

He Gently Leads

My husband and I both grew up in homes where yelling, swearing and physical violence were considered normal. We hadn't called it abuse; it was just the way things were.

I'd been raised to believe that I didn't matter at all. My job was to "keep the family together no matter what."

When my son was born, I assumed that I could protect him from my husband's anger, but when he was 2 years old, my husband barreled into the kitchen and screamed, "Shut up!" right into the baby's face because he'd been crying. I was so frightened that I determined I'd never let my husband hear our son crying again.

Although there were some good days, most of them were clouded by my husband's temper. He was like a bomb waiting to explode.

We began going to church when my son was around 3-1/2. As my husband lifted his hands to the Lord, his face seemed to glow.

But on our way home, he began swearing at the other drivers and yelling at me when I questioned him about the service. I soon learned that his good behavior was reserved for the church people.

During the next few years, my husband's moods began to worsen. He couldn't sleep and was angry or agitated most of the time.

He would speed out of our driveway shouting, "You'll never see me again!" But he'd always return, ranting and raving and accusing me of being unfaithful.

His rage would turn to intense sobbing. I would watch in disbelief as he crumpled into a helpless, pathetic creature. When he began threatening suicide, I tried to get help for him.

One day he came home and began telling me about a dream he'd had. No amount of persuading could convince him it wasn't real.

I took him to the emergency room. He was admitted to the psychiatric unit, diagnosed with bipolar disorder, given a number of medications and released.

Following his breakdown, the abuse escalated. During the next five years, I made hundreds of phone calls to mental health professionals, social workers and the police, trying to get help for my husband; but there was none.

I sought counseling for myself and our son, who was then 9, and discovered that his dad had been physically and emotionally abusing him for years. I realized that whether or not he was ill, my husband was an abuser, and I couldn't help him.

By now, my husband had been hospitalized eight times, once for each time I'd tried to leave him. Each time his threats of suicide had worn me down, so I had returned.

But I could not live with the fact that he was abusing my son. I had to leave for his sake.

My husband's harassment continued even though we lived apart. It became obvious that only God could protect us from him.

"Please show me what to do, Lord," I prayed, and instantly Isaiah 40:11 came to mind, "He lead those that are with young" (KJV).

When my son and I left my abusive husband, I had no idea how we would manage. But I knew that God would take care of us.

We've had some extremely difficult times, but my son and I have a wonderful life now; we are no longer abused. God has protected us and cared for us every step of the way.