

Marital and child abuse

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I don't want this posted with my name because I don't want the "who" to have any impact on the message. I know this story could belong to many women on the truth.

I would like to ask if anyone is talking about the subject of domestic abuse and child abuse that is not sexual within this fellowship.

I don't live in California but I can only imagine that the Tenniswood promotion of Catholic doctrine regarding divorce would make the situation I'm about to describe much more prevalent on the west coast.

I was a child, sexually abused by an older child (who went to meeting and whose parents were good friends with my parents). I didn't tell my parents because, of course, I was raised with the "sex before marriage is sin" rule and no one talked about the difference between consent and non-consent when I was a kid. It only happened once and after that I always stayed with the adults when that teenager was around. However, I carried my "secret sin" around with me for a long time.

When I was a teen, I was very awkward and not very good at conversation, and was constantly aware that I was not a "good catch" because I had this "sin" in my background. I didn't date and at one point thought I should probably just be a worker because I was not the kind of person anyone would want to marry.

Then I met the person who was to become my husband and oddly, it seemed he was not at all bothered by my report of the abuse I suffered as a child. The fact that he seemed grossly curious about it should have been a red flag but I was much too young to understand that. I also didn't feel I could talk to my parents about any of this because I believed that anything short of going into the ministry was a huge disappointment to them.

I jumped right into an ill-advised marriage with someone who was 6 years older than me when I was barely out of my childhood.

My marriage was 25 years of continual physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse and gaslighting that turned me into a different person altogether.

At one point, early on, I called law enforcement after he physically attacked me and that went badly. I didn't recognize the signs of a narcissist at that time, but in hindsight, he was a text book example. His ability to charm and lie to the police and convince them I was just crazy from being postpartum got me charged with domestic violence and convinced me

there was no help from the police for abused women. I went home at that time and my parents unknowingly perpetuated his abuse by telling me I needed to return home and work on my marriage and on controlling my temper because marriage is forever.

I know that over the years, many people suspected things were bad for me but I didn't talk about it. I wanted to believe that maybe some day he would change and come back to the fellowship and I didn't want him to have to overcome any judgement because I had gossiped about him. I learned to be a "peacemaker". For me that meant that I learned how to take the abuse quietly and constantly walk on eggshells trying to avoid making him angry.

Many times over the years, I contemplated leaving, but his threats kept me in line. He told me that the friends would look down on me. The workers would look down on me. I'd have to be alone the rest of my life because the friends don't remarry. He even threatened to do whatever it took to keep me from having my kids if I left him, even going so far as threatening their lives.

Even after he stopped going to meetings, he threatened me with going to talk to the workers, the friends, and my parents if I was "acting crazy". He bullied me using the workers and scripture as his clubs.

During this time, my parents had started to realize that the California stance on divorce was absolutely not from God, but I still didn't share the details of my life. I did see them showing compassion to those who had been through divorce and I appreciated that. I was so pleased when my dad even said "it's obvious people don't get divorced just because. It's a horrible experience and not something to be taken lightly." They were beginning to have their eyes opened to the suffering of people who went through divorce. They acknowledged that the bullying perpetuated by those in the truth was an unnecessary and inappropriate response to someone who had been through what was almost always a very difficult personal experience.

I had decided that as soon as my children were out of the house, I'd leave. I had established a career that would support me. I had started moving things he wouldn't miss out of the house to storage.

When my youngest son graduated from college, he moved out to live with his fiance because he couldn't deal with his father's abuse any longer. My ex husband became so enraged when he realized that the youngest had moved out that he threw me down the stairs and then when I wasn't badly injured he shoved me down the other half of the flight and said he would kill me. The look in his eyes made me believe he would.

He also contacted a family member of his who reported to the workers that my son was "living in sin". What followed was an unfortunate contact to my son and his fiance to tell

them that they were not welcome in meeting until they got married. It didn't force them to get married sooner, just made them want to have nothing to do with truth.

The next day, my abuser was gone for a few hours and I called a few amazing humans who showed up and helped me move a few things out of the house. I stayed with a dear work friend for a few days until I found a place to live.

I am incredibly grateful that when my life crumbled apart that day, it was actually the start of an incredible journey of healing: physically, spiritually and mentally.

Imagine my surprise when my family apologized for pressuring me to return. When my family admitted that the near "sainthood" we had bestowed on an aunt who endured decades with an abusive alcoholic and always kept a sweet spirit was not a healthy thing to hold before the girls in the family.

I was pleasantly surprised when the friends in my area were incredibly supportive and loving towards me even though I had left my husband.

But fear of "breaking the rules" and being judged by my brothers and sisters in truth kept me imprisoned in my abusive marriage for a quarter of a century. Witnessing the abuse I lived with had an effect on my children that they are still working to heal from as adults.

Also, my ex-husband was a pervert who exposed my children to pornography and a twisted view of sexuality by talking about how little girls were "going to be a real handful sexually". He was raised in "Truth" by abusive parents and everyone knew his family was abusive but no one stepped up to report the abuse or help the kids. Cycles of abuse like this are everywhere in this fellowship.

I've been scolded at a Wyoming convention for not praying hard enough for my husband because scripture says they can be saved because their spouse prays. I've been told I should be praying for him so we can be reconciled. I've been told, when visiting Arizona, that as long as I wasn't planning to remarry it was ok for me to take part in meeting.

These comments make me incredibly sad because it is a pattern of abuse among friends and workers that is considered ok but it's not! Abuse in a marriage and abuse of children physically and mentally should be no more accepted than CSA. I know we have a long ways to go in purging CSA from the fellowship and that is where all the focus is right now. However, I hope this can be the start of a no tolerance policy towards abuse of all kinds.

Just one of many abused and bullied spouses.