

# WHAT IS A GIRL WORTH?

A conversation on the Church's Abuse Crisis

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The Caring Well Initiative, which did not platform male victims in their main teachings, paralleled the same kind of thinking behind the Me Too movement's "believe women" slogan. Women who experienced sexual abuse were more qualified to advise pastors and churches on the topic of sexual abuse than were pastors who rightly understood and applied Scripture's teaching on the subject. Not only was their voice necessary for solving sexual abuse, but their stories were generally accepted without affirming the importance of verification. In the book *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused*, Caring Well contributors provided additional training in which they emphasized the importance of believing victims.

The book instructed pastors and ministry leaders to emphasize their belief in the victim's story and create a "safe space" where the victim felt believed. Leaders were to disregard "innocence until proven guilty," since it only applied in the legal realm, while instead practicing Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 13:7 that "love believes all things." According to the book, a victim may suffer more trauma from not being believed than from their actual abuse. This made reflexively believing victims a top priority.

However, in the context of 1 Corinthians 13:7, Paul was correcting the way Corinthian Christians pridefully misused their spiritual gifts by contrasting their arrogant attitudes with a spirit of love. Paul did not teach that victims had the right to be believed simply because of their stated experience or gender. Instead, he described the kind of encouraging attitude Christians should have toward each other in using their spiritual gifts. As Puritan Theologian Matthew Henry stated, "charity does by no means destroy prudence." Paul himself did not immediately believe every detail of an accusation just because it was made. Other passages warn against believing everything one is told without consideration in both the civil and ecclesiastical as well as the personal realm. Love does not compel someone to immediately believe a story simply because it came from someone claiming a victim experience. As 1 Corinthians 7:6 states, "[Love] rejoices with the truth."

