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## Surviving Abuse

Help and hope for those who have suffered sexual, physical, verbal, or emotional abuse.



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Introduction

## A Secret No More

The numbers of women helping women is on the rise.

*By Caryn Rivadeneira*

In an informal online poll, [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com) asked readers how many had been the victim of some form of domestic violence. Of the 70 percent who answered yes, 52 percent experienced emotional abuse, 30 percent experienced physical abuse, and 18 percent had experienced sexual abuse.





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While the poll was not scientific, the numbers are astounding. They surprised even those who were victims themselves, because even in this day and age—especially in Christian circles—it's still hard to admit you're a victim of abuse.

If there is good news about these figures, it's that on some levels the secrecy is lessening. In this guide, you'll read stories of women who've survived and triumphed over various kinds of abuse—and have come forward to share their stories to help others break the silence on the epidemic of abuse.

If you or someone you love has experienced some form of abuse, working through this guide will help you figure out how and where to get help. And if you or someone you love is currently in physical danger, please visit the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence's website, [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org), for hotlines and local support to help you get safe.

Blessings,

*Caryn Rivadeneira*  
Managing Editor, KYRIA downloads,  
Christianity Today International



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Leader's Guide

## How to use "Surviving Abuse" for a group study.



**"Surviving Abuse"** can be used for individual or group study, but if you intend to lead a group study on this, some simple suggestions follow:

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternatively, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the "Thought Provokers" be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experience. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**



## The Silent Epidemic



Here's how to respond if you or someone you love is abused.

*By Corrie Cutrer*

**H**er husband's comments were so routine that for 20 years, Brenda Branson didn't realize she was a victim of verbal and emotional abuse.

"You breathe too loud," her husband would tell her. "Your smile is silly. You look terrible. Don't you have anything better to wear?"



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It wasn't until Brenda realized his comments weren't true that she approached him. And that's when he picked up a chair and hit her with it. Brenda knew she had to do something, so she went to her pastor. Unfortunately he wasn't equipped to handle domestic abuse; his suggestions about submitting to her husband only made her home life more difficult. "Our church didn't know what to do with us," Brenda says. "They just wanted the problem to go away."

Brenda got the help she needed by forming a support group with another domestic-violence victim. Then in 1995 she cofounded Focus Ministries, one of the few Christian organizations devoted to helping victims of domestic violence while also training churches on how they can assist members who are being abused.

According to Detective Sgt. Don Stewart, a retired police officer who handled domestic violence cases for 25 years, one out of every four Christian couples experiences at least one episode of physical abuse within their marriage. In fact, battering is the single largest cause of injury to women—more than auto accidents, muggings, and rapes combined. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists reports that 3 to 4 million women are beaten in their homes every year. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, approximately 2,000 women are murdered every year by an intimate partner.

"Domestic violence has become an epidemic," says Brenda, who is no longer married to her husband. The enormity of the problem, combined with the fact law enforcement officials and church leaders often lack the skills to address it, led Don to author *Refuge*





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(New Hope), a book helping victims understand and flee from violence in their homes. "I consider Don to be a missionary who offers hope to hurting women and presents a wakeup call to the Christian community to get involved," says Brenda.

Today's Christian Woman spoke with both Don and Brenda on how battered women can get help as well as how Christians can respond to this crisis.

#### ***Explain the different types of domestic abuse.***

**Don:** Emotional and verbal abuse are the cutting remarks a spouse uses to destroy his wife's sense of self-worth. A man may label a woman fat or stupid. He may demean her personal accomplishments or scream at her that the dinner she cooked is terrible. Perhaps he yells at her because she's 15 minutes late coming home from work.

Physical abuse is when a man injures his wife in a nonsexual manner. Then there's sexual abuse—when a spouse forces sex on his partner. Most states have adopted laws protecting married women against spousal rape. But because there's so much shame involved for the woman, she may be hesitant to come forward about this.

**Brenda:** Emotional and verbal abuse can become so commonplace in a woman's relationship that she doesn't realize she's being harmed. It took me a while to realize my husband's attacks weren't my fault and weren't true. For example, we both used to work in our church's children's ministry. My husband often told me I was uncaring toward the kids. For a long time I struggled with this, until one day someone told me how blessed she was by the compassion I extended to her







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children. Suddenly I saw I'd been basing my identity on my husband's perception of me instead of God's.

#### ***What signs indicate verbal abuse may head toward physical abuse?***

**Don:** When a husband starts saying things such as, "If you ever left me, I'd kill myself," or "If you don't do exactly as I tell you, I'm going to beat the daylights out of you." Those are clues the escalation from verbal to physical abuse may have begun.

Another sign is if a husband starts damaging household property that has sentimental value to his wife. A batterer never will demolish his prized possessions, but he often will shatter a piece of pottery or a family heirloom. If his comments intensify to the point he says something such as, "If you ever leave me, I'm going to kill you and the kids," or "I'm going to burn the house down," he's crossed a critical psychological barrier, and it's not long before he's going to act on his words. As soon as a woman no longer feels safe in her home, she needs to make arrangements to leave. She may have to leave only until she and her husband can get some counseling or until he's arrested and has gone through a treatment program, but she still needs to remove herself from the dangerous situation.

#### ***What are the typical personality traits of a batterer?***

**Don:** Jealousy, hypersensitivity toward even the most constructive criticism, and the tendency to pressure a woman into a quick engagement, marriage, or live-in relationship. I encourage single women to watch out for these signs. Other indications include any use of physical force against you or an unusually harsh





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attitude toward children or animals. And any history of past battering should be of major concern.

#### ***How can we tell if abuse is happening in a woman's life?***

**Don:** A batterer tries to isolate his victim. So if you see a woman being isolated from family, friends, or church, that's a red flag. The second thing to look for is if the woman's husband constantly monitors his wife's whereabouts. He may call her ten times a day at work, and if she doesn't answer each time, he demands to know where she was. Or if she doesn't arrive home in the evening at a precise time, he demands to know why.

Also, be on the lookout if a woman completely covers her body with pants and a long-sleeve shirt even when it's hot outside, or if she uses a lot of makeup. She could be trying to cover a bruise.

#### ***Should a friend who suspects abuse approach a woman about it?***

**Don:** It depends on your relationship. If you're friends or even have a good casual relationship, invite her to breakfast or for coffee, and approach the subject gently by asking, "Is everything okay? Tell me about your personal life. How is your relationship with your husband?" Don't condemn her or try to push her out of her relationship with her husband.

At some point you need to say, "I'm concerned about you. If you'd like to talk about anything that's troubling you, I'm here for you." If she opens up, emphasize that she isn't causing her husband's abuse. Tell her: "You don't deserve what's happening to you."





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God doesn't approve of any man who beats, controls, or retaliates against his wife. And whenever you're ready to leave, I'm ready to help."

You may want to make an appointment for the two of you to sit down with a pastor, social worker, or law enforcement officer and decide where to go from there. If you discover she's being abused but she's unwilling to do anything about it, you also need to consider the option of calling the police for her. This is a difficult judgment call; it requires prayer and knowledge of the situation. But it may help save her life.

#### ***How can we better empathize with an abused woman?***

**Don:** Be careful not to criticize an abused woman, because until you've walked in her shoes, you can't appreciate the unbelievable hell she lives in every day. It's very difficult for a woman to walk away from an abusive situation—often the batterer is the full breadwinner in the family and she fears economic hardship. Nearly 50 percent of all homeless women and children in the U. S. are without a home because they're fleeing from domestic violence. Also, a woman may fear greater harassment from her spouse if she leaves, and this could prevent her from getting the help she needs.

#### ***What can the church do?***

**Brenda:** Church members are so afraid of promoting divorce, they often don't give women the help they need. Sometimes divorce is the end result of domestic violence, but I always tell church leaders that Focus Ministries doesn't promote divorce—we promote a woman's *safety*. That's why it's important leaders learn how to properly advise abused women. The techniques





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people use to counsel couples with other marital problems don't work with domestic abuse.

For example, when I went to my pastor for help, he encouraged me to be extra loving to my husband, to make his favorite meals, to extend empathy and ask if he'd had a hard day when he seemed agitated. Both pastors and abused women often mistakenly think if the *woman* changes, then things will get better. That's not true. Even the most gentle "confrontation" with my husband set him off and made things worse.

**Don:** Church leaders also need to realize batterers can be manipulative. I know a woman in my community who went to her pastor for help because she was afraid of her husband. The pastor called her husband and asked that he and the wife come in for counseling. The poor woman was absolutely terrified to sit in a joint counseling session with her husband and said nothing while the husband smoothed things over. Shortly after this, the woman made a decision to leave her husband. One night when she thought he was away, she returned home to get some of her things. The husband was there hiding and beat the woman so severely that parts of her brain were exposed.

Leaders also need to work to dismiss misinterpretations of Scripture such as 1 Peter 3:1–6, which abusers often use to defend their actions. It's unbelievable how many Christian men think they're entitled by God to discipline and control their wives. As 1 Peter 3:7 reminds us, no man has a God-given right to punish or retaliate against his wife under *any* condition. And a woman shouldn't be led to think that through her submission and suffering she'll become a





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better person. To allow someone to abuse you does not bring glory to God.

#### ***Are there any steps we can take to reach out to the abused?***

**Brenda:** Order training materials or invite someone in your area who's qualified to speak at your church to promote awareness. Most church members don't know how prevalent domestic violence is among Christians and have no idea how to deal with it. Also, find out what local support groups are available for abused women and have that information readily available.

**Don:** Organize a list of resources within your church you can utilize if you need to help an abused woman flee from a violent situation. She may need a vacant apartment, money for food and clothing, a car, or an attorney. Let women minister to women while men play a secondary role from a distance. Also, work to establish a relationship with your local women's shelter. Most women who work at these shelters are dedicated, passionate people who do wonderful things for abused women. Often these workers are willing to come to a church and provide the kind of instruction and tools church members need to react appropriately when they learn someone's being abused.

The church is in a great position to reach out to women who suffer so badly. My prayer is they'll do it.

*Corrie Cutrer, a TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN regular contributor, lives with her family in Illinois.*

*This article first appeared in the September/October 2004 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*





## Surviving Abuse The Silent Epidemic

*You can contact Don Stewart at [www.midwesttrainers.com](http://www.midwesttrainers.com).*

### Reflect

- *How does abuse cause a woman to base her perceptions of herself on her husband instead of on God?*
- *How does your church handle the issue of abused women?*
- *How might your influence help create better policies and more empathy?*



## Poisonous Putdowns

How to defuse verbal abuse that can damage your marriage.

*By Gary D. Chapman*



**“H**e makes me feel stupid. Like I can't do things right.”

“She talks so condescendingly to me in front of others.”

Physical abuse in marriage is devastating. But verbal abuse—putdowns, blame, harsh or bitter words, profanity—can be just as destructive.

Verbal abuse uses words as grenades—designed to punish the other person, to place blame, or to justify actions. It's poisonous putdowns that one spouse uses to make the other feel bad or appear wrong or inadequate.



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### Poisonous Putdowns

The Book of Proverbs is filled with warnings against unleashing poisonous words: "Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (29:20); "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control" (29:11); "The tongue has the power of life and death" (18:21). Clearly the Bible warns against verbal abuse.

**Confront lovingly.** Marilyn and Jeff struggled with this issue. Jeff would make cutting, nasty remarks if he didn't like what Marilyn was doing. She finally came to me for counseling.

I encouraged Marilyn to confront Jeff lovingly. Later that night after the children were in bed, she told him, "I've been thinking about us. I remember how kind you were to me when we dated: your tender touch, your kind words, the fun we had. Sometimes, though, I lose that vision when I'm hurt by your verbal attacks. I believe that gentle, loving man—the one I married—is the man you really want to be."

**Take time away.** Two weeks later Jeff exploded again in harsh words to Marilyn. Since confrontation needs to be progressive, I encouraged Marilyn to up the ante.

Marilyn had another conversation with Jeff: "I've made a decision. I've explained how deeply I'm hurt when you lash out at me with critical and demeaning words. It takes me days and sometimes weeks to get over the pain. I've decided that the next time you lose your temper and yell at me, I'll take some time away from you in order to recover. I'm not abandoning you; I'm trying to take constructive action. I'm sharing this with you because I believe in you and want to improve our marriage."







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"Your leaving isn't going to help," Jeff scoffed.  
"Perhaps not," Marilyn said, "but at least it's a step in the right direction."

A week later when Jeff erupted, Marilyn packed up their children and spent three days with her mother.

That's when Jeff got serious about his destructive behavior. He sought counseling and started down the road to recovery. While not all spouses will respond as quickly as Jeff, most will face reality when confronted with tough love.

**Don't give in.** We must never allow verbal abuse "to work" for the abuser. Giving in encourages that negative behavior to continue. If you recognize this in your marriage, you might say, "I realize I've encouraged your verbal outbursts by caving in. I understand now that this is wrong. In the future I will no longer be responsive when you lash out. If you want something, ask nicely, and I may well do what you desire. But I won't give in when you rant and rave." Then be consistent in following through. Love confronts and love is consistent.

**Pray.** Loving confrontation is best accompanied by prayer. We aren't praying simply for our spouse. We're asking for God's wisdom that we may know how to be constructive in our situation. We're asking for emotional strength to take positive action and not become victims of our spouse's wrong behavior.

Does the above approach guarantee your spouse will eliminate the abusive behavior? No. We can't determine another's choices. We can, however, be responsible even when our spouse is being irresponsible.





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### Poisonous Putdowns

Retaliation (fighting fire with fire), capitulation (giving up and becoming a doormat), and denial (acting as though nothing is wrong) are all common responses to verbal abuse. None of them, however, are Christian responses. The Christian response is loving confrontation (Galatians 6:1).

*Gary D. Chapman, Ph.D., is a marriage and relationship expert and best-selling author of *The Five Love Languages (Moody)* and *Covenant Marriage (Broadman & Holman)*.*

*This article first appeared in the Summer 2004 issues of MARRIAGE PARTNERSHIP.*

## Reflect

- *How do you handle "poisonous putdowns" in your marriage?*
- *In what ways have you found yourself buying into or believing unfair putdowns?*
- *How can you try the steps suggested in this article?*





## ‘He Seems to Hate Me’

When you don't want divorce, but won't put up with the abuse.

*By Gary and Carrie Oliver*

**Q:** *How much verbal abuse is a woman supposed to take from her husband? We have been married for 10 years, and even before the marriage my friends and family would tell me about the horrible way he spoke to me, but I was deaf to it. Now I am getting more and more depressed. I confront him with it and he says he doesn't know what I am talking about. He'll be okay for a while and then goes right back to his sarcastic, hurtful ways. He claims to love me while acting like he hates me. He always wants to be with me and is always home. I don't want a divorce, but I don't want to take the abuse any more either. What should I do?*





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**A:** The old saying "sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me" just isn't true. We've worked with many people whose broken bones have healed but whose broken hearts and spirits are still hurting from wounds inflicted many years earlier. Verbal abuse cannot be tolerated and is never something to be accepted. If it isn't dealt with, it will only get worse and may lead to physical abuse.

An important first step is to get clear about what behavior is healthy and unhealthy, what is appropriate and inappropriate, what is acceptable and unacceptable. If you've lived with this for 10 years, you've probably become desensitized to what healthy and appropriate look like. Dr. Grace Ketterman's book, *Verbal Abuse: Healing the Hidden Wound* (Servant), will help clarify what healthy looks like and give you practical suggestions for new ways to respond.

The next step is for you to state to your husband what you will and will not tolerate and then have a specific plan as to how you will respond the next time your boundaries are crossed. If he calls you names, leave the room or leave the house. Set specific boundaries for what you will tolerate and how you will respond to him. Retreating in silence, crying, yelling back, or threatening aren't healthy responses and won't produce positive results. Actually, nothing will guarantee positive results from your husband. However, there are things that you can do to protect yourself and increase the probability of change in your marriage.





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### 'He Seems to Hate Me'

In our early years of marriage we can give into unhealthy patterns that become unrecognizable to us. Over time they appear to be "normal." We may not understand that we can do things differently and sometimes get better results. As the wife, know that you can learn new ways to respond to your husband. If he puts you down, you can refuse to allow that to be truth for you. Many women don't understand that there is a place for healthy anger in a marriage relationship. *Good Women Get Angry* (Servant)—a book Gary wrote with Norm Wright—will give you practical and biblically consistent ways to express your fears, hurts, and frustrations to your husband and to use your anger-energy to set healthy, honoring, and respectful boundaries.

Consider telling him that you both need counseling to get through this hindrance to your marriage's growth. Let him know you are willing to take responsibility for whatever you bring to the relationship that is not helping it become all it could be. If he isn't willing to go, there's no reason why you can't. Finally, find some support from other women. God didn't design us to walk through life alone. Reach out and find some women who will pray with you and for you. Regardless of what your husband chooses to do, you can grow, learn, deepen, mature, and become more of who God designed you to be. Remember that all of God's promises still apply to you.

*Gary J. Oliver, Th.M., Ph.D., is the author of numerous books and is executive director of the Center for Marriage and Family Studies and Professor of*





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'He Seems to Hate Me'

*Psychology and Practical Theology at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. Carrie Oliver, M.A., is a clinical therapist at the PeopleCARE Clinics, specializing in marriage and family and women's issues. She is a seminar leader and co-author, with Gary, of *Raising Sons and Loving It!* (Zondervan). The Olivers have three sons.*

*This article first appeared in the Winter 2001 issue of MARRIAGE PARTNERSHIP.*

## Reflect

- *What boundaries have you set or could you set around verbal assaults?*
- *Gary and Carrie suggest that a proper handle on anger-energy can help you set proper boundaries. What does your anger-energy currently look like?*
- *How might you use this energy to help create a healthier and safer environment for you?*





## 'I'm Married to Jekyll and Hyde!'

When your husband is different in public than he is at home.

*By Dr. Diane Mandt Langberg*

**Q:** *I've been married only a few months, but I'm discovering my husband is like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde! When we're in public, he's usually happy and friendly. But at home he loses his temper easily and has a negative attitude. He didn't behave this way before we married, so I'm feeling betrayed and discouraged. What should I do?*



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'I'm Married to Jekyll and Hyde!'

**A:** Let's face it: There's no way to know *everything* about the person you marry until after you take those vows. But your matrimonial "surprise" is beyond the norm.

Your new husband may have a serious anger problem—and may even be potentially abusive. Many abusive, explosive men exhibit a public and private self that's vastly different; sometimes it's because they need to feel in control at home since they feel inadequate outside it.

Not only do these men often exhibit a Jekyll/Hyde syndrome, they usually get worse over time. That means what's anger in an earlier stage later can become abuse. The intensity of anger increases—as well as the frequency.

Answer the following questions about your husband's outbursts: Does he berate or ridicule you? Does he attempt to control what you say, where you go, what you do? Is his anger full of blame? Has he ever been physically threatening (shaking his fist in your face, throwing something, putting his fist through a wall)? If your answer is yes, you need to take action right away.

Be clear with your husband about what is permissible behavior. It's never okay for either marriage partner to berate, criticize, control, or ridicule the other. If you excuse or minimize his behavior, you're partnering with your husband in allowing abusive words and/or behavior into your relationship.

Don't dismiss your concerns. Seek help from someone who will take them seriously. Start with a pastor or a Christian counselor familiar with abuse.







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'I'm Married to Jekyll and Hyde!'

Remember, you aren't responsible for your husband's anger; it's his problem. You can't manage his anger for him or live so perfectly as to avoid arousing it. Scripture makes it clear that what comes out of a person is because of what's in his heart, not his environment (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:35).

Too often a wife tolerates awful words and behavior "for the sake of the marriage." But that passively permits destruction to enter the marriage. What goes on behind closed doors needs to reflect Christ's love. When it doesn't, help is needed.

*Diane Mandt Langberg, Ph.D., is an author and licensed psychologist in private practice.*

*This article first appeared in the March/April 1999 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *Diane says, "If you excuse or minimize his behavior, you're partnering with your husband in allowing abusive words and/or behavior into your relationship." How do you interpret what she's saying? Does this make sense to you?*
- *However, she also says, "You aren't responsible for your husband's anger; it's his problem." In what ways do you feel responsible for another person's anger problem?*



## 'I Was Sexually Abused'

Healing from the pain of your past.

By Joy Michaels



It was a sunny afternoon, and my parents were at a church function when my 13-year-old brother called me into his bedroom to show me some magazine pictures. "This is how a man and woman have babies," he told me, pointing to a photo of a naked man and woman having sex. My eyes grew wide as he turned the pages. I'd never seen pornography before.

"You want to try it, just for fun?" he asked, as he stuffed the *Penthouse* magazine under his mattress. "You're too young to have a baby anyway," he assured me.



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I followed innocently as he led me to a twin bed stored in the basement. Instructing me to undress, he did the same. Then he fondled me. I was only seven.

For the next few years, my brother periodically compelled me to meet him in his bedroom or in the basement. We never had actual coitus, but a few times he tied my legs to the bed frame, and when I let out a scream, he threatened to get me in big trouble. One time he left me naked and strapped to his bed. Alone in his room, I wept as I struggled to wriggle free.

Confused and ashamed, I couldn't bear to tell anyone—especially my Christian parents—what was going on. They trusted him implicitly, letting him babysit my four-year-old sister and me. My brother swore me to secrecy, and I felt the heavy burden of that secret.

At school, I discovered none of my girlfriends knew much about sex, so I played dumb. I was fearful and insecure, putting pressure on myself to appear normal. But at night, I'd often cry and pray to Jesus to let me die in my sleep so I could be with him in heaven.

Once my mother discovered a cartoon I'd drawn of a naked person being tickled by a big feather machine. When she asked me about it, I was so embarrassed, I cried and denied there was any significance to the cartoon. She let it go, crumbling the paper and dropping it into a wastebasket. There went my chance for intervention.

When I turned 11, my independent nature kicked in. Although I'd always felt ashamed about what was going on between my brother and me, it was then I finally realized something was seriously





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### 'I Was Sexually Abused'

wrong with his behavior. In a moment of courage one evening while my parents were out, I turned down his advances. When he tried to persuade me with a few quarters (a temptation, because money was tight in our family), I still said *no*. He stopped pursuing me for sexual stimulation, but I later learned he went after my precious sister, a sweet, sensitive girl who wanted that money to buy candy.

In high school and college, I masked my insecurity and poor self-image by getting high grades. Although I'd always wanted to remain a virgin until marriage, I often wondered if I still qualified. So when a college boyfriend finally pressured me into sex, I felt too defenseless to say *no*.

After graduation, I drifted from my Christian upbringing, moved out of state, and continued to date guys who weren't good for me.

My secret continued well into my 20s until I flew home to spend a weekend at my sister's house while her husband was out of town. While chatting on her bed, we ended up cautiously and painfully revealing some of our childhood secrets. My little sister cried as she remembered the horror of being chased and cornered in the basement, where my brother and his buddy took advantage of her. We each knew about the magazines he'd kept under his mattress. We each suspected my brother's friend had introduced him to pornography just when his male hormones were kicking in.

After unearthing some of those long-buried secrets and drying each other's tears, my sister and I felt some relief, but also self-pity and anger. I wondered if my relationship woes were somehow tied to my loss of innocence in





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childhood. My sister figured her lack of interest in sex was because of the incest. Naively, we encouraged each other to forgive, forget, and get on with life. I tried, but didn't get very far.

When a volatile relationship I was in ended in heartbreak, I decided to move closer to my roots. Depressed from failing to fix my life, I temporarily stayed with a friend who, unbeknownst to me, had become a Christian. She told me daily about the power of Jesus to heal and save. I'd grown up hearing the gospel, but never considered having a personal relationship with Christ before. I soon surrendered my life to him, and began to pray God would restore my innocence and heal me from the sexual abuse of my childhood.

I craved justice, but didn't want to cause a family feud. One night I decided to tell my father just enough to indicate my brother hadn't acted appropriately toward me as a young girl. My timing wasn't so great (it was Thanksgiving), and my father found my story distressing and hard to believe. (He said he'd spent a lot of time with my brother growing up, fishing and mowing lawns, for example, to keep him out of trouble.) I was devastated. How could he think I'd make up something like that? On another occasion, my parents came to visit me, and I lamented the way my life had gone, suggesting my brother was partly to blame. My mother sympathized with me, but I was desperate for my dad to acknowledge what had happened and to put his arms around me and comfort me. Instead, he told me he'd asked my brother about it, and wondered if I was confusing incest with "child's





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play." I raged at my dad until my mother frantically called a halt to our argument.

Eventually, I saw a Christian counselor who prayed with me. He used the Bible to show me my view of God was incomplete. Yes, God was almighty and powerful, but he seemed unfamiliar and distant—not the heavenly Father who cared deeply for me. Over time, my counselor helped me change my viewpoint and deal with the issue of forgiveness—toward my brother *and* my father. I began to accept that my dad may never respond the way I'd like, but that God understands and has adopted me into his family (Rom. 8:15–18). As I've grown in my faith, my desire to be vindicated has lessened, and my relationship with my parents has improved greatly. My sister and I also remain close.

A few years ago, I met with my brother, now married with his own family, and prayerfully confronted him about the past. He talked of a somewhat strained relationship with Dad, but denied most of his incestuous conduct or diminished the severity of it. I told him I forgave him anyway, that my attitude didn't depend on his response. However, when another relationship fizzled months later, I felt anger and sadness all over again. Forgiveness, I'm realizing, is something I'll need to practice whenever hurt feelings come to mind.

On one occasion I tried to talk to my brother about the dangers of pornography—its addictive nature, its degradation of women, its perversion of sex—but he didn't fully agree. He says he's a Christian, but it's not clear he's turned from this sin, as the Bible commands.

Despite the far-reaching ravages of pornography and sexual abuse, I don't blame my brother for the botched-





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up decisions I made in adulthood. (After all, I alone am responsible to God for my sinful actions.) Instead, I pray my brother will one day experience the forgiveness and grace I've experienced. And I thank God for saving me from a few potentially disastrous marriages and for teaching me to trust him with my life and future—whether or not I marry. Thanks to my church, I'm learning to adopt healthier dating habits and use discernment in my friendships with men.

God, who brings good out of evil, has given me an empathy for abused women. Some statistics show one out of five girls is sexually abused before reaching adulthood—usually by a close relative. That number is likely to increase as long as society tolerates pornography, the impetus for sexual molestation, rape, and other crimes. My prayer is that Christians will oppose porn at every level—on the Internet, on screen, in bookstores, in their home.

The greatest healing I've received isn't from a psychologist or a counselor, but from God's Word. I agree with Psalm 27:1, which says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?" I don't need to dredge up the past repeatedly; I don't need to hold a lifelong grudge against the one who stole my innocence; I don't even need to claim victim status. I'm of inestimable worth to the God who fashioned me in my mother's womb. His Son, Jesus, has borne my griefs and carried my sorrows. Through his power, I can overcome my past. The longer I follow God, the more optimistic I am that I can laugh at the days to come.





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Mother Teresa once stated that Jesus Christ is the Way to be walked, the Truth to be taught, and the Life to be led. I've found this to be true. He can redeem any life. He can restore innocence and joy. I'm living proof.

*Joy Michaels is a pseudonym. This article first appeared in the November/December 1999 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *How has past abuse affected—or how might current abuse affect—your relationships with family?*
- *What's been your extended family's response to abuse allegations? What's been the impact of those responses?*





## Opening the Door to Healing



When childhood sexual abuse affects a marriage's intimacy.

*By Mary DeMuth*

“Don'tcha wanna be married? Or have kids?”

I nodded, tears streaming down my five-year-old face, thorns and brambles cutting into my backside.

“You gotta do this, then, or you can't ever be married.” The voice—which came from a teenage boy, accompanied by the snicker from his kid brother—would haunt me for 18 years until I got married.

It still haunts me.



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The statistics about sexual crime both alarm and numb. According to the Department of Justice, by age 18, one in four women and one in six men have been sexually abused.

What happens to the titanic number of sexually abused men and women when they marry and enter regular sexual experiences with their mates? One study published in *Contemporary Family Therapy* estimates that 56 percent of women who were sexually abused as children feel discomfort during sex and 36 percent seek some sort of sexual therapy.

Although I told my husband, Patrick, about the abuse while we were dating, after we were married, I pretended immunity from my past trauma. But keeping up the charade wasn't so easy, since sex reminded me of the abuse. I didn't tell Patrick, though, because I felt guilty, as though I were a poor wife.

I hoped somehow I could work out everything through sheer willpower. So throughout our early married life, I tolerated sex, never letting Patrick know how much I was hurting. I'm not sure if I even knew the extent of my pain, at least enough to verbalize it.

When our eldest daughter turned five, however, I began to relive the molestation I'd experienced at her age. I felt the horror afresh. I saw those brothers steal my innocence on muddied nature trails, in secluded playgrounds, and in their bedroom.

I puzzled over the photos my divorced father took of nude women and his insistence that I bathe him while he sat naked in his claw-footed tub. I ached over my mother's lack of protection. I felt abandoned.





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Although I grieved, I still didn't realize how much those experiences were poisoning my sexual relationship with Patrick. It wasn't until we went through some marital difficulties and I spent two years in counseling that I finally realized the problem.

Now 12 years into our marriage, Patrick and I see clearly how the past affected our relationship—especially sexually.

**Fear of being used.** I felt used easily. If Patrick didn't talk enough with me during the day, but then initiated sex, I'd remember that frightened five-year-old who was simply a rag doll to be played with. If he touched me in a way that triggered the abuser's touch, I'd grit my teeth and silently recoil.

I'd think, *Men want only to use me. I'm just a plaything.* My resentment grew toward Patrick, yet I remained quiet, and he grew frustrated that I wouldn't tell him the problem.

**A distorted view of sex.** It was difficult for me to see sex as beautiful and what God intended. I felt if I enjoyed sex, I was somehow legitimizing my abusers, that they were right in molesting me. But if I didn't enjoy it, I wasn't a good Christian wife.

My view of sex was that it was solely for a man's gratification. I longed (and still long) for the passionate Song of Songs-kind of abandon.

**Guilt over failure to perform sexually.** I've often lamented to God, "Why did you give me a man who loves physical touch? Are you setting me up for failure?" I've felt overwhelming guilt over not having enough sex. The Christian marriage books I read and





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the sexual intimacy seminars I attended further thrust me into shame's cesspool; it's my duty after all—I'm depriving my husband. Couple that advice with a deep-seated ambivalence toward sex and I was a sexually defeated wife.

Part of my denying Patrick sex stemmed from wanting to avoid the deeper problem. When I "gave in," I uncovered prickly emotions I couldn't understand. It was easier if I avoided intimacy as much as I could so I wouldn't rip open a festering wound I couldn't handle.

Isolation and emotional disengagement. Of all the issues Patrick and I have confronted, this carries with it the deepest, most insidious pain.

Patrick once told me about a vision he had in which I was pacing on a high diving board while he and the children beckoned me from a swimming pool far below.

They shouted, "Dive in! The water's great!"

I peered over the edge of the board.

I saw their laughter-infused antics, but I turned away and walked down the ladder. Instead, I settled for putting my toe in the water while the rest of my family splashed and laughed.

I longed to be the spontaneous one who dives into the lives of my family, but I'd disconnected somehow, which prevented me from letting my husband into the recesses of my heart.

**Lack of affection and passion.** I found myself unable to be affectionate with my immediate family. While I knew I was supposed to demonstrate my love in tangible, physical ways, that seldom came naturally. When my





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son cried, I had to tell myself to hug him. When my husband came home from work, I had to make myself kiss him.

#### **Coping Strategies**

I wish I could say I'm free and the wound of sexual abuse is completely healed. I still have tender spots. But as Patrick and I have explored these areas, we've learned some important coping strategies.

**Be willing to be healed.** I liken emotional healing to a tunnel that links a barren land with a pristine forest. We'll never drink from the forest's mountain spring if we don't go through the tunnel. But most of us feel too afraid to step inside for fear of the dark; and the barren land—bleak as it is—has a staid familiarity about it. The truth? It's dark in the tunnel. The hurt is intensified, especially when we can't see the other side.

When I became a Christian at 15, I clung to the apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" I decided I'd been healed of all emotional wounds when I became a Christian and viewed others who struggled as lacking faith. But my emotional world fell apart in college and I became a struggler. I cried a lot. God sent many friends who simply listened and prayed for me.

I thought those prayers in college and my grief were all I needed to be whole. After things began to fall apart in our marriage, I realized how much more healing I needed and sought help from a Christian counselor.





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**Talk about your sexual relationship.** As difficult as it might be, Patrick and I had to speak frankly about our sexual relationship.

Through God's strength, I was finally able to tell Patrick, "When you complain about our sexual frequency, I want to give up and never try," or "When you say or do that, I feel used, that I'm only an object."

In that same God-strength, Patrick was able to say, "When you don't place sex and affection as a priority, I don't feel loved," or "When you don't kiss me, I feel distant from you."

We also had to resolve not to hide our anger or our pain. Patrick buried his anger over my lack of response and then quit communicating altogether. I erroneously thought if I hid my pain over my past I could magically improve sexually. But we realized not addressing the truth was disastrous for our sexual relationship.

**Heal together.** I used to think I was the only one working on issues from my past. When I struggled, I'd turn to my "normal" husband who had a seemingly idyllic upbringing and say, "You're perfect and I'm yucky."

Patrick seldom explored his own childhood issues. Consequently, I felt alone in my grief.

In his book **The Wounded Heart**, Dr. Dan Allender suggests that one way a marriage can offer healing is if the non-abused spouse will look at where he or she has been harmed from childhood. I felt a sense of comfort when I read: "We all have wounds; some are stab wounds, others pinpricks. The category isn't the degree of bleeding but 'have you ever bled?'"





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The camaraderie returned in our marriage when I saw Patrick begin to explore his family of origin issues. When he saw me becoming free from my past issues, it spurred him to look at his upbringing. He began to look at his quick temper, how he saw that modeled as a child, what it did to him to be on the receiving end of it, and how it still affects him. The process for him has been slow. He's quick to dismiss pain from his past, but he's beginning to see how that dismissal has helped him wall himself off from others, including me.

Now instead of feeling like a solitary pilgrim, I have Patrick's hand to grab as we share our past injuries and our future.

I still hear the haunting words of my abusers, and Patrick and I still struggle in our marriage. Last night we spent an hour discussing our sexual relationship and our mutual frustration over my reticence to kiss and his reluctance to share his hurts. Even so, I'm learning to take an emancipated leap off the high dive into our marriage.

*Mary DeMuth is author of **Ordinary Mom, Extraordinary God** (Harvest House).*

*This article first appeared in the Fall 2005 issue of MARRIAGE PARTNERSHIP.*





## Reflect

- *In what ways does abuse haunt your life?*
- *Mary writes of being afraid of going through the healing process. In what ways are you afraid of the process of healing or removing yourself from danger?*





## Words That Hurt



My mother's verbal abuse  
used to devastate me.

*By Kay L. Lee*

**A**s I hung up the phone, I felt my stomach churn as my mother's words rang in my ears: "How could you forget to call me? You'll be sorry someday when your son is grown."

Why—after all these years—does my mother still have the power to demolish me? It doesn't matter that I'm a 35-year-old woman with a loving husband, a woman who had a successful career before trading it in to manage our three small children. Why does one harsh criticism from my mom reduce me to a frightened little girl, desperate for love and approval?



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*How silly of me! I actually hoped she'd encourage me as I battle exhaustion caring for my children, I thought. Instead, I was in "trouble" for not calling according to her timetable.*

In the past, the anger I felt after an upsetting conversation with Mom would engulf me to the point where I would become out of control. But now—as I felt rage welling up in me—I knew what I had to do: drop to my knees and beg the Lord for self-control. Instantly I pulled from memory the verse I'd learned to get myself back on track when dealing with my mom's critical tongue: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). God comforted me by reminding me of the "truth" of the situation. I hadn't done anything that would make a normal mother angry.

I'm a people pleaser by nature. When I was a child, Mom encouraged this characteristic by rewarding behavior that catered to her needs. If I cleaned the house, fixed dinner, rubbed her back, or answered her beck and call, I got "strokes" from her—something I desperately craved. Once I was old enough to figure out the rules, I set out to do whatever it took to "keep Mom loving me." But unfortunately, the rules changed daily. I quickly learned I could do all the work she wanted, but she could still withdraw her love for no apparent reason.

Many times after finishing the housework, I would sit down to do my homework, watch TV, or rest, and I would feel Mom's unexpected wrath. "I thought I told you to clean the sliding glass door, you good-for-nothing, lazy @##\$%&!" I was only as good as the last thing I did for her—and even that depended on her mood.





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Once in the sixth grade, after I had won 12 awards for various field day and academic contests, my mother and a friend picked me up after school. I ran to Mom, bursting with my achievements, only to hear her say, "Don't be so pleased with yourself. No one cares about your stupid awards. You are being prideful." Minutes later, Mom was bragging to her friend about her great daughter.

There were many times (usually after making the cheerleading squad, being nice to Mom's latest boyfriend, or for no reason at all) that I was "the most beautiful, fantastic daughter" and she was the "luckiest mother in the whole world." But a day, a month, sometimes only an hour later—after something as minor as telling her the school's star quarterback asked me out on a date—I would hear, "You think you're so gorgeous, but you're nothing." Instantly, a sick feeling would well up in my stomach. I couldn't act angry for fear she'd be even more cruel, so I'd withdraw into my room for protection. If I called my mother on her inconsistent behavior, she'd scream hysterically, "After all I've done for you, how can you treat me like this? I hate you!"

Through all the verbal abuse, I never gave up trying to win my mother's love. I merely tried harder. *If I just do more for her, she'll finally love me*, I thought. Good or bad, right or wrong, there was part of me that needed my mother, no matter how she treated me. I often felt guilty for thinking she wasn't the best mother in the world.

By the time I went off to college, outwardly I appeared "perfect," but deep down, I was intensely insecure. I would win an award—but when the





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feeling of accomplishment subsided, I'd look for another way to fill my insatiable need for achievement.

I camouflaged my desperate need for approval, but it leaked out in many ways. I couldn't handle not being liked by everyone. When someone wasn't nice to me, I just tried harder. I felt as though I had to earn my friends daily. But the worst abuse was that which I heaped on myself when I made an honest mistake. It would take me months to get over feeling I was a failure.

As hard as I tried to put my past behind me, I knew I would have to go home for Christmas break, and I was scared. My fourth stepfather was an abusive alcoholic, and he and Mom would have intense fights that resulted in him leaving for weeks at a time. During these periods, my mother would be extremely nice and look to me as her counselor. Then, without comment, she and my stepfather would patch up their differences, and we would be back together as a family. If I didn't welcome him back with open arms, I would be labeled a troublemaker. The mixed messages were devastating and totally confusing.

To my surprise, when I went home for Christmas, my stepfather was gone—for good. There was a Bible on the table, and Mom explained that a friend had invited her to church. She had accepted Jesus and was going to try to clean up her life.

I prayed to God, but although I had grown up going to Sunday school, I never knew much about him. I decided that if he could change my mom, even temporarily, then I'd better dig into religion. What I found through a





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college Bible study was that "religion" wasn't the issue. Jesus wanted to have a personal relationship with me. He cared for me *unconditionally*. That was a new concept for me, so when I discovered I didn't have to earn his love, I thought, *Where do I sign up?*

I wish I could say Mom's life truly changed after her encounter with the Lord, but it was only temporary. She professes salvation, but hasn't let God transform her life. I quickly learned I had to look at the source of my faith—Jesus, the sinless one—rather than my mother's example. Mom did lead me to him, however, and for that I'm forever grateful.

Through Christian therapy, prayer, and Bible study, I found that the key to breaking Mom's grip on my life was forgiveness. But how could I forgive her for years of abuse? How could I let go of my anger? I felt that would invalidate the devastation I felt.

It was only through the power of God that I could finally decide to forgive Mom. And once I made that decision, I felt my rage start to melt away.

After 17 years, you'd think I'd have it together, but I still can fall into the "victim mentality." Expecting my mom to encourage me in motherhood is just another hill for the Lord and me to climb together, but a supportive husband, close personal friends, and a journal help me defend myself against the void Mom leaves in my life.

I'll always feel disappointment at the lack of relationship with her. But as my healing has progressed, I've started to like myself more. I have to keep time spent around Mom to a minimum, and my day doesn't start until I've spent time with God. I know





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daily prayer and Scripture reading are the only ways to keep my self-esteem in check. As I've grown as a Christian, my need to please everyone has diminished, and I've learned to be less hard on myself instead of feeling guilty for not measuring up to an unrealistic, self-imposed standard.

Because of the Lord's help, I can honestly say I love my mom and want the best for her. My painful childhood and insecurity force me to keep God paramount in my life so I won't repeat the cycle of my upbringing with my children. I realize healing from a hurtful past is a life-long project. But God promises that with his help, I have the power to stay on track—and I believe him.

*Kay L. Lee is a pseudonym. This article first appeared in the September/October 1997 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *Kay says outwardly she appeared "perfect," even though she was tormented inside. How important has it been to you to appear "perfect" to the outside world?*
- *How does having to maintain a perfect image further add to the abuse experience?*
- *In what ways do you find yourself trying to be liked, loved, or appreciated by your abuser?*
- *How can you find that acceptance and security in God instead?*



## Facing an Unwelcome Truth



We can help bear the burden of battered women.

*By Janice Shaw Crouse*

**G**loria Steinem, an icon of feminism, often speaks—with irony and humor—of male oppression and patriarchy. She describes the persecution, oppression, and domination women have suffered throughout history at the hands of the Christian church. So goes the criticism of the relationship between Christ's church and women.

While we can't change such one-sided characterizations of the institution we know represents our risen Lord, our Deliverer from oppression, we needn't make it so easy for them either.



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### Facing an Unwelcome Truth

We must face an unwelcome truth: Many of the attacks on the church come from women who have experienced great pain in their lives, either because someone in the church caused their pain or they found the church impotent in response. One woman tells of being counseled to be "more submissive" so that her husband would quit battering her. Another describes a Christian organization covering up the abuse of children by a powerful executive. Yet another describes her abuser as a wealthy, well-respected leader in her church and community. Another woman, in telling about her journey of escape from domestic violence, reports that when she finally found the courage to approach a pastor, he responded: "God never gives us more than we can handle."

It is, of course, true that God gives us grace to handle the circumstances of our lives. However, it is also true that in his calculations of what we can handle, God intends that, in our earthly frailty, we will have earthly support.

As Christians, we are meant to be burden-bearers. We are meant to have a heart for the hopeless, for the weary, for the abused. And yet, the church needs to do better in this area. Too often, we have had our heads in the sand.

While recent federal data indicates that family violence has declined over the past decade, too many women still suffer violence. An estimated 1.8 million women are assaulted each year by the men they live with—mostly by boyfriends. Husbands account for only about 2 percent of violent attacks on women; strangers account for 44 percent.







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The only hope of redeeming those who suffer is through the love of Christ. And how will they learn the source of hope except through the body of Christ, his church?

And yet, our churches are not always safe havens.

Social respectability—and outward piety—don't indicate the condition of the human heart. Jeremiah expressed wisdom for the ages: "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked." Depravity easily coexists with respectability, sometimes for a very long time.

We don't want to believe it, but in the church we should be able to face that truth squarely. Even God's beloved King David became a murderer when he wanted Bathsheba. Scripture includes that story, and others like it, to remind us of what the human heart is capable.

Indeed, Scripture begins with a tale of violence, brother against brother, and ends with the vindication of the oppressed when Christ returns in glory to wipe away all tears. The psalmist tells us in the interregnum to:

Vindicate the weak and fatherless;

Do justice to the afflicted and  
destitute.

Rescue the weak and needy;

Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.

We have a job to do. Paul told the Galatians, "Bear ye one another's burdens." This was, Paul said, "the law of Christ."





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The weak and powerless are among us—sometimes just in the next pew. Some are so cowed by the hand of the wicked that they don't know how to get help.

Scripture uses the marriage relationship as a primary tutorial of Christ's love for us. The church is the bride of Christ.

This bride is not meant to be battered—neither are any of her members!

If we leave victims with nowhere to escape, the serpent will sidle up to them, spreading his evil snare by saying, "You're worthless. You're worthless."

"No," the church replies. "You are created in the image of God. You deserve our care and protection."

*Janice Shaw Crouse, senior fellow of Concerned Women for America's Beverly LaHaye Institute, writes regularly on cultural, family, and religious issues.*

*This article first appeared in the October 2005 issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY.*





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Facing an Unwelcome Truth

### Reflect

- *In what ways have you felt failed by the church or other Christians?*
- *How have you experienced fellow Christians bearing your burdens?*
- *How can you reach out to others who are hurting?*





## Sharing the Gift of Healing Hands

How Dr. Lori Hansen works to heal  
the wounds of battered women.

*By Jane Johnson Struck*

**F**or most patients, a visit to Dr. Lori Hansen's tastefully appointed medical suite in Oklahoma City means wrinkles erased, a nose straightened, or droopy eyelids discreetly lifted. But for others, it means removing the physical reminders of domestic violence—cigarette-burned cheeks, broken jaw bones—and the chance to finally put the past to rest.





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### Sharing the Gift of Healing Hands

Battered women are the beneficiaries of this compassionate facial plastic surgeon's skills—and of her brainchild, the National Domestic Violence Program. Started three years ago under the auspices of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS), this project links, via a toll-free number, abuse victims who normally can't afford reconstructive surgery to a nationwide network of physicians who donate their time and expertise.

Today some 550 plastic surgeons have performed more than 1,800 surgeries. But that's not many, says Hansen, 43, "when you consider how many women are in shelters, and that up to 70 percent of all their injuries are to the head and neck."

The National Domestic Violence Program was born out of Hansen's love for the Lord and desire to serve him.

"I started thinking about all the people who suffer from low self-worth because of scars or broken bones," Hansen explains. Sharing the vision with AAFPRS president Dr. George Brennan in 1994, the national program was born. Locally, Hansen has done, to date, more than 20 surgeries, one of which was movingly depicted on ABC's 20/20.

"Anytime you have an opportunity to come into contact with people, real ministry takes place. I can do all sorts of things to make people more attractive by the world's standards, but it doesn't change anything unless they allow the Lord to make changes from the inside out. That's what I pray they'll ultimately realize."

*Jane Johnson Struck is editor of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*





## Surviving Abuse

Sharing the Gift of Healing Hands

*This article first appeared in the July/August 1997 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

## Reflect

- *What wounds—physical or otherwise—do you need healed or repaired from past abuse?*
- *What potential ministries could be born out of your experience with abuse?*



## Additional Resources



### Books:

**Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse** by Steven R. Tracy (Zondervan, 2005; 272 pages; \$14.99).

**Into Abba's Arms** by Sandra Wilson (Tyndale House Publishers, 1998; 250 pages; \$10.99).

**Healing the Scars of Emotional Abuse** by Gregory L. Jantz, Ann McMurray (Baker, 2003; 224 pages; \$9.99).

**Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them: Breaking the Cycle of Physical and Emotional Abuse** by Paul Hegstrom (Beacon Hill Press, n.d.; \$10.99).

**Battered but Not Broken: Help for Abused Wives & Their Church Families** by Patricia Gaddis (Judson Press, 1996; \$9.99).

**No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence** by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark (InterVarsity Press, 2001; 168 pages; \$9.99).

**On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse** by Diane Langberg (Tyndale House, 1999; 325 pages; \$10.99).



## Organizations and Ministries:

**Childhelp**

<http://www.childhelpusa.org/>

800-422-4453

**Christian Recovery Center**

<http://www.christianrecoverycenter.org/>

612-588-2505

**Compassion Connection**

<http://www.compassionconnection.org/>

303-985-HOPE

**Focus Ministries**

[www.focusministriesl.org](http://www.focusministriesl.org)

**Incest Survivors Resource Network International**

[www.jericho.org/~jericho/\\_isrni.html/](http://www.jericho.org/~jericho/_isrni.html/)

**Mastering Life Ministries**

[masteringlife.org](http://masteringlife.org)

904-220-7474

**Mercy Ministries of America**

[mercyministries.org](http://mercyministries.org)

615-831-6987

**Mothers Against Sexual Abuse**

[www.againstsexualabuse.org](http://www.againstsexualabuse.org)

615-831-6987

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

[www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

**National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse & Neglect**

[calib.com/nccanch](http://calib.com/nccanch)







**Surviving Abuse**  
Additional Resources

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**National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse & Neglect**

[calib.com/nccanch](http://calib.com/nccanch)

800-394-3366

**New Life Clinics**

<http://www.newlife.com/>

800-NEW-LIFE.



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