

## JULIA

I was married for one year and three days when I left my husband and took my five month old child.

I would tell him to stop and he wouldn't. I would tell him, ask him not to and he just didn't care. I'd be crying, screaming and yelling for him to stop hoping that one of the neighbours would complain and come knocking on my door but no body ever did. I said no, telling him to stop, telling him it hurts. He repeatedly did it when ever he wanted. It wasn't once or twice or even three times. It was constant. He knew it hurt. I told him it hurt. He was really rough. It wasn't like a love thing. It was rough and if I didn't cooperate he would just hurt me more. In the end I'd just lie there and cry and he would do what he wanted, because if I struggled he would just hurt me more. It happened heaps.

My biggest problem was getting other people to believe me and say, 'This is wrong you don't have to take this'. I believe that the way to changing people's attitudes is through education and if you think that your opinion cannot make a difference consider this:

In counselling my husband said, 'There's nothing wrong with my marriage. It's perfectly normal.

A family member said, 'If you don't give him what he wants he will go some where else. You just have to put up with it'.

The doctor who I trusted said in front of my husband, 'Women are built for sex. It shouldn't hurt and if it does it won't hurt for long'.

The church that I was going to at the time said, 'Pray for him'. I said, 'But I think he is going to kill me". Their response was, "Well, at least you will go to heaven then."

And the Neighbours just did not want to get involved.

As a Christian I found this very hard to take. Where was the love? My experience did not make me give up on God but it did make me give up on people for a long time. I was so afraid, lonely and heart broken. I didn't know that help was out there and everywhere I turned people just didn't believe that rape within a marriage was wrong or existed. If just one of the people had have stood up for me things would not have got so bad.

I got out when my child was 5 months old and it was an interesting observation that when he thought that someone was hurting me or getting me upset he would scream his head off until they stopped whatever they were doing. Violence in the home affects the children no matter how old they are. And if you think they do not know what is going on, then think again.

People only started to believe me when he slipped up in public in a big way. We were at a family birthday party and he got drunk. He then showed everyone his true colours and got violent and abusive. People then started to ask, 'Is he always like this?' And I said, 'Yes'.

I have a history of Epilepsy and when I found that I was pregnant I went off the drugs so I would not hurt my unborn baby. I started having seizures again and was not allowed to drive. As a result I lost my independence and ability to get away on my own. As soon as I was offered help I planned my escape. I could not store boxes because my husband would get suspicious. So I bought a roll of garbage bags and hid them. As soon as I knew in advance that he would be out for the day I called the people and they came with a small trailer on their car. We just stuffed things in garbage bags and the only furniture I took was baby furniture. This was all done very quickly as my neighbour rang my husband and told him that his wife was leaving. By the time he got back we were gone.

The only other help I got was when I went to the women's refuge for a couple of days and then spent a couple of months with my mother till I could get a place of my own. I was so stressed that I had a seizure every 10 days for the next six weeks. The women's refuge helped me get out of the lease that I was in with my husband and the court gave me custody of my son and an intervention order. Other than that I was pretty much on my own.

About a year later I started going to counselling, had a different church, a different doctor and started to look people in the eye again. About three years I started working for Uniting Care at the church I am in and found that there are people out there that will listen and help. You just have to know where they are. The amount of people that I came across in similar circumstances, looking for help was huge. That's where education is so important. I just didn't know that places like Uniting care and Upper Murray Family Care were out there.

If you are being raped, you don't have to put up with it. Speak out and if that person won't help, find someone who will.

If your abusive husband does leave because you won't give it to him, all the better.

If you do go to the doctor, make sure your rapist is not with you and request he stays outside for the visit.

And if religious leaders are critical of you leaving the relationship, go to a different church. We worship the same God. The main difference will be the people and their attitudes.

Is your attitude towards abuse going to stop someone else from getting help?