

Family Violence / Abigail and Nabal

Katherine: This is a very difficult story for me to tell. When my friend Alice told me what she'd been going through for years, I just couldn't believe it. I knew she sometimes missed meetings, saying she was "not feeling well," and I noticed that sometimes, even in warm weather, she wore long sleeved shirts. But I never suspected anything like the violence she described, that day we sat at my kitchen table talking.

Carol: It's that time again...for Women of Hope, and it's so good to be with you again, I'm Carol.

Tammy: And I'm Tammy. And I wonder if you recognized the voice of the other person who's here with us today. Yes it's our friend Katherine. Welcome Katherine.

Katherine: Thanks Tammy.

Carol: Katherine, I know this is a hard story for you – but we are so thankful you are sharing it with us today. You were telling us about your friend Alice...

Katherine: Yes, she's been a friend of mine for quite a while. Alice's husband is a successful businessman and well respected in the town. Her children went to school with my kids. As I said earlier, I never would have suspected what she was about to tell me that day. She said, "In the beginning it wasn't bad—only when he got upset about something at work, or one of the children would do something that made him angry."

I wondered what the children had seen, and if their father ever hurt them. When I asked her, she said, "I've tried to shield them as much as I could. That's why they've spent so much time at my mom's house down the street."

"But how could you keep them from knowing something was wrong?" I asked her.

She explained: "As they got older, it was harder, because he was drinking, and then he would get loud, and throw things. And then he started hitting me"

I gave her a hug as I got up to pour tea into our cups. "Why didn't you report all this to the police?" I asked.

"I did...once," she said. "They came to the house and talked to him, but he was as nice as you please with them, and basically called me a liar...and they believed him."

Carol: I wonder how often that happens? I expect it happens quite often. And I've heard that in some places, the police have even abused the person who's come to report the abuse.

Katherine: We live in a small town, and the police knew about Alice's husband's successful business and his church activities. He was even given a Good Citizen award for helping to raise money for a children's park, a couple of years ago.

As I looked at my friend's sad face, I tried to imagine her pain. Just last week, her son got into trouble for starting a fight after a football game at the high school. I knew it broke his mother's heart.

"Should I have left him when the kids were little?" She asked, and then shook her head. "I couldn't. I

didn't have any money, and I kept hoping he'd get better."

As I listened to her I felt so helpless. What could I tell her? What would help?

Katherine: Dear friend, you and I know that this kind of thing—and much worse—happens every day in our world. Innocent young girls are forced to be wives to men who mistreat them. In many cases, family friends sexually abuse young girls. Beautiful young women are forced into prostitution, because they try to help their families financially. Children are beaten.

What can we do? One thing we can do is pray. I know that God sees all this. It must break his heart to see his beautiful creatures treated this way. He has a perfect plan, for men and women to love each other in their marriages, and raise happy, healthy children.

Tammy: On Women of Hope today, Katherine has told us the story of her friend Alice. She was being beaten by her husband, but no one would have known if she had not told Katherine about it. I wonder if this is you? Are you suffering at home? Do you need to tell someone about it? Someone who cares and who can help you?

Carol: I'm sure we don't need to tell you that there's a lot of violence in this world. We're all aware of it aren't we? Much of this violence is there for everyone to see. People being shot, bombs and rockets going off. Warring between different groups of people. This is the cause of many deaths and terrible pain. But today we're talking about 'domestic violence' – as this is violence that happens in the home. We could call it 'quiet violence' because it can be hidden from others for a long time – no-one else may ever know about it.

Tammy: But does this make it right? If you're suffering violence in your home, should you just keep quiet? Maybe you feel that it would bring shame on you if you told anyone. Or maybe you think that you might not feel safe, and the violence may become worse if you told anyone. Yet keeping a secret like this just allows it to go on.

Carol: Maybe you think that it's your fault that this person is abusing you...and that you deserve it. Let me tell you that you do *not* deserve to be abused and it is *not* your fault.

Tammy: We want to talk today about some of the kinds of abuse that many people suffer. And it doesn't matter whether you live in a big house with many rooms, or a small house with one room; whether you live in a poor community or a very rich community. Domestic violence – abuse of people in their own homes – is something that happens all over the world.

Carol: Let's talk for a few minutes about the kinds of abuse that can happen in families. Wife beating is a common one – the husband may think it's his *right* to beat his wife if she doesn't do whatever he demands of her...or even if she's done *nothing at all*. Sometimes it's because the man thinks that the woman is inferior and needs to be forced to do what she's told. He may want to show that he has power over her. But you know something, women can be abusers too.

Children might be given severe physical punishment, beyond anything that's reasonable.

Tammy: Verbal abuse can happen between any members of the family – shouting, calling each other

names, threatening with physical abuse. Some family members feel that they have the right to say whatever they want to another – or put them down, telling them they're no good.

Carol: Sexual abuse by a man can often be used for just the same purposes – to show that they are a 'man' and to punish or control the wife. They may even consider it normal because they've seen their own fathers abusing women.

Whatever the reason, it is *not* the fault of the person being abused. They do not deserve it.

Tammy: It's good to be with you again today, as we're talking about something that may be very difficult for you or your family members...domestic, or family violence – abuse in the home.

Carol: We can't talk about everything to do with family violence today. And we've often talked together on Women of Hope about abuse of all different kinds. Most of all we want you to know that we care about you and we want you to understand that this abuse is not right. We want to encourage you to find someone you can talk to, someone you trust, about this violence and get some help... a friend, sister, mother or someone at church.

Be honest and tell them what's happening. They may be able to help you or tell you where to get the help you need.

Tammy: Family violence can cause a lot of *physical* damage to you and those in your home...serious injuries to the head and other parts of the body, miscarriages...or being unable to become pregnant. And of course sexual violence can cause you become sick with HIV Aids and other diseases. If your children are experiencing violence, they may lose weight and not grow and develop normally. They may often be unwell.

Carol: Then of course there are *social* consequences. Violence in your home teaches your children that they can be violent and encourages them to fight and argue. Remember what Katherine's friend Alice told her? Her son started fighting at school and she wondered whether she should have left her husband when the children were little.

The family that suffers violence is usually unhappy...and members of your family may not want to talk about what happens at home.

You may feel that you cannot join in other social activities outside your home with other women so you feel trapped.

Tammy: The *mental and psychological* effects of violence on members of the family can last a long time. Children might become very fearful and worried and find it hard to concentrate at school. Children who experience violence at home are not able to learn the proper way to deal with anger, or how to talk through their problems. They may feel guilty and think that for some reason the violence is their fault.

Carol: On Women of Hope today we've been talking about domestic violence – violence in the home. We want to share some ideas of practical things you can do if you are suffering family violence in *your* home. The first thing to think about is your safety and the safety of your family. If you're concerned about your safety, make a plan to get help

Tammy: Talk to a trusted friend or family member and if possible get them to help you make arrangements to get to a safe place. Always try to take your children with you. If you can, talk to your health care worker, or the police if you feel they are trustworthy, and ask where you can get help. Take a friend with you to support and protect you. And find out what the laws are in your country, or your community, to protect you from domestic violence.

Find out what services there are in your community to help you in your situation. Maybe there's a safe home for women who suffer abuse. Or free counselors to talk to.

It's most important for children who live in a violent home to have a simple safety plan so that they know what to do when violence is happening. This could include:

- warning children to stay out of the conflict,
- deciding ahead of time on a safe place the children can go when they feel unsafe, or showing them how to lock the doors against the violent person.
- teaching them how to use emergency phone numbers.

Carol: We cannot stress this enough: If you, or your children, are suffering from violence in your home, you *do not deserve it* and it is *not your fault*. For your safety, and the safety of your children, it's most important for you to get help.

Katharine, you have another story to tell us, don't you?

Katherine: Yes I do. In God's Word, the Bible, there's a story about a woman whose husband, Nabal, was a violent man? Her name was Abigail. He owned a very large property with thousands of sheep and goats. The Bible says he was 'crude and mean in all his dealings.' We don't know exactly what Abigail's life was like with him, but we would have to imagine that it was not very pleasant. The Bible says that she was a sensible, beautiful woman.

On Women of Hope we've talked many times about King David. He is in this story too, not long before he became King. David knew he would be the king one day, but at this time his men were living in tents out in the fields, running from King Saul who was insanely jealous of David.

Here's the true story from God's word:

David and his men moved down to the wilderness of Maon, where Nabal lived. It was shearing time. So when David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep, he sent ten of his young men to Nabal with this message: *Peace and prosperity to you, your family, and everything you own! While your shepherds stayed among us nearby, we did not harm them, or steal anything from them. We protected your sheep and goats. Ask your own men; they'll tell you it's true. As it's now a time of celebration, please be kind to us and share some of your food with us.* ...And they waited for the reply. Nabal sneered at the young men and shouted: "Who is this fellow David? Who does he think he is? He's just another slave, running away from his master! What makes you think I would take my bread, my water, and the meat I've had cooked for my own servants and give it to you?"

The men returned to the camp and told David what Nabal had said.

"Everybody, get your swords!" David ordered. He left 200 men to guard the camp and took 400 men with him! He was determined to take revenge and kill everyone in Nabal's family...and his servants' families.

Now one of Nabal's servants told Abigail what was happening. They said, "David sent some

messengers to wish our master well, but he shouted insults at them. He's a bully, who won't listen to anyone."

Abigail wasted no time, she quickly got some food together – bread, meat, roasted grain, raisins, dried figs and some wine. She loaded the food on donkeys and told the men to go ahead of her. She did not tell her husband, Nabal, what she was doing.

Abigail came along the road on a donkey, looking for David. When she saw David and his men coming, she got off her donkey and bowed down to David. "I accept all the blame in this matter, my lord," she said. I did not see the men you sent to us." She asked him to accept the food and not attack her family. David accepted the food. Then Abigail said some wise words: "The Lord, God has kept you from taking revenge and killing innocent people. ...The Lord will always protect you and your family because you fight for him. When God has made you king, please remember me, your servant." David was so impressed with this strong woman that he called off his men. "Praise the Lord," he said, "Thank God for your good sense. ...if you had not come out to meet me, not one of Nabal's men would have been alive by tomorrow morning. You have kept me from murder and from taking revenge with my own hands." Then he said, "Don't worry, you can go home now. I'll do what you have asked." When Abigail got home, Nabal was having a party and was very drunk. So Abigail waited until the morning, when he was sober, to tell him everything. When he heard what happened his heart failed him. He went as still as a stone...and ten days later, he died.

That's the end of this story, from God's word.

Tammy: Wow – what a brave woman she was. She was brave to face the warrior David but she was also brave to act without telling her husband. She probably risked severe punishment from him.

Carol: Abigail must have found it very difficult to live with a man who was so violent and foolish. In fact, his name, Nabal, means 'a fool.' But in spite of his foolishness and his shouting and curses, she did what she believed to be the best thing to protect him and all her family. She trusted God to lead her to make the right decision.

Tammy: And it was the best thing *wasn't it?* Of course she didn't know that her husband's heart would fail when she told him, and he would die! And she didn't know that when David heard that her husband had died, he would send a message to her to ask her to marry him.

Carol: It was a happy ending for her. But of course we know that living with abuse and violence all too often does not have a happy ending.

Thanks for coming today Katherine to share your friend's story and this story of Abigail from God's word.

Katherine: You're welcome. Dear friend, if you are being abused as my friend was, or if you know someone who is suffering like that, please remember that God sees what is happening, and his wonderful heart is breaking too. Like Abigail, you can turn to him, tell him you need his help and comfort...and he will hear you and give you courage to keep living, to take care of your children, and to get through this terrible time.

Perhaps you feel that you are somehow responsible for the abuse, or that you deserve to be mistreated. None of this is your fault. You are God's special, loved child. It says so in his Word, the

Bible. So you can go to him and ask for help and courage in this hard time.

Carol: And you're not alone. Many women around the world are hurting just as you are, and God cares about each one.

Also, you have sisters in many countries who are praying for you—that you will have courage and hope. We pray for you too, and for your husband, that God will change his heart.

Tammy: We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings....

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