

# How I Survived Abuse

*SEXUAL ABUSE I'D SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF MY FATHER HAD LEFT ME DEEPLY WOUNDED. BUT I WAS DETERMINED TO SEE HIM MADE WHOLE IN CHRIST.*

As many of you know, I was sexually, physically, verbally and emotionally abused from the time I can remember until I left home at 18. Although I was abused by several men while growing up, my father was the primary source.

The years of abuse left me emotionally wounded and unstable, and after a failed first marriage, I met my “knight in shining armor,” Dave Meyer. God used the peace, joy and stability in his life to create a deep desire within me to want what he had. Through many tears and trying times, God began to walk me through the process of emotional healing.

One of the most important things He taught me was that I needed to forgive my father for what he had done—releasing him, praying for him, and speaking blessings into his life (see Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28; Rom. 12:14).

Initially, my decision to forgive him was strictly a choice of my will—my feelings were still badly bruised. But over time, God healed my emotions and brought them in line with my will—setting me free from the fearful and angry spirit I once had and giving me a sincere burden to see my father saved.

At the time Dad didn't have any interest in God. But the Lord kept instructing me to trust Him and walk in love (see 1 John 3:23).

After my father's close call with death about two years ago, God spoke to me about moving my dad and mom closer to our house so that I could help take care of him. With Dave in agreement, we moved my parents closer to us, and every chance

I got, I visited him and showed him my love by meeting his and my mother's needs.

Dad was then in his early 80s and very weak. About a week before Thanksgiving in 2001, I began praying for him while driving to work one day. Out of deep concern, I said, "Lord, I've prayed and prayed and prayed for my dad. Now he's getting old, and he's sick.

"As a personal favor to me, please don't let him die without accepting Christ into his life. I just don't want the devil to win."

Soon after, I got a phone call from my mother, asking us to come over. She had found my dad sitting on the edge of the bed, sobbing and saying, "I'm so ashamed of what I did to Joyce. I've treated her so badly, and she has been so sweet to me."

When Dave and I arrived, he broke into tears. He turned to me and said, "I just need to tell you right now that I'm sorry. I'm sorry for what I did to you. I've wanted to say this to you for a long time, but I didn't have the guts."

Then he looked at Dave and began to weep again. He said, "Dave, I'm sorry for what I did to you, too, and I'm sorry I hurt your wife. Please forgive me."

My prayers had been answered—my dad was finally ready to get right with God! I knelt down beside him and together we prayed the sinner's prayer. A few days later, at his request, I had the privilege of baptizing him in front of hundreds of witnesses at the Dream Center, our inner-city church here in St. Louis.

Today, my dad is a new man! Although his physical health is frail, he is alive spiritually, and his soul is healthier than ever!

Friends, we serve an awesome God. He has the power to heal your hurts and restore relationships that you think are long gone. If you're hurt and deeply wounded from past abuse, let the Lord walk you through the process of inner healing. Nothing is impossible with Him!

If your prayers haven't been answered yet, don't let the devil depress you and steal your joy. Take life one day at a time and keep sowing seeds of love into the lives of others.

Trust God to bring your miracle. It's only a matter of time until you see His glory show up in your situation!

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