

Do Elders have child abuse victims confront the accused molester in the same room? Is this done alone, or with others in the room? Do Elders require child abuse victims to follow Matthew 18:15?

New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (Published in 1984):

Matthew 18:15: "Moreover, if your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

SPIEGEL ONLINE Germany News, June 12, 2002 :

John Robert (J.R.) Brown, director of the office of Public Information at the home office in Brooklyn , rejects what Bowen says. Brown states they do not [have the] molested child confront the accused in the presence of parents and three elders.

Official Watchtower Society JW-Media.org Statement, May 2002:

When any one of Jehovah's Witnesses is accused of an act of child abuse, the local congregation elders are expected to investigate. Two elders meet separately with the accused and the acc user to see what each says on the matter. If the accused denies the charge, the two elders may arrange for him and the victim to restate their position in each other's presence, with elders also there. If during that meeting the accused still denies the charges and there are no others who can substantiate them, the elders cannot take action within the congregation at that time.

Quotes from The Watchtower, November 1, 1995 Issue, which is available Online at http://www.watchtower.org/library/w/1995/11/1a/article_01.htm

Sometimes one may feel that a relative or a member of one's immediate family is involved [in sexually abusing them]. Remember the dubious nature of some "repressed memories" when it comes to identifying the one suspected of being a perpetrator. In such a situation, as long as the matter has not been firmly established, keeping contact with the family at least by occasional visits, by letter, or by telephone would show that one is trying to follow a Scriptural course.--Compare Ephesians 6:1-3.

What if the sufferer decides that he wants to make an accusation? [FOOTNOTE SAYS: It may also be necessary for the step outlined in this paragraph to be taken if the matter has become common knowledge in the congregation.] Then the two elders can advise him that, in line with the principle at Matthew 18:15 , he should personally approach the accused about the matter. If the acc user is not emotionally able to do this face-to-face, it can be done by telephone or perhaps by writing a letter. In this way the one accused is given the opportunity to go on record before Jehovah with his answer to the accusation. He may even be able to present evidence that he could not have committed the abuse. Or perhaps the one accused will confess, and a reconciliation may be achieved. What a blessing that would be! If there is a confession, the two elders can handle matters further in accordance with Scriptural principles.

If the accusation is denied, the elders should explain to the acc user that nothing more can be done in a judicial way. And the congregation will continue to view the one accused as an innocent person. The Bible says that there must be two or three witnesses before judicial action can be taken. (2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19) Even if more than one person "remembers" abuse by the same individual, the nature of these recalls is just too uncertain to base judicial decisions on them without other supporting evidence. This does not mean that such "memories" are viewed as false (or that they are viewed as true). But Bible principles must be followed in establishing a matter judicially.

What if the one accused though denying the wrongdoing is really guilty? Does he "get away with it," as it were? Certainly not! The question of his guilt or innocence can be safely left in Jehovah's hands. "The sins of some men are publicly manifest, leading directly to judgment, but as for other men their sins also become manifest later." (1 Timothy 5:24; Romans 12:19 ; 14:12)

The book of Proverbs says: "The expectation of the righteous ones is a rejoicing, but the very hope of the wicked ones will perish." "When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes." (Proverbs 10:28; 11:7) Ultimately, Jehovah God and Christ Jesus render everlasting judgment in justice.--1 Corinthians 4:5."

Quotes from Awake!, October 8, 1991 Issue, Pages 10-11:

It is only natural to feel angry when one has suffered abuse. Nevertheless, the ties that bind families can be strong, and you may not want to cut off all contact with your parents. You may even be willing to consider a reconciliation. Much, though, would depend on the circumstances. Victims are sometimes inclined to forgive their parents outright--not excusing the abuse, but refusing to be consumed with resentment or controlled by fear. Preferring to avoid an emotional confrontation, some are content to 'have their say in their heart' and let matters rest.--Psalm 4:4.

You may come to feel, however, that matters can be resolved only by confronting your parents with the abuse--in person, by phone, or by letter. (Compare Matthew 18:15.) If so, be sure you have recovered

sufficiently--or at least have enough support--to withstand the emotional storm that might erupt. Since little will be accomplished by a shouting match, try to be firm but calm. (Proverbs 29:11) You might proceed by stating (1) what took place, (2) how it has affected you, and (3) what you expect from them now (such as apologies, payment for doctor bills, or changes in conduct). At the very least, bringing matters out in the open may help dispel any lingering feelings that you are powerless. And it just might pave the way for a new relationship with your parents.

For example, your father might acknowledge the abuse, expressing deep remorse. He may also have made sincere efforts to change, perhaps by getting treatment for alcohol addiction or by pursuing a study of the Bible. Your mother may likewise beg your forgiveness for her having failed to protect you. Sometimes a full reconciliation may result.

However, do not be surprised if you still feel ambivalent about your parents and prefer not to rush into a close relationship with them. At the very least, though, you may be able to resume reasonable family dealings. On the other hand, the confrontation may trigger a torrent of denial and verbal abuse from the molester and other family members. Worse, you may discover that he is still a threat to you. Forgiveness may then be inappropriate, a close relationship impossible.--Compare Psalm 139:21.

In any event, it may take considerable time before your hurt feelings subside. You may need to remind yourself repeatedly that final justice belongs to God.