

“Wherever you find yourself—whether you’re a victim, survivor, overcomer, or conqueror of domestic abuse—you’ll find Gardner is a trustworthy guide on your journey to hope and healing. This book is immensely practical and deeply spiritual. Anyone who engages with the steps outlined here and does the hard work of processing what has happened to them will benefit. Please do yourself a favor and have your pen and journal handy when you begin. Then watch with expectation as God meets you right where you are and draws you along the path to where you were always meant to be.”

ANNA LEBARON, author of *The Polygamist’s Daughter: A Memoir*

“With compassion, wisdom, and a proper understanding of Scripture, Karen will convince you that God loves you more than he hates divorce. Let her lead you through the healing that awaits you as you trust God with your betrayal and pain. You will boldly face your future knowing that, as Karen writes, ‘Your life will not be defined by what was done to you, but by what *God does* with what was done to you.’”

CINDI MCMENAMIN, national speaker, Bible teacher, and author of seventeen books, including *When Women Walk Alone*

“God abhors evil and hates abuse toward his children. While the world heaps guilt, shame, and condemnation on those who have endured abuse, Karen DeArmond Gardner shares God’s unconditional love. She understands that secrets no longer hold their power when they are exposed to the light. God has brought beauty from ashes as he has used Karen to speak up for others and show how she learned to live again after escaping an abusive marriage, and how you can have a voice too.”

DR. MICHELLE L. BENGTON, clinical neuropsychologist and award-winning author of *Hope Prevails*

# HOPE FOR HEALING FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE

Reaching for God's Promise  
of Real Freedom

KAREN DEARMOND GARDNER



KREGEL  
PUBLICATIONS

# CONTENTS

<i>Foreword by Laura McPherson</i>	11
<i>Introduction: Leaving Is Just the Beginning</i>	15
<b>Part 1: Victim—We Have to Start Someplace</b>	
1. Unfaltering: When It’s Time to Take Your Life Back	21
2. Undisguised: How Could You Know How Much Darkness Lived in Him?	31
3. Unenchanted: When Your Nightmare Is Disguised as a Fairy Tale	43
<b>Part 2: Survivor—Learning to Breathe Again</b>	
4. Unstuck: When the Anguish in Your Soul Longs to Be Released	57
5. Uncovered: When Facing Pain Is the Only Option	71
6. Unveiled: When God’s Truth Confronts Your Lies	85
<b>Part 3: Overcomer—Learning to Live Until You’re Alive</b>	
7. Unwavering: Break Out of Prison and Overcome Deception	99
8. Unashamed: Determine to Live Out Loud	113
9. Unflinching: Develop Courage in the Face of Fear	125
<b>Part 4: Conqueror—Living Undaunted</b>	
10. Unshackled: Live Freely and Fully	139
11. Unshakable: Live Boldly and Bravely	151
12. Unstoppable: Live Out the More	163
<i>Not the End . . . A New Beginning: Another One Free</i>	175

**Don't Stop, There's More . . .**

<i>How Does God Know What It Feels Like to Be a Woman?</i>	181
<i>Your Picker Isn't Broken</i>	185
<i>Eight Questions You Don't Have to Answer</i>	195
<i>God, Church, and Abuse</i>	199
<i>What Can the Church Do?</i>	203
<i>Say This, Not That</i>	211
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	215
<i>Notes</i>	217

## FOREWORD

I've known Karen DeArmond Gardner for several years as a fellow author and member of the same writer's group and association. It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend *Hope for Healing from Domestic Abuse* as a must-read for those who have left an abusive relationship or are considering leaving one.

Karen is a woman of integrity, care, and passion. Her heart embraces others and their stories. She believes that women are stronger than they realize, so she speaks directly to them about abuse. Some may believe they can't relate to a book like *Hope for Healing from Domestic Abuse* because they didn't endure physical abuse. Karen asks, *Are you waiting for the other shoe to drop? Have you ever thought, If only I hadn't said that or did this, I wouldn't have been hit or verbally assaulted? Or have you told yourself, I can't leave because God hates divorce, and if I ended my marriage, I'd ruin my children's lives?*

I didn't endure physical abuse, but many years into my marriage I realized that I was experiencing emotional abuse. After becoming a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist after my divorce, I was able to identify the emotional abuse and other subtle abuse I endured. In those early years, I always thought it was my fault because that's what I was told. I was hesitant to divorce because I was afraid of wearing the scarlet *D*. I didn't think I would be welcome in my church anymore, which wasn't true. It is difficult for many of us to admit to being abused, but our habits, our words, and even our lack of words reveal what we have experienced.

Karen may not have professional letters after her name that reflect academic training and work experience, but she has earned the degree of "lived and survived." She gives a well-balanced presentation of domestic abuse and what it takes not only to survive but also to be healed. She states facts, gives excellent examples, and takes the shame away when we find ourselves relating to her stories or facts. She not

only survived thirty years of domestic violence, she's taken the steps to be truly healed from it. The reader will find this to be a cornerstone for the book: It's not only about surviving. It's about healing.

When she and I collaborated on writing this foreword, it became clear to her that I may still need some healing. I had admitted to her that I don't like the word *victim*. I struggled with it. Karen convinced me that we have to face the fact that we are/were victims. There is a difference between *being* a victim and *acting* like a victim. In my practice, some clients enjoy the victim role. I didn't want to be that person. Karen helped me embrace the word *victim* in a different way. There is truth in the word. Avoiding identifying with it doesn't help. It will tempt us not to get the help we need.

Karen helps those of us who have also experienced spiritual abuse by others misusing Scripture to minimize or dismiss our situation. Some churches and church members have, unfortunately, re-abused victims by quoting Scripture incorrectly or using it to shame them. They minimize our pain, shift the blame from the abuser to the victim, and ostracize us. *Hope for Healing from Domestic Abuse* includes encouraging, supportive, and accurate Scripture we can use to combat our own doubts as well as accusations from the enemy or from friends and family members.

As we live with abuse, "why" questions fill our minds. Why does God allow this abuse? Why does no one see my abuser's cruelty? Why wasn't I enough for him? Karen addresses these critical topics. She provides examples and suggestions of how to address these questions. She also addresses our fears, doubts, grief, and anger at God. She offers readers hope, courage, freedom, and ways to live in truth and reality.

Karen does one-on-one mentoring through word-of-mouth referrals. Since she can only see a small number of individuals, she felt God was calling her to write this book to reach larger numbers who need to read it and be mentored by her in this way. This book does not recommend divorce; it offers freedom of choice without shame.

God loves you more than he hates divorce. There is no doubt God hates divorce—so do I; so do many divorced people. Hating something doesn't mean it's prohibited; it means it has consequences

that are unfortunate but also good. As a therapist, I hate divorce for what it does to us and to our families, but I hate abuse much more because of what it does to us and to our families. According to Karen, the hope we have is this: what the enemy would use to destroy us, God will use to heal us.

Laura McPherson, MS, LPC, LMF  
Licensed Professional Counselor  
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

## INTRODUCTION

---

# LEAVING IS JUST THE BEGINNING

*And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*

—Philippians 1:6

You likely never thought you'd be reading a book on healing from domestic abuse. But here you are. And I'm glad you came. If you're like me, you may not know that you can heal from the trauma from abuse.

Notice this book is not called *Twelve Easy Steps to Heal from Domestic Abuse*. That's because there are no easy steps to this kind of healing, and there aren't just twelve. The journey to healing is long, arduous, wonderful, and scary all at the same time. Freedom isn't one and done. It's a process that you may have to fight for to keep.

Through the last sixteen-plus years of healing, I couldn't have imagined how deep God's love is for me. My hope is that you will discover the same depth of his love.

When I left my abuser, I purchased every book I could find to figure out what happened to me and how to deal with it. None of those books helped ease the pain or made me feel better. They did explain what happened to me, and it was shocking to discover names and definitions for everything I experienced. Since that time, I've discovered more words and better explanations.

Because of the type of churches I attended, I was taught life is hard, so endure until Jesus returns or until you die and go to heaven. I've since learned that's only part of the story. The Gospels tell us about Jesus, who offered living water (John 4:10) and called himself the bread of life (John 6:48).



Scripture tells us he's the God "who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). And in John 10:10, Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they would have life, and have it abundantly" (NASB).

You may believe that domestic violence will haunt you for the rest of your life, but I'm saying no. The verse at the beginning of this introduction states that God will work in you until the day he returns. The apostle Paul, who wrote that verse, was certain, persuaded, and convinced that God would keep his promise to complete what he started in you. God didn't save you to leave you wallowing in a pit of despair for a lifetime.

Do you, like me, long to know God's purpose and destiny for your life? I mistakenly thought *purpose* meant ministry and serving God through writing, speaking, being an artist, taking on a profession, or devoting myself to missions. I was wrong. Those are things we may do because we love him, but they are only part of our destiny. What is your destiny and mine? Reaching for God's promise. It sounds too simple, but it's not. His love for you and me is deeper than the ocean and wider than the universe.

Yet abuse distorts love, and love becomes a curse word—something to be given and taken away. Abuse turns love into a weapon instead of a sacrifice. My desire is for you to know and experience God's love.

God's love is multidimensional and limitless. There are seventeen variations for the word *love* in the Hebrew and Greek: affection, beloved, words of love, friend, amorousness, compassion, desire, to choose, brotherly, sisterly, husband and wife, benevolence, greedy love, love toward children, tenderness, devotion, and passion.<sup>1</sup> Most of the words have more than one meaning.

God's love is multidimensional and limitless. That kind of love will get you through whatever your enemy, Satan, throws at you. God's love for you is more—additionally, again, also, besides, either, further, furthermore, for good measure, into the bargain, on top of, greater—than the abuse or anything the evil one or your abuser throws at you.

Why am I bringing up love? When you've lived in and survived abuse, love seems foreign and uncharacteristic and beyond comprehension, which makes it difficult for you to receive anything from others, especially love. As you create new friendships with women and men, you'll find it easier to give than to receive kindness and love. And it's even harder to ask for help when you need it. Asking for help may make you feel weak. Yet opening yourself up for help is not weakness. It is an act of strength.

My hope is that you will discover day after day the depths of God's love for you and that it will transform your life, giving you the courage to change your world.

Throughout this book, I'll use the term *BeLoved*. It is who you are. You can read it several ways: *be loved* (live as one who is loved mightily) and *beloved* (one who is highly loved). It's a term of affection, devotion, and love.

My hope as you read the words, sentences, paragraphs, pages, and chapters is that you'll discover there is freedom and abundance after abuse. And I pray you'll also discover that God loves you more than he hates divorce, more than he hates abuse, more than he hates anything.

I invite you to join me on a journey through pain and trauma and into the *more* God has for you as you ride the roller coaster called healing and wholeness.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a section called "Reaching for More," which is designed to help you put words to what happened to you, start conversations with Jesus, and discover there is more to life than living in pain and agony. Read the book, and when you are ready, grab your Bible and journal, review each chapter, and complete the questions at the end of the chapter. Take your time. Healing begins as you interact with the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

## PART 1

---

# VICTIM

### *We Have to Start Somewhere*

You may say, “I am not a victim! I refuse to be called a victim.” I can understand those feelings. But acknowledging you are a victim says you recognize that you were hurt, maligned, deceived, and abused. It’s what happened to you, not who you are.

As you begin your journey toward wholeness, let’s look at what you have survived. As you revisit some tender places in your soul, keep in mind that you are not alone. Jesus knew betrayal too: “He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care” (Isaiah 53:3).

## CHAPTER 1

# UNFALTERING

### *When It's Time to Take Your Life Back*

*By your mighty power I can walk through any devastation,  
and you will keep me alive, reviving me. Your power set  
me free from the hatred of my enemies.*

—Psalm 138:7 (TPT)

After a long day at work, I settled into my favorite chair to watch mindless television and avoid talking to my then husband. Finding myself bored with TV, I began to flip through the latest edition of *Today's Christian Woman* magazine.<sup>2</sup> I felt as if someone plunged a hot poker into my heart as I read that God doesn't condone abuse, that I was one in four women.

I sneaked a glance at Guy, trying not to react, afraid he somehow knew what I was reading. *Can he read my mind?* As I continued reading the article, "The Silent Epidemic," *shock* is the only word that describes how it felt to see my life played out in print. How could they know about the physical and verbal abuse? Yet that wasn't what stopped my heart. It was the author talking about husbands destroying sentimental property, issuing death threats, and isolating their wives from family and friends.

The harsh reality smacked me in the face.

My husband was an abuser.

It's not just the way he was. It wasn't just because I made him angry. *He was a predator.* It meant our marriage was a travesty. Even harder to admit . . . if he was an abuser, *I was abused.*

I couldn't be.

Oh, but I was.

I'd been in denial for thirty years. To accept it, to say it out loud made it too real. I needed to leave him, but fear screamed, *You can't leave—he won't let you.*

*Oh, dear God! What have I done?* It was as if I woke from a stupor. *Why did I assume I had to stay?*

Admitting your husband is an abuser is painful; it's admitting that maybe he doesn't love you, and you begin to question whether you love him. The revelation creates anxiety throughout your body as you wonder what to do next. You may falter between awakening and denial, which is understandable.

One year earlier, on our twenty-ninth anniversary, Guy assaulted me with cruel words and with his fists. When he finished, he shoved me out the door. Battered and bruised, I stumbled away from the house. My son picked me up and we drove two hours to my daughter's home in another state.

I stayed away for a month, but once again, Guy "got right with Jesus," admitted what he did, and lost his career in law enforcement. Guilt told me I should stand by my man. But everything in me fought going back. The thought made me sick. Yet I did go back. After all, he took responsibility and changed. For nine months, he was a changed man . . . until he wasn't.

Cascades of despair rolled over me as I continued reading the article. I avoided looking at him. I couldn't let him see. He must suspect nothing. My enduring what Guy had done wasn't God's purpose for our marriage. God isn't okay with abuse . . . of any kind.

Sitting on the other side of the room watching TV, he was unaware his world had just blown up. All the while, I was on a roller coaster of emotions, ranging from rage to terror.

With every plan I made to leave, fear rose to remind me who I was. Shattered. Worthless. Conquered. Hopeless. But how would I get out?

In the abuse dynamic, there's an invisible line. If you cross it, you pay his price. His generosity determines if you eat, if you drive the car, what you wear, where you sleep, or *if* you sleep. I could have left, you say. I could've called the police, you may reason. But my husband *was* the police and, above all else, I'd been taught that God hates divorce.

As I read that article, in that moment I knew it wasn't me. It was him.

I was done—done pretending, done denying, done being treated as if I was nothing to him.

Have you had your defining moment? The moment you knew it wasn't you—that it was him and that he may never change?

Your defining moment is important; it helps you to remain unfaltering when you may be wavering about whether to stay or go.

Once I decided I was done, God immediately started to put my rescue into motion.

Do I wonder why God took so long to answer me? Absolutely. But I could never have orchestrated the miracle he was about to work.

Have you had your defining moment? The moment you knew it wasn't you—that it was him and that he may never change?

## THE ESCAPE

As winter approached and Christmas drew near, I began preparing for my daughter's college graduation, which was the week before Christmas. My mother was coming to visit, and I hadn't seen my mom in years! Both excitement and apprehension overwhelmed me. The weeks leading up to Mom's visit were a roller coaster of ups and downs between silence and anger, followed by verbal jabs, blame, and control. Guy ordered me not to allow my mom to come. I refused. This wasn't about us. It was about my mother watching her granddaughter graduate from college.

The time leading up to her visit was like wandering through a mine field. No matter which way I turned or stepped, I was bound to land on one. While mom and I helped to set up for my daughter's graduation party, Guy left for home, which was two hours away. No warning, no words, just up and left without mom and me, leaving us to get a ride home with my son.

After graduation, the days leading up to Christmas were hell on earth. Mom and I would take off each day to shop, while I battled indecision. Should I leave him? Should I not? The answer *should* have been obvious, but it clearly wasn't. Mom would give advice, but

wouldn't choose for me, and each night Mom packed my clothes, expecting I would leave.

Choosing to leave aroused distress, a sense of impending danger, dread, and apprehension. It's understandable why so many abused women may waver between staying and going. But I told myself, "Take a deep breath and choose you." It's advice I still give to other women in my situation.

Terror overwhelmed me as I thought of the repercussions of leaving. I sincerely believed I would disappoint God. After all, he hates divorce, right? Yet I knew, deep in my soul, God was nudging me to leave. But in my panic, the voice of fear sounded more persuasive than the voice of God.

Christmas 2004 went down as both my worst and best Christmas. It was the day I stopped the yo-yo of indecision and determined to stop dancing around my husband's core of darkness and leave.

After my mom and our adult children went to bed, he and I stayed up. Not to savor the quiet around the tree but for him to pound me with his words. For hours, he barraged me with all my failings and what he would do if I ever cheated or left him. It took everything in me to not laugh, knowing in a few short hours I would leave. If I drifted off, he'd startle me, act like he would hit me. As he raged, the Holy Spirit whispered, *Tell him to stop in Jesus's name*. But my fear of this man was stronger than my faith in the Holy Spirit.

By three in the morning, his rage spent, he demanded sex—his final act of humiliation and dominance. My body yielded to his and betrayed me. He fell asleep as if nothing had happened. It was his normal pattern. I was flooded with rage, humiliation, and shame. I'd waffled between staying and leaving for a week. Now I was determined to leave this man. Sleep eluded me as I bounced between dread and excitement at finally being free.

The Sunday morning sun woke me. For a moment I lay there praying Guy wouldn't wake up. Quaking with fear and apprehension, I slid out of bed, took one last look at him, and prayed, "Please God, don't let him wake up," as I slipped out of the room. I walked out the door, not to church, but to freedom. Fear mocked me as my mom and I loaded our luggage into the trunk. I was doing this. Leaving,



not on a jet plane, but in a Monte Carlo. As we shut the car doors, I turned the key, expecting to hear the roar of an engine. Instead, we were met with silence. Total and complete silence.

In a flash, my hope was as dead as the engine. I jumped out of the car, crying, yanking luggage out of the trunk. There would be no escape today—until the voice of my seventy-two-year-old mother penetrated my fear: “Karen. Karen! We’ll call a tow truck.”

We found a safe place to wait, and my rescuing knight drove up in his shiny white tow truck to save the day. “I’m running away from home,” I said. “You must not wake him.” As my fairy godmother and knight drove off to recharge the Monte, I waited at the 7-Eleven, expecting Guy to show up. My heart leapt when my mother drove up.

As we drove to Texas, hope soared. *I’m free!*

I remember feeling surprised that I actually left him. I now know I was feeling courageous. How did you feel when you left? Scared? Courageous? Both and everything in between?

I remember feeling surprised that I actually left him. I now know I was feeling courageous.

## YOU DID WHAT?

After my successful escape, my mom didn’t want me to leave Texas and go back to my job, even though I wasn’t going back to my husband. But I felt as if I couldn’t leave my employer without any notice. As soon as I returned to work, I knew I’d made a huge mistake. I didn’t realize how hard it would be to leave a place I thought was home. But this place was no longer my home.

I struggled with indecision. Should I stay in this city I’d called home for thirty years or move to Texas? Each day the terror inside me grew until I knew it was time to put in my notice at work. You’d think leaving would be a no-brainer. But this brain was in a massive state of confusion.

I spoke to Guy twice on the phone, January 9 and 16. I told him I wasn’t coming back and that we both needed counseling. I suggested that maybe, just maybe we could put our marriage back together. Did I really want to put our marriage back together? Did I really think



counseling would help? I didn't. I appeased him with hope where there wasn't any. He seemed calm. I let my guard down and talked about visiting friends moving to Alaska. It proved a massive mistake.

I was on my way home after visiting my friends when I spotted his unmistakable '72 blue and white Chevy truck several car lengths behind me. My heart slammed into my chest as fear flooded my body.

Hoping it was a coincidence and he didn't see me, yet knowing it wasn't, I exploded with fear when the light turned red. Stuck in traffic, my hands shaking, I tried to remember how to lock the doors.

Sweet relief hit as I heard the click of doors locking . . . just as he pulled the handle.

Looking into his face, a face I hadn't seen for twenty-four days, sent bone-chilling shivers up my spine. He wanted to talk but there were no words he could say, promises he could make, or actions he could take to change my mind. I no longer wanted to be with him. The veil had lifted, and I saw the monster within. He didn't love me. I was his possession. His drug of choice. Was I afraid of him? Absolutely.

Anger and frustration contorted his face as he demanded we talk. With my every refusal, he became angrier, louder, and more insistent. The exchange lasted for what seemed like an eternity. The moment the light turned green I sped away, leaving him standing in traffic. All rational thought left as panic took over.

Getting away was my only thought. As he chased me through the city, a reasonable person would call 911 or drive to the police station. But I was beyond rational thought. Instead, I called my daughter, who lives two hours away and was unable to help. Imagine answering that call, expecting to chat and all you hear is your mother screaming. Though she was an adult and married, that night traumatized her as much as it did me.

With no destination in mind I drove for eight miles through the city, begging God to do something, anything, to stop him. As the sun dipped out of sight and darkness surrounded me I lost all hope.

If you ever leave, if you ever cheat . . .

I. Will. Kill. You.

The words stuck in my head, playing repeatedly, consuming me with terror.

In the last year and a half, he'd lost everything, including both his career in law enforcement and his wife.

He had nothing left to lose.

I had everything to lose.

At one point, Guy slammed into my car and ran me off the road. Rage boiled out of him as he charged my car, and attempted to break through my window with his elbow. Jolted by my daughter's voice, I followed her instructions. "Hang up, Mom. Call 911!"

As I punched the numbers into the phone, he stood next to my car and said, almost resigned, "You're calling the cops?" Duh!

If looks could kill, he would have died on the spot. Deflated, his rage spent, he walked back to his truck and drove down the block to wait for the police.

Two officers came to my rescue; one spoke to Guy while the other interviewed me. The officer asked me if this had ever happened before. Shame washed over me. How do I explain a lifetime of abuse after thirty years of keeping the family secret? A million thoughts ran through my mind. As I looked up at the officer, he repeated his question, "Has this happened before?"

"Yes."

"Do you want me to arrest him?"

I thought, *He would be so mad.*

Why in the world did it matter if he was mad? To this day, my one regret of that night is not having him arrested. He deserved at least one night in jail. I only considered how he would react, instead of thinking of my own safety.

"No, I'm leaving tomorrow. I'm moving to Texas. And I'm never coming back." The officer asked me again if I was sure and if I had a place to go, assuring me they would keep him there until I left.

I was shaking and crying as I drove away from my nightmare. Eventually, mile after mile, my hope returned.

I don't remember all the thoughts that were racing through my mind during my flight to Texas the next day. However, I *do* remember my constant companions—fear and shame—tagging along, arms looped through mine. They had found a friend, and they weren't about to let go.

Texas became my place of safety and Psalm 107:1–9 my anthem:

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!

His faithful love endures forever.

Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out!

Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies.

For he has gathered the exiles from many lands,

from east and west,

from north and south.

Some wandered in the wilderness,

lost and homeless.

Hungry and thirsty,

they nearly died.

“LORD, help!” they cried in their trouble,

and he rescued them from their distress.

He led them straight to safety,

to a city where they could live.

Let them praise the LORD for his great love

and for the wonderful things he has done for them.

For he satisfies the thirsty

and fills the hungry with good things.

January 19, 2005, is my Independence Day—a day I thought I would never see and a day far beyond my imagination.

It was a “Pinch me, I’m dreaming” moment.

But it was no dream. I woke up in an unfamiliar place, surrounded by family I hadn’t been around in thirty years. The weight of shame enveloped me as I walked down the stairs to face my family at breakfast the next morning. I was clothed but I felt naked and exposed.

## **IS THIS ALL THERE IS?**

Admitting you are or were abused is one of the hardest things you’ll do. It’s horrifying to say the words out loud: “My husband is an

abuser.” I understand the pain you may be experiencing right now as you’re reading. Seeing him for who he is or was means seeing yourself for who you have become. Once you acknowledge you are a victim, you can do something about it.

If you’re still in your marriage, you can plan your escape. If you’re out, you can plan to stay out. Did you know it takes most of us abused wives somewhere between six to eight times of repeated leaving before we finally leave for good? Each time we go back, he’ll escalate. Precious one, your journey to healing can begin today. This place you may be in now is temporary. Jesus will guide each step you take toward healing.

Your journey to healing can begin today. . . . Jesus will guide each step you take.

## ENCOUNTER GOD

---

*Come, my BeLoved, on a journey to healing. I’m so sorry for what your abuser did to you. I will carry you as you read. I will fan the flame of hope within you. I am as close as your breath. You can face anything because I am with you. I heard your cries in the night, curled up, lost in hopelessness. I was there holding you, comforting you. Come with me, precious one, and you’ll discover I am more than you ever imagined.*

-Your Comforter and Protector  
(Psalm 116; Ephesians 3:20)

## REACHING FOR MORE

---

Choosing to leave an abusive marriage is by far one of the most difficult decisions you made. You had a moment when the darkness lifted, what was obscure became clear, when the cloud lifted and you could finally see the hidden. Putting words to this moment will help you to remain unfaltering in your decision.

1. What were the circumstances that led up to your moment when you knew you were done?
2. How did those circumstances shift your thinking?
3. Identify and name the emotions that rose up in this process.
4. What was the decision you made in this moment, and how did you feel when you made it?
5. What is one thing you can do to remain unfaltering in your decision?