

How Abuse Shaped a Woman's View of God

God is not a rapist.

I remember it like it was yesterday. I'd been wrestling through my ideas of love, trying to figure out what "Jesus loves me" really meant. My experiences with "love" had been so confusing, I didn't know if I **wanted** God to love me.

As I was praying and trying to prepare myself for time of real heart-searching, God stopped me short by simply saying, "I'm not a rapist."

I looked up at Him, stunned. He was looking back at me with tears running down His face.

Suddenly I was seeing myself through His eyes, and we were watching vignettes from the past scroll by like a movie. I watched His heart break as He watched me try to relate to Him the same way I had learned to relate to others in my life.

A vicious incident from childhood set my life on a destructive path that lasted long into adulthood. Over and over again, I entered into relationships with people who were selfish at best and dangerous at worst.

As we watched these scenes pass by, God began opening my eyes to what was going on inside of me during that time: I was terrified that control over my body would be stolen from me again, yet I didn't know how to choose people who wouldn't do so. I wasn't even sure there **were** such people.

The only solution I could find was to give myself away so I wouldn't be stolen from again. Submission became the way I *maintained* control, not gave it up. Basically, I was saying, "I'm going to give in to your desires, regardless of my own

feelings, so that the decision remains mine.”

Unsurprisingly, it didn’t work out the way I wanted it to. Eventually I became entangled with people who weren’t satisfied being given what they wanted to take. Others only found pleasure when they were inflicting pain. The claws of perversity, violence and control that had pierced me as a child were only being driven deeper and gaining more power. After more than 20 years I’d ended up back in the place I’d worked so hard to escape, but with those added decades of time spent cementing these relational patterns in place.

Finally I turned to God. He swept right into my life and instantly began healing me. But I found out that simply being out of those relationships didn’t mean I was free. Words like “love,” “submission” and “fear of God” set off alarm bells nothing could silence. Eventually, He had to get direct with me: “If you don’t let Me love you, you aren’t going to make it.”

Love—now that’s an interesting word. That’s all I was looking for from the beginning, but my experiences taught me that the way to please someone was to let them use me any way they wanted. Pain was to be expected, and even desired. Without realizing it, I’d taken those lessons into my new relationship with my Father.

It took several years for God and me to work through my very real fear of Him. It wasn’t just in my head. Every atom of my being recoiled from the idea of letting God love me. If He spoke, I expected it to be in anger. If He touched me, I expected it to hurt. It didn’t matter what the preacher, my friends or any book said—I **knew**, because I’d lived it, that love equaled pain. And I’d had enough of that to last a lifetime.

Fast forward to the present, and God is restoring every area of my life. I am free in ways I never knew possible. Now, I

get to bring that healing and life to others. What joy it is to be able to confidently speak words of life and hope to those who are hurting! But I can't pretend it was easy getting here. It's taken many tears, battles, prayers and friends to crawl out from under years of pain and rise to the position my Father has for me in Him.

And then we come to a movie like *50 Shades of Grey*. For some, it seems harmless fantasy. Others are concerned for its effects on relationships between men and women. But equating violence with love or romance is about more than confusing girls about what to expect from an earthly relationship. It creates a perverted view of the One who is described in 1 John 4:8 as the embodiment of love itself.

This is no coincidence. God is a God of relationship; He established that from the beginning when He would come down to walk with Adam and Eve. What better way for His enemy to keep people out of relationship with Him than to twist the meaning of love until they can't recognize it when it's right in front of them?

You can avoid the movie, and encourage your friends to do the same. But that's not enough. This is a full-frontal attack on the purposes and love of God. We must act. But not in the way the enemy wants, by turning on each other with judgment and condemnation.

Instead, become a real threat to the enemy. Become the embodiment of love yourself. Take whatever time it requires to become so consumed with the love of God that no one can deny it's the real thing. Let your every fear, heartache and grief be crushed by the overwhelming love of God until **you** begin to rise and crush those things in the broken hearts around you. No movie can threaten the tangible experience of the goodness of God. Let it begin with you.

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