

Profile of a Victim



Although battered women may exhibit some of the characteristics in the list below, the one element that is shared by all victims is **FEAR!** A woman is more likely to be killed when she tries to leave than at any other time. The abuser may also threaten to hurt or kill family members or friends who try to help the victim.

Besides living in fear for her own safety and that of her family, a battered woman fears being homeless and unable to provide for her children, as well as threats by the abuser to kidnap or gain custody of the children.

Many women do try to stand up to the abuser, and try everything they can think of to stop the violence, but nothing works. Many women leave, while others leave and then go back. Some women choose to put up with the abuse because they believe there's nothing better for them, while others erroneously believe it is better for their children to have an abusive father than no father at all.

After long periods of trauma and repeated abuse, some women develop "post-traumatic stress disorder." This is not a mental disorder, but is characterized by significant changes in the way a person thinks, acts, and behaves. The victim believes she is helpless and lacks the power to change the situation. They may experience flashbacks or nightmares about past abuses, and may develop unhealthy coping skills to avoid anything that reminds them of the abuse.

Victims of domestic violence do not necessarily exhibit all of the following characteristics, and may be from all social and educational backgrounds.

- ◆ Low self-esteem
- ◆ Traditional family values (submission, preservation of family, nurturing personality, keep the peace mentality)
- ◆ Believes divorce is wrong

- ◆ Accepts responsibility for abuser's actions
- ◆ Exhibits codependent behavior toward abuser
- ◆ Pins her self-worth and self-esteem on perceptions of abuser
- ◆ Knows she is not being treated right, but does not confront the issue
- ◆ Easily intimidated by the abuser
- ◆ Feels trapped due to economics
- ◆ Thinks no one will believe her
- ◆ Fearful of retaliation by abuser
- ◆ Lacks healthy boundaries
- ◆ Usually puts others first and her needs last
- ◆ May have grown up in dysfunctional family
- ◆ Fears abandonment and loneliness
- ◆ Believes the abuse is all her fault
- ◆ Maintains hope that the abuser will change
- ◆ Feels responsible for holding the family together
- ◆ Believes no one will be able to help her
- ◆ Feels guilty for telling anyone

Are you abused?

Does he . . .

- Criticize you for little things?
- Become angry easily?
- Constantly accuse you of being unfaithful?
- Keep track of all your time?
- Discourage your friendships with family and friends?
- Prevent you from working or attending school?

- Control all the family finances and force you to beg for spending money, and then account for all you spend?
- Humiliate you in front of others?
- Destroy personal property or sentimental items?
- Hit, punch, slap, kick, or bite you or the children?
- Use or threaten to use a weapon against you?
- Force you to have sex against your will?
- Blame you for anything that goes wrong
- Disregard your feelings and distort what you say
- Accuse you of actions and emotions which he has actually exhibited
- Undermine your role as a parent in front of your children
- Minimize your perceptions and force his opinions on you
- Demand that you keep your mouth shut about family business
- Lie to pastor, friends, and counselors about your situation
- Threaten to turn the children against you or get custody of them
- Tape record your conversations or keep a calendar of your "sins" to use against you later
- Coerce you to do something illegal or questionable
- Give you that certain "look" that instills fear

If any of the above characterizes your relationship, please seek help immediately. Do not let fear immobilize you so much that you fail to take action. **Don't ever forget that you have a choice!**

**You are a child of the King!
Redeemed and called by His name
You are a child of the King
Precious in the sight of the Lord!**