

The First Step in Breaking Free From Abuse

The first step in breaking free from abuse, whether it's sexual, physical, verbal or emotional, is sharing with someone who can help you break free.

Jesus said in John 8:32, *"The truth will set you free"* (MEV). Freedom comes when you open up and admit your pain to someone else.

In a study of 10 nations, it was discovered that between 55 to 95 percent of women who have been abused by their partners have never told anybody, and men are even less likely to talk about it or get help.

Abuse is often called the silent epidemic because it's the big, pink elephant in many marriages that nobody wants to talk about. People suffer in silence.

If anyone in the Bible understood abuse, it was King David. He was the king who wrote most of the book of Psalms and who also spent much of his life dealing with abuse, because there were people who wanted to hurt, kill, abuse, defame and ridicule him—all kinds of abuse.

In more than 100 passages in the book of Psalms, David expresses his hurt, frustration and anger at his enemies. He uses the word "enemies" nearly 100 times in the New International Version. He talks about the abuse that they heaped on his life.

But one of the things David modeled for us is this: Don't hold it in. In Psalm 39:1-4, David explains what happened when he tried to keep his struggles a secret: *"I said, 'I will take heed of my ways so that I do not sin with my tongue; I will keep my mouth muzzled while the wicked are before me.' I was*

speechless in silence; I was silent to no avail, but my anguish was stirred up. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned, then I spoke with my tongue: 'Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how transient I am'" (MEV).

This is a classic response to abuse. David was afraid to talk about it in the presence of his abusers, but his silence only made it worse: *"I kept quiet, not saying a word. ... But my suffering only grew worse, and I was overcome with anxiety."*

If you are experiencing this right now, I want you to know that God cares about you. I care about you. And there is hope. You don't have to stay in that cycle of pain, anxiety and fear.

But first you've got to stop being silent. You've got to speak up and tell someone you trust. You've got to bring it into the light so that God can begin to lead you to healing.

Talk It Over

- What are the signs of emotional abuse? How can you help a friend who may be suffering?
 - Why do you think many people who have suffered abuse find it difficult to accept God's love?
 - Why do we suffer more when we keep our pain hidden?
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