A Story of Abuse within the Church

(Based on a true story published in the Washington Post, April 2, 2011

A youth director at a large suburban church privately deceptively convinced several girls in the youth group that he was in love with them, saying to each that he wanted to marry her, convincing her to keep their relationship secret, and then gradually increasing sexual contact with each girl, stealing private moments with her as she grew older. He quoted scripture to each girl, convincing her the relationship was ok.

When one of the girl’s parent became aware of and reported what was happening to her daughter to Child Protective Services, the youth director was publicly accused and forced to resign. He pleaded guilty to abusing that girl and charged guilty of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. However, nether public agents nor the church officials asked sufficient questions. The remaining girls who were involved remained silent, fearing disapproval. Some members of the church community were vocal in supporte of the youth director in court. They loaned him money, and suggested that the young girl seduced him.

The youth director moved to a different state.

Five years later, a new associate pastor, sensing malaise and divisiveness in the congregation, sought to correct the damage. It was only then that the church community began to learn the full story of what was happening in the lives of their youth five years earlier.

In your small groups, consider these questions:

Who was the abuser(s) in that story?

Who contributed to the abuse?

Who were the victims?

Who protected the victims?

Who interfered with efforts to protect the victims?

Who suffered?

Who participated in healing?