

*I Will Survive In
Jesus' Name!*



Jennifer Mitchell Earley

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DEDICATION

Thank you, Lord, for trusting and imparting to me your vision, purpose, and gifting. Bless your name, Lord, for your Word says that you equip the called, and you definitely equipped me for this! Thank you, mom and dad, for your never ending support. I pray daily that God will bless you for the many sacrifices that you have made for Jeff and me throughout the years. To the Maryland Mitchell's, I love you guys! Danielle and Michael, thank you for being my "eyes." To my MBNA colleagues and college crew, you will never know how God has used and continues to use you to bless me. Thank you for reminding me of the power of laughter. To Charles and Alicia, thank you for countless visits to Applebee's and for showing me a godly marriage, which makes me want to try it again. To the Booker family – thank you for "much prayer", late night conversations, and good coffee! Kathy, you're definitely my "iron!"

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PREFACE

Millions of Christians, from all walks of life and denominations, have either known someone who has been faced with domestic violence or have dealt with issues of domestic violence themselves. While all communities of faith are plagued by domestic violence, there are certain issues that arise for Christians because our lives are governed by the Word of God.

Scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible speak to the roles of men and women in relationships, the structure of family, Jesus' suffering and sacrifice, compassion, and forgiveness. These scriptures are most commonly misused and misinterpreted to justify why women should remain in a relationship despite being abused as well as when trying to answer questions about deservedness, cause of abuse, and in deciding whether to forgive the abusive partners.

Abuse is a pattern of hurtful behavior that one partner in an intimate relationship uses to control the other. A common myth is that abuse is the result of one person becoming angry and "losing control". On the contrary, abuse is actually a way that a person attempts to gain control over his intimate partner. When abuse has occurred once in a relationship, it is likely to happen again.

Abuse takes on many forms:

PHYSICAL ABUSE – BEHAVIOR THAT INFLECTS HARM ON A PERSON

- ☛ punching
- ☛ slapping
- ☛ kicking
- ☛ shoving
- ☛ hair pulling
- ☛ choking
- ☛ striking with an object
- ☛ physical confinement
- ☛ isolation
- ☛ grabbing
- ☛ biting
- ☛ throwing objects
- ☛ scratching
- ☛ burning

SEXUAL ABUSE – SEXUAL ADVANCES THAT ARE UNWANTED OR MAKE A PERSON FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE

- ☛ unwanted touching
- ☛ sexual relations without consent
- ☛ humiliating or painful acts
- ☛ being called sexual names
- ☛ threatening to get another sex partner

- ☛ accusations of sleeping around
- ☛ striking with an object
- ☛ making fun of sexual ability

**PHYSIOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL – BEHAVIOR INTENDED TO CAUSE
EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS**

- ☛ acts intended to humiliate, control or intimidate
- ☛ stalking or following
- ☛ extreme expressions of jealousy
- ☛ threatening the partner or people related to them
- ☛ intimidation
- ☛ put-downs
- ☛ telling a person's secrets
- ☛ possessiveness
- ☛ isolating a person from one's family and friends
- ☛ destroying gifts, cards or letters
- ☛ damaging a car, home or other prized possessions
- ☛ being blamed for a partner's own faults
- ☛ emotional withholding
- ☛ economic control

VERBAL ABUSE – BEHAVIOR THAT CAUSES HARM WITH WORDS

- ☛ name-calling
- ☛ ridiculing
- ☛ degrading
- ☛ saying "nobody will ever be with you"
- ☛ insults

☞ public humiliation

☞ yelling

Domestic violence is a serious criminal offense that results in physical, emotional and financial harm. It is also very detrimental to the victims' faith because it attacks the very source of their strength by destroying their hope for safe, peaceful lives for themselves and their children.

It is my hope that this book will help you heal from the sense of betrayal, emotional pain, and spiritual damage created by and resulting from abuse. Please remember that no one has the right to hurt you. Domestic violence is a crime and is contrary to God's Word.

PART I

HOW DID I GET HERE?

Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding.

In all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (AMP)

CHAPTER ONE

OVERLOOKING THE OBVIOUS

So much has happened - too much, too fast, too rocky. Somewhere along the line, I lost focus. I lost track of God, she thought...

Kim rededicated her life to Christ about three years ago and had been sold out for Jesus every since. She had quit her job as a Speech and Language Pathologist and decided to go back to school to work on her Ph.D. in Urban Education. As an elected official, Kim was the youngest school board member ever to be elected in her community. She had a passion for education and the study of child development.

She was young and full of life and energy. The

only thing missing was companionship. Yes, she had her girls and she was very close to her parents, but Kim desperately wanted someone to share her life with. In her spare time she read every book written by T.D. Jakes that she could put her hands on. Kim was definitely serious about her relationship with God. A true party girl, Kim severed all “worldly” ties. She no longer went out to clubs, smoked cigarettes, nor drank alcohol.

Kim was truly on fire for the Lord. Instead of trying to keep up with every social event in the city, Kim was trying to attend every church service, revival, and explosion that she could find.

Kim always found it therapeutic to write her feelings down. The problem is that she was never very consistent in keeping up with her journal. She was notorious for having several half-written journals tossed here and there around her house.

Kim began journaling again when she met Conrad. Journaling helped Kim to sort out her feelings. Things didn’t seem quite so overwhelming when she wrote them down on paper.

It was a beautiful fall day. The leaves had turned a bright red-orange and brown. Kim watched absentmindedly as some leaves fell off the tree in her front yard. Soon, she thought, it will be winter and snow will cover the ground instead of leaves.

Kim made herself a hot cup of coffee and curled up on her living room couch. She was very tired, because she had not been able to sleep for the last couple of nights. Time had really gotten away from her. She continued to stare out of her living room window watching the leaves fall as she had for the last hour. Kim had a lot on her mind and she was trying to gather her thoughts in order to make some sense out of her life. Her head was pounding despite the fact that she had taken two aspirin about an

hour ago.

Out of the corner of her eye she caught a glimpse of her journal buried under a pile of old newspapers and bills. Kim mustered up the energy to get up from the couch to retrieve her journal. She rummaged through her bag to find an ink pen. She exhaled as she began writing. She didn't even realize that she had been holding her breath as her thoughts flowed on to the page.

My relationship with Conrad, let's see...In the beginning it was wonderful! I will admit that I was very apprehensive about the difference in our ages (I, was 33 and he, was 26 – turning 27 on that Sunday). Initially, I wasn't going to talk to him, but he called me the next day and really impressed me with his conversation. He addressed my anxieties regarding our age difference at the onset of the conversation. I was definitely WOWED! She wrote. Kim smiled as she recalled the conversation, I had never met a man, my age or older, and DEFINITELY NOT HIS AGE, who confronted a problem head on.

I met Conrad when I went bowling at the neighborhood bowling alley with Lydia. Instantly, I was intrigued by him. When I got home that evening, I prayed that God would take him away. I knew that my heart was in danger of being captured. Of course, I had my 'that's sweet, but you're too young for me' speech all ready, but when he called I was so impressed!

In any case, it was a whirlwind courtship. Despite my best efforts, I was drawn to him. We saw each other every day. Since I was trying to "live right" and he was a minister (cha- ching – jackpot) we started off no kisses. We only hugged. He surprised me with an understanding, respectful spirit. We would sit out in the car for hours talking and holding hands. It got to the point that we hated leaving one another.

Late nights soon turned into days, weeks, months,

etc. Then we were living together. That's when the trouble began...

I can't even remember what Conrad did to make me angry, but I do remember that I was on fire. I marched out of the bedroom and set an extra alarm clock on the dining room table in front of him. I remember saying something to the effect of him sleeping on the couch in the den. I expected that he would be upset and sleep out on the couch – all while calling me a five-letter explicative.

Sometime during the night I heard the bathroom light go on and him vomiting. I remember lying there thinking "Is this real?" I wondered if I should get up and go check on him. As I was about to go check on him, I thought that his ego might be bruised if I saw him at a moment like that. He, of course, did not feel that way. Instead, he felt that I had abandoned him in his time of need. This was the beginning of the end. Once he had determined that I could sleep without him and that I had left him "hanging" in the bathroom – his openness, trust, and belief were shattered.

Soon after, the rages began. Conrad would have fits of anger, tears, destruction, and suicide threats all during the wee hours of the morning. I have never been so frightened in all of my life. I would sometimes imagine that my body would be found bruised and battered. Perhaps I would be stabbed to death.

A rage was usually the result of a disagreement between the two of us. It would generally start off with Conrad feeling ignored. His feelings would be hurt and I would be tired and, therefore, evil and malicious. He would cry, and I would lie in the bed wishing that he would shut up and go to sleep. He would get up and go into the den, leave the apartment, come back, and then

the rollercoaster ride to hell would begin around 2 or 3 a.m.

He would hit himself, put his head through walls, stab himself, grab me, curse me, etc. In the morning, I would be exhausted and unnerved by the previous night. Every time, I would question whether or not I was using common sense by continuing to be in this relationship. I thought to myself, "He's crazy." He put me in the mind of a wounded animal looking for love - jittery, panicky, and viciously trying to protect itself.

In those moments of fear and anxiety, I would beg God to take it all away. I would ask for forgiveness for making the wrong choices. I thought for sure that Conrad could not be from God – with his psychosis. Miraculously, I would eventually have some peace even though the situation was miserable... I know that it's a sin that we live together, but I can help him.

THE DANGER OF DESIRE

In our drive to obtain our heart's desires, we often lose sight of God's desires for our lives. The Bible says that God foreknew us before the foundations of this world and predestined us for *his* purpose (Romans 8:29-30). God's plan for our life is perfect, "For I know the thoughts *and* plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts *and* plans for welfare *and* peace and not of evil, to give you peace in your final outcome (Jeremiah 29:11 AMP)."

Kim allowed her desire for companionship to override the Holy Spirit. God will never require you to do something contrary to His Word in order to receive what he has for you. Being blessed will **never** involve you sinning. The Bible says:

Let no one say when he is

tempted, I am tempted by God; for God is incapable of being tempted by [what is] evil and He Himself tempts no one. But every person is tempted when he is drawn away and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions) (James 1:13-14 AMP).”

The supreme tempter is the devil (Matthew 4:3, 1 Corinthians 7:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:5) who is able to play upon the weakness of corrupt human nature and lead people to destruction. The devil tempts, constantly, by using our desires against us. He tempts us by allowing our desires to appear to be just at our fingertips, but far enough away that it eludes our grasp. He seeks to make us resent the blessings that God has already given us as well as the blessings that he has in store for us, by focusing our attention on what we *don't* have.

God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. God told Adam that he could eat from any tree in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15-16). When the serpent [the devil] approached Eve about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he tempted her with the desire to “be like God and know good and evil.” In that moment, Eve did not focus on all the other trees that God had placed in the Garden of Eden for her and Adam, instead she focused on the one tree that God had forbidden them to eat from.

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman.
“For God knows that when

you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it (Genesis 3:4-6).

The Bible directs us to resist temptation, promising blessedness to those who do (James 1:12). It also directs us to pray for deliverance from exposure to temptation

The man that God sends looking for you will not require you to sin, by going against God's Word, in order to keep him.

and from surrender to it (Matthew 6:13, Luke 11:4). Remember that the Lord will not allow his children to encounter temptation beyond our Spirit-given ability to resist (1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Peter 2:9). In essence, the man that God sends *looking for you* will not require you to sin, by going against God's Word, in order to keep him. For the Bible says, “He who *finds* a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord (Proverbs 18:22, EMPHASIS ADDED).”

WHAT FRUIT?

The Bible says that you can tell a tree by the fruit that it bears, "...Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit (Matthew 7:16-17)." Kim knew that her relationship with Conrad did not bear "good fruit."

Fornication, abuse, deceit, and manipulation are not of God. Many times we willingly allow someone to take advantage of us, or we justify remaining in a relationship that bears bad fruit so that we won't be lonely. Don't you know that you can be in a relationship and still be lonely? The only one who will never leave us nor forsake us, who can offer us comfort and supernatural peace is God. We will never be able to find in mortal men what God has offered us before our conception – unconditional love without compromise.



I was exhausted last night, I fell asleep around 4:15 a.m. I fell asleep on the floor next to the couch in the living room. Conrad awoke around 5:00 a.m., stepped over me and went to bed. At first, I was a little angry that he would just step over me and go get in the bed, but I was too tired to give it much thought.

Around 6:00 a.m. I got up and went to bed, too. Needless to say, this morning I was exhausted and did not go to work. Sooner or later something is going to have to give or I will lose my job. Things are still the same, if not worse. I have been praying to God during every incidence of Conrad's tears, convulsions, etc...to keep me.

I have asked God repeatedly to give me His heart for Conrad so that I can be compassionate and

understanding. The problem is I don't know what's real and what's added drama. His sister, Michelle, who is a self-admitted drama queen, said she thought that he behaved the way that he did for attention. All I know is that I am so tired of everything. The good times are far and few between and the bad times are definitely bad!

I know that I can't continue much longer. It's like I'm in a bad dream – only I wake up and find myself right back in the same situation. I can't live the rest of my life this way. I called my maid of honor to tell her that the wedding was off if things don't get better.

I have to be honest; it's not all Conrad's fault. I just can't deal with the psychosis. Right at this very moment, Conrad is standing in front of the sliding glass doors that lead to the patio with no shirt on. Never mind the fact that it's about nineteen degrees outside and he just stepped out of the shower. He is purposely trying to make himself sick. I went back and forth with him about it, but ultimately decided that he's grown. If he wants to get sick so, be it. I refuse to let my positive attitude be stolen.

Frustrated that his attempt to hurt himself no longer elicits a response from me, Conrad retreated to the bedroom. After a while, he returned to say that he wanted to talk to me. As he talked, tears rolled down his face. He was crying. He told me that all he wanted to do was love me, but I keep rejecting him.

“My mother didn't want me and neither do you. You make me feel like I'm bothering you. You don't want me to touch you. You're beautiful. I can't help it. Every time I see you, I want to make love to you.”

“It's not that I don't want to be with you. You know that I love you. I just don't want to continue living in sin. It's enough that we live together. I, at least, want to try to live right. Don't you feel guilty preaching about living

right when you know that we don't?"

"There you go again. Using the Bible to try to hurt me. You're always throwing daggers at me!" Conrad said crying even harder.

"Conrad, I'm not throwing daggers at you. All I'm saying is I don't want to live like this anymore. I want to try to get back on track. You said that we would do that. You said that we would abstain from sex until we got married." Kim said pleading with him. The last thing that she wanted was to spark another rage in Conrad; he was so sensitive. Every time she opened up her mouth she felt like she was walking on eggshells.

"Just forget it." Conrad said as he walked away from her.

I did not realize how much I had hurt him, she wrote. I'm so insensitive that I originally thought that he was just too demanding; I thought that he over-dramatized everything. Lord, forgive me, I only think of myself. I can help him. Together, we can pray for deliverance to break the generational curses on his life. Kim and Conrad were married six months later. They never received pre-marital counseling.

SEEING RED

Many women feel the way that Kim did. "I can help him". In order to help someone, they must want to be helped. First, a person must recognize that they have a problem. Once they recognize that there's a problem they must have the desire to change and line up with the will of God. They must come to the point where they say to the Lord, "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right, persevering, *and* steadfast spirit within me (Psalm 51:10 AMP). When we seek God with a sincere heart, he promises that we will find him (1 Chronicles 28:9).

Batterers come from all walks of life, but the general characteristics of a batterer include the following: A batterer objectifies women. He does not see women as people. He does not respect women as a group. Overall, women are viewed as property or sexual objects. In general, batterers have low-self esteem. He often feels powerless and ineffective in the world. He may appear confident and successful, but inside he feels inadequate. A Batterer doesn't take responsibility for his actions.

God does not intend for his daughters to be in abusive relationships with men who are unable to cover and/or love their wives in the manner in which he has called them.

Instead, he makes excuses and externalizes his behavior. He blames his violence on stress, his partner's behavior, or other factors. In most cases, a batterer is pleasant and charming between periods of violence. Therefore, he is often seen as a "nice guy" to outsiders.

God does not intend for his daughters to be in abusive relationships with men who are unable to cover and/or love their wives in the manner in which he has called them. In fact, God despises the mistreatment of wives by their husbands (Colossians 3:19, 1 Peter 3:7, Ephesians 5:25-33).

The best way to prevent ending up feeling trapped in an abusive marriage is to get to know a person before making the commitment to marry. Abusive characteristics are manifested in one's personality. These

Overlooking the Obvious

“red flags” are always there, but are often overlooked or even ignored when attraction and infatuation take over. These signs can include irrational jealousy, the need to be in control, a quick temper, attempts to isolate the other person from his or her friends and family, drug or alcohol abuse, and disrespect for their partner’s boundaries, privacy, personal space, or moral values.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which desires have caused you to lose sight of God's intentions for your life?
2. How has the devil tempted you with these desires?
3. What steps have you taken to resist these temptations?
4. What are you looking for in man that you can only find in God?
5. What "red flags" have you been able to identify?