
Chapter 13

Questions to Ponder

1. How has the idea of community changed since the beginning of your relationship with your abuser? Have you become more isolated, over time losing contact with family and friends?
2. Look at the Isolation versus Community diagram in this chapter. To what extent have you seen this play out in your

- life? How have you seen the connection between isolation and secrecy resulting in the escalation of abuse?
3. Reaching out to various forms of community requires tremendous courage. If you haven't already, are you willing to begin to connect with community now? List people and resources you believe would be trustworthy and safe options for you. Remember to pray for God's leading and trust the gut He's given you.
 4. Leaving an abusive relationship does not immunize you from entering into another one. This is a faulty but common assumption. Therefore, are you willing to make the commitment to stay connected with a healthy community and to respectfully consider the input those in your community give you? Can you identify your possible blind spots that may impede you from receiving healthy feedback? If you aren't able to identify your blind spots, ask a trusted friend to be honest with you about what they foresee as potential future pitfalls. Your friend's feedback could ultimately save you from future pain.
 5. After hearing my story of getting into a subsequent unhealthy dating relationship, do you recognize your own personal vulnerability in this area? What vulnerabilities can you identify?
 6. Become familiar with the red flags listed in appendix O. Do you see any of these red flags in a relationship you may be considering or are currently in? Even if there's just one, what are your next action steps based on all you've learned up to this point?

Prayer of Reflection

Lord, I have lost contact with so many people in my life as I have isolated more and more. I want to connect with people again in an authentic and honest way. I don't want to keep

this secret anymore. I have shared my story with a few, but I realize that in order to heal well and live free, I need to reach out and stay connected with a wider community. Help me to identify what this new community in my life will look like. I'm not sure whom I can trust. Please make it clear to me. Open the doors that are safe for me to walk through and keep the doors closed tightly that could cause my heart further injury. I know I have blind spots that increase my vulnerability. Protect me, Jesus. Show me areas within myself that have the potential of leading me down the wrong road. Help me to remain teachable and open to feedback from those who love me. And above all, please protect me from getting into another relationship with someone who will in the end mistreat me, abuse me, and leave me injured. I need You. Thank You for continuing to walk with me as we journey together. I am never alone with You by my side. I love You. Amen.

God's Enduring Promises

Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up. . . .
Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes
4:9–10, 12)

Without good direction, people lose their way;
the more wise counsel you follow, the better your
chances. (Proverbs 11:14 Message)

Healing Well and Living Free from an Abusive Relationship

Fools are headstrong and do what they like;
wise people take advice. (Proverbs 12:15 Message)

Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22)

Help each other in troubles and problems. This is the kind of law
Christ asks us to obey. (Galatians 6:2 NLV)

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.
(Matthew 18:20)