

Wife Abuse

Assault on a Woman's Worth

By June Hunt

He was prominent in the community. What woman wouldn't feel fortunate to be his wife? She certainly had all the finer things in life. And the children . . . didn't they have the best that [money](#) could buy? How could she think about destroying such a picture-perfect family or risk stepping into a future unknown? Where would she go? What could she do? How would she support herself? And even worse, if she began to expose the terrible truth, would she lose the children? She felt hopeless. Who would believe her? She had been so skillful at hiding her feelings, as well as the bruises. With swollen, tear-stained eyes, she reasoned . . . *It's mostly my fault anyway!*

Even when reason seems skewed, the Psalms offer [hope](#) for the afflicted.

[Ps 10:17-18](#)

DEFINITIONS

While abusive acts are committed by both husbands and wives, in cases of domestic [violence](#), approximately 95 percent of the victims are women.¹ Although the

reality of wife battering reveals a long history of being tolerated—tolerated traditionally and even legally—abusive behavior has always grieved the heart of God. Any violation of this most sacred [relationship](#) always produces pain, but God promises to be close to the [victim](#) who suffers at the hands of an abuser.

[Ps 34:18](#)

A. What Is Abuse?

- In general, the verb **abuse** means "to mistreat, hurt, or injure."²
- The words **abuse** and **violence** are often used interchangeably, although the word [violence](#) implies an escalation of abuse and introduces the element of fear of harm as a means of control.³
- The Old Testament Hebrew word most often translated as "violent" or "[violence](#)" is **chamas**, which means "to mistreat."⁴ **Chamac** is also translated as "malicious, destroy, wrong, crime, ruthless, plunder," and "terror."

God's judgment falls on anyone who is abusive or violent toward another.

[Mal 2:16](#)

- **Domestic violence** and **family violence** are the legal terms for physical spousal [abuse](#), child [abuse](#), elder [abuse](#), or any other physically abusive [relationship](#) within the home or family.⁵

- Domestic [violence](#) refers to a pattern of coercive and violent behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate [relationship](#) with another.⁶
- Domestic [violence](#) is **not** an issue of "marriage problems" or "irreconcilable differences" solved by "conflict resolution." This kind of [abuse](#) . . .

Affects everyone in the family

Bridges all levels in society: racial, religious, geographic, and economic

Undermines the value of others

Seeks to dominate others

Escalates in intensity and frequency

Spiritual leaders, family, and friends need to be responsive when informed of spousal abuse. Violence of any kind should never be tolerated nor hidden under the cover of "godly submission." The God of the Bible is our God of refuge . . . a stronghold of support and defense against violence.

[2 Sam 22:3](#)

Q "Would God have my husband abuse me in order to punish me for my sins?"

No, there are many instances in Scripture of God using one nation to bring judgment upon another nation. However, there is no instance of God using the [violence](#) of a husband to punish his wife. God hates [sin](#), and [abuse](#) is [sin](#).

According to God, the [relationship](#) between husband and wife is to be a picture of the [relationship](#) between Christ and His bride, the church. His instruction to husbands is for them to [love](#) their wives as Christ loved the church and gave up His life for her.

Your husband's thinking is obviously distorted, and he is being abusive simply because he is choosing wrong over right. While you are the **recipient** of your husband's [abuse](#), you are not the **reason** for his [abuse](#). His [violence](#) exposes *his* sinfulness, not yours.

[Jer 22:3](#)

B. What Are the Different Types of Abuse?⁷

Abusive behavior can be aggressive or passive, physical or psychological, direct or indirect, but regardless of the method, all abusive behavior comes from a hardened heart with the desire to punish, coerce, and control.⁸ Although the abuser treats his mate unjustly, he blames her for making him do it. It is never his fault . . . or so he says.

[Ps 58:2](#)

Verbal Abuse

[Verbal abuse](#) is the use of **words** or **tone of voice** in an attempt to control or hurt another person or to destroy that person's [self-worth](#).⁹ [Verbal abuse](#) can be as devastating as physical abuse within a [marriage](#)—a

destroyer of respect, [trust](#), and [intimacy](#). Verbally abusive language is meant to do the following:

- Intimidate with yelling or threats
- [Shame](#) with humiliation or "[guilt](#) trips"
- Silence with constant interruptions or changing topics
- Confuse with mind games or by twisting what is said
- Badger with excessive questioning or accusations
- [Deceive](#) with half-truths or lies
- "Guilt-jerk" with threats of self-injury or [suicide](#)
- Insult with coarse language or profanity
- Degrade with public or private put-downs
- Control with [criticism](#) or sarcasm
- Devalue by demeaning family or friends
- Belittle by mocking or name-calling
- Overpower by always claiming to be right
- Disempower by continually dictating orders
- Disrespect by denying that the [abuse](#) ever happened
- Demoralize by making light of the abusive behavior
- Accuse by blaming you for the [abuse](#)
- Paralyze by threatening to report you as an unfit [parent](#)

[Ps 10:7](#)

Emotional Abuse

While all forms of mistreatment are emotionally abusive, certain behaviors can be overtly labeled as "[emotional abuse](#)." An emotionally abusive behavior will fit into one of two categories: passive or aggressive.

- ***Passive emotional abuse*** is characterized by:
 - Withholding emotional support
 - Withholding important information
 - Withholding [money](#) and access to the checkbook
 - Not giving appropriate attention or compliments
 - Not listening or responding
 - Not taking a fair share of responsibility
 - Not respecting your rights, opinions, or feelings
 - Sulking and brooding
 - Using the "silent treatment"
 - Choosing to be irritable
 - Manipulating the children
 - Neglecting important family gatherings
 - Failing to return home at a reasonable time
 - Refusing to help with children or housework
 - Refusing help to overcome an [addiction](#) (drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling)
 - Refusing to express true feelings

- Refusing to leave when asked
- Keeping weapons in order to frighten you
- ***Aggressive emotional abuse*** is characterized by:
 - Isolating you from family and friends
 - Not allowing you to have any part in major decisions
 - Rushing your decision-making through intimidation
 - Intimidating looks or body language
 - Blocking the doorway when arguing
 - Hiding car keys as a means of control
 - Breaking promises or not keeping agreements
 - Making threatening gestures
 - Driving recklessly to instill fear
 - Excessive jealousy and suspicion
 - Prohibiting sleep
 - Damaging treasured items
 - Excessive anger
 - Continually checking up on you
 - Interfering with your work
 - Monitoring your phone calls
 - Making unwanted calls or visits
 - Following or stalking you

[Ps 10:2](#)

Physical Abuse/Violence

Physical [abuse](#) involves any use of size, strength, or presence to control or hurt someone. Often beginning with verbal threats of physical harm—"You'll wish you had never been born."—the [verbal abuse](#) escalates to physical [abuse](#).

- ***Acts of violence include:***

- pushing/shoving
- biting/spitting
- destroying property
- punching/slapping
- pinning down
- using weapons (stabbing/shooting)
- kicking/tripping
- pulling hair
- grabbing/choking
- twisting arm
- threatening with weapons
- confining/locking up
- hitting walls
- harming a pet
- binding/chaining
- slamming doors
- killing a pet
- scratching/pinching
- throwing objects

- kidnapping her child
- poking/piercing
- knocking out teeth
- harming her child
- burning/scalding
- breaking items
- killing her child

[Prov 24:1-2](#)

Sexual Abuse/Violence

Because many believe that a wife is to be submissive to all her husband's desires, many married women experience sexual abuse without realizing it. Sexual abuse and/or [violence](#) includes:

- Sexually degrading attitudes and treatment
- [Discrimination](#) based on gender
- Withholding sexual [intimacy](#) and romance
- Unjust accusations of extramarital affairs
- Brazen flirtation with members of the opposite sex
- Threats of forced sex
- Forced sex ("mate [rape](#)")
- Sodomy
- Obscene gestures
- Homosexuality
- [Adultery](#)

- Forced involvement in perverse sexual acts
- Using objects on sexual parts
- Forced involvement in [pornography](#)
- Coerced sexual acts with others for entertainment

[Heb 13:4](#)

C.What Is Misogyny?¹⁰

The English word **misogyny** comes from the Greek **misogynia** (**miso**, which means "hatred," and **gyne**, which means "woman"). **Misogyny** means "hatred and distrust of women."¹¹ The misogynist may have experienced emotional or physical harm from a woman during his childhood. Therefore, he overgeneralizes, thinking all women are the same. His behavior toward women, especially toward his wife, reflects the bitterness and hatred stored within his soul.

[Matt 12:35](#)

- **The misogynist:**
 - Has a gender [prejudice](#) against all women
 - Thinks women are weak and despises their weakness
 - Feels both threatened and enraged by tears
 - Acts both lovingly and hatefully toward women
 - Primarily uses mental and [emotional abuse](#) to control women

D. Where Is God in All This?

Is God just a bystander in life, passively watching as the innocent suffer and the wicked prosper? Never! Then, in the midst of injustice, where is the heavenly Father? He is with you just as He was with His Son when Jesus endured unjust [suffering](#) at the most pivotal point in history . . . the Crucifixion. God the Father watched with a broken heart, even though He knew that only His Son's [death](#) could pay the penalty for the sins of the world.

When the deepest part of your heart cries His name, He responds with deep [love](#) and [compassion](#). God's purpose for allowing you to suffer may seem shrouded in a cloud of mystery. At those times, when you cannot see His hand, you can always [trust](#) His heart.

[Lam 3:32-33](#)

God's Heart on Violence

- **God hates [violence](#).**

[Ps 11:5](#)

- **God judges those who are violent.**

[Gen 6:13](#)

- **God is angry with violent behavior.**

[Ezek 8:17](#)

- **God prohibits violent people from positions of leadership.**

[Titus 1:7](#)

- **God commands those who are violent to change.**

Ezek 45:9

Q "I am angry with God. If God is just, why does He allow abuse?"

You are living with misplaced blame. Realize God did not create human beings to be puppets to do His will, but rather He allows all people to choose wrong from right . . . even if they go against His will. Don't blame God when people choose to do wrong. They are the guilty ones—not God. Rest assured, God is just . . . and He will punish those who abuse you.

2 Thess 1:6

God's Heart for the Victim

- **God hears the cry of the battered and abused.**

Ps 10:17

- **God holds the victim of abuse in the palm of His hand.**

Isa 41:10

- **God will rescue the victim of abuse and violence.**

Ps 72:14

- **God confirms the victim's value and worth.**

Luke 12:6-7

- **God brings good out of the evil deeds of others.**

Prov 16:4

CHARACTERISTICS

Who are the abusers? Do you know anyone who is being abused? Since one out of every three women are victims of domestic violence, you probably do know someone who is or has been abused. She could be your doctor or dentist, your secretary or sister, your beautician or boss . . . or your best friend. The abuser could be your preacher or postman, your salesman or son, your banker or broker . . . or your best friend.

Seldom do we know what takes place behind closed doors. But God sees everything, and He knows the hurt within every heart.

Heb 4:13

A. What Is the Cycle of Abuse?¹²

Like a volcano, abuse doesn't start with a sudden outburst of physical force, but rather with intense internal pressure in need of an outlet. Abusive patterns develop in three stages that are cyclical, becoming increasingly violent. Family members who fall victim to these patterns feel traumatized by the mere anticipation of a violent eruption. Unfortunately, the escalating nature of abuse is rarely curbed without intervention and adequate accountability.

Ps 10:15

- **Agitated Stage**

An environment of tension and [anxiety](#) marks the beginning phase of [abuse](#). The husband communicates his dissatisfaction over something small and blames his wife. Through verbal and [emotional abuse](#), a husband maintains **passive psychological** control over his wife and creates [fear](#) of impending disaster. During this stage many women buy into the lies spoken to them and accept responsibility for their husbands' unhappiness. Then they try to adjust their own behavior in an effort to please their husbands and relieve the tension in their homes.

Prov 13:2

- **Acute Stage**

In this phase, the pressure becomes so intense that the abuser erupts and gives full vent to his [rage](#). When violent behavior is unleashed, family members, outsiders, or police are often called upon to diffuse the [rage](#). This acute stage of **aggressive** behavior doesn't last long, but over time these overpowering outbursts tend to become more frequent and more dangerous.

Prov 29:22

- **Apologetic Stage**

During this "honeymoon phase," the abuser becomes contrite, and the wife feels soothed by her husband's loving actions. With renewed [hope](#) for change and her deep desire to have a successful [marriage](#), she views his overtures as apologies and extends [forgiveness](#). But, as with all honeymoons, they don't last, and the cycle of [anger](#) occurs again . . . and again.

Prov 27:12

This temporary honeymoon phase is characterized by a dramatic transformation from being villainous to virtuous. This transformation is demonstrated by a number of the following:

- Apologies
- Bargaining
- Remorse
- Crying
- Penitence
- Romance
- Gifts
- Peacemaking
- Promises
- Helpfulness
- Accepting responsibility
- Pleading

B. What Is the Situational Setup for Abuse?

In an abusive [relationship](#), both the husband and the wife bring certain emotional deficiencies into the [marriage](#), creating an unhealthy dynamic. For the cycle of [abuse](#) to be broken, someone in the [relationship](#) must change. Either the abuser must stop abusing or the abused must stop accepting [abuse](#). It takes only one person to break free from the painful pattern of relating that has them both ensnared. Though difficult,

release is possible, especially through the power of the Lord.¹³

Ps 25:15

The Abuser

- Low self-worth
- Emotionally dependent on her
- Emotionally depressed
- Believes in male supremacy
- Exaggerated jealousy
- Insatiable ego
- Short fuse
- Explosive emotions
- Lives with suspicion
- Fears being betrayed
- Uses sex to dominate
- Displays anger
- Blames her for his abuse
- Believes she is the problem

The Abused

- Low self-worth
- Emotionally dependent on him
- Emotionally depressed
- Believes in family unity
- Exaggerated guilt
- Insecure ego

- Long fuse
- Stifled emotions
- Lives with [fear](#)
- Fears being abandoned
- Uses sex to establish [intimacy](#)
- Denies [anger](#)
- Accepts responsibility for his [abuse](#)
- Believes she is the problem

Q "Can people ever really change?"

Yes. God would never tell people to change if they couldn't change.

[Eph 4:31](#)

CAUSES

The way couples relate to each other is often a mirror of the way their parents related to one another. Behavioral patterns—both positive and negative—are learned. In abusive marriages, typically either the husband or the wife or both grew up in an abusive home. Therefore, an abusive environment was the normal. They often don't realize that **their normal** isn't "normal." Little do they know that their [sin](#) patterns are generational. The God of the Bible says,

[Hos 4:6](#)

A. Why Does He Do It?¹⁴

- He grew up watching [abuse](#) between his parents.

- He experienced [abuse](#) as a child.
- He views her as a possession instead of as a person.
- He has not been taught how to [love](#).
- He thinks using force is his "right" as a husband.
- He fears she could be unfaithful.
- He fears losing her.
- He becomes angry when she shows weakness.
- He sees himself as a [victim](#).
- He thinks she has taken power from him.
- He blames her for his low [self-esteem](#).
- He thinks [violence](#) is his way of getting even or retaliating.
- He believes his power demonstrates his superiority.
- He wants to feel significant and in control.
- He feels he has the right to control her.
- He possesses an unbiblical view of [submission](#).
- He handles [stress](#) immaturely.
- He has learned that [violence](#) works.

Q "If sin is passed down from generation to generation, how can a person change?"

Abuse is a matter of the heart ([Matt 12:35](#))! God promises that those who come to Him will be given a new heart with the power to change any generational pattern of [sin](#).

Ezek 36:26-27

B. Why Doesn't She Leave?¹⁵

- She is terrified of her husband and what he will do if she leaves.
- She feels helpless, as if she has no power.
- She believes abuse is normal and that she must accept it.
- She has low self-esteem.
- She is afraid he will take her children.
- She is manipulated by his threats of suicide.
- She loves her husband and hopes and prays he'll change.
- She has an incorrect understanding of Biblical submission.
- She doesn't know that she has the right to separate in order to achieve a healthy relationship.
- She blames herself and believes she deserves to be abused.
- She wants to protect the family image, thinking that family "problems" are private.
- She feels that "any father" for the children is better than "no father."
- She fears she can't make it financially without him.
- She has been isolated from supportive people.

- She has been told by family, friends, and church leaders to stay.
- She fears living alone.
- She doesn't want the stigma of depending on welfare or living in a shelter.
- She believes that her husband and children are all she has.
- She has been told she is insane, and she fears that is true.
- She doesn't know there are organizations and services to help her.
- She trusts his promise to never do it again.

Q "If I am in a violent or threatening situation, is it all right for me to leave?"

In the Bible a hierarchy of [submission](#) exists, with God being the highest [authority](#). Scripture reveals that godly people sometimes physically separated from their ungodly authorities. Biblically, we are to submit to our governing authorities, yet David fled King Saul . . . with God's blessing. Although David was one of the king's subjects, when Saul's actions became violent, David escaped.

[1 Sam 18:12; 19:10](#)

C. Why Does She Leave?

- She finally realizes he will not change if circumstances remain the same.

- She understands that leaving may be the only way to get her husband to change.¹⁶
- He is now acting out his threats of [abuse](#).
- His [abuse](#) is occurring more frequently.
- He has begun to [abuse](#) the children.
- She wants to prevent the children from adopting his behavior.
- She has found help through friends, family, church, or professional organizations.
- She realizes it is not God's will for anyone to be abused.
- She is afraid for her life or for the lives of her children.
- She realizes there is a thin line between threats and homicide.¹⁷

Q "Since the Bible teaches '*Wives, submit to your husbands,*' isn't leaving an abusive husband against the teaching of the Bible?"¹⁸

The Bible gives specific instruction to the wife of a hot-tempered man. When she is in danger, temporary separation is appropriate.

[Prov 22:24](#)

D. Root Cause

Some people can't comprehend the *why*'s of [abuse](#). "Why does he do it?" "Why does she accept it?" Within the heart of every person are three God-given inner

needs—the need for [love](#), for significance and for security.¹⁹ At times we attempt to get our needs met illegitimately. The **abuser** abuses his [victim](#) in order to **feel significant**. The **abused** stays in the abusive [relationship](#) in order to **feel secure** . . . either because she feels she can't live without him or feels terrified that the [violence](#) will escalate if she leaves him. God's solution is that they both need to look to the Lord to meet their deepest inner needs.

[Isa 58:11](#)

Wrong Belief of Abusers Who Abuse in Order to Feel Significant:

"She's to blame for what's happening. As head of the home, she belongs to me. If I don't control her, I could lose her, so I'll do whatever it takes to show her who's boss."

Wrong Belief of Abusers Who Abuse in Order to Feel Secure:

"I'm to blame for what he's doing to me. If I don't give in to him, I could lose him. He is my security." Or, "If I don't give into him, he could kill me. Pleasing him is my only security."

Right Belief of the Abuser:

I am the only one responsible for my abusive behavior. She is not to blame. Even if I lose her, I'll never lose God. He is my source of significance and promises to meet my needs.

[Phil 4:19](#)

Right Belief of the Abused:

I'm not to blame for my husband's [abuse](#). Even if I lose him, I will never lose Jesus, who lives in me. Because

the Lord promises to be my provider, I will depend on Him to meet all my needs. The Lord is my source of security.

[Isa 54:5](#)

STEPS TO SOLUTION

[Ps 140:1](#)

A. Key Verse to Memorize

[Prov 19:19](#)

B. Key Passage to Read and Reread

For the Abused:

[Ps 91](#)

God is . . .

- your shelter—[Ps 91:1](#)
- your resting place—[Ps 91:1](#)
- your refuge—[Ps 91:2](#)
- your fortress—[Ps 91:2](#)
- your God—[Ps 91:2](#)
- your Savior—[Ps 91:3](#)
- your cover—[Ps 91:4](#)
- your shield—[Ps 91:4](#)
- your rampart—[Ps 91:4](#)

- your dwelling—[Ps 91:9](#)
- your guardian—[Ps 91:11](#)
- your rescuer—[Ps 91:14](#)
- your protector—[Ps 91:14](#)
- your answer—[Ps 91:15](#)
- your deliverer—[Ps 91:15](#)
- your salvation—[Ps 91:16](#)

For the Abuser:

[Ps 94](#)

God will . . .

- avenge your [victim](#)(s)—[Ps 94:1](#)
- judge you—[Ps 94:2](#)
- pay you back what you deserve—[Ps 94:2](#)

You are . . .

- arrogant—[Ps 94:4](#)
- boastful—[Ps 94:4](#)
- senseless—[Ps 94:8](#)
- a fool—[Ps 94:8](#)

God . . .

- hears the [abuse](#)—[Ps 94:9](#)
- sees the [abuse](#)—[Ps 94:9](#)
- punishes your [sin](#)—[Ps 94:10](#)
- knows your thoughts—[Ps 94:10](#)

God will . . .

- dig a pit for you—[Ps 94:13](#)
- rise up against you—[Ps 94:16](#)
- stand up against you—[Ps 94:16](#)
- repay you for your sins—[Ps 94:23](#)
- destroy you for your wickedness—[Ps 94:23](#)

C. Seek God's Security

[Abuse](#) does more than damage a woman's body and impact her mind. The pain goes much deeper, breaking her heart and leaving her feeling as though she'll never be able to [trust](#) anyone again. Unfortunately, this kind of heartache cannot heal itself over time, and no amount of positive actions can restore a woman's sense of security when she has been abused by the man she loves. Only One can provide an eternal sanctuary.

Through His Son, Jesus, God offers [hope](#) and healing to all who are weary and broken. His path to healing may be long, and you may not find complete physical safety until [heaven](#), but God promises His guidance and comfort for everyone who believes in Jesus. If you entrust your heart to Him, He will always walk beside you. . . . You will never again face another day of [fear](#) and pain alone.

How to Have Security That Lasts Forever

#1 God's Purpose for You . . . is *Salvation*.

- What was God's motive in sending Christ to earth? To condemn you? No . . . to express His [love](#) for you by saving you!

John 3:16-17

- What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To make everything perfect and to remove all sin? No . . . to forgive your sins, empower you to have victory over sin, and enable you to live a fulfilled life!

John 10:10

#2 Your Problem . . . is Sin.

- What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is right, but choosing wrong.

James 4:17

- What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, spiritual separation from God.

Rom 6:23

#3 God's Provision for You . . . is the Savior.

- Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes. Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins.

Rom 5:8

- What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father.

John 14:6

#4 Your Part . . . is Surrender.

- Place your [faith](#) in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your "good works" as a means of gaining God's approval.

[Eph 2:8-9](#)

- Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him.

[Matt 16:24-26](#)

The moment you choose to believe in Him—entrusting your life to Christ—He gives you His Spirit to live inside you. Then the Spirit of Christ gives you His power to live the fulfilled life God has planned for you. If you want to be fully forgiven by God and become the person God created you to be, you can tell Him in a simple, heartfelt [prayer](#) like this:

Prayer of Salvation

"God, I want a real relationship with You. I admit that many times I've chosen to go my own way instead of Your way. Please forgive me for my sins. Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior. Through Your power, begin healing the hurts in my heart. Teach me to find my security and comfort in You alone. Make me the person You created me to be.

In Your holy name I pray. Amen."

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