



October 2022

UNHOLY CHARADE

UNMASKING THE DOMESTIC ABUSER IN THE CHURCH

**OCTOBER IS
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AWARENESS MONTH**

**1 in 4 women have been abused.
Surprisingly, 1 in 7 men have been abused as well.
Also, there's psychological abuse.
That gets missed by many and is just as important to mention.**

**We know there are abusers in our world.
Are there abusers in our churches?**



Are there domestic abusers hiding in our churches?

One Domestic Abuse Survivor's Story

Three years ago I found myself consumed with the realization that not only were my kids and I in real danger, but we were alone. Completely alone.

Ten years before, my husband had been arrested for domestic abuse. We had just moved to a new state where I knew no one. Over the years I reached out several times to my church for help, but each time I was told I needed to submit more and improve my relationship with God.

The years passed, and the religious guilt increased. I began to doubt that God even loved me. More babies came as the abuse amplified. Every time I reached out for help from my church, I was led to believe I was the problem. People even began to feel bad for my abuser, though I was the one coming to church hardly able to walk and weighing 72 pounds.

I fell into darkness as I gave in to the restraints my church and abuser had laid upon me. A vicious cycle of abuse, guilt, shame, and submission controlled me, until God brought some old friends back into my life, to stay with us for a week. It was so nice to have friends around, mainly because my husband was on his best behavior. That didn't fool my friends, though. God used them to confirm that I was being abused.

One day I took my five young children to the church playground. We were alone there, and I took the sweet moments of solitude while the kids played to search the internet for help. I knew the pain that my children and I were feeling was not right, but all I could hear was my pastor's voice ringing out that God hates divorce.

I came across a sermon series on Sermon Audio about domestic abuse. It was as if God led me right to it. I looked at the title of the first sermon: "Sin of Abuse Exposed by the Light of Christ." Sin? Surely I must not be in an abusive marriage? After all, my pastor knew what was going on—he wouldn't allow sin in my marriage! Would he?

The pastor on the audio sermon opened with a prayer, asking God to allow us to see sin for what it is, to withstand false teaching. I felt immediately God telling me that what I was experiencing was indeed abuse. It was indeed sin. And I was indeed a victim of false teaching.

I eagerly listened to all the audio sermons whenever it was safe to do so. Over the next few months God used the comforting voice of this amazing pastor to lead me through God's Word. I began to find hope in the Scriptures, something I had not felt in well over a decade.

Through the Scriptures and first-person accounts the audio pastor told, I realized not only was my husband abusive, but my church was not going to help. While this realization was painful, I was comforted as God continued to open my eyes. I soon began to see that even though the church had turned their back on me, God never has and never will!

I spent the next few years still struggling with fear and guilt. I was so afraid of being outside of God's will or angering God. I frequently went back to these sermons and the Scriptures.

I finally found the strength not only to leave my abuser, but also to begin to shed the years of religious guilt that had been heaved on me. Once I was able to focus on Christ rather than my abuser and my church, I was finally able to experience Matthew 11:30— "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Today my kids and I are free from our abuser, and we have moved on to a wonderful church. While the path has not been easy, He has never ceased to be a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

It is awesome to look back and see God's hand at work, even in how I came to know the "audio pastor" that God used to lead me to see the truth of my abusive confinement.

I was introduced through the friend of a friend to a dear woman named Rebecca who was working on a book about domestic abuse. While we were together I told her of an amazing sermon series that had helped me to overcome the restrictions of false religious guilt to finally free my children and me from the bondage of abuse. As I pulled up the series, she laughed. I quickly joined her as she clued me into the fact that Jeff Crippen—the pastor I had listened to for so long—was the same man who was the author of the book she was working on! This is truly the work of an omnipotent, loving God. He knows your pain. He knows your battles. You are not alone. He is with you.

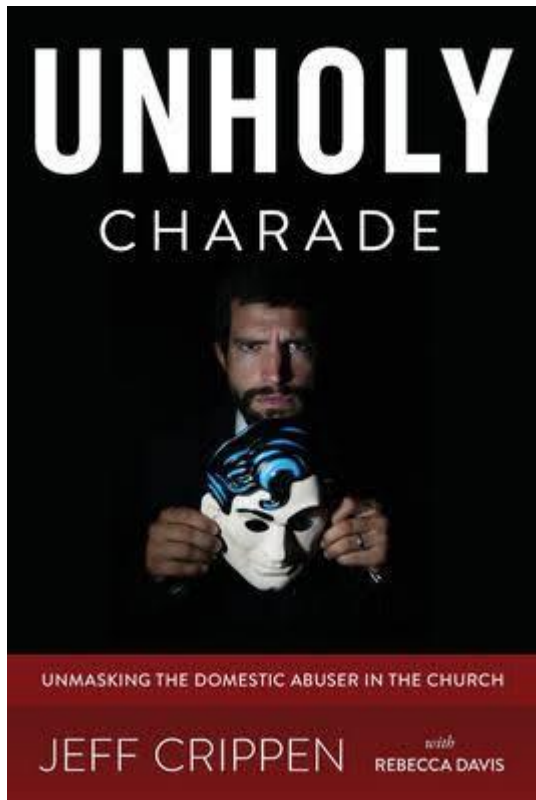
I was blessed to have been able to read this manuscript. Pastor Crippen's personal crusade to end this hidden sin within the church is like none other. God is using him in a mighty way.

The power of abusers hiding in our churches is real, and their dominance only continues to grow as we continue to turn a blind eye to their sin. Don't be fooled; this even can be hiding in your church! They

can be sitting in the pew next to you. They are wicked men. The church has become their playground and the Bible their weapon of choice. It is so important to recognize these wolves in sheep's clothing before they completely destroy the foundation of love in the church. The effects of their abuse will poison generations to come.

The Spirit-led words of this book have brought me peace and understanding. My prayer is that every church leader, elder, and abuse victim would read Pastor Crippens' erudite words. Please take time to read how these depraved minds work to destroy the beauty God has created. Learn how to help. Unmask this Unholy Charade.

His steadfast servant,
Katie Zerndt



I started reading this book on December 3, 2019. It is so powerful! I finished reading the last word on December 8, 2019. If you were to look at my copy you would see underling and stars on every page! This book is a must read for every pastor, elder, deacon, church leader, and church member.

I also encourage you to read Pastor Jeff's Blog and listen to his sermons.

If you are a victim of abuse, or even just wondering if you are, then unholycharade.com is an excellent resource for you. If you don't have a church home at this time you are welcome to watch my weekly Sunday morning sermons at lightfordarktimes.com.

And you are also welcome to email me at swordtrowel@gmail.com. I am always glad to hear your stories and help you clear away the confusing fog that abusers cast on their targets.

Pastor Jeff Crippen
swordtrowel@gmail.com

The people who are secretly practicing evil while playing the game of pretend as good Christians are the hardest and most treacherous of all abusers. When a person decides to use the mask of Christianity for his unholy charade, he commits an odious sin. (p. 20)

Even though the abuser, and possibly the church, has demanded that the abuse stay private, abuse should never be considered a private matter. The light of truth needs to shine. (p. 167)

If you remain neutral in cases of abuse, you are in effect siding with the abuser. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." (p. 179)

All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain, the victim demands action, engagement, and remembering. (p. 179)

We have living proof on film that what Pastor Jeff Crippen exposes and writes about in *UNHOLY CHARADE* does in fact happen within the Christian community in West Michigan.

Bringing a

VOICE

to the

MUZZLED ^{part}
1

WITH GUEST HEIDI WOLDHUIS

KINGDOM REEL
Podcasts



July 7, 2022

BRINGING A VOICE TO THE MUZZLED PART 1 WITH GUEST HEIDI WOLDHUIS

What is it like to be in a world where you have no voice? You have no say in the choices you make or they are very limited? What if all you've ever known since childhood gets taken away in one moment and you're left having to completely learn life all over again? Who do you turn to when you need help but the people you ask won't listen? Join us for this emotional, heart wrenching story told by Heidi of her life's journey through some incredibly hard moments. This is part 1 of a two part episode of KINGDOM REEL Podcasts. Heidi is so brave and bold in telling her story through raw, unfiltered emotion, letting God lead her words as she shared.

<https://www.kingdomreel.com/bringing-a-voice-to-the-muzzled-part-1-with-guest-heidi-woldhuis/>

Bringing a

VOICE

to the

MUZZLED

part
2

WITH GUEST HEIDI WOLDHUIS

KINGDOM | REEL
Podcasts



July 14, 2022

BRINGING A VOICE TO THE MUZZLED PART 2 WITH GUEST HEIDI WOLDHUIS

We are back for Part 2 of this powerful KINGDOM REEL Podcast Episode. Last week, Heidi shared the first part of her story of abuse, betrayal, excommunication and heartbreak. She is so determined to take a stand and help others who might be in these types of situations, she desperately wants to bring a voice to the muzzled in our world. Heidi shares the rest of her story in this second episode, which is just as heart-wrenching as the first, so make sure to grab the tissues. We end this beautiful story with a message of hope to anyone who might find themselves in any of these situations. God can use the broken hearted, the lost, the weary, the people who have been cast out and cast aside...He sees you even when it feels like no one else does! We are so thankful to Heidi for her amazing example she is setting for the whole world to see! Her strength is not found in herself, but in God and it shows!

<https://www.kingdomreel.com/bringing-a-voice-to-the-muzzled-part-2-with-guest-heidi-woldhuis/>

As Christians we are called to help end domestic abuse in our churches and in our communities.

**IN 2021 KENT COUNTY HAD 2,400 PPO'S FILED
10 DOMESTIC RELATED HOMICIDES
7 MEN, ONE BEING A 3 YR OLD BOY, 3 WOMEN**

In 2021, my friend, Troy Rienstra became the co-founder of the [Coalition to Oppose Domestic Abuse \(CODA\)](#). CODA partnered with a film company in Grand Rapids, GR MIFI & Grand Stand Pictures to create a 90 minute documentary film ("72/90") focusing on the obstacles victims face the first 90 days after separating from their abuser and the first 72 hours after serving a personal protection order (PPO) on their abuser. Documented research explains that both of these time frames possess a very dangerous opportunity for violence to turn lethal for the victim involved.

To create safer communities CODA is educating Michigan on the dangers that occur for victims while trying to leave abusive relationships. The event at Rosa Parks Circle on 10-22-2022 was the first day of filming! They invited the community to SPEAK OUT and allow their story to be heard to help change the support they offer moving forward. All testimonies taken will be included in the documentary film.



**Troy Rienstra. Co-founder / Executive Director
Dayna Sloan Bowers, Co-founder / President
Coalition to Oppose Domestic Abuse, CODA**



**Troy Rienstra interviewing Pastor John Smith
WWW.CODAMICH.COM
WWW.KINGDOMREEL.COM**

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