

# Heart Piercing Wounds

*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. James 19-20 NIV*

All of us have from time to time said things that we later regret. Emotions run high and anger comes to the surface. There are, though, individuals who consistently remain in a pattern of behavior using words to destroy others out of a sense of entitlement, superiority, and power. In James 3:6 we find, *The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

These abusive people can even profess to be "Christians" using this mask to cover up what is really in their heart. *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. James 3:9-10 NIV*

When confronted with a verbally abusive person, we have a tendency to explain or defend ourselves over and over again hoping to prove that their statements are false. This only gives the abusive person more ammunition to use against the victim.

In Patricia Evans' book, *The Verbally Abusive Relationships*, she states, "If you are encountering abuse and feel that if you could explain things, he'd understand, remember this: If someone started throwing rocks through your windows, you would be more inclined to tell him to stop than you would be to explain to him why he shouldn't throw rocks. Verbal abuse is like

a rock thrown through your window." Verbal abuse shatters the window (our spirit) of our heart into pieces. Eventually we will no longer know who we are.

Therefore it is critical to identify the categories of verbal abuse.

- ★ **Name Calling**—The abuser uses derogatory names.
- ★ **Abusive Anger**—The abuser exhibits sudden outburst of anger which are usually irrational and unexpected.
- ★ **Threatening**—The abuser knows the victim's greatest fears and uses these to intimidate and keep control.
- ★ **Withholding**—The abuser refuses to acknowledge the victim's thoughts and feelings while remaining aloof, silent, and emotionally distant.
- ★ **Countering**—The abuser refutes the victims perceptions, thoughts, opinions, feelings, and life experiences usually stating the opposite viewpoint. This causes the victim to not trust her own perceptions.
- ★ **Discounting**—The abuser invalidates denies, and distorts the victim's perceptions, feelings and thoughts stating; *You're too sensitive. You make a big deal out of everything. . .*
- ★ **Blocking and Diverting**—The abuser either refuses to communicate or controls what is to be discussed. Sometimes information is withheld or the topic of discussion is suddenly switched to a new topic other than the original. This puts the victim into a position of defending herself. *You're such a nag. You're always trying to start*

*something.* These are common statements used to block or divert.

- ★ **Accusing and Blaming**—The abuser blames the victim for his anger and problems. He accuses the victim of doing something wrong.
- ★ **Judging and Criticizing**—The abuser consistently judges, criticizes, and negates the victim's feelings, thoughts, opinions, and actions.
- ★ **Trivializing**—The abuser considers the accomplishments, talents, abilities, and statements as insignificant.
- ★ **Undermining**—The abuser undermines the victim's decisions especially parental decision regarding rules and consequences given to children.
- ★ **Ordering**—The abuser demands instead of asking politely.
- ★ **Denial**—The abuser denies that he is abusive by saying statements like: *I never said that. That never happened.*
- ★ **Forgetting**—The abuser denies he said or did something even if it happened recently.

Responding to verbal abuse in appropriate ways is a difficult task. Our tendency is to become defensive and angry ourselves. This only adds fuel to the fire. Setting boundaries such as telling the abuser to stop, walking away or becoming emotionally distant are appropriate responses for a victim who remains in the relationship.

*By Paula Silva*