

## CHAPTER 7

# TRANSFORMATION AND HEALING

### 7.1 Introduction

The goal of counselling spousal rape victims is to assist them to move from being a victim, to being a survivor and finally, to being a victor. In my understanding (as described in Chapter 1) a victim is a woman who is at the beginning stages of her healing. At this stage, she is unaware of the severity of her injury, the accompanying reactions, and the stages of recovery that lie ahead. A survivor, on the other hand, is a woman who is on the journey to recovery and reaches a place where she can live a relatively restored life which resembles the one she knew prior to her traumatic experience. The survivor does not ever fully recover from her trauma, but rather finds a way in which to deal with it while continuing to carry her traumatic memories. The survivor becomes a conqueror when she is able to acknowledge that she has grown because of and in spite of her spousal rape trauma. This is the most effective outcome of pastoral counselling.

Psychology is generally concerned with psychopathology. This means that psychology promotes an “illness ideology” which is more directed at the presence of pathology than at how this pathology can be changed. Positive psychology on the other hand, emphasizes personal strengths and abilities. Maddux et al (2004:322) are of the opinion that illness ideology should be replaced with a positive clinical psychology which is grounded in positive psychology’s ideology of health, happiness and human strengths.

Positive psychology became a recognized school of thought in 2000, when the then president of the American Psychological Association, Martin Seligman, endorsed it. It has subsequently blossomed. Magyar-Moe (2009:1) defines positive psychology as “the scientific study of optimal human functioning”. Positive psychologists are concerned, not only with pathology, but also with balancing the management of weaknesses with the repairing of the worst things in life by building strengths (Magyar-Moe 2009:12). Positive emotions regarding the past, present and future are important. This allows the victim to attend to her immediate experience and to not be distracted by concerns regarding her past or future. The purpose of positive psychology is to complement and extend problem-focused psychology,

which has been criticised for being too focused on mental illness and giving insufficient attention to mental health. It is therefore not viewed as being in opposition to problem-focused psychology. According to Seligman (2003:127) positive psychology consists of three aspects: the pleasant life, the good life and the meaningful life. These will now be discussed briefly:

- **Pleasant life**

The pleasant life gains its perspective from the experience of satisfaction, contentment and pride, which all generate positive and present well-being. Optimism, hope and faith also influence how the present is positively engaged.

- **Good life**

The good life is more concerned with participating in pleasant activities than with emotions. It is more concerned about investing in and forming connections with work, intimate relationships and leisure activities. Individuals are not isolated, but rather have active engagements with people.

- **Meaningful life**

Seligman (2003:127) defines a meaningful life as “the use of your strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are”. In this way, individuals gain a sense of belonging to a larger group, cause, or institution and enhance their sense of self-worth and life purpose. Positive psychology is therefore not concerned with instant gratification, but rather obtaining happiness through giving.

The psychological assessments, treatments and interventions employed within the framework of positive psychology do not differ significantly from those of traditional psychology, but rather emphasise an evaluation of an individual's unique strengths and assets. There are three possible cognitive outcomes from a traumatic event such as spousal rape. Firstly, there is assimilation, where the victim's attempts to return to their way of life prior to traumatic the incident. This requires the victim to modify their existing security structures in an attempt to prevent the incident from re occurring. It frequently causes the victim to experience a sense of vulnerability and constantly being on guard against another possible future attack. The second cognitive outcome is that of negative accommodation. Negative accommodation leads to pathology that is depression, helplessness and other recognised

psychological disorders. The third outcome is that of positive accommodation. This is known as posttraumatic growth (PTG). According to Joseph and Linley (2008:14), accommodation of new trauma information will change the personality schema. This manifests in either some form of psychopathology, or in posttraumatic growth, depending on whether the information is negatively or positively accommodated.

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) therefore refers to positive psychological change which is experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. Posttraumatic growth is not simply a return to the pre-trauma baseline. Rather, it is an experience of improvement and is deeply profound for some. In other words, posttraumatic growth is the “post event adaptation that exceeds pre-event levels of functioning” (Morland et.al. 2008:57).

Growth does not occur as a direct result of trauma. It occurs as a result of an individual’s struggle with their new reality in the aftermath of trauma. This is crucial when determining the extent to which posttraumatic growth occurs. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004:408) emphasise that traumatic events produce attempts to cope. The struggle in the aftermath of the trauma and not the trauma itself produces posttraumatic growth. The study of Joseph and Linley (2006:1041), amongst others, has shown that stressful and traumatic events can lead to personal growth and positive change. These positive changes include a greater appreciation of life, a changed sense of priorities, more intimate relationships, a greater sense of personal strength, self-reliance, the recognition of new possibilities or paths for one’s life and spiritual development. Posttraumatic growth is usually characterised by the attainment of a clearer meaning and purpose in life, a closer connection with others, a greater sense of personal strength and self-reliance, as a result of confronting a difficult life event. Joseph and Linley (2008a:33) emphasise that posttraumatic growth is not subjective well-being. They put it as follows: “The concept of growth is concerned with issues of meaning, personality schema's, and relationships, all aspects of psychological well-being, rather than with positive and negative effect, or life satisfaction, which make up subjective well-being” (Joseph and Linley 2008a:33).

Posttraumatic growth does not ignore the negative consequences of a traumatic event. The goal of posttraumatic growth is not merely to promote growth, but also to help lessen the experience of posttraumatic stress. Christopher (2004:92) elaborates as follows on this goal: “Therefore, if the clinical goal of trauma treatment is to facilitate PTG rather than simply minimizing symptoms, as this perspective

suggests it should be, pharmacological intervention should be used very sparingly in the case of trauma exposure. Instead, the focus should be on assisting the patient to develop the metacognitive reconfiguration of schema needed to turn anxiety into meaning". For this reason, pastoral counsellors should not focus solely on issues relating to posttraumatic stress, but also on the available growth opportunities.

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996:468) developed the instrument, *Posttraumatic growth inventory*, and discovered that women generally have a more positive outcome after trauma than do men. This encourages pastoral counsellors to actively engage with spousal rape victims with regard to possible positive growth opportunities which may arise as a result of their traumatic experience.

Research into posttraumatic growth does not diminish the need for the study of the pathology of posttraumatic stress. The fact is that distress and growth can coexist. Morland et al. (2008:51) explain it as follows: "The seeming paradox of the coexistence of distress and growth is less problematic when one considers that the experience of a highly stressful or traumatic event is a necessary precondition for growth". This statement has implications for the growth of the spousal rape victim in a number of different areas. The pastoral counselling process can be more effective if the pastoral counsellor keeps a balance between the distress of posttraumatic stress and possible growth opportunities. Pastoral counsellors should address the spousal rape victim's symptoms of trauma and maladaptive coping strategies before they can expect to see any growth in the victim.

Pastoral counsellors can facilitate posttraumatic growth by listening carefully for instances where the spousal rape victim demonstrates signs of strength before, during and/or after the spousal rape incident. They are then able to point out, support and encourage these strengths. Trauma survivors should be encouraged to place all experiences within a developmental framework which supplements standard cognitive-behavioural therapies (Lyons 2008: 253). Morland et al. (2008:55) suggest psychotherapeutic treatment for those unable to recognise either benefits or growth. This treatment should aim at reducing emotional distress through the development of the spousal rape victim's active coping skills and the use of cognitive behavioural therapy to identify and challenge distorted thought processes.

Posttraumatic growth not only concerns the emotion of well-being. Tedeschi et al. (2007:399) explain it as follows: "PTG [posttraumatic growth] involves internal changes that can set the stage for changed behavior". Posttraumatic growth does

not take place in the absence of negative outcomes as a result of the traumatic event, but in both negative and positive experiences subsequent to the traumatic event. Posttraumatic growth takes place in three general areas:

- **Sense of self**

According to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2010:228), some individuals experience an increased sense of personal strength, changed priorities, altered life paths and an increased appreciation for life and existence subsequent to experiencing a traumatic event.

- **Relationships**

The victim's interpersonal relationships with family, friends and others who are suffering also improve (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2010:229). Victims transform their traumas into efforts to spearhead social change movements and develop greater compassion for others (Tedeschi et al 2007:401).

- **Spirituality**

In a broad understanding of spirituality, the victims reformulate their beliefs and this forces a re-examination of their assumptive world, in order to bring it into line with what they have experienced. In a narrower understanding of spirituality, as covered below, a more meaningful spiritual life is experienced (Tedeschi et al 2007).

- **Meaning**

The victims discover their own personal meaning for a situation which involved unavoidable suffering and where a general discovery of meaning through actions was simply not possible. Frankel (2006) did not regard actions as somehow superior to the fulfilment of meaning through "attitudes" or "experiential" values.

The findings of studies on sexual assault and posttraumatic growth (Frazier & Berman 2008) can be related to the focus of this study, namely spousal rape. The following findings from a study by Frazier & Berman (2008:164) are pertinent. The development of posttraumatic growth in victims of sexual assault did not take a long time to develop and victims reported "at least one positive life change". Those victims who demonstrated the lowest levels of depression and PTSD twelve months after the sexual assault were those who reported positive life changes at two weeks

after the assault, and maintained those changes over time. Survivors who reported the highest levels of depression and PTSD were those who “never reported positive life changes” (Frazier & Berman 2008:169). This suggests that pastoral counsellors can assist the spousal rape victim if they listen for posttraumatic growth, even shortly after the traumatic event. The pastoral counsellor may further assist the victim, by encouraging her to reframe her traumatic events or to “find or create benefits out of traumatic events” (Frazier & Berman 2008:175).

A negative consequence of focusing solely on psychological treatment for the spousal rape victim is that other aspects of the victim’s experience are ignored. Her inner strength, faith and social and familial support systems are sometimes not considered. According to Briggs et al. (2012:80) pathologising normal trauma reactions has the potential to reduce the resilience of the trauma victim and promote a stigma associated with psychiatric diagnoses. Lamb (1999:111) is of the opinion that victims are prevented from growing and coping when they are diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. According to him, treating the victim symptomatically results in the strong notion of her being “damaged goods”. Long term therapy is usually employed to treat individuals who have been diagnosed with PTSD. This implies that the spousal rape victim is not expected to recover within a short period of time. Lamb (1999:114) therefore blames the victim’s extended suffering on professional therapeutic intervention.

Even in the face of a traumatic event such as spousal rape, the victim's resilience factors should be identified and tapped into. Keane & Miller (2012:57) define resilience “as a multivariate concept that covers genetic, psychobiological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, cultural, and social components” (cf. Friedman 2011:5; Okasha 2011:273; Salehinezhad 2012:476; King et al 2012: 336;). The key factors of resilience include the ability to recover from stressful situation quickly, a sense of family support and a sense of social connectedness. Therefore the spousal rape victim's personal beliefs, social and familial support systems and available resources all influence her resilience. There are a number of factors that influence resilience: intelligence, temperament, the quality of family relationships, the existence of external support from other persons, age, gender, self-enchantment bias and ethnic minority status (see Okasha 2011:273; King et al. 2012:337).

Resilience is an interactive concept and is differentiated from positive mental health (see Herman 2011:80). In addition, resilience is distinguished from

Posttraumatic Growth because resilience is related to the lack of change in functioning while Posttraumatic Growth denotes an improvement and positive change in personal characteristics (see Okasha 2011:273). Lilienfeld (2009), while sceptical concerning positive psychology, did suggest “a better understanding of resilience and the factors that buffer people from developing psychopathology in the face of stressors will prove to be among positive psychology's more enduring - and valuable - contributions”.

One of the key ways minimising psychopathology with regard to traumatic events is by the fostering of resilience factors (see March et al. 2011:270). Therefore, prior to the onset of traumatic events the church and pastoral counsellors can greatly influence the resilience of their members and community by addressing issues of personal growth, healthy family life and cohesive communities.

Psychological research demonstrates a connection between religion, posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic growth (see Keener 2007). According to Tedeschi and Colhoun (2010:228), this connection is beneficial because posttraumatic growth is commonly reported in the spiritual and existential domains. One of the reasons which could account for this is that religious beliefs offer a useful framework from which meaning and strength may be gained. This is the view of a number of studies (see Joseph & Linley 2006; McGrath 2008; Loewenthal 2010; DeMarinis 2010). Religion, religious beliefs, and religious believers all differ greatly. In addition, the degree to which people are religious and the way in which they express their religiosity vary from person to person. It is therefore necessary to understand the various recognised religious orientations (cf. Hood et al 2009:411). They are the following:

- **Quest religious orientation**

This religious outlook is open-ended and assumes that there is not only one way to God. Baston and Schoenrade (1991:430) explain, “Religion, as quest, involves openly facing complex, existential questions (questions of life's meaning, of death, and of relations with others) and resisting clear-cut, pat answers”. Quest orientation then describes individuals who have questions concerning matters of religion and therefore are not committed to any particular religion. While this religious orientation falls outside of the scope of this study, it is important to note that it has positive and negative implications for posttraumatic growth. The readiness to face existential

questions and openness to religious change is considered to be positive. The lack of a strong faith in God is however considered to be negative (Shaw 2003:8).

Allport and Ross (1967) developed a theory of *religious orientation*. Their research considered the internal motivation for religiosity as well as the external motivation which meant the external receiving of rewards. The differences are known as Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation respectively.

- **Extrinsic religious orientation**

Those who align themselves to this religious orientation may identify themselves with a particular religion; however their level of commitment to this religion is low.

According to Whitley and Kite (2009:257), people with an extrinsic religious orientation, “use religion as a way to gain nonreligious goals”. Individuals, who hold to this view, give little attention to religious teaching and they align themselves with the worldview of society. They therefore use their religion for their own ends, whether this is social interaction, self-justification or other personal needs. Allport and Ross (1967:434) identify those with this religious orientation as being those who “turn to God, but without turning away from self”.

- **Intrinsic religious orientation**

Intrinsic religious orientation can be found in believers who have a deep faith and a personal relationship with God. Allport and Ross (1996:434) emphasise that these Christians believe for the sake of their faith and try to live in accordance with Christian teachings (cf. Whitley & Kite 2009). They regard their faith as having ultimate significance and are willing to sacrifice their own needs for the sake of their faith. According to Kahoe 1985:410), “having embraced a creed, the individual endeavours to internalize it and follow it fully”. She notes that men with this orientation are tender-minded, dependent and sensitive, while women with this orientation present as conscientious, persevering and rule-bound. Kahoe (1985:411) also found that both the men and women in the research study had significant correlation with being “venturesome, socially bold, uninhibited, and spontaneous”.

With regard to posttraumatic growth Richards and Bergin (2005:220) note that “religious intrinsicness or devoutness has usually been found to be associated with better physical health, social adjustment, and emotional well-being”. In terms of the three posttraumatic growth orientations, Shaw et al. (2005:7) explain:

Although religious participation per se seems to have some benefit, perhaps because it may lead to increased social support, what seems to be most important are the more intrinsic aspects of religiosity and spirituality because of the sense of meaning, purpose, and coherence that these may provide for people. It is these aspects that can develop following trauma and which in turn can help people to grow.

While it would seem that Christians, who had hold to an intrinsic view of their faith are most likely to experience posttraumatic growth as a result of their traumatic event, it ultimately depends upon the individual's unique outlook on life and his/her perception of the traumatic event.

- **Negative view**

If the spousal rape victim has interpreted the traumatic event in a negative manner, it may result in her core religious beliefs being threatened and her experiencing doubt. The victim could feel as though she has been abandoned by God and that God is no longer trustworthy, or even exists. Nevertheless, this does not mean that posttraumatic growth cannot result in such situation. Mahoney et.al (2008:118) believe that individuals who have experienced trauma also suffer spiritually. However the same trauma and struggles can also contribute to long-term psychological and spiritual growth, depending on their individual perceptions.

- **Positive view**

If the spousal rape victim perceives God as loving and supportive, then her relationship with God will remain secure. She believes that God is with her in her struggles and wants to assist her. Mahoney et.al. (2008:105) note that victims often believe they have experienced the most psychological, social and spiritual growth when they have engaged in spiritual disciplines, connected to supportive fellow believers, and have an on-going relationship with God.

The pastoral counsellor has an opportunity to assist the spousal rape victim to develop posttraumatic growth by assessing her spiritual frame of reference. This will include any particular spiritual struggles she may be experiencing because of the

trauma. The pastoral counsellor may also identify adaptive spiritual coping methods that the victim may have previously applied in order to cope with trauma.

This study develops an integrative approach to pastoral counselling with a spousal rape victim. This integrative approach commences from the moment the pastoral counsellor is made aware of the woman's situation and addresses her immediate requirements at that time. It considers the psychological symptoms related to posttraumatic stress and how the pastoral counsellors deal with these symptoms. It also considers the challenges and threats to the spousal rape victim's world view and schema (which include a possible 'faith crisis'). The integrative approach works through the victim's various relationships and even her relationship with the pastoral counsellor. Pastoral counsellors are exposed to some risks as they work with victims of spousal rape. This chapter explores what is needed for a spousal rape victim to develop from being a victim to being victorious especially with regard to her spirituality.

## 7.2 Spirituality in integrative pastoral counselling

The insights of this study with regard to spirituality, the role of Scripture, and the limitations of existing counselling models are applied to the integrative counselling model. The aim is the transformation and healing of women who were traumatised by spousal rape. Positive psychology is useful in the quest for women who have been raped by their husbands to not only become functional human beings again, but to also be happy and fulfilled members of society. This not only means that the schema of "victim" should be altered, but also their sense of self and general feelings of well-being. This will enable them to become victors in spite of, and even in some instances, because of, their traumatic experience. Studies in posttraumatic growth have indicated that some people who have experienced traumatic incidents demonstrate psychological, social and spiritual growth as they struggle with the aftermath of the traumatic event (see Linley & Joseph 2004; Magyar-Moe 2009). Pastoral counsellors can use the powerful resource of faith in their approach to healing. They are not limited to the use of psychological intervention techniques.

I align myself to the traditions and beliefs of Conservative Evangelicalism, therefore this study was developed on the premise that the teaching of the Christian faith is the exclusive truth and that the God of the Christian faith is the only God.

Christianity is therefore not merely a religion among others, but rather is the only means by which to have access to the one God. A pastoral counsellor is this tradition therefore seeks to apply the truth of the Scriptures and the resources of faith to guide the transformation from spousal rape victim to victor through the work and person of Jesus Christ.

Though the subject of theodicy was dealt with earlier, it is now necessary to focus specifically on its role in and relevance to the growth of the traumatised person.

## 7.3 Overcoming suffering

### 7.3.1 Introduction

In a broad sense, suffering is bearing of pain, either physically or emotionally. Cooper-White (2012:25) for healing to take place, the relationship between pain and suffering should be understood. Pain occurs due to hurt which an individual has experienced and which occupies the inner being of that individual. In order for healing to begin, pain should come to expression. The expression of pain is called suffering. Suffering has an element of time to it: what has happened, what is happening and what is going to happen. The manner in which suffering is addressed will influence this “suffering-time” relationship.

In contemporary society and in the church of today pain and suffering are generally thought of as something to be avoided. The Scriptures record that Jesus suffered and that humankind benefited from his suffering. Feminists also see Jesus as the redeemer of women in this regard (see Reuther 1998).

Evangelicals connect the suffering of Jesus with the doctrine of substitutionary atonement (Carson 2004). Hebrews (2:10) articulate the value of Jesus' suffering as follows: “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering”. Jesus suffered not only at His passion, but also throughout His life. The issue of Jesus' perfection as both man and God is not in question in this passage. Marshall (2008:26) explains that while Jesus was perfect, He still experienced human suffering. Jesus is therefore fully qualified to be the Saviour of humankind. This is due to the fact that His suffering became the means of humankind's salvation.

Jesus is able to fully identify with all who suffer, due to the fact that He himself endured suffering.

The Scriptures also speak much of the suffering of the saints. While it may be difficult to understand why the saints suffered as they did, the Scriptures focus on how they dealt with the suffering they endured. Their suffering was not only that of persecution and the threat of death, but also included various kinds of trials that saw them being excluded from their families, losing their jobs, being mocked and generally being ill-treated. In most cases, the saints suffered these hardships as a direct result of their confession of the Christian faith. In some cases, the suffering of God's people was a test to prove their faithfulness (Job) or related to their discipline. Hebrews (12:7) encourages Christ's followers to "endure hardship as discipline". Bridges (2006:228) comments regarding this passage that hardship as a discipline "is imposed on us by God as a means of spiritual growth". The Scriptures teach believers how they should deal with hardships irrespective of their reason for suffering which is often unknown to them. The Scriptures also give insight either into the growth that is possible as a result of and in spite of suffering, however. According to Marshall (2008:3), suffering can be positive when the sufferers perceives themselves as having gained something valuable subsequent to, and as a result of, their suffering. The apostle Paul, who was no stranger to suffering, expressed his struggles and triumphs, as well as their positive outcomes. He also taught about how to deal with suffering and the growth that is able to come from it.

Growth through suffering cannot be comprehended until there is a belief that God is sovereign. According to Norman (2009:249) "God is ultimately in control of every event that occurs upon the earth". The believer may not know where the difficult circumstances originated with human evil, Satan, God, or the mistakes of the person him or herself but can see suffering as an ultimate opportunity for God to bring glory to God-self. The Westminster Shorter Catechism which was written in 1640 echoes the belief "that the chief aim of man is to glory God and enjoy Him forever" (see Hee 2002:1). This enables suffering to be seen as ultimately beneficial to the person.

The apostle Peter is even more explicit concerning suffering when he declares that suffering is a blessing: "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed" (1 Pet 3:14). Scripture indicates that suffering results in the following gains:

- **Sanctification**

Sanctification is the process by which God makes the believer progressively more holy. According to Carson (1990:70), the primary form of suffering in the Bible is that which is imposed by God and is therefore unique to God's people. Stott (2006:308, 309) develops the idea of God using suffering as a means of sanctifying believers. He highlights three Biblical metaphors: Firstly, that of a father disciplining his children; secondly, that of a metalworker refining a piece of metal, and thirdly, that of a gardener pruning his vine. Suffering is a form of discipline which encourages the believer to become obedient to the Heavenly Father. Other Scriptural passages echo this idea of a loving father disciplining His children in their best interest (1Cor 11:28-32; 5:1-5, Heb 5:5-1). Hebrews (12:11) states: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness". Suffering through discipline not only develops sanctification, but also reinforces that believer are true children of God. God loves them enough to discipline them (Heb 12:8). Almy (2000:59) explains sanctification as follows:

Sanctification in an ongoing process of change is the life of the believer. It is the psychotherapists' role to assist victims to develop self-mastery over their problems, and there are times when this is necessary. However, the work of sanctification is God's progressive work in the believer. Therefore, sanctification is not dependent upon the believer's self-empowerment, self-actualization or self-cure.

- **Refining faith**

Scripture makes use of the metaphor of a refiner's fire, through which God refines the faith of God's people. In the Old Testament (Isa 1:25; Jer 6:27-30; Eze 22:18-22; Ps 66:10) this refining process led the people of God to positively change their thinking and their behaviour. In the New Testament, the apostle Peter (1 Pet 1:6-7) also uses the imagery of the refiner's "fire of affliction" for the lives of believers. According to Stibb & Walls (1983:78), the image of the metal gold in the above passage is used to signify the value of this commodity as compared to others. In God's sight, the faith of the believer is of even greater value. God therefore makes use of refining trials in order to demonstrate the existence of true faith. The gain for

the believer is that their faith is proved genuine when they have endured the adversity of refinement.

- **Humility**

Humility is often associated with self-deprecation, humiliation and inferiority. For the spousal rape victim, these may be the dominant characteristics of her sense of self. According to Reid (1995:469), the humility of Jesus is illustrative of the transformation that takes place in the life of the believer. Jesus' humility does not fit the above description of humility. Jesus was certainly of humble origins, but He was never without authority and dignity. Crosby's (2011:40) understands humility in the Bible as abandoning one's own sense of control and anxiety and having a fully confident faith in God. The apostle Paul (2Cor 12:10b) states "For when I am weak, then I am strong", with reference to his "thorn in the flesh". When believers endure suffering, God is their source of strength. This was demonstrated in the person and deeds of Jesus. He relied completely on God and the Spirit. Jesus, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, was able to display God's glory in His humility. According to Burridge (2007:97), believers should be ready to imitate Jesus in this respect. Pui-Lan (2005:547) also considers an attitude of humility, amongst others, to be necessary in order for Christian spirituality to be "enlivened and rejuvenated".

- **Dependence on God**

At times, through suffering, believers learn to trust in God's ability, power and provision instead of their own strength. In his Letter to the Philippians (3:8) the apostle Paul uses strong language to explain his previous dependence upon things and his new-found dependence upon God.

The spousal rape victim could experience this dependence upon God, particularly if all other resources have been depleted. Heitritter and Vought (2006:126) state the following in their work about counselling victims of sexual abuse: "Accepting one's powerlessness lays a foundation for restorative dependence on God, and the movement toward healing begins with restoration of personal worth". In a bizarre way, this implies that powerless spousal rape victims are more able to rely upon God than are believers who are not powerless. Secondly, the transfer of reliance to God is the foundational source from which the spousal rape victim could gain a sense of personal worth (Heitritter and Vought 2006:126). When

believers have either given up all to gain knowledge of Christ (Phil 3:8), or have had everything taken away from them, at times violently, they are more able to fully depend upon God and thereby gain something of true value.

- **Perseverance**

Suffering is linked to perseverance in a number of Scriptural passages (Rom 5:3-4, James 1:2-4). In Hebrews 12:1, the believer is encouraged to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us”. The danger is that this can lead to “humanistic self-reliance” (Field 1995:657). Believers can attempt to persevere through difficulty by relying on their own strength and resources. Believers should therefore rather learn to persevere through spiritual lethargy (Field 1995:657). The spousal rape victim is to rely upon God and to persevere in her relationship with God.

- **Identification with Christ**

In Romans 8:17 the apostle Paul claims that believers are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ because they are God’s children. The word “heir” refers to the position of privilege the believer occupies as a member of God’s “family”. According to Morris (1988:317), the term “heir” denotes full possession of son-ship, not so much in the sense of ownership, but rather in relationship. Heir-ship appears to be validated by suffering. According to Marshall (2008:33), suffering was a means by which Paul could identify with Christ (2Cor 4:10). If believers are to be co-heirs with Christ, then they should be prepared to identify with Him in His suffering. The believer’s suffering is therefore not without value.

- **Comforting others**

Believers are often able to minister to others at times as a direct result of their own suffering. It is not merely the common experience of suffering that qualifies believers to minister to others. Rather, it is the comfort believers received during their own suffering that makes it possible for them to comfort others. Hauerwas (2004:88) quotes one of his readers who felt that suffering was not the primary function of a Christian. A believer should learn to bear suffering patiently. This benefits not only the believer, but also those with whom he or she comes into contact and who are seeking comfort. Pastoral counsellors should not force a teleological pattern onto a spousal rape victim during the counselling process. The spousal rape victim should

be sufficiently healed and willing, before she is ready to assist others. Failure to achieve this goal would be destructive to all parties involved. Nevertheless, the “wounded helper” is best able to assist other wounded persons (2Cor:1:3-5). This assistance is accompanied by the promise that the God of all comfort will not only comfort the spousal rape victim, but also enable her to use her suffering for a higher good. The victim will therefore be enabled to allocate meaning to her suffering and view it from an alternative perspective of value.

- **Joy**

A number of Scriptural passages link suffering to joy (1Pe 4:13-19; Acts 5:41-42; Matt 5:11-14). The apostle Paul (2Cor 12:10) expresses joy in his “in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties”. His joy lies in his relationship with God and is not determined by circumstances. The concept of Biblical joy being linked to suffering (1Pe 4:13-19) is foreign to human society and frequently even to believers, because it seems nonsensical and paradoxical to experience joy while suffering. This subject has intrigued ancient and modern theologians alike. Moltmann (2002:17) explains that one is able to joyfully acknowledge and accept one’s circumstances while suffering, because of the believer’s expectation and hope. Joy is therefore experienced as a result of viewing one’s suffering in the context of faith.

- **Confirmation of faith**

According to Piper (1995:347), one of the major outcomes for believers who suffer is that their faith can become more fully developed and strong. Carson (1990:79) states emphatically that faith is not fully developed until it is tested by suffering. The positive outcome of suffering is that the believer’s faith is proven to be genuine. This has implications for the believer’s spirituality.

- **Hope**

The Scriptural concept of hope is grounded in future certainty. Jürgen Moltmann (2002) has developed a theology of hope. He sees hope as an expectation of the promises of God that are believed by faith. Hope therefore differs from positive thinking in that it rests upon a reliable external source – God. Hope is connected to the future and is directed by what is invisible. There is a close relationship between hope and faith. According to Moltmann (2002:6), faith is obviously central to the

Christian life, but hope is of equal importance. Without faith, hope is an ungrounded ideal. Hope finds its true meaning in Christ and His future.

Christian hope has distinguishing features that differ from that of utopian hope. Firstly, Christian hope is strongly connected to suffering. The apostle Paul (Rom 5:3) explains that hope is developed through suffering. To possess hope does not signify the end of hardships, or the escape from difficulties. Rather, it means that comfort and strength will be derived from God's promise of having overcome the world and its suffering. Moltmann (2002:7) elaborates as follows on this idea: "Christian hope finds in Christ not only a consolation *in* suffering, but also the protest of the divine promise *against* suffering". According to Moltamnn (2002:7), presumption, despair and acquiescence are the enemies of hope. Presumption results from the past, which the individual cannot change and despair results from concern about the future, which the individual is again powerless to control. Acquiescence is however the most damaging to hope, because the present is approached with passivity. If the pastoral counsellor is able to identify the elements opposing the hope and ultimately the faith of the spousal rape victim, then steps can be taken to rectify the problem. The spousal rape victim will then be able to understand and experience hope and rely on the trustworthy promises of God. De Villiers (2005:3) notes that victims can development a learned hopelessness if the pastoral counsellor is ineffective. Pastoral counsellors should realise the enormity of the impact they have on people's spiritual growth and psychological well-being. The role of the pastoral counsellor is that of an agent of hope (Capps 2001), who encourages the development of the spousal rape victim's patience and trust and allows her to feel safe and contained. Then personal growth can take place. Patience is necessary to keep hope alive. One of the definitions of patience is "quiet, steady perseverance" (Dictionary.com. 2011). In order persevere people who seek help require a solid, long term counselling relationship. Secondly, trust contains an element of confident expectation. This implies that trust and hope are connected to the future. The consistency and reliability of the pastoral counsellor will instill a sense of trust in the spousal rape victim. This trust extends to counselling confidentiality and should be directed by the one in whom the pastoral counsellor trusts, namely God. According to Donald Capps (2001:161-162), hope is instilled when one sees the repetitive and continued faithfulness of God, despite the fact that not most or all of one's desires are met.

- **Wisdom**

In order to experience happiness, wisdom is required and in order to acquire wisdom, suffering is necessary (Kreeft and Tacelli 2010:54). Wisdom is insight gained through suffering, which in turn helps people to deal effectively with suffering. However, wisdom is not automatically gained from suffering. It can also not be obtained from the personal strength of a victim (cf. McArthur 1995:148).

The idea of wisdom resulting from suffering is not new. Hogan (1984:43), in his commentary of Greek tragedies, notes that Aeschylus used the term “learning through suffering” and that “wisdom from suffering seems more honored in word than action”. The apostle James (1:5) seems to take a different view to this and encourages his readers to seek wisdom in the light of the trials they are facing. This wisdom will “enable them to discern God’s purpose in times of testing” (Sailhamer 1995: 897).

- **Suffering broadens ministry**

According to Marshall (2008:34) the suffering of the apostle Paul’s suffering had a direct positive effect on others and their faith in God. The apostle Paul himself put it as follows: “Death is at work in us, but life is at work in you” (2Cor 4:12). This implies that his sacrifice for the ministry had borne spiritual fruit in the development of other believers. Piper (2007), in his address to the students at Wheaton College, encouraged them, “We don’t kill to extend our cause but we die to extend our cause”. The call is then for believers to be prepared to suffer for the furtherance of God’s Kingdom. Christians will affect their churches and wider communities by being willing to suffer for Christ and by demonstrating their ability to endure such suffering. This is great gain and gives benefit to the concept of the “wounded healer”.

Suffering therefore has meaning, value and purpose and believers can expect to encounter it on their spiritual journey. This expectation is expressed by different people in the Scriptures, Jesus (Matt. 10:22), Paul (Acts 14:21-22; Phil. 1:29-30; 2 Tim. 3:12) and Peter (1 Pe 4:12-13). This does not imply that the believer should seek out and deliberately create suffering. Suffering in and of itself has no value. Correspondingly, believers need not try and avoid suffering at all costs. They could try and avoid suffering, as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:42), but like Jesus, they should also be prepared to endure suffering in accordance with God’s will.

It is important to note that suffering does not automatically result in a positive outcome for the believer. It has the ability to either destroy or develop the believer's faith and it is for this reason that the pastoral counsellor should gently guide, direct, encourage (and at times) teach the truths of Scripture to the spousal rape victim. This will encourage the victim's faith to mature and she will be able to integrate her scriptural knowledge with her personal experience. Believers should not be taken by surprise when suffering occurs. This honest motives and an attitude of courage suffering, which is part of life, can be faced in faith.

### 7.3.2 Imitating Jesus

Imitation can be understood as mimicking the behaviour and mannerisms of another. While there are dangers associated with imitating others, Richard Burridge (2007) suggests that there is value to imitating Jesus. He comments that the purpose of the gospel is to invite persons to imitate the "words and deeds" of Jesus. The central thesis of his book, *Imitating Jesus*, is that, "according to the biographical hypothesis, the genre of the gospels means taking Jesus' deeds as seriously as his words - or even more so" (Burridge 2007:179). The call to be imitators of Jesus is not only made throughout the four gospels (each author emphasises different aspects of imitating Jesus), but also by the apostle Paul (1 Cor 11:1). This is a call to discipleship and following Jesus within the context of a community of learners. The believer is called to imitate the humility of Jesus, His love and concern for others and the self-giving that was so evident in His life and teachings. Burridge (2007:220) explains it as follows: "Matthew's Christology is constantly concerned to depict Jesus as the truly righteous interpreter of the law in all his teaching, especially ethics, as well as in his deeds". Watson (2010:336) also emphasizes that the gospel message not only contains explicit ethical instruction, but also focuses on Jesus' praiseworthy deeds. Jesus is presented as the friend of sinners throughout the Bible. This translates into a community of acceptance and love. The spousal rape victim has access to this loving community of Jesus, who is able to "be Jesus to her" in every loving way. The pastoral counsellor is also a member of this church community and should be "imitating Jesus" when engaging with the spousal rape victim.

However, Jonathan Draper (2009:2) emphasises that there should also be an aspect of justice in the imitation of Jesus, as love and justice cannot be separated. He links justice to theodicy and notes that, if God loves, God cannot allow believers

to suffer to no end. Justice will consequently be meted out in society. It is especially encouraging for the spousal rape victim to know that God will ensure that justice is obtained. She can confidently rely on this with certainty. The idea of justice can also empower her to utilise the appropriate legal channels and resources available to her.

Some Biblical authors and more particularly Luke, emphasise that Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit. His miraculous deeds were made possible because of this empowerment. Believers are only able to imitate Jesus if they rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit will live a life that imitates Jesus. Spousal rape victims who are empowered by the Holy Spirit are also enabled to imitate Jesus in terms of forgiving like Jesus forgave, experiencing joy as Jesus did and having intimacy with God and others as Jesus did. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is manifest in the person of Jesus. The spousal rape victim is able to live a victorious life through the comfort and enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **7.4 Overcoming the abuse of power**

The issue of the abuse of power is critical to any discussion on spousal rape. Power is a complex phenomenon where individual, social, institutional and religious aspects are relevant. The philosopher who is best known for his work on power is Michael Foucault. According to Mills (2003:34), Foucault focuses more on resistance to the presence of power than on the oppression of the masses. Foucault (1990:38) uses the term “power relations” as a means of explaining the manner in which power relationships exist and present in the areas of family, institutions or administration. In other words, Foucault examines the way in which power relations function in day-to-day relationships between people, and also in how people relate to institutions. The institution of marriage will then also be relevant in this regard. Practical theologian James Poling (1991:24) also focuses on the relational aspect of power and notes the danger of thinking that power is to have “a one-way effect on others”.

A woman who is the victim of power abuse in her marriage can only afford to resist if she has access to emotional, physical or material resources. In many cases however, these resources are not available and she has no other option than to desist from resistance. Many abusive men isolate their spouses from friends and family and perpetrate various forms of abuse – emotional, financial, physical and sexual in conjunction. This lowers the woman’s ability to resist the abuse even more.

According to Poling (1991:133), the abuse of power raises a theological problem. From a Christian perspective, power emanates from God who delegates it to individuals in the form of authority or office (Eph 1:19). He also emphasizes that sin causes suffering and this leads to the abuse and distortion of power in individuals and societies (see Poling 1991:133). God-given power should be utilised and implemented with caution. In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus says that true power is found in servanthood. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 Paul equates weakness with power. "I [Paul] will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me". For Christians, power should not be about domination or oppression, nor should it be about resistance and struggle. This constitutes a distorted perspective on power.

The victim of spousal rape can be comforted by the knowledge that biblical references to suffering do not only relate to persecution, but also to various forms of struggles, such as difficulties, hardships and traumatic events (James 1:2). Brueggemann (1984:51, 52) demonstrates how the book of Psalms, and more especially the lament psalms, could be of value to people who suffer. The Christian community has often ignored these Psalms because, says Brueggemann (1984:51), their faith does not seek to acknowledge or embrace anything negative. This has resulted in worship and even faith speech that avoid any form of negativity which could be perceived as a lack of faith in God. However, quite the opposite is true. The lament psalms indicate that such experiences have a significant place before the sovereign God. Brueggemann (1984:52) elaborates that everything should be brought to God "who is the final reference for all of life". The normalising of negative experiences, the verbal expression of such experiences in the Christian community and the liberty to corporately bring them before God, will be of great significance to the spousal rape victim and will bring her into communion with God and others. For Hauerwas (2004:82) the lament Psalms create word pictures for the expression of silent suffering. They not only provide an opportunity for cathartic release, but also for sharing one's suffering with supportive co-worshippers. The victim is therefore able to acknowledge the injustice of the event with others. This is not always an easy task, however. It requires raw honesty before God and a willingness to face the emotion of the traumatic event in public – even if the details of the event itself are not made known.

One of the most effective ways for a victim to recover and grow beyond who she previously was is to have someone who can relate to the difficulties she is currently experiencing. No human person can fully relate to her feelings and experience. However, there is One who knows every detail, every thought and feeling. That person is Jesus. He not only knows intellectually, but also experientially. This is because He suffered trauma, mocking (cf. Mat 27:29; Mark 15:32; Luke 22:63), injustice (Acts 8:33) and a traumatic death (Phil 2:8). The author of Hebrews puts it as follows (Heb 4:15): “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are”.

It is not the intent of this study to suggest that spousal rape falls within the will of God. No one knows the mind of God and one can therefore not speculate. Peter writes to those who are suffering “various kinds of trials” (1Pet 1:7) and notes that it is better, if it is God’s will, “to suffer for doing good than for doing wrong” (1 Pet 3:17). Peter calls the suffering person “blessed” (1 Pet 3:14). The spousal rape victim therefore “can approach the throne of grace with confidence” (Heb 4:16), in order that she may “receive mercy and find grace” to help her in “our time of need” (Heb 4:16). In Genesis 50:20, Joseph, who experienced abuse and an attempt on his life by his own brothers, told them years later: “What you intended for me was evil, but God used it for good and the saving of many lives”. Suffering is not beyond the goodness of a sovereign God who is able to use the victim’s suffering for her and others’ good.

This study does not condone or excuse the actions of the perpetrator of spousal rape. Neither does it suggest that the spousal rape victim should remain in her abusive situation and helplessly endure suffering as “God’s will for her life”. There is no doubt that the victim should seek safety and a means of terminating the abuse. The perpetrator cannot be permitted to continually sin, in order for the victim’s sanctification to develop. God requires justice to take its course and has set social justice structures in place to this end. Justice systems, however, often fail victims of rape and especially of spousal rape. Nevertheless, the spousal rape victim can take comfort in the knowledge that nothing escapes God who will see that justice is ultimately carried out to its fullest extent (cf. Aikman 2006:247).

The Scriptures can assist the pastoral counsellor in guiding the spousal rape victim to the reality that she is able to be emancipated from the label of “victim” and

to live a life that is expressed in joy, contentment, hope, fulfillment, growth and purpose, through the enabling power of God. Romans (8:37) states that believers are “more than conquerors”. This is the message for the spousal rape victim who is a believer. It does not imply a form of Christianity that lives a triumphant life with no regard to the problematic issues of doubt and discouragement. Rather, being “more than conquerors” means that believers have the full assurance of God’s presence, involvement and empowerment in the midst of their struggles and problems. One of the consequences of spousal rape is a sense of mistrust and abandonment. In Romans 8:35-37, the apostle Paul asks who could separate believers from the love of Christ. He concludes that *nothing* is ever able to separate the believer from the love of Christ. Not only are the believer and Christ’s love inseparable, but the believer is also able to be “more than conquerors through him who loved us” during times of trial (Rom 8:37). The victim of spousal rape is able to obtain hope and the promise of change from the Scripture: "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Cor 15:57). This victory could translate into deliverance from a current situation of hardship, though this might not always be the case. Once the spousal rape victim is able to confidently place her trust in God, she may be able to say with Habakkuk (3:17, 19):

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.

## 7.5 Spiritual healing

Spousal rape victims require multifaceted assistance which includes individual care and therapy, community involvement, mentorship programmes, gender-sensitive counselling and theological perspectives, amongst others. An integrative approach assists the spousal rape victim to progress from a state of victim to that of victor. The victim’s spiritual regeneration is only made possible through the intervention, power and wisdom of God. This has positive implications for her coping skills, self-esteem

and emotional health. Nevertheless, an understanding and utilization of psychological principles and techniques are useful. Much psychological research has been undertaken on the issue of trauma and it is prudent for pastoral counsellors to take cognizance of this work. However, from a Conservative Evangelical perspective it is of the essence that the use of psychological theory and the application of psychological methods and techniques should always be undertaken by looking through the lens of Scripture. In the same way, it is useful for pastoral counsellors to keep abreast of current research (by the feminist theologians and social action groups, among others) which has contributed to the fight against spousal rape. Here too, for Conservative Evangelicals, the Scriptures should be the lens through which all research and writings should be perused, integrated and applied.

The process of assisting the spousal rape victim to transform to victor is an intense, prolonged and emotionally demanding one. This requires time, commitment and sacrifice on the part of the pastoral counsellor. The outcome is however well worth it. Any pastoral counsellor who is up for this challenge should be aware of what the helping process entails and be prepared to be consistent, reliable, self-aware, tenacious and committed. In 1 Corinthians 15:58 the apostle Paul instructs:

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.