

Cutting Off Shame's Rule Over Your Life

For two years, Diane lived with a man who was an emotionally and physically abusive alcoholic. She finally escaped from the relationship and went to live in a shelter for abused women, but the abuse had rendered her a broken, battered mess—inside and out.

Her exterior wounds healed, but all his harsh, critical words had buried deep in her mind, leaving her feeling hurt, resentful and worthless. She struggled with strong feelings of hatred toward this man who had broken her heart and her spirit. As a result, she became bitter toward all men, even her own brothers, as anger and negativity poisoned her mind. She was afraid to get close to or trust anyone, even God, and feeling the blessing of joy seemed a lost gift, impossible to find or feel again.

But after six weeks of intense counseling with godly mentors and teachers in the shelter, Diane moved in with loving family members and slowly began to heal as God helped her put the pieces of her heart and her life back together. Diane began reading Scripture and spending a lot of time in prayer, and after having been back at church for several months, she heard a powerful sermon about forgiveness that stirred her soul. She practically ran to the altar when the message was over, asking the pastor to pray her heart would soften towards her abuser and for God to give her the strength and ability to truly forgive. Although it didn't happen instantaneously, Diane's heart did soften over time. She eventually realized she had to let go of all those feelings of hatred and unforgiveness and let God fill the empty spaces where deep-rooted negativity had been living.

The shame, hurt, resentment and anger Diane carried against

her abuser were only weighing her heart and attitude down, not her abuser's. They were robbing her of her joy, not robbing the abuser of his. She had inadvertently allowed her abuser to hold the key to her joy, and she finally decided to take the key back so she could be in charge of her happiness and her life once and for all.

Diane's choice to forgive is a beautiful picture of what it looks like to be set free from the anchors that hold us captive and pull us into the deep. She let go of the anchor of negativity and grabbed hold of the anchor of hope God was offering. She made an intentional choice to choose joy and invite God to transform her thinking, and in turn, he transformed her life too.

Diane began to look forward to each new day instead of dreading it. She became excited to be with new friends, learned to trust people again, and allowed herself to believe there were good Christian men in this world. One of those men helped her embrace her value in Christ and Diane is now happily married to him! When Diane forgave the unforgivable, she broke free of the bondage of hatred and stopped the poison of negativity that had been coursing through her veins. When she made the decision to let go of her negative thoughts—even though she was fully justified in having them—the stronghold of negativity broke, and she anchored her heart in God instead, opening the door for His peace to finally take up full residence in her heart and for happiness and joy to fill her days.

Diane's story is only one of many I share in *Unsinkable Faith*, of women who invited God to transform their hearts and minds and who implemented the three steps into their lives, and who have experienced radical life change as a result. I am confident you'll find all their stories inspiring and hopefully will glean motivation to invite God to start writing a new story in your new life too.

We all have people who have hurt us or situations that have left us feeling broken. From time to time, we all struggle with feelings similar to Diane's—feelings that keep us stuck in negativity and steal our joy. So if we truly long to feel joy in our lives, despite our circumstances or the heavy burdens we carry, we have to let go of negative thoughts, and intentionally choose joy instead.

The choices we make today lay the foundation of what life will be like tomorrow. If we want a future filled with peace and joy and unsinkable faith, we first have to determine what we need to do today to make that a reality. {eoa}

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