

Lord, Are You Still There?

With her dreams in her hand and hope for the future, Pat walked down the long aisle of her church to marry a Christian man who was well liked. As she gazed into his eyes, a moment of doubt flashed before her. Dismissing it as wedding jitters, she spoke her vows with a smile on her face. After all she was older and much wiser now.

She headed for her new life leaving an excellent job, friends, family, and church to move to another state foreign to her. As they drove up the long driveway, she noted the remoteness of the area. The promise of a house on the lake slowly slipped away.

As she moved her things into his house, she realized how damp, cold and dreary it was. She determined to make it a cheery place. She soon learned there were limitations placed on her by her new spouse. The words, “there’s no money” rang in her ears. When she offered to get a job, she was told that a *submissive* wife does not work outside the home.

She put her creative ability together and used items she had brought with to decorate her new home. This was difficult to do for she was not allowed to turn on lights whether it was day or night. The gloominess of the home began to match the dreariness of the outside. It seemed there were endless days of no sunlight.

Noticing her demeanor had changed and her depression had increased, she sought to find others to build a relationship. There was no one around for miles. No place to walk to. No car to drive. Her husband would take her to a grocery store or to church once in a while. She was instructed not to interact with anyone unless he was present.

Phone calls were restricted and mail was limited. Isolation became intense and loneliness set in. If she mustered enough courage to state how she felt, he would rage and attack her. Fear became a constant companion.

More and more she realized she had made a huge mistake by marrying. She began to feel that God was punishing her by letting her suffer the consequences of her decision for the rest of her life. She felt God had withdrawn His love for her and inside her spirit was dying.

Realizing her husband had become the enemy of her soul, she felt trapped and caged like an animal. Although the windows had no bars, Pat felt like a prisoner in her own home. She needed help.

By candlelight, she began to read Scripture almost fearing that God would point His finger at her like a scolding father. Yet something was drawing her to the Bible that she held in her hands, the same hands that had once held her dreams.

The passage in Isaiah 61 caught her eye. “*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, (“That’s me,” she thought.) to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,*” (“I have been in darkness. Are you really going to release me. Lord, what do I do?” Pat stated out loud.)

“*to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*”

(“Could I possibly be redeemed and restored?”)

As the candlelight flickered, Pat pondered the passage of Scripture. She did not see a way out of the captivity, but she chose to pray for release and direction. She did not know that it would come in just a couple of weeks when she received permission to visit her son in another area of the world.

During her flight, she began to feel the heaviness of the darkness lifting. Doubts, though, began to permeate her mind. Had she done the right thing by leaving? Did God actually still love her?

As she journeyed to see her son, she made one stop along the way. There she met a godly woman who could understand her experiences. Slowly Pat began to reveal her story. The woman listened intently without judgment. As the story unfolded, Pat began to express her doubts regarding God's love for her.

The godly woman began to share Romans 8 in which God declares there is nothing that can separate us from His love. With eyes closed, a mental picture of climbing up in God's lap came into view as He gently, drew her close to His chest, and whispered, "I love you!" Tears began to flow from her eyes as God's presence enveloped her. Pat whispered, "He does love me." Moments turned into minutes as she basked in God's love finding refuge in the safety of His arms. God was in the process of restoring her by releasing her from the prison of domestic violence by providing a safe place where she could become the woman God intended her to be.

Pat rejoiced at her new found freedom and hope when she turned her focus on the Lord instead of her circumstances. "I am truly safe," she thought.

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. . . Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge. . ." Psalm 91:1. 3-4 NIV

"Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge." Psalm 16:1 NIV

Women and families experiencing domestic violence are looking for a *safe place*.

- Safe place to tell the secret of the oppression they are experiencing
- Safe place to live and thrive with renewed hope
- A Safe church where they will be believed and helped
- Safe people who will love and support them

Is the Christian community providing a safe place?

"Safe Place"

She grew numb to the pain, she got good at excuses

From all the years living with pain, trying to cover up the bruises

She wanted to run, she wanted to hide

Looking for a place he'd never find her

Ghosts from her past, running through her mind

She hoped to leave them all behind her

All she ever wanted was to find a safe place.

She ran into the arms, of someone who'd never judge her
He wiped away all her tears, she knew that He would always love her
Now she knows where to run, she knows where to hide
And she's staying right where he can find her
Ghosts from her past, never cross her mind
She left them all behind her
She found all she wanted, when she found a safe place
In the arms of Jesus

Song: Safe Place
Artist: Lessmyself
Album: Ember
Label: TMG
Writers: David Trippe,
Mike Edmonds, Josh Cooper

Article based on a true story
by Paula Silva