

Tears of Hopelessness . . .

He was prominent in the community. What woman wouldn't feel fortunate to be his wife? She certainly had all the finer things in life. And the children . . . didn't they have the best that money could buy? How could she think about destroying such a picture-perfect family or risk stepping into a future unknown? Where would she go? What could she do? How would she support herself? And even worse, if she began to expose the terrible truth, would she lose the children? She felt hopeless. Who would believe her? She had been so skillful at hiding her feelings, as well as the bruises. With swollen, tear-stained eyes, she reasoned . . . *It's mostly my fault anyway!*

Even when reason seems skewed, the Psalms offer hope for the afflicted.

*"O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more."
(Psalm 10:17–18)*

Q: "Would God have my husband abuse me in order to punish me for my sins?"

No. God hates sin, and abuse is sin. According to God, the relationship between husband and wife is to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. His instruction to husbands is for them to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave up His life for her. (Ephesians 5:25)

Your husband's thinking is obviously distorted, and he is being abusive simply because he is choosing wrong over right. His violence exposes his sinfulness, not yours.

*"Do justice and righteousness . . .
And do no wrong or violence."
(Jeremiah 22:3)*

Q: "Can people ever really change?"

Yes. God would never tell people to change if they couldn't change.

*"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."
(Ephesians 4:31)*

Q: "If I am in a violent or threatening situation, is it all right for me to leave?"

In the Bible a hierarchy of submission exists, with God being the highest authority. Biblically, we are to submit to our governing authorities, yet David fled King Saul . . . with God's blessing. Although David was one of the king's subjects, when Saul's actions became violent, David escaped.

*"The LORD was with him [David] but had departed from Saul. . . . And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night."
(1 Samuel 18:12; 19:10)*

Why Does He Do It?¹

- He grew up watching abuse between his parents.
- He experienced abuse as a child.
- He views her as a possession instead of as a person.
- He thinks using force is his “right” as a husband.
- He fears losing her.
- He becomes angry when she shows weakness.
- He sees himself as a victim.
- He thinks she has taken power from him.
- He blames her for his low self-esteem.
- He believes his power demonstrates his superiority.
- He wants to feel significant and in control.
- He possesses an unbiblical view of submission.
- He has learned that violence works.

*“Make no friendship with a man given to anger,
nor go with a wrathful man.”
(Proverbs 22:24)*

Key Verse to Memorize

*“A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if
you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.”
(Proverbs 19:19)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Psalm 91

Arguments and Answers

- **Argument:** “When Jesus said, ‘Turn the other cheek,’ He meant that women should submit to abuse.”²
Answer: When you look at these words of Jesus, the context is the issue of retaliation: refuse to retaliate evil for evil. Jesus was not advocating abuse. (Read Matthew 5:38–39.)
- **Argument:** “Since Ephesians 5:24 says, ‘Wives should submit in everything to their husbands,’ a wife must submit unconditionally—even to abuse.”³
Answer: This conclusion contradicts other Scripture. A hierarchy of submission is demonstrated when the apostles refused to obey the high priest and instead obeyed the Great Commission by continuing to teach in the name of Jesus (Matthew 28:19–20). Similarly, if a husband expects his wife to do something that God says is wrong, the wife is to disobey her husband in order to submit to God. (Read Acts 5:29.)

Build Healthy Boundaries

Begin a new way of thinking about yourself, about God, and about abuse. (Romans 12:2)

Overcome fear of the unknown by trusting God with the future. (Isaiah 41:10)

Understand the biblical mandate to hold abusers accountable. (Psalm 10:15)

Notify others of your needs (supportive friends, relatives, or others). (Galatians 6:2)

Develop God’s perspective on biblical submission. (Ephesians 5:21)

Admit your anger and practice forgiveness. (Hebrews 12:15)

Recognize your own codependent patterns of relating, and change the way you respond. (Galatians 1:10)

Identify healthy boundaries for yourself, and commit to maintaining them. (Proverbs 19:19)

Ensure your personal safety (and that of your children) immediately. (Psalm 4:8)

See your identity as being a precious child of God through your belief in Jesus Christ, an identity that cannot change, rather than in your role as wife, a role that can change. (1 John 3:1)

Strategies for Safety

The greatest danger to a woman comes when a husband discovers his wife has intentions of leaving. A wife who is wise will have prepared for the worst by having a safety plan for leaving.⁴

- **Confide** the seriousness of your situation to trustworthy people.
- **Plan** an escape route.
- **Place** physical evidence of violence with a trusted confidant or in a safety deposit box.
- **Identify** essential or meaningful items you can gather quickly (but remember that your safety must be your first concern).
- **Keep** important papers and documents easily accessible and together in one place (but remember that everything can be replaced).

*“The prudent sees danger and hides himself,
but the simple go on and suffer for it.”
(Proverbs 27:12)*

Related Topics . . .

- **Adultery:**
The Snare of an Affair
- **Conflict Resolution:**
Solving People Problems
- **Divorce:**
A New Beginning from Brokenness
- **Manipulation:**
Severing the Strings of Control
- **Self-Worth:**
Discerning Your God-Given Value

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

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Wife Abuse:
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If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).

1. For this section see Kay Marshall Strom, *In the Name of Submission: A Painful Look at Wife Battering* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1986), 20–26.
2. Marie Marshall Fortune, *Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 28–29.
3. See Strom, *In the Name of Submission*, 56.
4. For the following checklist, see *Domestic Violence: The Facts*, (Boston: Peace at Home, 1995), 13.



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