**INTRODUCTION**

**Purpose of the Group:**

To aid women who have experienced sexual assault(s) come to an understanding and healing of the effects of the sexual assault(s) through prayer, the Word of God, forgiveness, and self-examination in a compassionate and loving atmosphere of support and fellowship.

**Sexual Assault:**

Sexual assault is described to be the worst experience any woman could experience. Aphrodite Matsakis, in her book, *The Rape Recovery Handbook*, describes the severity of sexual assault.

“Indeed, except for homicide, sexual assault is the most serious violation of a person’s physical, emotional, and spiritual self that anyone can experience. It takes tremendous inner strength and great self-love to recover from the cruelty of sexual assault.”

The way she goes on to define sexual assault and consent is very thorough and deserves to be read as follows.

“Sexual assault is defined as any form of nonconsensual sexual contact. Sexual contact refers to another person touching any of the sexual parts of your body with a part of their body or an object. Nonconsensual sexual contact includes that which takes place when a woman is unconscious or incapable of true consent due to mental defect, mental or physical illness, or is incapacitated as the result of alcohol or drug intake or undergoing a medical procedure. Consent is also not possible in situations of unequal power, such as a male older, physically stronger, or more emotionally mature than a woman or if he holds some form of economic or social power over her.”

The most severe sexual assault is rape. That is why, in some states, it is labeled as “first-degree sexual assault.” Matt Atkinson, in his book, *Resurrection After Rape*, uses the findlaw.com website to define rape.

“The crime of rape generally refers to non-consensual sexual intercourse that is committed by physical force, the threat of injury, or other duress. A lack of consent can include the victim's inability to say "no" to intercourse due to the effects of drugs or alcohol. Rape can occur when the offender and victim have a preexisting relationship (sometimes called “date rape”), or even when the offender is the victim's spouse.

Under a variation known as ‘statutory rape,’ some states make it unlawful for an adult to engage in sexual intercourse with a person who has not reached the age of consent [which varies state to state].”

Rape is not only physical trauma to the body, it is wounding of the whole person as well. The damaging effects of rape reach the deepest, most intimate places within a person. True healing can only come from a perfectly loving and trustworthy God. The problem is that usually the emotional pain of rape turns a person inward, away from the healing love of God and towards sinful and unloving attitudes and behaviors that promote self-protection.

Rape leaves a trail of damaging results, some of which are a paralyzing fear of recurrence, depression, guilt, a sense of loss, deep grief, bitterness, and the inability to forgive. Without healing, the damage of rape eats away at the person like a cancer that runs rampant through the body. If left ignored and unexposed, the rape becomes an integral part of the person’s identity. Without healing, the victim carries much of her damage into adulthood, viewing life and relationships through the clouded filter of victimization. The person’s relationships with God and with people are crippled because it is impossible to trust, it is too painful to be known, and the walls of self-protection surrounding the victim are too thick to penetrate. Sadly, if the wounds of rape are never healed, the victim grows into an adult who is but a shadow of the person God intended her to be.

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if any man is in Christ he is a new creature. The old things passed away, behold new things have come."

God wants to heal you of the effects of your rape. He has already overcome the power of darkness which binds you through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:1

"It is for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

God offers you the gift of freedom. The path to healing is not an easy one, but God promises to never leave you and He will carry your burden. Sanctification is not something that happens with a quick-fix or a glossing over of the problems. Spiritual maturity and true healing from rape is brought about when you present yourself before God, receive God’s truth, and persevere in obedience by stepping out in faith, believing that God is moving you towards healing.

Romans 12:2

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

John 8:31-32

“If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”