

## Speak Out Sunday 2010 Commentaries on Psalm 71:1-6

### A Baptist Perspective

I remember the first time someone spoke to me as a pastor about their domestic violence situation. I was filled with shock, anger at the abuser, and the feeling of inadequacy at knowing how to help this member of *my church*. What to do? What to say to this victim? I was in shock because no one had taken the time to prepare me in my seminary studies in the early 1980s. We talked about pastoral care but more along the lines of hospital visitation and couples' counseling. I challenge you to read verses 4-6 through the mind of a young adult who grew up in a church but whose church leadership failed to take the time to talk about bad, unhealthy relationships. Hear the pain when the young person now in an abusive, possibly violent, relationship says, "Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man."

### A Catholic Perspective

Dominant motifs are: (a) the psalmist's determination to go on praising God despite present distress (vv 8, 15, 24); (b) the reliance on God as the source of strength (vv 3, 5, 18); (c) the [psalmist's](#) confidence in God's saving righteousness/righteous deeds, which forms an envelope around the psalm (vv 2, 24; cf. also vv 15-16, 181).

### Reflection

These verses express a confidence in God's saving action in the face of evil and destruction. In the case of the abused spouse, the cry in verse 4

### Psalm 71:1-6

**1 In you, O LORD, I take refuge;  
let me never be put to shame.**

**2 In your righteousness deliver  
me and rescue me; incline your  
ear to me and save me.**

**3 Be to me a rock of refuge, a  
strong fortress, to save me, for  
you are my rock and my fortress.**

**4 Rescue me, O my God, from the  
hand of the wicked, from the  
grasp of the unjust and cruel.**

**5 For you, O Lord, are my hope,  
my trust, O LORD, from my  
youth.**

**6 Upon you I have leaned from  
my birth; it was you who took me  
from my mother's womb. My  
praise is continually of you.**

### A Presbyterian Perspective

Recognizing that God has been with us on our journey from birth can be a difficult connection to make... especially if we think that God has placed us in our current context. How do we praise the Lord when we find ourselves in the hand of the wicked, the grasp of the unjust and the cruel? We remember the God of our past is also the God of our present and our future. We know that we can look back and point to indicators of God's faithfulness, and be confident that God will be faithful still, even if we are unable to see, feel, hear or experience it. One day we will look back and

### A Unitarian Universalist Perspective

(v.1) To operate from shame is to dishonor one's self. In dishonoring ones self one dishonors the spark of divinity that dwells within. In Psalm 8 v. 4 the Psalmists asks "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" In v. 5 the answer comes, "Thou has made him little less than God and thus crowned him with glory and honor."

### A Jewish Perspective

God is our refuge, our shelter. We can take strength and courage from God's steadfast and enduring Presence. We can stand firmly on our faith, as God is our Rock. To God, we can admit that the abuser is unjust, cruel, and violent—we don't have to pretend and lie to protect him. The victim does not have to be complicit in her suffering; she can trust God with the truth.

## **A Baptist Perspective (continued)**

For you, O Lord art my hope and trust from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from my birth....” Do we not owe it to our middle schoolers and high schoolers to teach them not only memory verses but the warning signs of an abusive situation? Should we not only provide them with fun times on retreats but give them a lesson in 5 types of abuse: emotional, mental, sexual, financial and physical? Let our congregations be filled with real acknowledgment of and the wisdom about the evil things in this world so that when these youths begin to discern that they are headed in unsafe and unhealthy relationships, they will remember the good instruction that they were given. Then they will cry out in confidence, “In you, O Lord, do I take refuge, let me never be put to shame!” May we take time to teach our young ones, the future of our churches, how to live in healthy relationships and know that their faith and quality religious education will be a steady rock and a strong fortress.

## **A Catholic Perspective (continued)**

is to be delivered from the hand of the husband that is evil and cruel. This is a terrifying reality: that the one who has vowed to be helpmate and to love her violates the marriage covenant by violent abuse.

Who will God use to help her if not God’s People? This time of awareness of domestic violence is a good time to question ourselves on our role in our faith community. How do I relate to women who may seem [distressed](#) ? Do I believe a person who tells me her husband is beating her? (Especially if he is someone I respect) Do I learn all that I can about domestic violence? Is God calling me to be a “rock of refuge, a fortress”?

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## **A Presbyterian Perspective (continued)**

say, “There you were! I had no idea. Thank you, God, for being there.” How good it is to know that we have such a refuge, a dwelling place removed from where our hearts currently reside, in God. If we cannot escape or find relief from our plight physically, we can offer our heart refuge in God’s faithful love – a love that desires freedom and wholeness for us all.