



Through the Valley #1: Behind Closed Doors

This program is called “Her Journey” because healing from domestic abuse is a step-by-step process for each individual woman. Each lesson provides you with a piece of the map to help you find your own way Through the Valley, Past the Shadows, and Into HIS Light (God’s light). God’s light brings truth and healing to us and everyone else. The only way you can get to where you want to go, is by taking one step at a time. Your *journey* begins when you choose to open the door and expose what has gone behind the doors of your own life.

“Her Journey” is loosely based on PSALM 23.

In this lesson, we will be talking about verse 1, from the Amplified Bible Translation:

“The Lord is my shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me]; I shall not lack.”

Is the Lord your shepherd? Making God Lord of your life means being willing to follow *His* lead. He wants to feed, guide, and shield you because He loves you. He knows what is best for you. Maybe you’ve accepted Him as your Savior, but have not known how to let Him fully be your leader. This lack of trust could be because of the abuse you have suffered; you may not be sure you can actually trust Him yet. Fortunately, God understands how abuse has damaged your ability to trust and He has seen everything that has taken place behind your closed doors. The community around you may think your abuser is the nicest person and may even refuse to believe you when you begin to share details of what you have experienced, but God has not missed a single detail. It saddens and angers Him to see what you have endured. Begin asking Him to show you how trustworthy He is, so that your heart can fully trust in Him.

God does not see domestic abuse as an adult abuse issue. He sees it as a child abuse issue. For we are His children and He does not want His children to be abused. Imagine if you sent your daughter to school and while she was there, someone harassed, abused, and frightened her. When she came home crying, with her shirt torn, you would not tell her to simply pray harder, nor attempt to win her abuser over with a quiet and gentle spirit! You would go down to the school, find out who did this to your child and ensure something would be done about it. If the abuse continued, you would not think twice about removing your child from that environment! Since God loves us even more than we could love our own children, why would He not do the same for you? Would He not come and rescue you at all costs?

Sometimes abusers quote verses to make you do what they want. Sometimes well-meaning pastors, counselors, and friends quote verses that can make you feel like the abuse is our fault, implying that if you could just pray harder, fast more, and submit to God more, that things would surely change. This ultimately sends a subtle message that you are the one responsible for your partner's change in attitude and action. This can leave you feeling trapped, like you have no options, and that you are failing. Yet, the ability to choose is a gift from God that He has given to each of us. He will not take this power of choice away from you or anyone else. While praying for your abuser is a good idea, your responsibility ends there; the rest is between him and God. He is responsible for his attitudes and actions. You cannot pray or fast abuse away. Your abuser must choose to change for himself. Regardless of whether he chooses to seek help or change, you get to choose healing for yourself.

An important part of God's nature is that He is balanced. God carefully holds His principles of law and love in His hands. It is important to remember that at the heart of God's Word is LOVE. When someone separates the heart of God's Word, from the law of God's Word they are abusing God's Word. God's main motivation is always love.

Let us look at a verse often quoted to abused women. Malachi 2:16 says: "God hates divorce," while never bothering to quote the rest of the verse. Let us look at it from the Amplified Bible Translation:

"For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I hate divorce and marital separation, and him who covers his garment [his wife] with violence. Therefore, keep a watch upon your spirit [that it may be controlled by My Spirit], that you deal not treacherously and faithlessly [with your marriage mate]."

God hates divorce because He knows the devastation it brings to families, but notice The Word does not say 'God hates people who divorce'. He hates the pain of divorce brought to individuals, families, and society. This is much like the emotions you feel when you see stories of innocent people on the news being harmed. God truly does understand why divorce happens. There is an appropriate time to draw a boundary but obviously, divorce was never the way God planned it to be. In Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:8 God says He gave Israel her certificate of divorce. God has His limits therefore, people should also have limits.

There are many boundaries we can draw. Not all marriages have to end but sadly many abusive relationships do end in divorce. The reason for this is that you cannot make another person change. You only have power to change yourself. You cannot change yourself in order to change your abuser. The abuser must choose to change; must

choose to get help for himself. Therefore, we pray for change. If he does not choose to change, you will need to ask yourself and God some hard questions about His will for your life. This program is not here to promote divorce, we simply believe that **if you want to save your marriage, the abuse has to end**. Abuse is not what God intended when it came to marriage. During these lessons you will begin to learn some steps to help bring an end to the abuse in your life and to know what God is calling you to do in your situation.

Psalms 23:1 says, "I will not lack." What does an abused woman lack? She may lack knowledge and understanding about abuse issues. We want to educate you, so you won't lack this valuable information.

Abuse is not normal, everyday marriage conflict. It is not about being mad at one another. **RATHER**, domestic abuse is about power and control. A normal miscommunication in a marriage involves a degree of conflict and an occasional power struggle, whereas, an abusive relationship, one person is using a pattern of power and control to get the other person to think, feel, or act in a way they want. Abuse is never about being mutual or even doing what is right; it is about winning and controlling a person(s) or situation(s). His abusive behavior is played out in a cycle.

INSTRUCTION: *Hand out Abuse Cycle and explain it to the group and give examples.*

Abuse is a learned behavior; you either learn to give it or learn to take it and in some situations, people have learned both. Because abuse is learned, the good news is anyone can learn new, healthy ways to live life and ultimately end the cycle of abuse.

Domestic abuse comes in many forms and degrees. There is everything from the most obvious, which is physical abuse, to subtler instances, like emotional mind games. All abuse brings death in one way or another.

INSTRUCTIONS: *Please pull out the Types of Abuse Chart in your folder to follow along. This is not an exhaustive list. Anything can be used to abuse or control another person.*

Physical Abuse includes: hitting, biting, pushing, blocking, pinching, slapping, tripping, scratching, shaking, smothering, hair pulling, and strangulation. A person can be physically abusive without touching the other person by posturing to intimidate, which could include standing up, taking a step towards you, raising a hand, or blocking the door. Because physical abuse often leaves marks, we call it the sanity abuse because you can see it and most people recognize it as abuse.

Psychological/Emotional Abuse includes: many forms of controlling behaviors that are meant to manipulate, undermine, and confuse you. Attempting to make you crazy and

playing mind games are the most common forms of psychological abuse. They cause you to question yourself and lose your confidence. Isolation from friends and family who would support you, which may include moving you away from support systems you have. Stalking behaviors include: following you, using GPS or spyware, calling or texting multiple times a day. Stalking behaviors should not be taken lightly. These types of abusers can be very dangerous. While physical abuse is dangerous, frightening, and illegal; psychological abuse is just as deadly because it brings death to your soul: your mind, your will, you're your emotions. We need a healthy soul to function in life. Emotional abuse is very difficult to explain to others because it can easily be mistaken for normal marriage conflict, but remember, domestic abuse is about power and control. It also is important to note that all forms of abuse fall under psychological/emotional abuse because all abuse causes emotional scarring.

Verbal Abuse includes: name-calling, swearing, put downs, abusive jokes, yelling, threats, the silent treatment, criticism, blaming, and shaming. Prov. 18:21a says, "The tongue has the power of life and death," meaning, words used abusively bring death to our life. God meant words to be used to edify and encourage. What would life be like if everyone spoke *life* to everyone all the time? We would see a glimpse of Heaven! Hearing verbal abuse is like taking in small doses of poison every day.

Sexual Abuse includes: everything from rape, unwanted touch, affairs, sexual jokes, sexual put downs, sexual name calling, insisting you dress a certain way, badgering for sex, pouting, and manipulation for sex. Extreme jealousy is often a part of this form of abuse. God meant for sex to be a way you give to another, not something you take from someone to meet your own personal wants.

Financial Abuse includes: controlling money, taking money the victim earns, spending excessive amounts of money on himself, interfering with you getting or keeping a job, denying basic needs, hiding and/or keeping you from knowing about the finances, making you ask for money, and making you account for every penny spent. Even making you handle the finances while he mispends as a set-up to abuse you.

Property Abuse includes: throwing things, breaking things, slamming doors, hitting walls or tabletops. As well as sabotaging the car or driving erratically to frighten his victim. This form of abuse is a show of power and is used to intimidate. A person may never have to physically abuse the victim if he can convince his victim that he is dangerous.

Spiritual Abuse includes: misusing scripture to get you to do what he wants, discouraging, or keeping you from attending the church of your choice, questioning your theology or salvation, and going to the pastor to make you look like the one with the problem. Father is the most common analogy used for God. Therefore, any abuse done to or in front of children is spiritual abuse. It effects their ability to relate to God. If an earthly father is harsh, mean and cruel, it is very hard to relate to God as loving, gracious and kind.

Animal Abuse includes: threatening to get rid of, harm or kill family pets or actually doing those things. It can include neglect, getting a pet their partner is afraid of or allergic to,

and showing the pet more affection, while withholding the pet from you. Overall, the goal is to use the animal to control you.

The statistics are staggering when it comes to abuse issues. Most abuse goes unreported. Think about that as I read you these statistics:

- More than 1 in 3 women have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.¹
- United States nationwide, an average of 3 women are killed by a current or former intimate partner every day.²
- 75% of domestic violence victims who are killed are murdered during the separation.³
- 76% domestic violence was committed against females.⁴
- 72% of all murder-suicides involve an intimate partner; 94% of the victims of these murder suicides are female.⁵
- Only 37% of people who are injured by intimate partners receive medical care for their injuries.⁶
- The cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$8.3 billion per year. Between 21-60% of victims of intimate partner violence lose their jobs due to reasons stemming from the abuse.⁷
- Approximately half of victims who were murdered or almost murdered underestimated the risk that their perpetrator was capable of killing her.⁸
- Children of domestic violence are three times more likely to repeat the cycle in adulthood, as growing up with domestic violence is the most significant predictor of whether or not someone will be engaged in domestic violence later in life.⁹

God understands the heartbreak abuse causes. It is one thing to be attacked by a stranger but it is arguably more heartbreaking to be attacked by someone who you think loves you. Psalm 55 speaks to the pain brought on by abuse: Psalm 55:3-5, 12-13, 20-21 “[I am distracted] by the noise of the enemy, because of the wicked; for they would cast trouble upon me, and in wrath they persecute me. My heart is grievously pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling are come upon me; horror and fright have overwhelmed me. For it is not an enemy who reproaches and taunts me; then I might bear it; nor one who has hated me who insolently vaunts himself against me;

¹ Black, M.C. Basile, KC Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L, Merrick, M.T, Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R (2011)

² Black, M.C. Basile, KC Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L, Merrick, M.T, Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R (2011)

³ Danger Assessment, Jacquelyn Campbell

⁴ U.S Department of Justice 2003-2013

⁵ U.S Department of Justice 2003-2013

⁶ Rand, Michael R. 1997. Violence-related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments.

⁷ NCADV 2013

⁸ Intimate Partner Violence Risk Assessment; John Hopkins University, 1985

⁹ Childhood Domestic Violence Association 2014