worldwide has become worse. In October 2006, the United Nations released [The UN Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children](#). After reading this document, Christians and other men and women of good will should become angry and energized to work to stop child abuse.

Here are tragic statistics from the United Nations:

- Almost 53,000 children died worldwide in 2002 as a result of homicide.
- 150 million girls and 73 million boys under age 18 experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence during 2002.
- Between 100 million and 140 million girls and women in the world have undergone some form of female genital mutilation. In sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt and the Sudan, 3 million girls and women are subjected to genital mutilation every year.
- In 2004, 218 million children were involved in child labor, 126 million of whom were in hazardous work.
- Estimates from 2000 suggest that 1.8 million children were forced into prostitution and pornography, and 1.2 million were victims of trafficking.

Christians cannot remain silent in the face of these horrendous and evil acts against children whom Jesus loves!

What should Christians do?

- Be informed. Check The UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children on a UN website: www.violencestudy.org.
- At church meetings and Sunday school teachers' workshops, make parents and other adults aware of signs of child abuse.
- Check with local authorities and police about laws protecting children from child abuse. Report instances of child abuse to responsible authorities.
- Make the church a safe haven for abused children. We should be aware that because of their abusive treatment, such children often become

abusers themselves.

- Work with other churches, schools and local government authorities to educate the public and your congregation about these evils.

Warning: Child abuse is a secret sin. Few people know what happens in homes. The fact that one in four women is abused at home before she is 18 years of age is an indication of the extent of the problem!

Child abusers in churches need to be confronted and helped by counseling and discipleship groups to prevent future abusive behavior. Do not allow untrained and inexperienced counselors to hold leadership positions.

False accusations can poison relationships and fellowship. Public accusations without proper follow-through with authorities can cause even further abuse of children at home.

The call of Christ is a call to conversion, repentance and healing. The abused and the abuser need to know and experience God's love in Christ. They need to know of regeneration that is offered to those who truly repent. At the same time, we need to be aware that there are sick and dysfunctional people who need to be institutionalized and kept out of reach of innocent children.

Finally, a renewed movement of Bible study and Sunday school among children and youth will give greater opportunity to bring security, redemption and healing to a world of sexual aberration flamed by the evil institution of pornography and sexual slave traders.

The church must not remain silent. The future of our children depends upon the church's prophetic ministry of confronting and preventing child abuse in Jesus' name.

Denton Lotz is the general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.