

DRAMA

DURING 'INTO THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH', A WOMAN SITS CENTRE STAGE, AND PEOPLE IN THE AUDIENCE ARE INVITED TO 'COVER' THE WOMAN WITH A SCARF/PIECE OF CLOTH, ONE FOR EACH STATEMENT.

DURING 'COMING OUT OF THE SHADOWS' THE SCARVES/CLOTHS ARE TAKEN OFF, AGAIN ONE BY ONE.

JEAN'S STORY;

INTO THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

(Each statement is a quotation from women interviewed as part of the 'Out of the Shadows' project. They form a composite story – of a typical pattern of abusive relationships and then illustrating some of the support and resources need to help 'Jean' on her courageous journey out of the shadows. It's worth considering how, and where, churches and Christian people colluded with the violence, and where they were able to stand alongside Jean in her struggle to leave the abuse behind and find new hope for her life.)

1. I met my husband when we were students. We formed a relationship in which I seemed to do everything for him, and he sat back and enjoyed it. But I was glad to have a charming boyfriend.
2. When we got married, my mother said to me I should keep any difficulties within the privacy of our 4 walls. And I took her advice.
3. He became very jealous and suspicious, constantly insulted me, and stopped me from visiting friends. Then one day after a difficult meeting at church, he beat me and kicked me – I was so shocked and humiliated.
4. I began to think I really had done something wrong, to blame myself for causing him to behave like this.
5. I was like a trapped animal – you need transport and money and somewhere to go – I had none of these. I was sure that no one would believe their devoted minister was capable of such horrendous attacks.
6. He finally gave me the worst beating of my life. I was terrified that my internal organs had ruptured. Next morning was Sunday. He said 'You'd better get up and go to church – if anyone needs it, it's you'.
7. After I finally left, I was blamed for deserting this fine man of God, and taking away my sons. Nobody from the church came to find out how I was. I felt abandoned and alone.

COMING OUT OF THE SHADOWS

1. A psychologist said to my husband – ‘do you realise that if you lift your hand to someone that is *violence*?’ That was the first time I really felt that someone understood, and was on my side.
2. Another abused woman said to me – ‘I served 20 years of a life sentence, and now I’m going to get on with my own life. Why don’t you?’
3. My doctor said, ‘Come here any time and accept this as a haven; there will be somewhere for you to rest, and someone for you to talk to.’
4. After we finally left, I thanked God every morning and night that we were free, and happy, and had nothing to be afraid of. My sense of control returned. It was what I chose that would happen, and that was wonderful.
5. My sister said, ‘just go out and hold your head up and smile; you have nothing to be ashamed of. And I never gave up praying. Deep down, I knew God didn’t want to punish me, but was loving and just – I clung on to that when everything else attacked my sense of worth.’
6. For years I couldn’t bear to go to church. After moving to a new house, a member from the local church came to see me. She was so open and caring I knew it was safe to trust her. We talked for hours and hours, and she said ‘You don’t need any piece of paper – you know you are welcome in this place any time – but only when it’s right for you.’ That woman really helped restore my faith.
7. It’s been traumatic, but breaking the silence, and meeting others who’ve been through similar situations, has given me strength and purpose. I know things need to change – in relationships, in church, in society, and I want to be part of the process.