

“Sabbath Predators”

Posted April 19th, 2009 by David Person

My friend's voice began to break. I could almost hear her tears over the phone. She didn't want to be angry, she said. She didn't want to hate him. But she struggled with a venomous rage because he was the man who had molested her son. And her son, now years later a grown man, was dying of AIDS.

I understood the connection she was making. Her son's struggles and choices are rooted in the heinous crime that was committed against him when he was still a child. She's not naïve. The grown man made some choices he shouldn't have. And at some point, molester or not, the grown man was in complete control of his choices.

Think it's too easy for me to say since I wasn't molested as a child? You're right. It's much too easy, since I don't know what it's like to struggle through the pain, anger, guilt, and confusion that I'm sure must have pummeled him through childhood, his teen years and then as an adult. Who knows what I would have done had it been me. Maybe I would have made the same difficult, painful choices, suffered through the same mistakes.

Still, we have to talk about choices, don't we? We have to, not to be judgmental, but to encourage survival, because even after the worst happens, we have choices. We can give up and give in to the evil and its consequences, or we can look up and, by grace through faith, struggle to find a way to transcend tragic circumstances. Even when it seems there is nothing left to live for, we have to grasp onto hope, treating it as our lifeline --- because, in fact, it is our lifeline. The grown man's course was set by what happened to the child. And yet, at some point, the grown man had the autonomy and freedom to make life-changing choices.

My hope is that other grown men -- and women --- who were child victims of abuse will realize that there is help out there for them: support groups, both outside of the church and increasingly inside of it; professional counseling and therapy; prayer partners who will respect your privacy and keep your confidences; lots of good books.

I also hope that we believers will stop being naïve about the potential for evil among church-going people. The monster in this tragic, but true story was very active at a prominent SDA church in the southeastern United States. His talents gave him high visibility. I doubt anyone had a clue that the humble, likeable person they saw serving the church and worshipping God was a sexual predator, raping a child of his innocence.

I doubt my friend's pain will ever heal, but hopefully she'll find some peace despite everything that's happened to her and her son. Meanwhile, I can't help but wonder how many other young men or women are being targeted by a predator that keeps the Sabbath, proclaims his love for the Lord and says amen at the right times.

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