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# 1

## *No Place to Cry*

Someone has rightly observed that the trouble abused children face is that they have no place to cry their eyes out. Think of what it must be like to have to bear the dark secret of abuse alone. To tell someone in authority is to risk punishment or disbelief.

To my dismay I have learned that sexual abuse can take place in Christian homes—even in the homes of Christian leaders. This hidden sin happens behind the closed doors of some of our most respected families. It happens everywhere.

Those dark secrets are what cause the soul to become bitter, unloving, and woefully sad. They are the cause of many neuroses, and they also lead to withdrawal from society or even the contemplation of suicide.

The part of our souls that we keep from one another (and perhaps also from God) becomes the seat of our troubles. Many people could be greatly helped if they could find a listening ear and a sympathetic heart.

For years I concealed a secret that I determined only God and my husband would know about. I thought they were the only ones I could trust. I thought people would not believe me if I told them that I had been sexually abused.

But now I tell my story because I have met hundreds of women who can identify with my suffering.

My sister and I left the orphanage when I was thirteen years old. We were taken to a foster home run by a woman we called "Granny." I attended junior high school, and Marie went to an elementary school nearby.

Granny began to intimidate us the day of our arrival. "If you don't mind me, you'll get *this*," she warned as she slapped my face with her bare hand, using me as an example. The blows stung, but I tried not to cry.

There was, however, something far worse than the beatings I endured in Granny's home. One evening when I was sleeping, her husband came into my room, woke me, and told me to take off my clothes. Then without further explanation, he forced me to participate in sexual acts to satisfy his perverted whims and desires.

That was the first of many such experiences. *How I hated the very sight of the man!* He was tall, strong, and heavyset. There was nothing I could do to stop him from violating my body. He warned me that if I ever told anyone he would kill me, and I believed him. After almost every one of those traumatic encounters, he would lock me into a closet until I stopped crying. If I cracked open the door and he was still around, he would abuse me again. One time I sobbed with such intensity and anger that I pushed my hands right through my pockets.

The only thing that sustained me during those painful days was the knowledge that God was with me. Back in the orphanage, a Christian matron by the name of Irma Freman had given me a copy of the New Testament. Each day I would read a few verses, trying to memorize them as well as I could. "Lord, You promised to be with me all the time," I would say. "All I have is You."

After about four months with Granny, Marie and I were taken to a home for girls who were wards of the state. There we had a welcome respite from the cruelty of the past few

months. Unfortunately, our stay was short-lived. We were told that we would be transferred into a private home. We looked forward to this, thinking we might actually find someone who loved us. But that was not to be.

### OH NO, NOT AGAIN

When the doorbell at the Girls' Home rang, I was stunned. There stood Granny, looking as angry as ever. "We've come to take you to a family that lives in San Francisco," she said, pointing at the social worker who was with her.

Granny, we discovered, knew our mother. We never quite understood the connection, but we were told that she was there on our mother's behalf. My sister was taken to live with a family who really wanted her. I was taken to live with a family that knew my mother.

Life in the Makin home was as bad as, if not worse than, what I experienced at Granny's. Mr. Makin was a short, stocky man with a heavy chest. He reminded me of a gorilla. Mrs. Makin looked stern with her gray hair parted down the middle. Mrs. Makin permitted me to take only one bath a month and to wash my hair every eight weeks. Over the door she kept a calendar indicating the day she would draw the water into the tub. I would have to strip in front of her, and when I was wet, she would beat me with a leather strap. I can still feel the sting.

Often I was beaten just before leaving for school, so I had to begin the five-mile walk with a bloody nose or black eye. I would use the restroom in a service station before I arrived so that I could attempt to camouflage my hurts. I'm convinced now that my teachers and other adults must have seen that I was being abused. But they pretended not to notice. If they had asked questions, they would have become responsible. Apparently no one wanted to get involved.

My hair became matted, and I developed head lice. So my hair was shaved off. To hide my embarrassment, I went to school with my head wrapped in a towel. The other children would pull it off and laugh, calling me cruel names.

Dirt encased itself around my wrists and ankles. When I walked into the classroom, I'd hear the other students say, "There's Stinky!" as they turned their backs toward me.

I looked forward to that long walk to and from school. I used the time to talk to God. Sometimes after school I would crawl into boxes in an alley or crouch behind trash cans, seeking some sort of refuge. I sought a place to pray and cry my eyes out.

The beatings I had come to expect at Granny's were repeated at the Makins. They beat me mercilessly. Once again, I found myself running outside to hide under a step or in an alley, always looking for a place to cry.

My rollaway bed was in the hallway that led from the dining hall to the Makins' bedroom. Frequently strange men walked past my couch, shuffling their way into the bedroom. I prayed that they would not touch me.

One day Mrs. Makin said to one of the men, "Go ahead, take her. I'll stay in the other room." The man overpowered me. He tore my clothes and forced me to participate in his sexual acts. Once again, I found myself screaming, begging, pleading that I might not have to become a part of these perversions. But no one listened to my cries. No one came to help.

Soon other men would come to the house looking for "the little girl." The houses in San Francisco are built so close to one another that there is only room for a small alley between them. Sometimes when I heard the men coming I would run through the alley and hide under a step or run to the other side of the block. I still recall hiding one evening and overhearing the men saying to one another, "Where is she? Where could she have gone?"

I had scraped my knee as I crouched in the small crevice, waiting for the men to leave. Rotting garbage must have been near me because I vividly recall thinking that it smelled like dead rats. Amid my tears I sobbed, "If only I had a mother, this would not be happening to me!" Then a light seemed to engulf me, and I felt a sense of peace. I heard the men say, "She's not here." They left. That time God protected me.

But there were times when God did not protect me. I prayed earnestly for deliverance, calling to the Lord for help and protection, but still I was sexually abused by evil men. Once I threw a cup of hot coffee on one of my attackers but was beaten and abused all the more severely.

No one had to tell me that what was happening was perverted and filthy. It is impossible to exaggerate the sense of shame and revulsion that those acts brought to my soul. For a long time I would run from anyone who wanted to touch me, even if it was an innocent touch.

God did not shield me from the violations of my body, yet I still clung to Him, believing that He would be with me. He gave me the grace to bear my trials. That's why I have never been bitter or angry with my heavenly Father. It was He who chose me to belong to Him; He led those students to the orphanage to tell me about God's love. Regardless of the heartaches I have endured on earth, I know that this present suffering cannot be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us. God has reserved a place for me in heaven, so that I may be with Him forever. Eternity is a long time. Someday I shall speak to my Savior, who stood with me when no one else did. Maybe He will tell me why I had to endure all those tears. And maybe He will point to some people and say, "Dorie, these are here because you told them about My grace and power." Just a word from my Savior will make up for the past.

I believe God is sovereign; He knew the first day of my life, and He knows the last, as well as all the days in between.

Nothing can happen to me without first passing through His fingers of love. He knew that some day that dirty little girl would stand before thousands of people and tell them that God is faithful—that there is nothing in their lives too big for God to handle.

People have told me, “Dorie, you’ve survived because you had such strong faith.” That’s not true. I survived because there was no one else to run to except the Lord. I had absolutely no one else. I sometimes questioned God, but I never hated Him.

Do I have scars? Of course. But there is something beautiful about a scar. It means that you have been healed—that you are on the mend. All over the country I meet people who have been cut open emotionally, and many of them still have open wounds. Sometimes I meet people who are holding onto their bitterness; they keep reliving the painful events of the past. They are, in effect, peeling off the scabs to see whether healing has occurred—or sometimes to prove that it hasn’t.

The process of healing is like major surgery. After the operation, the wound is painful and tender, but if the stitches do their job, healing occurs. Slowly the flesh begins to grow together, and the area becomes whole again. Eventually you can be hit where the scars are without feeling it.

Today I tell people, “Don’t blame God for what happens to little children!” It is true that terrible things happen within the context of His permissive will and that He could prevent them. But He does not *do* the evil, and He has good reasons for allowing those things to happen.

Job did not curse God even though he lost his children, possessions, and health. His wife advised, “Curse God and die.” But he called her foolish, asking, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” (2:10). Thus Job did not sin with his lips or charge God foolishly.

Also, I have to remind my listeners, “Don’t believe the psychiatrists who state that experiences of abuse will ruin

you for the rest of your life and that you will never be normal." Unfortunately, many people have believed the lie that past abuse will ruin all your chances for happiness. Not so. When Christ promised that our joy would be full, I believe He meant it for all Christians, regardless of their backgrounds. He is indeed able to heal the broken-hearted. For example, I had the good fortune to be married to an understanding husband who loved me despite my abuse. He was tender and compassionate, and through his love the sexual relationship became beautiful and fulfilling. That is proof of what God is able to do.

### THE VALUE OF TEARS

I know what it is like to try to find a place to cry my eyes out. Often during those difficult years I would specifically look for a place to cry—a closet, a vacant lot, or an alley. If all the tears I have shed could be collected, I'm quite sure they would fill a bucket or two. Tears are a necessary part of handling grief.

In two incidents recorded in the New Testament, Jesus wept. He stood at the grave of Lazarus, and He looked compassionately over the city of Jerusalem—in those instances our Lord participated in the grief of mortals. His tears give ours legitimacy.

I've often pondered the words of David, who himself shed many tears because of the oppression of wicked men. "My foes have trampled upon me all day long," he writes. "For they are many who fight proudly against me" (Psalm 56:2). He continues, "All day long they distort my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They attack, they lurk, they watch my steps, as they have waited to take my life" (vv. 5-6).

Was God taking note of the mistreatment David received at the hands of his enemies? Notice what follows: "Thou hast taken account of my wanderings; put my tears in



Thy bottle; are they not in Thy book?" (v. 8). David believed his tears were put in a bottle; they were recorded in God's special book. God did that for David, and I like to think that He has done the same for me. My tears were noticed by God, collected as a symbol of my suffering and His special care. I have not cried in vain. Those tears, though long since dried, have not escaped the attention of God. My friend, you can safely cry in God's presence. Someday He will wipe the tears from your eyes, but until that time He collects them as precious perfume in His sight.

A young lady wrote, "Dear Dorie, thank you for letting me cry. I've prayed that the Lord would send me someone who knew what my heart felt. I've got good friends, but I needed someone to touch me who knew my pain. Now I can go on, knowing that someone who knows touched me."

Let us as the Body of Christ allow people the privilege of crying. Some women were never allowed to be children when they were growing up. As far back as they can remember they have borne hurts that are even too much for adults. The little girls inside still need to come out. Let us permit them to cry.

My heart still breaks for the thousands of children out there who are being abused, either physically or sexually (or both), who do not know Christ as their Savior. They have to withstand the trauma alone, and they have nowhere to turn. To them God may seem cold, impersonal, and cruel. Some lash out in anger against the Almighty and against the people who have mistreated them. Even after they grow up and become integrated into society, they live alone emotionally. They never really feel as if they belong to anyone. No one helps them carry their trauma; no one makes their burden lighter. The family they marry into is often just as cruel as the one that reared them.

Christ already knows our dark secrets. We share our inmost thoughts, and He lends His listening ear. The same Christ who forgave my sins and enabled me to come to grips

with my troubled past is available to you. His death on the cross was a sacrifice for sinners so that we all can be welcomed into His family forever. We must, however, receive Him as our own. In the orphanage in Oakland I put my faith in Him and received both His companionship and the gift of eternal life. If you have not already done that, don't read any further. You have business with God.

The first step in experiencing the healing of the past is to choose to deal with those dark secrets. Bring them to God. He knows about them already, of course; indeed, He knows every detail of our history. By taking up the matter with our heavenly Father, we have the advantage of talking with someone who already knows the details if words fail us. "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). The Holy Spirit takes the groanings of the soul and puts them into words. He helps us in our intercession.

Then find a friend who will believe you. Perhaps it will be someone who has also experienced abuse, though that is not necessary. There are many fine Christians who can sympathize though they themselves have never experienced the same trauma. You will need the strength of the Body of Christ in order to be healed.

*At night,  
unkissed, a-bed  
without  
anyone's blessing,  
the weeping child  
shudders and  
sobs until  
she's wrung dry  
from tears,  
and spent.*

*In the morning,  
carefully,  
she gathers the  
tattered edges of  
her garment  
of composure  
about her nakedness,  
and tiptoes out  
into another loveless day.*

*Oh, tell her about the One  
Who promises  
"I will never leave you  
or forsake you,"  
for  
"I have loved you  
with an  
everlasting  
love."*

(Nancy Spiegelberg)