

Brenda:

As a young woman about to be married there were some things I did not understand about my boyfriend. For one thing, he seemed so insecure. Hadn't he told me about some awful things that had happened to him in his growing up years? I did not realize the harmful impact it would have on our future life together as long as he did not get counseling to help resolve those issues.

I knew I did not want any of those harmful behaviors in my home but somehow figured it would all go away after we got married. How horribly wrong I was! We weren't married long when I started hearing him finding fault with how I did this or that. Well, it's to be expected I guess. He did some pretty odd things himself! He started accusing me of doing things on purpose just to make it bad for him, when in fact I was just being myself! I wanted to do things to please him, but I wanted to be respected too, and I told him. But he said I just needed to obey him and be submissive like the Bible says. Yet I knew that thinking was off balance.

We had children. I loved them dearly and believed in disciplining and also spanking at times. At an early age, he became rough with them. When I protested, he would say, "You stay out of this and don't stick up for them. Just be my wife and support me."

I knew the children were forming character and personality and this was harmful to them. I later learned through counseling that young children will think that the way their father is, is also how God is. His behavior was so wrong!

He got loud and angry with me, sticking his finger in my face and telling me how wrong I was. He'd come in the door screaming at me when something didn't suit him and occasionally threw things. I never knew grown people acted

that way. I felt depressed and stomped on. It threatened to make me feel worthless as a mother. His beating of the children got out of hand. It was awful. Oh, where could I go to get away from this nightmare? I prayed a lot for wisdom and guidance and courage to do the right thing. I talked to the ministers but they just didn't understand how to help. Things went on and got worse. I talked to a friend who called Child Protective Services. They came out and asked questions and showed much concern. What a relief! Here was someone who understood what I was saying and knew what to do to help.

The only way to get to the core of abuse is to believe the victim and hold the abuser accountable. They believed me and the children. We had a court hearing and they made him leave.

There is no end to destructive behavior among family members as long as the abuser remains in the home. Neither are the problems all solved by having him leave. Some of the children had learned to fight and manipulate each other. Others withdrew and were quiet. My own self worth had been broken down. I was not consistent anymore. There was much tension. Through much professional counseling for me and the children, and the support of family and close friends, the tension finally left and we were able to find the peace we so desperately longed for in our home.