

Mountains to Conquer

Column by Bob Coombs, MA
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This Column is written especially for men!

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Men, you may have lived with emotional abuse, physical abuse or pain in your life. You may feel that your relationships or job are more painful than fulfilling. You may be working with others that are going through difficult relationships, who you would like to help. It is the purpose of this column to help you find a toolbox full of tools to make life more meaningful and fulfilling to you and your family.

It has been said, "Life is not fair". This is true at one level, but the good news is, you can find support to overcome many difficulties and still enjoy your friendships, family and your Church or job. An understanding of certain relationship skills can make you a stronger survivor of this life in spite of the pitfalls and landmines that can wear you down as the "upright man" that God intended you to be.

Since this is the first issue of "Mountains to Conquer", it might be good for you to get to know who I am and why Mable Dunbar asked me to write this column. My wife and I got to know Mable Dunbar through working together on a book called "We Suffered in Silence" which deals with a pastor who emotionally abused his wife when he had repeated affairs with women while he was their pastor.

Mable felt that more emphasis is placed on women who are emotionally or physically abused than on men who also suffer from abusive relationships with spouses, bosses or even controlling parents who can not let go. Because of my chapter in the book titled "The Blameless Man?", Mable felt that I could bring the same type of support for men that this Newsletter is giving to women.

Let's go back to my experience with abusive relationships. As a child, I lived in a home with two passive parents who did not model effective negotiation or problem solving skills. Since I was more or less allowed to make my own decisions, I married a woman who could be quite charming, but who had deep psychological problems. We had two children, both girls.

My first wife became very moody, started going out at night, and severely neglected our girls. As time went on, she would take her anger out on my girls and me. She would scream at us for up to two hours and say that we did not love her and we were no good.

Several times my first wife would punch me and challenge me to hit her back. It was hard to not punch her as I was much stronger. At some level, I realized that she was trying to set me up so she could charge me with spousal abuse. I did not realize then how serious she was to hurt me and to get out of our marriage.

She finally filed a restraining order on me and had the County Constable ask me to move out. I did move out, but took both daughters with me in order to save their lives from starvation or probable physical or sexual abuse from my first wife's many boyfriends.

Looking back, I know that I could have done more to protect myself and my daughters. If only I had been given the help that is offered now days, I would have left years sooner. Mental Health counseling was not an option to her, as she was terrified of going to talk with psychiatrists as they probably would "say she was crazy".

Back then, I believed that it was my Christian duty to stay with my wife. I only found out after I left that she was having affairs with other men.

After my wife and I were separated, many of our friends turned against me and believed that I was neglecting or even physically abusing her. The church I was attending took my deacon position away from me. Years later, friends told me that they heard my girls screaming for hours in the basement of our house while I was at work.

Men, this column is where you can be heard. Send your questions or story to the e-mail address below. I will offer different tools for working on different problems.

Your feedback is welcome. Write to:

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