

A Biblical Look at Abusive Relationships

Examples of Abuse:

Abuse Rooted in Envy-Cain and Abel Genesis 4:8. "You lust and do not have; so you commit murder..." James 4:2 NOTE: Abel did not provoke nor was he guilty of wrong doing

Abuse Rooted in Perceived Loathing by an Inferior- Sarah and Hagar- Genesis 16:6 "Sarai said... I was despised in her sight... so Sarai treated her [Hagar] harshly" Genesis 16:5-6 "The angel of the Lord said to her [Hagar] return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority." Genesis 16:9 Peter affirms this directive on an even broader scale emphasizing "this finds favor with God.... If one bears up under sorrow when suffering unjustly" 1 Peter 2:18-20

Abuse Rooted in Personal preference & Insensitivity- Jacob & Leah- Genesis 29:25,31. Jacob's preference takes precedence over care and kindness. "Was it not for Rachel..." Genesis 29:25 "Now the Lord saw that Leah was unloved..." vs. 31

This plays out in a slightly different way in 1 Samuel 1 with Hannah. Though Hannah's husband will reassure her of his love, his divided loyalty between his 2 wives will only breed contempt and competitive unrest and relational uncertainty. Clearly an abuse in and of itself.

For this reason the total rejection of a spouse was seen as the worst kind of treachery. Therefore capital punishment was given as the judgement for those committing adultery. Jesus will declare immorality grounds for divorce in Matthew 19:9 as this is an act of treachery worthy of death.

*It is important to note that God, in both cases, will come to the aid of those who were wronged and will grant them that which will both comfort and increase regard.

Abuse Rooted in a Worthless Disposition & Self-Indulgence- Nabal & Abigail- 1 Samuel 25 "... a worthless man [Nabal] that no one can speak to" vs. 17 Incurable "... so that he became as stone." vs. 37 "pursuing... drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties...." 1 Peter 4:3, 1 Samuel 25:36 Abigail in spite of her husband's evil and unruly spirit will seek to protect his household, salvage the damage and reason with Nabal. Nabal's rejection of such grace will bring the wrath of the Lord upon him. "About 10 days later the Lord struck Nabal and he died" vs. 38 No doubt God's swift judgement upon Nabal is testament to His favor & affirmation of Abigail's heart and action.

The Heart of God:

On some occasions God will give specific direction to those suffering abuse. To others who are suffering He may give great latitude of personal discretion. In Hebrews 11:4,5 Abel will give testament through death, Enoch will be taken up "so that he should not see death." However it is crucial to understand that God never supports the one abusing and will ever seek to comfort and vindicate the one who is being abused. Psalm 56 "Be gracious, O God, for man has trampled upon me; fighting all day long he oppresses me." vs. 1 "... This I know, that God is for me." vs. 9

Principles in Scripture for the Abused & Those Next to Them:

With this in mind those in abusive relationships would do well to consider these fundamental truths.

1. "When I am afraid I will put my trust in Thee" Psalm 56:3. -Turn to God-draw near to Him.
2. "For it is better, if God should will it so that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong." 1 Peter 3:17 -Do what is right. Keep your behavior excellent.
3. "If the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace." 1 Corinthians 7:15. NOTE verse 16 reminds us that the goal is salvation and or sanctification whether one stays or goes. "...if you are able to become free, rather do that" vs. 21. -Seek God's peace. Long to see His salvation.
4. "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God...For it is a minister of God to you for good...and avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil." For this reason they bear a sword. (Romans 13:1-4) Chapter 13 of Romans is in direct connection to chapter 12 which states, "Never take your own revenge... "Vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord"" Romans 12:19. (In other words God uses the government , police, courts, prosecutors, etc. to avenge) Don't hesitate to call the police. They are God's agents! -Turn away from vengeance. Acknowledge the authority God has ordained for such matters.
5. "I was dumb and silent, I refrained even from good; and my sorrow grew worse" Psalm 39:2 -Don't suppress your feelings. God and the body of Christ will surround with lovingkindness. Psalm 32:6-11
6. Acts 21:10-14. God uses the church to warn of dangers. Acts 9:23-25. God uses the church to rescue from danger. Acts 23:12-25 God reveals dangers to relatives to avoid dangers. "Deliver those who are being taken away to death, and those who are staggering to slaughter, O hold them back. If you say, see, we did not know this, does He not consider it who weights the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?" Proverbs 24:11, 12. -Those privy to abuse have an obligation to warn, rescue, protect and give aid to those who are being abused. (This is not optional.)