

Chapter 9

Questions to Ponder

1. Below is a list of reasons someone may choose to remain in an abusive relationship. Mark any of the reasons you have stayed or add your own to the list.
 - ☐ You fear your abuser will become more violent, perhaps fatally so, if you try to leave.
 - ☐ You want to protect your partner's and your family's image.
 - ☐ Your partner is your support system, even though he is abusive. Psychologically, he has destroyed your outside relationships.
 - ☐ You think this time will be the last time; he will change.
 - ☐ You fear being a single parent with a reduced income.
 - ☐ You fear he will stalk you and harass you at your workplace.
 - ☐ You do not realize you have the right *not* to be abused.
 - ☐ Your only desire for change is *not to be abused*.
 - ☐ You fear living alone.

- ☐ You were raised in an abusive home, and this feels normal.
- ☐ You think the abuse will stop if you will only . . .
- ☐ Religious and cultural beliefs keep you in the marriage.
- ☐ You stay for the children; any father is better than none.
- ☐ Your confidence has deteriorated as a result of continuous put-downs, name-calling, or other forms of abusive behavior.
- ☐ You have no place to go. Often friends and family are not helpful.
- ☐ You have feelings of powerlessness and fear.
- ☐ You believe that all you have in life is your family, house, children, husband, and/or marriage. They are your responsibility, and you must fix whatever goes wrong.
- ☐ You believe divorce is not a viable option.
- ☐ He is not always abusive. After the violence, he is often contrite, asking for forgiveness, promising change, and acting like the model father and husband . . . for a while.
- ☐ You feel trapped and do not know about help services.
- ☐ You believe that if you disclose the secret, no one will believe you. He is a pillar in the community and/or church.
- ☐ You believe the law will not take you seriously and that he will not be punished.
- ☐ You fear the complexities of the legal system. Lawyers are expensive.
- ☐ You still love him.
- ☐ _____

- ☐ _____

Have you ever left for a while only to return and watch the cycle repeat itself? Please refrain from shaming yourself for this choice. Leaving is a difficult decision. Take the time you need to make the best decision for yourself.

2. If you have left the abusive relationship, why did you choose to leave? Take a moment to write out the reasons you left and reread them as you continue working through this book. Check off any of the reasons below that apply to your story. Remind yourself daily that choosing an abuse-free life was one of the greatest gifts you could ever give yourself. Remember, only you can choose you.

- ☐ You believed the next abusive incident could be fatal.
- ☐ He was either sexually or physically abusing the children.
- ☐ The children were acting abusive, and you realized you needed to remove them from the abusive situation.
- ☐ You were informed of available help via internet, radio, TV, church, etc.
- ☐ You were encouraged by other women who had left.
- ☐ You received the support you needed from a friend, family member, counselor, or church.
- ☐ You were learning to truly love yourself.

- ☐ _____

- ☐ _____

3. Describe how you are learning to love yourself in a healthier way. List some observable indicators that this positive change is happening.
4. Can you identify any mental roadblocks to having a healthy love for yourself? If so, do you realize these are faulty beliefs?

For every faulty belief you have regarding yourself, write it down along with a statement of truth to replace it.

Examples:

Faulty belief: I made the decision to get into this relationship. Now I must make the best of it.

Truth: No one should ever live with abuse. It's imperative that I learn to have a healthy love for myself. Healthy love does not tolerate abuse.

Faulty belief: I am not able to support myself. I need him to take care of me.

Truth: I have gifts and talents that are uniquely mine. I am capable of meeting my needs. If necessary, I can get training or education to support myself (and my children). I am strong.

5. What are your thoughts regarding divorce? How has the information in this chapter affected what you believe about this subject? Do you recognize now that remaining in an abusive situation is not God's desire for you or your cross to bear?

Prayer of Reflection

Jesus, I'm at a crossroads. I've been sitting at this intersection in my life for way too long. It's time to make a decision. I'm comforted in knowing that You've sat next to me this entire time and that You have no intention of ever leaving me. My reasons for staying seemed to make sense to me at the time. But I'm learning that it's not important why I stayed but why I leave. Leaving is loving myself. Leaving the abuse is loving my children. I need Your help. I can't do this without You.

I'm still confused at times. Clear my thoughts. Lead my steps. Teach me what it means to love myself as You love me. I'm scared. Please comfort me as only You can. Wrap Your arms of protection around me and my children. Hold us tightly to Your chest. Allow me to feel Your embrace if I'm ever tempted to turn back or doubt my decision. Thank You for continuing to hold my hand as together we walk through this dark valley of weeping. Knowing this valley will become a place of blessing is the encouragement and reminder I need to keep walking. Lead me out to the other side. There is life, a great life, after abuse. Show me the way. Amen.

God's Enduring Promises

When they walk through the Valley of Weeping,
it will become a place of refreshing springs.
The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings. (Psalm
84:6 NLT)

He will redeem them from oppression and violence,
for their lives are precious to him. (Psalm 72:14 NLT)

O LORD, rescue me from evil people.
Protect me from those who are violent. (Psalm 140:1 NLT)

"All your children shall be taught by the LORD,
And great shall be the peace of your children.
In righteousness you shall be established;
You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear;
And from terror, for it shall not come near you. . . .
No weapon formed against you shall prosper,
And every tongue which rises against you in judgment
You shall condemn.

This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
And their righteousness is from Me,”
Says the LORD. (Isaiah 54:13–14, 17 NKJV)

(Note: While in an abusive relationship, you certainly are not in a safe place. God’s desire is that you live in peace and safety. Continue to trust and walk with Him as He leads you out.)

The work of righteousness will be peace,
And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance
forever.

My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation,
In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. (Isaiah
32:17–18 NKJV)

I will both lie down in peace, and sleep;
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. (Psalm
4:8 NKJV)