



Delivered
from
the Abuser

by
Felicity Asher

"Delivered from the Abuser," by Felicity Asher, is a must-read for those who have struggled in, or are currently in an abusive relationship. The history of abuse is exposed by the author, and she gives you tips on how to recognize that you are in an abusive relationship. Many women and men who are in abusive relationships can learn a great deal from Ms. Asher. She's been there and knows the steps of getting out, not only to protect yourself but your children too. If you have a family member or friend, pass this booklet along—it could save someone's life.

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Introduction

The term abuse conjures up many thoughts. Abuse can be psychological, emotional, sexual, spiritual, physical or all of them combined. Unfortunately, the number of women affected by abuse runs in the multi-millions. My personal experience runs deep throughout this booklet and you may find you can identify with much of it. There may be parts that don't fit your situation but others that will. Abuse fits a pattern—that's what I attempt to identify and help to provide you with a way out. **It's important to know that as soon as you begin to unveil his* secrets to your abuse your danger will become greater. The higher-risk times for you are when you begin the process of leaving and when you actually leave.**

Something led you to obtain this booklet. It will help you answer this question: Are you trapped in a House of Hell when you originally thought it would be a home of love? Within these pages you will discover the way of hope, safety, support and comfort. God will deliver you, just like He delivered me. You can believe His promise in 1Peter 5:8-10 GW:

“Keep your mind clear, and be alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion as he looks for someone to devour. Be firm in the faith and resist him, knowing that other believers throughout the world are going through the same kind of suffering. God, who shows you his kindness and who has called you through Christ Jesus to his eternal glory, will restore you, strengthen you, make you strong, and support you as you suffer for a little while (underlining supplied by author).

There may be true-life accounts in this booklet that shock you. Portions may cause you to think I'm crazy. There will be other readers who recognize exactly what I am talking about. I've paraphrased what Jesus said, *"Be careful of religious imposters. They come to you looking like gentle sheep. But they are really dangerous like wolves."* Matthew 7:15

Before marriage, I was seeking a mate who would love and cherish me—the two of us walking with, and becoming one in the Lord. I thought I found such a man, but the mirage ended in less than 24 hours after we said our vows. The sheep's clothing was ripped off to expose a dangerous wolf. BUT WHAT NEXT?

*A note: I use the pronoun “he” to describe the abuser throughout my booklet. There are far more men who fit into that category, but it should be noted that some men suffer under the abuse of women as well. This work is for anyone who is suffering abuse and needs help.

Chapter 1

Honeymoon Sorrow

We were tired so we only traveled about an hour from our wedding location and overnighted at a quaint hotel before traveling on to our final honeymoon destination the next day. It had been a beautiful day and wonderful ceremony—white flowers adorned every area of the church. Hundreds of guests watched with joy from their matching white chairs. Everything seemed perfect—the wedding of my dreams.

Arriving in our room, Larry set his suitcase on the floor and opened it. His face immediately morphed into an angry grimace. *“What’s all this mess?”* He seemed possessed as he rifled through his clothes, getting angrier by the minute. *“It’s everywhere, just look!”*

His sister had, somehow, found our luggage and filled them with rice—the typical wedding prank. Throwing handfuls of underwear in the air, he began yelling at me, *“I thought you were supposed to take care of our bags—what did you do? Why in the world did you let her get ahold of our luggage? What is wrong with you? You have ruined everything!”*

My heart sank as tears began streaming down my face. I had been so excited and anxiously looking forward to this night. What had I done? Was it my fault? Had I spoiled our wedding night? Unfortunately, this first night was only a harbinger of the nightmares to come.

Chapter 2

Trapped in Hell

Larry walked through the door—saw what I was doing—and started slamming his fist through our living room wall. What set my husband off? I couldn't believe it. He was yelling and screaming so loud that his face turned red. *“How stupid can you be? You don't fry steak! Any idiot with half a brain knows that! Look what you've done, you've wasted my hard-earned money and wasted a perfectly good steak!”*

As I looked at the hole in the wall and watched him dump my wonderfully prepared meal of love in the trash, sheer terror gripped my heart—tears flowed down my cheeks, as my body shook. I thought I was going to die—I almost wished I could! In reality, the spirit of joy I once possessed was murdered that night and this silent crime of the roaring lion would happen a thousand times over during the course of our more than 20 years of marriage.

But what had precipitated this night of horror? We had only been married a few short months and I wanted to be the very best wife I could be. When it came to cooking meals for Larry, who loved to hunt and bring home game meat, there was a little problem. I was a vegetarian and had never cooked meat before.

I used a special cookbook my mom gave me as a wedding present. I searched and searched until I found the perfect recipe. It called for a special cut of steak to be fried with herbs and spices. This young bride worked feverishly to have the greatest meal prepared for my husband when he came home from work. I went to the market and picked out the perfect steak.

I dressed in a fancy outfit and was anxiously cooking—waiting for him to arrive home. But his arrival was not at all what I expected. It was not what I signed up for!

Yes, I was a young naive bride and unprepared for that horrific night which became the first of many similar violent episodes I would experience during my marriage. I was trapped in a living hell which grew more intense by the year. No matter how I tried to be a better wife, the suffocating oppression of the lion grew in intensity. The worst thing I continually heard was, *“It's all your fault. If you were better, you wouldn't cause me to act like this.”* I thought to myself, *“It must be so. If only I could do better, things will change.”*

Horrible thoughts continually haunted me, *“I'm living in a nightmare, but I said my vows before God and everyone. I didn't repeat the words the preacher handed me; no! I personally crafted my vows. I made promises and I am a woman of integrity.”* I knew I had no other choice but to honor the promises I made and to hold onto the hope that things would change.

I was taught that it wasn't appropriate to talk negatively about your spouse and air your dirty laundry to the world. Every Christian book I read on the subject seemed to make it plain that doing so could destroy a marriage. I had no idea what was happening to me—the continual harassment, the hot and cold conditional love offered to me, the conflicting thoughts and beliefs, would tie me in knots for years to come. The stress level of dealing with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde on a daily basis would eventually run me down mentally, then my immune system began to fail and, eventually, it came close to ruining my life both physically and emotionally!

Still, I thought Larry would change if I did... because I was brainwashed to believe it was all my fault.

Chapter 3

The Eyes of the Devil

The event was surreal, the pain was excruciating—not only physically but emotionally. As I leaned out, Larry started slamming my head in the truck door while shouting, *“It’s either me or your family! You decide right now!”*

I’m sure I suffered a concussion and was shell-shocked enough to believe I’d better go with him or else! I was terrified but I rationalized in my mind that, *“I made my vows and God said you must leave your family and cleave to your husband.”*

And so, I did. I left and cleaved!

I recall few details of the nearly three-hour car ride home, but distinctly remember going to my office later that night, after Larry fell asleep. I wanted to talk to my family, but I was too frightened to make the call from home. During the conversation, my brother’s wife told me, *“I will pay for the cost of the divorce if you want to leave him.”*

I naively replied, *“No, no, it’s okay—he apologized. And it was probably my fault for getting in the way of the truck door. He didn’t mean to cause me any harm.”*

Don Hennessy, in his book, *How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser*, speaks to the professional counselor regarding the futility of counseling when it comes to the Abuser:

“Many of the skilled offenders relish the idea of their partner seeking help for her problem. They can use this information to emphasize that she is the one with the problem. They can increase their criticism of her because she remains inadequate in spite of the best efforts of the counselor.

“Talk therapy will not counter ongoing brainwashing. We must first find a way to protect her mind. She has been invaded by a ‘virus’ that has destroyed her emotional boundaries.”

(Underlining is mine)

I was unaware, at the time, that he already had me in his grasp. We decided to go to a counselor. I asked my parents to join us because they were there when the truck door incident took place. I didn’t realize experts (who specialize in abuse situations) never recommend counseling together as couples in abusive marriages (reason found in Chapter 8) My mom and dad agreed, and we met with a friend-counselor one evening. Looking back, I especially remember what my dad said during the session. Speaking about eye contact with Larry, he said, “When he looked up at me—it

was like looking into the eyes of the devil.” But the counselor quickly dismissed my dad’s concerns... he really misunderstood the whole situation.

Chapter 4

Brainwashed

The horrendous events I've shared with you, so far, occurred within our first year of marriage. And that was just the beginning! You may say, "*You should have left him, he was crazy.*" But, by this time I was fully infected by the virus he continually spread... it's called brainwashing. My sister-in-law and I were talking the other day and we figured that it took Larry and his tactics about six months to completely infect me and destroy my immunity and take full control of my mind. He had already placed his own straightjacket on me.

I had little to no idea I was being abused. I always believed domestic violence—abuse—was when your partner beat you up. That wasn't happening to me, so I honored my vows and stayed with him. Why? I had been taught when you get married, it's for life. But I was to discover later on that his actual abuse began the moment he met me.

Many professionals will agree with the following statement: On the very day he met me and said hello, he began his plan of abuse. By the time I walked down the aisle and said, "*I do,*" I was fully conditioned by him to believe everything he told me—"*It's ALL your fault.*"

Toward the end of my marriage ordeal, I found a test called the Brainwashing scale. It rates how severely you have been brainwashed. I took the test and scored a 223. According to the test's creator, anyone scoring 161 or higher is considered to have been brainwashed using terror tactics!

As bad as this sounds, it was great news to me. It meant that I was not crazy. I was not brain dead. I really wasn't getting dementia at my young age. I was not off in left field. NO, the test proved that I had been the target of real brainwashing just like the first brainwashing that occurred in the Korean War.

That's right. Brainwashing is a psychological torture technique first used on a large scale by communist China during the Korean War. It's based on isolation and intimidation. The abuser works to overcome the resistance of the prisoner. The final results allow the abuser to implant new ideas into the mind of the subject.

In his book, *Brainwashing and Manipulation*, Joseph Cooper, explains, "Psychological manipulation involves actions of mental distortion and emotional exploitation to exert control over a person, with the aim of obtaining a certain benefit or objective. Unlike healthy social influence, a common phenomenon in constructive win-win relationships, the emotional manipulator takes advantage of his victim by generating an imbalance of power that he uses to his advantage. When

this type of relationship is established, there is a clear "winner" the emotional manipulator, and a "loser," his victim.”

I think the following old frog tale has been disproven but it still makes my point:

If you toss a frog in a pot of boiling water the frog will jump out, BUT put a frog in a pot of room temperature water and the frog will simply hop around. If you continue to slowly heat the pot to boiling, the frog won't recognize the danger because he slowly becomes accustomed to the temperature change—he accepts it as normal.

The grooming process—slowly heating the water—occurs when the abuser employs tactics, such as gently pushing the target's boundaries. He creates a cycle of grooming her. He first befriends her mentally, then he severs that connection, then the grooming cycle starts all over again. Befriending, reoffending and befriending again. This cycle repeats over and over again until you can no longer grasp the reality of the situation. These are the mind games that he plays, just as it happened in Korea during the war.

A quick way to sum up the preceding paragraph would be: Intermittent rewarding followed by punishment. You may find yourself saying, “He isn't all bad, all the time. Sometimes he is charming, caring, and loving. That's the real him, not this other guy...that's not him. I'll try my very best and then my guy will be here for me.” A perfect example of brainwashing.

How does it happen? How can anyone stay with someone who treats them like a captive? Have you ever heard of Stockholm Syndrome?

In 1973 several men entered a bank and took four people hostage for six days. They kept them in the bank vault while the police attempted to negotiate their release. As told by History.com, “Holed up inside a cramped bank vault, the captives quickly forged a strange bond with their abductors. Olsson draped a wool jacket over the shoulders of hostage Kristin Enmark when she began to shiver, soothed her when she had a bad dream and gave her a bullet from his gun as a keepsake. The gunman consoled captive Birgitta Lundblad when she couldn't reach her family by phone and told her, ‘Try again; don't give up.’”

When hostage Elisabeth Oldgren complained of claustrophobia, he allowed her to walk outside the vault attached to a 30-foot rope, and Oldgren told *The New Yorker* a year later that although leashed, “I remember thinking he was very kind to allow me to leave the vault.”

Although eventually rescued, the victims did just about everything they could to protect their captors. The hostages even refused to testify in court against their former captors. The world was stunned.

That's where the term "Stockholm syndrome" came from—it's what happens between hostages and captors—abusers. That's why a bank captive could say, "I remember thinking he was very kind to allow me to leave the vault." Seriously? He was very kind? Brainwashing is real! It happens all the time—maybe it's happening to you, to your best friend, to your neighbor or a relative.

*His words were smoother than cream,
but there was hatred in his heart;
his words were as soothing as oil,
but they cut like sharp swords.*

Psalms 55:21 GNB

Chapter 5

The Serpent

“The huge dragon was thrown out—that ancient serpent, named the Devil, or Satan, that deceived the whole world. He was thrown down to earth, and all his angels with him.” Rev 12:9 GNB

Stockholm syndrome has been around for far longer than 1973—in fact, we can trace it back to the Garden of Eden, in the beginning of time, when our first parents were taken psychologically captive by the devil’s lies. You can find the whole story in Genesis 3 but here are just a few verses to give you the idea of what happened. Note: The devil possessed the snake, or serpent, to speak through it to Eve.

“Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the LORD God had made. The snake asked the woman, ‘**Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?**’ ‘We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden,’ the woman answered, ‘except the tree in the middle of it. God told us not to eat the fruit of that tree or even touch it; if we do, we will die.’ The snake replied, ‘**That’s not true; you will not die.**’” Genesis 3:1-4 GNB

I bolded the two statements to call your attention to them. The first statement by the devil was, “**Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?**” The devil was simply questioning—placing doubt in Eve’s mind. Notice step two: He openly assaulted the reality of the situation and the believability of God: “**That’s not true; you will not die.**”

Speaking of the devil;

“...When he tells a lie, he is only doing what is natural to him, because he is a liar and the father of all lies.” John 8:44 GNB

Please take a moment and go back to the Introduction page in this booklet and re-read the Biblical texts I shared. The devil hates God and, therefore, you. He, and those who listen to him obtain great pleasure in controlling you... working as the lion and the wolf in sheep’s clothing, “***You are causing all the problems in this marriage!***”

Ellen White, in an article written for the *Review and Herald*, said it best: “This spirit of deception in evil-doers is the spirit of their father, the devil. Even in heaven, before the light and glory of God, Satan thought to hide his secret thoughts and rebellious counsels. He employed such consummate wisdom in covering his real character and aims that legions of the angels of heaven were deceived, and they fell from their loyalty to the God of the universe to serve the prince of darkness. The same art of deception is displayed by those who partake of the enmity of Satan, and follow in his course of rebellion.... To cover the enormity of sin with the garment of light and

innocence, has been the practice of the evil one from the beginning. Thus, it is that he has been successful in alluring souls to transgression and destruction.” RH March 27, 1888

My story and that of my abuser is not a unique one. The abuser is a meticulous planner. There are many men (and some women) who maintain an outward appearance of being upright and godly. They put on the persona of being wonderful in public, but they transform into demons among family, in the secrecy of their own home. Talk about planning, it is known that the abuser lays plans before the first date.

“Before the abuser initiates contact with a prospective long-term intimate partner, he has already developed some very strong beliefs and attitudes. In his own mind he knows what he needs from an intimate relationship, and he is convinced that he is entitled to have these needs met. He is also convinced that these needs outweigh any cost to his prospective partner.” — Don Hennessy, *How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser*

Did you notice, his needs outweigh the needs of a partner. That perfectly fits into the definition of an abuser.

The world, the church, your next-door-neighbor. and you, must realize abuse is not new and it can be deadly. It originated in heaven with the first abuser—Satan. One day he looked in the mirror and decided he was far more handsome and had an intellect exceeding that of God Himself. He decided he would sit in God’s throne. We find that account in Isaiah 14:13,14 KJV: “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” He started as a narcissist but rapidly progressed into the first abuser.

The first thing he did was to hide his true intentions using an outward display of, “*I care about you.*” I can imagine the devil going to the angels and telling them, “*You are so good, you deserve better than what you are getting. If I were in charge, I would improve your quality of life.*”

This brainwashing continued until it precipitated “war in heaven.” We find the Biblical account in Rev 12:7-9. “And there was war in heaven: Michael [Jesus] and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

A few verses prior, we find that one third of the stars [The term for angels] were cast down to earth. Imagine that. Beings who had everything they could ever desire—were deceived and

brainwashed by the first abuser— the one the Bible refers to as, “the father of lies.” The fallen angels chose the devil over God, who had given them everything that was good.

Chapter 6

Target Selection

The Serpent had a chosen target and so do his followers. They don't randomly wander around and grab the first good-looking woman they find. They are systematic, just like the devil was when he picked the serpent to speak through in the garden. He also picked the location and his target—Eve.

The average person thinks that to be abused, you must be weak, a pushover, or maybe a little 'slow upstairs'—just doesn't know how to deal with a real man.

In the area of religion, the average church member believes that if there are problems in the marriage, you simply need to get it together and make it work! The same thing applies to most pastors. As I share with you in chapter 8, I went to a pastor and asked what I should do about several 'red flags.' This was prior to marriage. He brushed them off as no big deal. "Marriage always has bumps." More than he ever knew.

When I was in the midst of my escape plan, I found great comfort in the thoughts of Natalie Hoffman, *What Kind of Woman Does an Abusive Man Target?* When I was feeling like I was worth nothing, the following list from Natalie bolstered me up a lot, and helped me to continue. I realized I had some great traits despite what I had been hearing for the past 20 years.

"The emotional abuse target can be anyone. She can be a business owner. An attorney. A professor. A doctor. An author. A homemaker. A company president. A Police officer. And contrary to the opinions of those who don't understand how abuse works, she isn't targeted because she can't stand up for herself and has low self-esteem.

"She's targeted for her strengths. And they are many. Here are a few of her strengths—specific strengths that are sought out by an abusive man and used against her.

1. She has the kind of character that **puts the needs of others before her own.**
2. When she makes a commitment, **she sticks to it.** She is faithful and trustworthy.
3. She takes responsibility for herself and those around her. She's a **woman of integrity.**
4. She is **generous to a fault**—giving more than she takes and doing it with pleasure.
5. She is kind and compassionate. **Empathy oozes from her pores.**
6. She is intuitive and sensitive to the emotional environment around her. **She picks up on tone and body language,** and she adjusts her approach accordingly.

7. She is forgiving. **She will forgive and forgive and forgive** – without being asked. Her love is deep and wide.
8. She is patient and long-suffering. She will endure the attacks of her partner, **believing in his potential as a human being.**
9. She is courageous. **She survives the rejection of her love and the dehumanization of her spirit,** and still, she goes into each day with hope.
10. She is **resourceful.** She takes what she is given and multiplies it even though she is offered only criticism and rejection in return.
11. She doesn't want to betray her abuser. **She is loyal and doesn't desire revenge.** All she wants is to be treated with honor, as a human being.

This kind of woman, when paired with an emotionally and spiritually healthy man, *can co-create a beautiful marriage.*”

Did you notice the many wonderful character traits you possess? You are actually a pretty great person. Your abuser picked the best. And you will soon rise up because of who you really are!

Chapter 7

Brainwashing 101

Adam and Eve (the targets of Satan) were persuaded to give up their perfect existence in exchange for eventual death. That's BRAINWASHING 101 as taught by the Serpent to his followers. Today, he has many pupils in his class!

What is Brainwashing?

Merriam-Webster's concise encyclopedia states that brainwashing is a "Systematic effort to destroy an individual's former loyalties and beliefs and to substitute loyalty to a new ideology or power... The techniques of brainwashing usually involve isolation from former associates and sources of information; an exacting regimen calling for absolute obedience and humility; strong social pressures and rewards for cooperation; physical and psychological punishments for noncooperation, including social ostracism and criticism, deprivation of food, sleep, and social contacts, bondage, and torture; and constant reinforcement...."

I could have asked what Domestic Abuse is and would have been provided the same definition.

In her book, *Women Who Love Psychopaths*, Sandra L. Brown, exposes the mind of the abuser. "Abusers do not feel the way we normally think of what it means to feel.... many if not most abusers detach from their feelings at an early age. Instead of feeling, they observe how other people behave, and then mimic those behaviors appropriately. In this way, abusers become expert behaviorists without taking a step inside a classroom.

"They know what works and what doesn't work to manipulate you to do what they want. And because they've detached from their feelings, abusers do not feel guilt for their manipulative actions. This is probably why abusers cannot take responsibility for what they've done to you or admit they abuse you (with lasting regret). They do not comprehend that any wrong took place and may think that your fear and tears are merely a show designed to manipulate them, and baby, they ain't fallin' for it.

"In short, abuser's use brainwashing techniques naturally because 'the set-up' is all they know."

Sometimes he will be the most charming, loving, tender person she knows, and then like turning off the light switch, the raging lion or wolf appears. Brainwashing and manipulation begin by getting a woman to doubt herself—*it's really all your fault!*" Remember what the serpent said? "**Did God really tell you not to eat the fruit?**" He attacks your intuition, your perceptions, your very thoughts, and ideas.

I'll provide an example: Larry walked through the door and a short time later said to me in an accusing voice, "*Why did you ignore me when I got home from work?*" Puzzled, I answered, "*I didn't ignore you. I got up, greeted you at the door and tried to give you a kiss but you walked right past me!*" Larry replied, "*No you didn't, I walked in the door, and you walked right past me ignoring me, never saying hi or even acknowledging my existence.*"

This interaction caused me to doubt my own memory. "*Did I do that?*" I felt very confused, sad, hurt, and upset with myself. I thought, "*How come I am trying so hard to be a good wife, yet I am failing so miserably? The person I vowed to love forever thinks I am doing a horrible job at loving them. What am I doing wrong?*"

In his book, *Coercive Control*, Evan Stark wrote: "If abusive relationships were filmed in slow motion, they would resemble a grotesque dance whereby victims create moments of autonomy and perpetrators 'search and destroy' them."

Dear reader, are you following me as I lay out the pattern that develops with the abuser? He sets unreal expectations that you can never meet and then gets angry because you don't! He constantly changes the rules of the marriage—never letting you know what those rules are! If you get close to figuring them out, he quickly changes them again. An article I found in apost.com nailed the process:

"An abusive partner's mission is to control you and make you think the way they do. Your opinions and views on topics are irrelevant to them and you lose your voice over time. You may feel obligated to make them happy by doing what they wish, but this is never enough. The abusive partner will continue to isolate you from your family and friends and put you through physical/emotional/psychological/sexual abuse. It never stops. There's no light at the end of the tunnel."

In his book *How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser*, Don Hennessy shares some powerful guidance to his fellow counselors:

"We can encourage our clients to desist from revealing the effects on them of any particular behavior by the offender. We can encourage our clients to see the effects as planned. This planning is a consequence of the stored information that has been gleaned from the target woman. ...

"The practice of 'keeping one's cards close to one's chest' ... begins to change the monologue that goes on in the mind of the target woman. She stops analyzing how he might react to any opinion she might have about her life or her relationship. She can gradually restore her ability to examine these thoughts and ideas against her own criteria and value system. She can allow the voice of her instincts, quietened for so long by her abuser, to be heard again inside her head.

“When she begins to diminish the power of his voice in her head, she will develop the capacity to make decisions that are unique to her.

“I have told many of my clients not to talk to or listen to their abusive partners. This instruction is anathema to most counselors and especially to couples’ therapists.”

“What can be really useful for our client is if she can develop the practice of not revealing [to her abuser] her inner life and the emotions that are evoked by the abuser.”

In other words, stop providing the abuser with the tools to keep brainwashing you.

Chapter 8

How Come Everyone Else Thinks He's Wonderful?

This question continually burned within me like a brush fire. How could I and the children know him for who he was but no one else did? For 20 plus years we saw him as a time bomb that would go off with no warning—spreading shrapnel everywhere!

I believe Lundy Bancroft, in his book *Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* lays out the perfect answer of **how come everyone else thinks he's wonderful**.

“Most abusive men put on a charming face for their communities, creating a sharp split between their public image and their private treatment of women and children. He may be:

- Enraged at home but calm and smiling outside
- Selfish and self-centered with you but generous and supportive with others
- Domineering at home but willing to negotiate and compromise outside
- Highly negative about females while on his own turf but a vocal supporter of equality when anyone else is listening
- Assaultive toward his partner or children but nonviolent and non-threatening with everyone else
- Entitled at home but critical of other men who disrespect or assault women

“The pain of this contrast can eat away at a woman. In the morning, her partner cuts her to the quick but a few hours later she sees him laughing with the people next door. Later the neighbor says to her, ‘Your partner is so nice. You are lucky to be with him.’

“The abusive man’s charm makes his partner reluctant to reach out for support or assistance because she feels that people will find her revelations hard to believe or will blame her. If police arrest him for an assault, his previous people-pleasing lays the groundwork to get him off the hook. The observers think, *He’s such a nice guy, he’s just not the type to be abusive. She must have really hurt him.*

“One of the most important challenges facing a counselor of abusive men is to resist being drawn in by the men’s charming persona.”

Even the best of counselors will admit that most of these guys—including doctors, attorneys, corporate leaders, college professors and more—are so good at portraying how great they are it is

difficult to not take their side in a husband/wife session. At times, even their employment status lends credibility to their façade.

Be very discerning with counselors. Before we were married, I thought there were a few “Red-flags” so we went to our pastor for marriage counseling. Everything I saw as a potential Red-flag was explained away by the pastor. As you have read, he was 180 degrees wrong!

Knowing these things will give a heads-up. Remember, don't go to any sessions together...you will come away the loser! He will use all of the information you shared at the session to abuse you even more.

Chapter 9

Identifying the Abuse Part 1

In apost.com an article spoke of perspecticide. A general definition would be the following: often part of a strategy of coercive control that may include manipulation, stalking, gaslighting and physical abuse. Erasing a person's thoughts, feelings and perspectives.

Lisa Aronson Fontes, a psychology researcher at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, defines the term perspecticide as “**the incapacity to know what you know**” —essentially, when someone has convinced you that all the lies are true, you’re no longer able to process what’s real and what isn’t.

The abuser attempts to confuse and destabilize their partner in order to gain power and increase their control. They do so by slowly erasing you. Do you find that you are left with only the outer shell of yourself? Has your spunky character, strength, happiness, and independence been replaced? Do you resonate with the list below?

1. You Doubt Your Self-Worth

An abuser’s first target is your self-worth. You are not easy to control if you speak up for yourself and make your own decisions. (My note: They will quickly make sure to cut you off at the knees, so you no longer stand up for yourself. If you do stand on your own, there will ALWAYS be hell to pay) An abuser will make you doubt your talents, opinions, choices, interests, and beliefs. This can result in feeling ashamed and unworthy, and you may find yourself giving in to your abuser’s lies.

2. Your Thoughts, Feelings, and Perspectives are Erased

An abusive partner will try to destabilize you to feel in control, which is often achieved through physical or psychological means. By interrupting your daily routine to make sure your sleep patterns are disturbed, gaslighting, ignoring your feelings, or responding with violence, your partner exhausts you into submission.

3. You’re Isolated from Your Family and Friends

If you find yourself losing touch with your social circle and seeing your family less and less because your partner does not approve of you spending time with them, then this is another clear sign of perspecticide. The goal is to make you feel less independent and strong, which is exactly what limiting your time spent with people outside of your abuser does. You are easy to control if you do not have outside influence or support.

4. You're Micromanaged

Abusers want to decide what you wear, where you go, what you eat, when you sleep, where you work...the list goes on. If you can't go shopping without your partner accompanying you to decide what you buy, or frequently receive unsolicited comments about your body and habits, then your partner is trying to push you to question yourself and eventually give in to their demands and ideas.

5. Defining You

An abuser wants to make you feel bad about yourself. By telling you that people find you gloomy or uninteresting (most of the time these comments are completely fabricated), they make you lose self-esteem and begin to doubt your nature. This, coupled with being isolated from your friends and family, may make you feel like there's no point spending time with anyone besides your partner, which is what they want.

6. They Create the Relationship Rules (My note: They regularly change the rules, so you never know what to expect.) An abusive partner decides the rules of the relationship (which are often unreasonable) and if you do not abide by them, then you are seen as a selfish partner who must face the consequences. This is often interspersed with kindness and affection so they can make you feel guilty if you're not reciprocating, a phenomenon called trauma bonding.

Victims of perspective experience many types of gaslighting behavior and may feel disoriented and confused about themselves and the situation they're in. If you feel like you're in an abusive relationship, be safe. Seek help, and support. You can contact your local Domestic Violence shelter or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Later in this booklet, I provide resources to help you.

Please don't forget this: **Your abuser will NOT change.**

There's a story of a river that was flooding due to a massive rainstorm. A fox arrived at the bank of the river—wanting to get to the other side. He decided to swim across. As he stepped in the water a scorpion shouted, "Hey, I need to get to the other side too. Can I ride on your back?" The fox replied, "You'll sting me!" The scorpion responded, "No, no, I won't, I would drown too if I stung you." "Ok," the fox said. "Hop on." Halfway across the river the fox felt the stinger in his back. The fox looked up as he was drowning and said, "Why did you do it?" Clinging to the last bit of fur, the scorpion said, "Because I'm a scorpion, it's my nature!"

Your life is too precious to be trapped in a relationship with someone who is dangerous and who is harming you and will keep doing so.

Chapter 10

Identifying the Abuse Part 2

This second list is from Sarah McDougall. Her website: <https://www.wildernesstowild.com>. The following list provides examples of Domestic Violence.

1. Child Abuse

- Threatening to harm the children
- Threatening to take away the children
- Refusing to comply with child support
- Using children as leverage
- Belittling you in front of children
- Using children to keep you silent
- Abusing your children

2. Cultural Abuse

- Using culture as an excuse for mistreatment
- Putting down your culture
- Forcing you to accept or embrace his culture
- Isolating you from mainstream cultural practices
- Using culture to keep you silent
- Using language barriers to isolate you
- Not providing translation when you can't understand

3. Emotional Abuse

- Incessant teasing
- Invalidating your feelings
- Using guilt to manipulate you
- Blame you for everything
- Acting jealous (calling it protective)
- Threatening you
- Withholding affection
- Waking you up from sleep
- Stalking your whereabouts
- Stalking your social media/electronic devices
- Giving you the silent treatment

4. Financial Abuse

- Limiting your access to money
- Not sharing bank accounts
- Requiring an account of every penny spent
- Making financial decisions without you

- Controlling the income and cash flow
- Closing accounts without telling you
- Creating debt, you didn't agree to or know about
- Wasting resources
- Not paying child support
- Taking care of their own needs but neglecting yours or the children's
- Calling welfare to interfere with income
- Confiscating your income or cash

5. Intellectual Abuse

- Saying you're over-sensitive
- Saying you're crazy
- Manipulating information or facts
- Attacking your ideas
- Devaluing your opinions
- Demanding perfection
- Playing head games
- Making you prove things
- Shaming your tastes
- Insulting your education
- Dumbing you down

6. Pets & Property Abuse

- Destroying property
- Breaking or smashing things
- Punching walls
- Slamming doors
- Hurting pets
- Damaging your car
- Confiscating your car keys
- Keeping your identification or Driver's License
- Controlling your access to GPS or computers/phones
- Selling items w/o telling you
- Keeping cash from selling your things
- Threatening to do any of the above

7. Physical Abuse

- Driving too fast or recklessly
- Slapping or hitting
- Kicking, punching, or biting
- Pinching or twisting
- Restraining you
- Choking you
- Spitting on you

- Intimidating you with actions or gestures
- Throwing things at you
- Using items other than hands to hurt you
- Locking you out of the house
- Making you sleep outside
- Blocking exits, not letting you leave

8. Psychological Abuse

- Saying things and then denying it later (gaslighting)
- Intimidating you with words or gestures or actions
- Displaying weapons
- Threatening to commit suicide
- Threatening to hurt you
- Threatening to kill you
- Minimizing actions or threats after the fact
- Making it sound like you misunderstood or made it up
- Controlling your access to food
- Dictating what you eat
- Using gestures or body language to control you through fear

9. Sexual Abuse

- Using pornography
- Demanding that you use pornography
- Demanding sex as payment
- Withholding sex
- Criticizing your body sexually
- Comparing your sexuality to others
- Having an affair
- Threatening to have an affair
- Forcing sex
- Manipulating sex
- Sexual put-downs
- Sexually abusing others

10. Social Abuse

- Isolating you from friends
- Isolating you from family
- Monitoring your phone calls
- Monitoring your emails/social media
- Monitoring your mileage
- Controlling who you are allowed to see or talk to
- Controlling your freedom to work
- Controlling your freedom to get educated
- Keeping you at home

- Not allowing equal access to social interaction
- Telling you not to talk about your relationship with others

11. Spiritual Abuse

- Using scripture to excuse abusive behavior
- Using scripture to manipulate you
- Twisting scripture to gain power
- Putting down your beliefs
- Isolating you from your faith community
- Using his church to his advantage over you
- Refusing to get counseling
- Dictating who you are allowed to see for counseling
- Using scripture to keep you silent
- Soul-destroying behavior

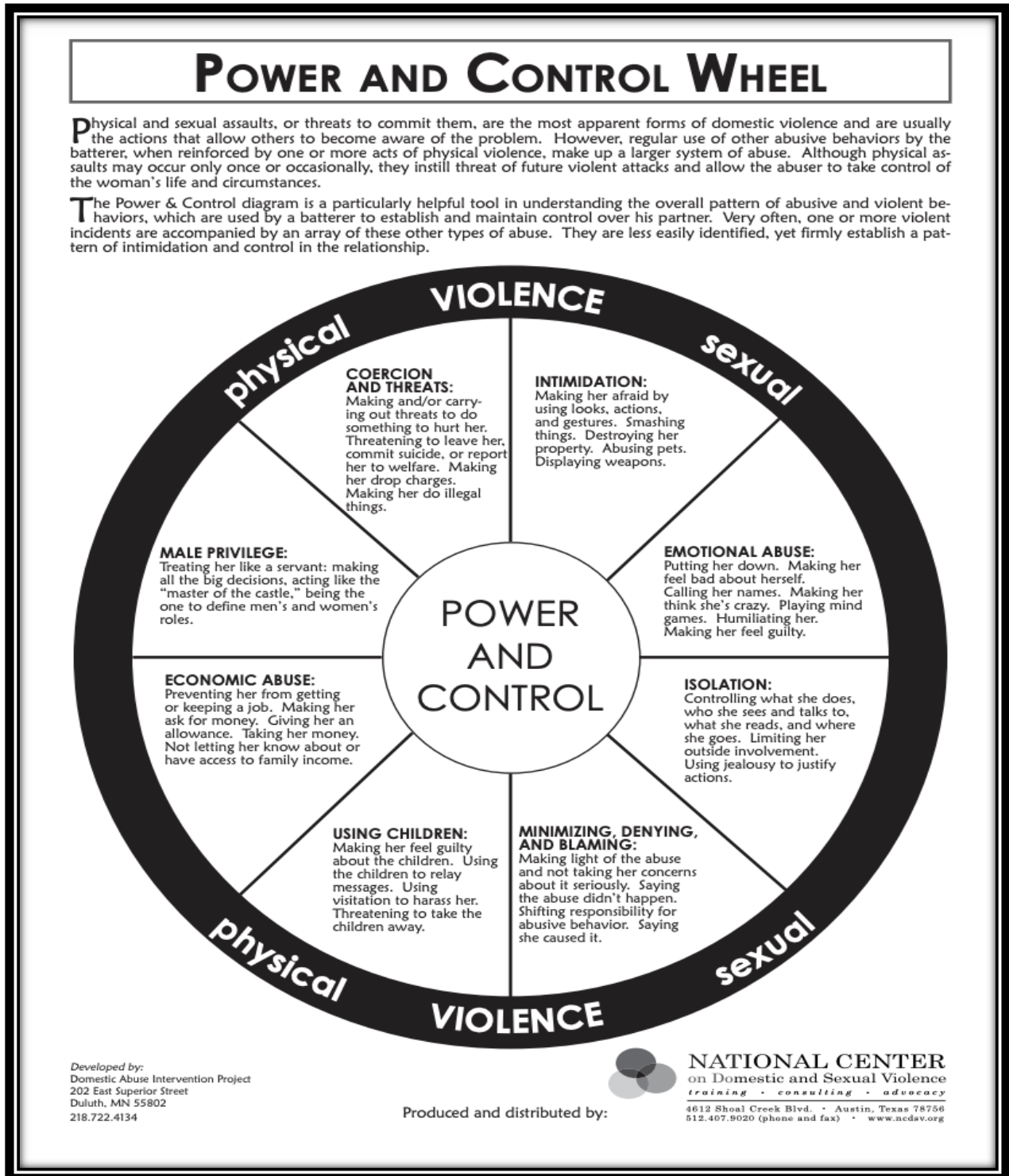
12. Verbal Abuse

- Calling you names
- Swearing at you
- Yelling or screaming
- Using sarcasm to put you down
- Being condescending
- Insulting you
- Body shaming you
- Cutting you off in conversation
- Telling you to be quiet around other people
- Intimidating you

13. Power Abuse Lies at the Core of All Abusive Systems

- Creates chaos and conflict by turning people against each other, misrepresenting situations
- Twists past event to gain control
- Credit hog—acts like they get everything done, doesn't give healthy credit where it's due
- Delusions of grandeur, believes they are smarter/wiser/stronger/richer/more powerful than others are
- Refuses to get counseling, refuses to allow spouse to get counseling
- Projecting addictions as spouse's w/o taking responsibility
- Racist/elitist—diminishes/ridicules culture, color, gender, age, status—believes their own identity is superior

Familiarize yourself with the patterns of these cycles. The following graphs will help you visualize and internalize them.



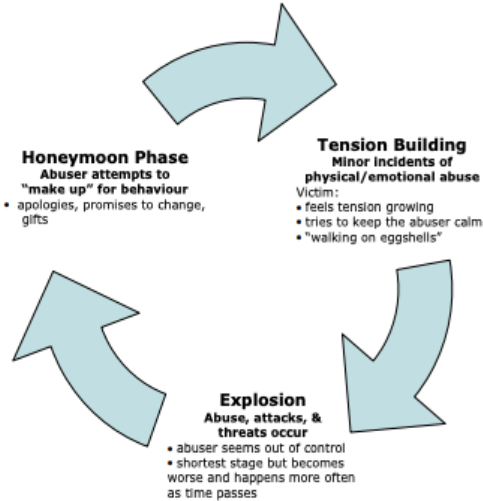


family
transition
place



519-941-HELP
905-584-HELP
1-800-265-9178
TTY: 519-942-1651

The Cycle of Abuse



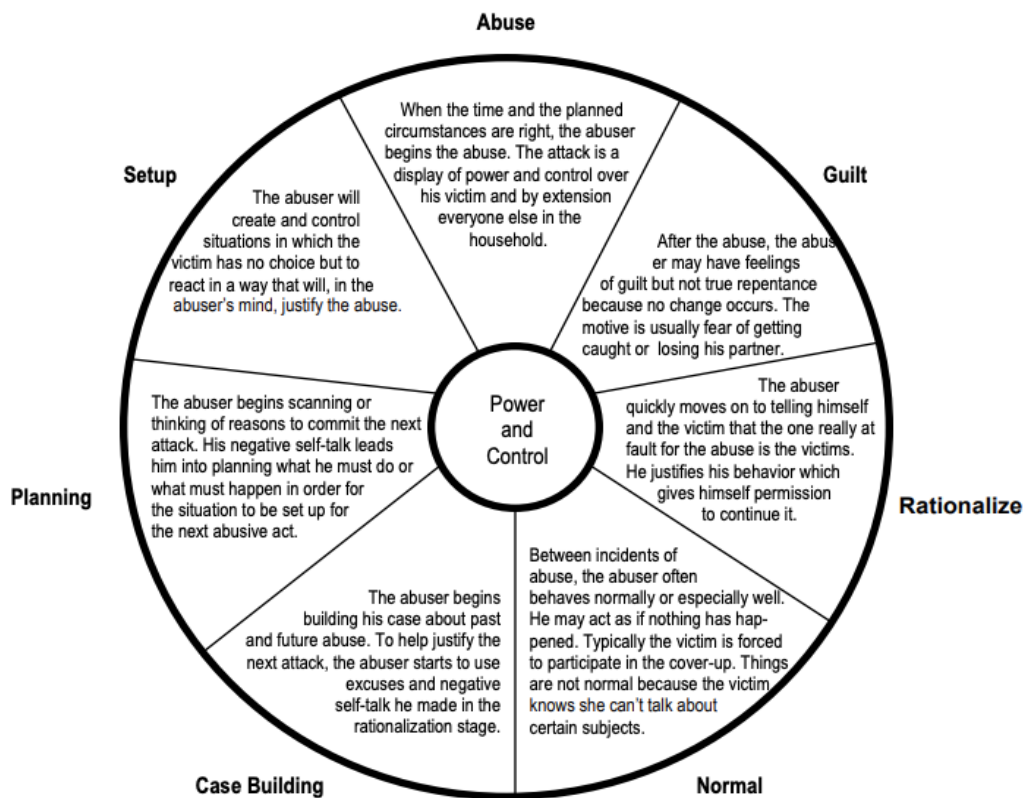
The Cycle of Abuse can happen hundreds of times, once or not at all in an abusive relationship.

Each stage lasts a different amount of time. The total cycle can take anywhere from a few days, weeks or even a year to complete.

- If there is no intervention, the abuse can become worse and happen more frequently as the years continue.
- In this cycle, women's fears increase, they lose personal power and control, and they minimize and deny the abuse in order to survive.

Phase	Abuser May:	Woman May:	Effect on Children:
Tension Building May include: pressure from others: bill collectors, parents, pressure about money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick fights • Act jealous & possessive • Criticize, threaten • Use alcohol, drugs • Be moody, unpredictable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel like she's walking on eggshells • Try to reason with/calm/appease abuser • Keep silent, keep children quiet • Feel afraid or anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify behaviour to avoid anger • Manipulate either parent for own benefit • Assume parental role • Use drugs, alcohol • Run away to escape
Explosion May include: actual physical/sexual violence, increased verbal abuse, threats of harm to children, pets, belongings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blame victim for provoking abuse • Increase control over money • Restrain partner • Destroy property • Assault/abuse physically, verbally, sexually, emotionally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience fear, shock • Protect self/children • Use self-defense • Call for help • Try to flee, leave • Pray for it to stop • Do what is necessary to survive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May get hurt trying to intervene • Attempt to hide and be frantic • Display acting out behaviour • Become clingy or withdrawn
Honeymoon Abuser apologizes, looks for forgiveness, manipulates victim to "make up", makes promises (get counselling, stop drinking, go to church, change behaviour) Peace, even keel, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for forgiveness • Promise it won't happen again • Stop using drugs, alcohol • Be affectionate • Initiate intimacy • Minimize or deny abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgive • Return home • Arrange for counselling • Feel hopeful • Feel manipulated • Blame self • Minimize or deny abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be unable to believe in or trust either the victim or abuser • Blame

The Cycle of Abuse



Violence is any act that violates another human being.

Chapter 11

Anguish

I kept thinking things would change but they never did. The more I submitted to his will, the more he abused my trust and love. His plans to control and destabilize my entire life were coming to fruition.

Even now, I find it difficult to share this story with you—it left some big scars. But today, thanks to the Lord, I can handle scars!

I had reached a point where I didn't think I could take being married anymore, though I still didn't know I was in an abusive marriage. I was working full time, caring for my small children, doing all the housework, taking the kids to their many events, shuttling them to school, helping with homework, cooking three meals a day, caring for our animals, and finishing up my master's degree. It's no stretch to say I was exhausted mentally and physically.

I asked Larry for help one time—just one time! We were on a rare date without the children. During dinner I mustered up the courage to ask for a little help. *“Honey, can you help me a little bit once in a while around the house because I just can't keep up with everything anymore?”* Immediately the date was over. I was scolded. *“How dare you ask me for help!”*

On the tense car ride home, I caught it again. *“What is the matter with you? You're a horrible wife! You ruined our date. I had everything planned just perfectly.”* What on earth was I thinking, asking for help? He dropped me at home and took off flaming mad. He continued blaming me for ruining our rare night out together as he drove away.

Between his volatility and his endless rants and rages, I was at my wit's end and considered leaving but knew I couldn't just give up on my marriage, so I wrote down my absolutes. what I wouldn't tolerate. If that list of items happened, I was going to leave.

Some time prior to this, I was told how horrible and untrusting I was. You see, I had a problem with him taking a buddy's girlfriend to dinner and the movies. He had some reasoning that he thought explained the need. But I was the one who was horrible.

My heart began beating so hard, I thought it was going to leap out of my chest. Holding Larry's phone, I stared at the screen. I could barely grasp what my eyes were seeing. Viewing the content broke my heart into a million pieces. I now had proof of what my gut had been telling me for years. I wanted to run, I wanted to hide, I wanted to scream and cry. I wanted to die.

And here the line was crossed. I found not only pornography on his phone but messages back and forth with other women. Even a text inviting another woman out.

I was sick to my stomach! I felt like a cheap, discarded piece of meat—something you might find in the trash can in the grocer’s butcher section.

I carefully crafted my words of confrontation—they would be different this time. For years I asked Larry about using pornography. His answer was always the same. “*No of course not, honey.*” I naively believed him. Now I had the undeniable truth in front of me.

I had him dead to rights but still, I didn’t want to tear apart my family. And crazy as it may sound, a small piece of me was a tiny bit relieved because I thought wow, this is what has been wrong in my marriage all my married life! This is why it has been a living hell! This is the reason. Now that we have diagnosed the problem, I reasoned, we can fix it.

I didn’t realize that the use of porn is a just symptom of abuse—to one’s own self and the spouse. It’s not the disease, it’s the symptom.

The days and months following my discovery were excruciating as I untangled the web of lies, deceit and unfaithfulness. I remember talking to my mom on the phone and she would tell me, “Honey, you sound like you are dying, like you are half dead!” She had no idea what I was going through... I was still in the “You don’t talk about your marriage to anyone” mode

Truth be told, I was dead. It was difficult for me to drag myself out of bed in the mornings. Both the physical pain and mental pain ran deep. It took every ounce of strength and courage I could muster just to drag myself out of bed. Had I not had my wonderful children and a job, I would have stayed in bed. It was hard to exist.

I felt like a failure as a woman, a wife, a human being. I felt gross. I felt unlovable, unworthy, icky, ugly and self-conscious. The discovery of pornography and communication with other women completely stripped me of my womanhood!

Remember the words of the previous chapter:

Your abuser will NOT change. You must understand and remember this important fact. And being abused is NEVER your fault! Your abuser is completely aware of what they are doing. They know they are harming you and it is on PURPOSE!

Chapter 12

Time to Plan

If you find yourself in a domestic abuse situation as I did, not only is it potentially very dangerous but unfortunately it is also very difficult to find help. There are not many Christians or counseling professionals who understand the true dynamics of an abusive person. The abusive person is far too clever for most professionals—don't forget who taught them everything: the devil, the Father of all lies. I reached out to numerous counselors over the years but couldn't find anyone who understood the situation. My abuser was so skillful that the problem with our marriage was always identified as me.

At the time I was mentally preparing to exit my marriage, God directed me each step of the way. He revealed the depth of Larry's abuse and how to get away. He guided me to the very people I needed to connect with in order to prepare my way to liberty. Through the process of slowly backing away, I learned that nothing I did controlled his abusive cycles.

For years I believed my actions had something to do with his patterns of ups and downs, but it became evident that the cycles were of his own doing. It was a major revelation to realize that nothing I did controlled the cycles that overshadowed my life. There was no rhyme or reason—except for special occasions. I could plan on a violent episode anytime there was a holiday, birthday or special event the kids were part of. Those events always meant hell was going to explode!

If you think about the special event situation, it's easy to understand. An abuser cannot stand attention going anywhere but toward him! This was especially true when it came to the children's programs and events. He was extremely jealous of them for receiving attention.

So how did I get out of my extremely volatile, highly abusive marriage with two children? As I said, the Lord slowly revealed the truth to me of why my marriage had always been so incredibly painful—it is hard to view from the inside. God led me out of my marriage just as he led the children of Israel out of Egypt and bondage.

The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you,
just as he did for you in Egypt....
Deuteronomy 1:30 ESV

Does God hate divorce? Yes, He does but if the continuation of marriage would place the family in worse condition or danger, I know of no scripture that would condone staying in a situation of

abuse. God hates the abuse of his own! So, if you identify with anything I have written so far, it is time for you to start planning your exit by mentally shifting your personal, internal narrative.

You must begin by dispelling the myth: You are not the problem in the marriage. Understand that he is his own problem. You must trust yourself by relying, once again, on your own perceptions of the situation. Listen to your internal voice. Your experience is real. You did all you could. Don't let him alter your truth of any situation. Deep down, you know the reality of the circumstances. He has caused you to lose your balance, but you can get back to center. Grab onto that truth—your truth—and you will become stronger and stronger.

Chapter 13

Helpful Material & Resources

In this section you will find three lists of resources. 1) Trustworthy counselors/support team 2) Reading and study material. 3) App downloads. The key is that this booklet can be your launching pad to freedom. I am sharing material that helped me and many other women to get out of our abusive situations safely. Begin to read and study these resources as much as you can.

Seek counsel from your local or **national domestic violence center**. Ask for an experienced advocate who understands the specific types of abuse you are experiencing. **Hotline: 800-799-7233**. They can help you create an escape plan.

Select a person or people you can count on to provide experienced counsel and positive support. You must be wise and careful regarding the people you choose. Your life, and the life of your children could depend on it. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, many counselors don't understand the dynamics of the toxic abuser (see chapter 7)—most pastors fit into this area as well. It is important to find someone experienced and trained in abuse, and trauma to help you create an escape plan.

In order to help you, most of the resource people I have listed have walked in your shoes. They understand, to the depths of their souls, the trauma, fear, and turmoil you are experiencing. They understand the potential danger and volatility of your situation. And couples counseling is absolutely not recommended in circumstances of Domestic Violence. Couples counseling can be incredibly dangerous to the victim because everything the victim says truly will be used against her by the abuser.

It is extremely crucial to understand that in an abuse dynamic you don't have a communication problem, nor do you have a couple's problem. You are with an abuser and **the ONLY one**—let me repeat—**the ONLY one** who can alleviate the abuse is the abuser!

In his book, *Why Does He Do That?* Lundy Bancroft shares a conversation he had with the abuser when in his office, “Your problem is not that you lose control of yourself, it's that you take control of your partner. In order to change, you don't need to gain control of yourself, you need to let go of control of her.”

You can't change him, God can't change him, only the abuser can change his actions toward you by allowing God into his heart to mold and shape him as God desires and sees fit! The abuser is not your responsibility and God won't force his will or force changes upon anyone. And sadly, these changes don't happen very often. Their long history of abuse and general mindset makes it

extremely difficult for them to imagine being in an equal and respectful relationship with you. Nor do they have any desire to do so.

Be wise; don't try to convince people about the reality of your abusive situation. If they don't understand, accept it and move on. Ask God to send you a few close people who will join your team—don't take this journey alone.

Beware, even the families of many women side with their abuser and disown her. Remember, Adam and Eve sided with the devil and left the father for a time. I was fortunate enough to have my family beside me on my journey out. The bond with my family was a bond that my abuser tried desperately to break but thankfully to no avail. He strategically cut me off and isolated me from my friends, but he wasn't successful at his attempts to isolate me from my family. Praise God because I don't think I would have survived or gotten out without them.

In the book of Job, the record says great devastation and sorrow fell upon Job. He lost his family, his homes, his livestock and he was hit with a massive medical problem. Through it all, God was with him, and Job was with God.

Through this ordeal, God was with me, and His promises became more and more precious to me. I realized His promises are personal to each one of His children—you and me. Here are a few special ones. I encourage you to memorize and claim these passages

“The LORD your God is going with you, and he will give you victory.” Deuteronomy 20:4 GNB

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31
ESV

“Do not be afraid—I am with you! I am your God—let nothing terrify you! I will make you strong and help you; I will protect you and save you. Those who are angry with you will know the shame of defeat....” Isaiah 41:10,11 GNB

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” James 4:7 KJV

My body was shutting down and my mind was a mess. I thought I had a severe case of dementia before I was 40! I couldn't eat anything without getting sick to my stomach, my hair was falling out, and I found it incredibly difficult to function and nearly impossible to drag myself out of bed in the morning—which is a huge sign of depression. Larry was killing me a day at a time. I began to reach out to many of the resources I have listed below.

Take heart and have courage. The road you have journeyed on thus far hasn't been easy. The road you have ahead of you will not be an easy one either, but you are amazing, strong, brave, a warrior, and God will help you rise from the ashes and the wreckage to bring you into spectacular beauty and form a powerful connection with Him.

1) Trustworthy counselors/support team

- a) Sarah McDugal ~ <https://www.wildernesstowild.com/>
- b) Dr. Michael Brooks ~ Applicable Counseling and Coaching Services – <https://applicablecoaching.com/>
- c) Tina Swithin ~ One Mom’s Battle - <https://www.onemomsbattle.com/>
- d) Natalie Hoffman ~ Flying Free
 - a. Coaching program: <https://www.flyingfreenow.com/about-flying-free>
- e) Sarah K. Ramsey ~ <https://sarahkramsey.com/>
- f) Megan Fox ~ Give Her Wings - <https://www.giveherwings.com/>
- g) Think Differently Academy - <https://tdacad.com/>

2) Reading and study material

- a) Natalie Hoffman - *Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage: A Christian Woman's Guide to Hidden Emotional and Spiritual Abuse*
 - i) Book available on Amazon
 - ii) Website: www.flyingfreenow.com/
- b) Gretchen Baskerville - *The Life-Saving Divorce: Hope for People Leaving Destructive Relationships*
 - i) Book available on Amazon
 - ii) Website: <http://lifesavingdivorce.com/>
- c) Sarah K. Ramsey - *Becoming Toxic Person Proof*
 - i) Book available on Amazon
- d) Lundy Bancroft - *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*
 - i) Download here: <https://sa1s3.patientpop.com/assets/docs/85477.pdf>
 - ii) Book also available on Amazon

- e) Sarah McDugal - *Systems of Abuse: A Guide to Recognizing Toxic Behavior Patterns*
 - i) Book available on Amazon
 - ii) Website: <https://www.wildernesstowild.com/>

- f) Tina Swithin - *Divorcing a Narcissist: One Mom's Battle*
 - i) Book available on Amazon
 - ii) Website: <https://www.onemomsbattle.com/>

- g) Don Hennessy - *How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser*
 - i) Book available on Amazon

- h) Don Hennessy - *Steps to Freedom: Escaping Intimate Control*
 - i) Book available on Amazon

- i) Leslie Vernick - *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage: How to Find Your Voice and Reclaim Your Hope*
 - i) Available Here:
<https://un184.infusionsoft.app/app/storeFront/showProductDetail?productId=12>
 - ii) Website: <https://leslievernick.com/>
 - iii) Helpful Article: <https://leslievernick.com/whats-the-difference-between-a-difficult-disappointing-and-destructive-marriage/>

- j) Domestic Shelters.org - <https://www.domesticshelters.org/>
 - i) Helpful article: <https://www.domesticshelters.org/articles/identifying-abuse/what-are-the-power-and-control-wheels>

3) App downloads

- a) *Bright Sky App*: *Bright Sky* is a free to download mobile app providing support and information for anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know. This app enables you to document and safely store evidence of abuse. It provides an encrypted journal that is synced to the cloud. Helps assess the safety level of the relationships and helps develop a safety plan.

- b) *Trauma MAMAs App*: *Trauma MAMAs* is a mobile app bringing life-changing toolkits for mamas after trauma ~ <https://www.wildernesstowild.com/wild-traumamamas-mobile-app>

Chapter 14

Further Help

I created the following acronym and found it to be helpful for me and for others.

A.S.H.E.S:

A – Awareness ~ Many times victims are not even aware they are in an abusive relationship. Abusers, like the devil, are very cunning and crafty when applying their tactics. Becoming aware of your true situation can be scary, confusing, painful, and dangerous. As God reveals the true condition of your marriage relationship, remember to be patient with yourself and give yourself a lot of grace. Pray for God to reveal the truth to you. This can be a long journey as you awake from your slumber.

S – Safety & Support ~ If you are in an abusive relationship, you may be in danger! If you think you are in such a relationship, ask God for both His council and to guide you to a godly, earthly counselor who has experience with trauma and domestic violence as well. Both will help guide you on your journey to stability and happiness. In addition, contacting the National Domestic Violence Center or your local women’s shelter may be necessary in some situations. Your life and happiness may depend on it! Do ask God to guide you to those who will believe your story, will provide safety, support, and give you hope.

H – Hope ~ Be confident, my dear sister, that Jesus is with you and does not condone the oppression you find yourself in. He will be with you and guide you as you lean on Him and His truth, moment by moment!

E – Embrace ~ Embrace the reality that you are God’s royal priestess. You are His chosen child.

S – Self-Talk and Self-Care ~ It is imperative that you take time to care for yourself. As Christian women, sometimes we have been conditioned that this is selfish. You are a princess! You are God’s child and if you don’t care for yourself, who will? This may be a foreign concept to you but start small. Spend five minutes taking a walk, or reading, or taking a bath or eating a healthier meal. Fill your mind and your heart with truth. Your self talk is critical to your healing journey. Flood your mind with truth from your creator and combat the lies of the devil with scripture. Instead of saying, “I am not enough,” replace that thought immediately with “I am a chosen daughter of God.”

Chapter 15

What if I'm not the victim of abuse but I want to help?

If you are not in a domestic violence situation but know of someone who is, here are some ways you can be supportive. Again, using my A.S.H.E.S. acronym, I created the following:

A.S.H.E.S:

A – Awareness ~ The devil likes to keep hidden in the dark what abuse really is. He likes to hide the truth. In my experience I wasn't even aware of what abuse really is. I always thought it was bruises and black eyes. This however is untrue! Creating more awareness will help shine light in the darkness and the devil's tactics.

S – Support ~ If a woman confides in you that she is scared, hurting, confused, and may not know why, believe her. It doesn't matter how amazing and kind you think her husband may be. She mustered all the courage she could find to speak out in truth.

H – Hope ~ Please don't tell her she must pray more but pray for her and with her. Chances are, if you are in the presence of a Christian domestic violence victim Jesus is all she has, and she is hanging on to him with every desperate fiber of her being.

E – Encouragement ~ Being a victim of domestic violence is **NEVER** the victim's fault. The perpetrators know how to hand pick women who have certain amazing qualities and use those against her and to his benefit. Let her know that being treated this way is NOT God's plan for marriage. Refer back to her strengths found in chapter 6. You may have additional qualities you can add. She is likely confused, scared, and very emotional. Lift her up. Help her see her value and her strengths.

S – Speak ~ Speak life and truth over her. God's truth, that she is an amazing daughter of the creator of the universe. Let her know she is loved, valued and treasured. If you want to help end domestic violence and support the victim, awareness is key to shining the light in the dark corners. Shine light on what abuse really is. Get to know the list presented in chapter 10 of the 13 abuses from Sarah McDugal. Familiarize yourself and others with the traps used by the devil to enslave women into thinking they are turning the other cheek for their God when truly it is just another way for the devil to suppress them further into the depths of an earthly hell!

To increase your understanding of abuse, the following is an informative and helpful resource:
Megan Fox—Give Her Wings <https://www.giveherwings.com>

Chapter 16

Safety Planning & Strategy Tips

A safety plan is an outline that includes ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave.

The most dangerous and deadly time in a domestic violence situation is when you leave or if your partner finds out you are planning on leaving. Be safe!

As you make the shift to freedom, you are challenging his absolute authority. All life revolves around his wants, needs, and desires. Any pushback against him will be viewed as a violent attack against him. In his reality, you will have become violent against him. That means, in his mind, he is fully justified in using force against you to bring you back in line. Even if he has not physically attacked you in the past... he may now.

As you make plans, you will begin collecting information, study material, etc. Soon you will be writing certain things for plans and preparations. **DO NOT LEAVE ANYTHING ANYWHERE THAT CAN BE FOUND BY HIM.**

1. **BE SAFE!** Your life could be in danger - This is serious. Every move you make or don't make can be the difference between life and death. Each circumstance is uniquely different, and it is crucial that you seek wise counsel because the counsel you seek could either cost you your life or save it! If you are in immediate danger, call the police. Get to your nearest Domestic Violence Shelter (DVS), get to safety. Even if there hasn't been violence in the past and you are in an abusive situation, this could change in an instant—especially if your abuser gets any suspicion of you wanting to leave.
2. If you have children, their lives could be in danger as well! If you or they are in immediate danger, call the police. Get to your nearest Domestic Violence Shelter, get to safety.
3. Go to your local DV office. This is an **important step** in creating your map for getting out safely.
4. Prepare a Go Bag. Have it packed and ready at all times. If you have kids, have a bag packed for them as well. You will need to get creative when deciding where to safely keep the bag. Keep it at a friend's house. If you don't have friends, keep it at work. If you don't have a job, if you have any current access to a gym or somewhere with lockers, you could utilize. If you can't find a way, keep a few items in your car or your purse like a toothbrush and some toothpaste. You can begin carrying those items around the same time you have a

dental appointment or something that provides an easy explanation that your abuser might accept. You don't want to call any attention to changes in your behavior. Your abuser already goes through everything you own so they know the contents of your car, your purse, your briefcase, your backpack etc. This means you may get questioned for any items you start carrying that are new or different. Have a valid reason for why you are doing so. Don't create suspicion or a cause to accuse you of cheating. Carrying a toothbrush could raise suspicion and be dangerous for you because your abuser might think you are sleeping with someone else.

5. Pray for God to guide you in every move you make, and He will. This is the most valuable and important relationship you need to build ...now. Spend time in prayer, spend time in study. It is probable that your mind is like scrambled eggs, and it is crucial you start healing your mind and renewing the connection with your Creator. He can restore your mind. It is imperative that you start thinking clearly and you are in tune with Him and can hear the Holy Spirit's prompting. If you ask Him to guide you safely out, He will. It is highly possible that you will be in for the long haul. It might not happen overnight, but it is imperative you get out as quickly as you can. And once again if your life is in immediate danger seek emergency help right away!
6. Ask God to send you someone you can trust, rely on and connect with to help you to safely get out. If you are a woman this needs to be another woman. This is imperative! For so many reasons this person must be another woman... not a man. If you have no friends and have been cut off from having anyone in your life, this could be challenging, but God will send you someone. Be patient and get connected with God and He will guide you.
7. Take care of yourself. Take time to exercise, relax. Spend time in the sunshine and as much time in nature as you possibly can. If you are unable to get outside, practice breathing deeply and looking up using your peripheral vision. This can help calm your nervous system. Eat healthy and get as much sleep as you can. Ask your doctor about taking a good vitamin and Vitamin D3.
8. Gretchen Baskerville wrote *Life Saving Divorce*, in which she outlines steps to take and documents that you will need to gather for the divorce process. Again, find a safe location to collect and store these items.
9. THIS IS CRUCIAL. Start a journal immediately documenting the abuse and the dates. Be very careful, **your abuser could potentially discover it**. Keep a journal electronically only if you are 100% positive he won't gain access to it. Keep it at work or someplace safe. Think about using Evernote. It's password protected. You could also create an email that you access only from a work computer or a computer that your abuser doesn't have access

to. The library or somewhere like that. Create the email and document abuse by writing the email and sending it to the same email address. You will be sending it to yourself. That will time stamp and date abuse or any other critical items that need to be dated.

10. Don't second guess yourself or your instincts. Don't let anyone talk you out of what you know and what your body tells you to do no matter who thinks he's AMAZING! Top abuse counselors will tell you that one statement they hear from women is, "*How come everyone else thinks he's wonderful?*" The answer is because he is very good at what he does. Stick to your plan of escape.
11. Pray for God's guidance. Here is what he is saying to you: "**If you wander off the road to the right or the left, you will hear his voice behind you saying, "Here is the road. Follow it."** Isaiah 30:21 GNB The key is this; when you study His word and talk to Him in prayer, you learn to recognize His voice.
12. Pick one small thing every day that you can accomplish —something you can complete that will empower you... it will be a step towards your preparation to get out safely. The more you empower yourself, the more strength you will gain. Then tackle something that will help you detach from your partner—something he won't notice. For instance, delete a picture of the two of you from your photos archive on your phone.
13. Only if it is safe to do so, begin speaking to as many lawyers in your area as you can, glean advice, talking strategy, interviewing them, learning what they understand about abuse and what they know about DV. Ask them who the key players are in your court system. While most attorneys offer free consults, some will charge, but it can be well worth it. When the time comes for hiring an attorney, if you have talked to the best ones in the area, your spouse can't use them... If you can't safely go in person, have phone consults from a safe location.
14. Check out Tina Swithin. She is the founder of *One Moms Battle* and writer of the series, *Divorcing a Narcissist*. She has many resources that are free and will help you strategize for court.
15. Take the lethality quiz. Make sure your score is shown and you have the date you took it. <https://thelaurelcenter.org/quiz/lethality-assessment/> . This quiz can be a potential guide to the severity of your danger.
16. Get the book *The Mind of the Intimate Male Abuser* by Don Hennessy. I found them online for \$14.95 and up. Appendix 4 has a quiz called the brainwashing scale. Take the quiz and date it. You may be able to find the quiz online.

17. Take the *Emotionally Destructive Marriage Assessment* by Leslie Vernick:
<https://leslievernick.com/the-emotionally-destructive-marriage/assessment/>
18. Start gathering any materials that your abuser could use against you in court. For example, if you need to prove he is a horrible father, **SAFELY** get rid of cards or love letters you have given him stating what an amazing father he is. If you want to keep these things, put them in your safe location.
19. If you receive or have received any nasty texts, emails, etc. from him, save them.
20. If he scares you at all - yells and screams etc., call the police so there is a record of it. At some point, you may want to or need to seek a restraining order against him. Remember—this is real!
21. I was always too scared to do this, but a friend wanted me to install hidden nanny cameras in my house. I was terrified they would be found but perhaps if you already have something like this you can somehow use it to your advantage. I finally did install them after he left the house...God's doing.
22. I suspected he had placed hidden cameras or audio equipment in my house. Larry worked nights and I feared he would listen or record the kids and my conversations, so we were **EXTREMELY** careful what we talked about in our home. You should be too.
23. I also suspected that my phone was tapped so I never had any conversations that could be dangerous to me. Be sure all calls for your exit strategy are not made from your phone. There may be spyware on your phone to allow your abuser to listen to your conversations and see your texts without ever touching your phone. Consider purchasing another phone... just for you.

The following is a partial list of cellphone strategies from www.cryingoutforjustice.blog

- a) Lock your cellphone with a passcode and don't share it with anyone
- b) Turn off the GPS on your phone
- c) If you have Apps connected to online accounts on your phone, do not stay logged in after each use.
- d) Turn off Bluetooth when not in use
- e) Check your phone's account online about once a month to know all the features running on your phone.
- f) If available, run anti-virus and security software on your phone. Some software will list everything that is running on your phone.

24. Think of it this way; you have entered the world of Spy-craft. Start thinking like a spy...you don't want to get caught. You may have a tracker on your car placed there by your abuser. Careful.
25. Familiarize yourself with the different types of abuse (See list in chapter 9). This will help you understand and articulate in court exactly what is going on. Remember, when you are finished with your search, delete your search history as soon as you are finished.
26. If you can safely do so without your abuser knowing, record heated conversations or altercations. As soon as it is safe, send those files to your safe location (see below).
27. Create a Gmail account from a safe computer that he doesn't have access to and only log into it from that computer—this will give you an email and also Google drive where you can store files, documents, journals etc.
28. If he has written and authorized medical power of attorney authority over you, revoke it immediately! Record a video stating your name, birthdate, age, and date of recording and keep it in the drive revoking his medical power of attorney. Write a written revocation and have it notarized and keep it in your safe place. If you have located a trustworthy friend, give them a copy of the document.
29. If you have the financial resources, have a new will drafted.
30. Record a video stating the date, your name, your birthdate. State your fears and some specific events of abuse you and or your children have experienced.
31. Start changing your passwords to things you don't want him to have access to. And add dual factor authentication.
32. Be aware that the more steps you take to safely get out, the more the abuse can escalate and become more volatile and dangerous.
33. If you are able to get a PO Box of some kind just in your name that you can pay cash for, do so. This will help you with items for your research, etc.
34. Open a bank account in just your name and have any mail sent to that PO Box. If you receive any type of card with your new account, do not keep it in your wallet! Your abuser will find the card. And don't keep the account number, or anything related to the account, anywhere your abuser has access. Remember; Spy-craft! Examine this site:
<https://cryingoutforjustice.blog/resources/safety-planning/>

35. If you have an old friend you haven't spoken to in years, she may be your best advocate. I hadn't really spoken to my maid of honor in over 20 years even though we lived in the same town (*I had strategically been cut off from her*). She IMMEDIATELY was there for me with whatever I needed. True friends are this way. They understand.
36. Start mentally preparing yourself for not being with your spouse. A little daydreaming can be good. The more detached you can become the better. This is war and there are different rules for peace time and there are different rules for war time. This is the war of your life.
37. Start mentally preparing your strategy plans for getting out and a time frame you believe God is leading you toward. It might be right now, this very instant. It might be today. It might be tomorrow. Everyone's circumstance is different and possibly dangerous as well. Be safe!
38. You've got this! God has you. Every day take some time to write down your blessings. I know that some days it might be nearly impossible to think of any BUT it is imperative for you to keep strong and keep moving forward. Before you go to bed at night write down the date and 3 things you are grateful for that day. If it isn't possible for you to safely do this (without your abuser finding the list) then at least recall 3 things from the day. If you are able to write them down and keep track, then do so. This will be imperative for your journey out. You will be able to look back and see God's hands providing blessings to you and guiding you on your journey out of Egypt. If you can't think of any blessings, do what one preacher said, "Hold your breath for 5 minutes and then see if you can think of a blessing."
39. If you have kids, hug them often...and hug them again! The strong love of a mother can help to overcome the destruction the abuser has attempted to sow in their lives.



talkingdonkeyinternational.org

Postscript

After escaping the nightmare, I found it hard to write this and re-experience the stories I have shared with you. There will always be scarring left from the attacks of the lion and the wiles of the serpent, but the key is; God enabled me to get out. He will be with you on your journey too. The truth is God loves you so much He died for you to save you for eternity.

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 8:32 GNB



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Dedicated to DJW

Encouraging Scripture

I urge you to read the following scriptures. Memorize them and claim the powerful promises God has given to you. He loves you with an everlasting love.

And I'll prevent the devourer from harming you, so that he does not destroy the crops of your land. Nor will the vines in your fields drop their fruit," says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies. ~ Malachi 3:11 ISV

Whoever goes to the LORD for safety, whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty, can say to him, "You are my defender and protector. You are my God; in you I trust." He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers and from all deadly diseases. He will cover you with his wings; you will be safe in his care; his faithfulness will protect and defend you. You need not fear any dangers at night or sudden attacks during the day or the plagues that strike in the dark or the evils that kill in daylight.

A thousand may fall dead beside you, ten thousand all around you, but you will not be harmed. You will look and see how the wicked are punished. You have made the LORD your defender, the Most High your protector, and so no disaster will strike you, no violence will come near your home. God will put his angels in charge of you to protect you wherever you go. They will hold you up with their hands to keep you from hurting your feet on the stones. You will trample down lions and snakes, fierce lions and poisonous snakes. God says, "I will save those who love me and will protect those who acknowledge me as LORD.

When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them. I will rescue them and honor them. I will reward them with long life; I will save them." ~ Psalms 91 GNB

But no weapon will be able to hurt you; you will have an answer for all who accuse you. I will defend my servants and give them victory." The LORD has spoken. ~ Isaiah 54:17 GNB

My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. ~ 2 Samuel 22:3 ESV

Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy ~ Exodus 15:6 ESV