

## Lesson 7

### VERBAL ABUSE IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Bible teaches us that words are powerful. They can bring life (John 6:63) or death (James 3:6,8-9a). Words can build up people (Ephesians 4:29) or tear down nations (Jeremiah 1:9-10). Words can bring great suffering (Psalm 55:2b-3) or be a fountain of life and healing (Proverbs 10:11).

Like all domestic violence, verbal abuse is a pattern of behaviors aimed at gaining and maintaining power and control over another person. It does so by systematically diminishing the other person, wounding them emotionally and psychologically, and telling them that their feelings and perception of reality are wrong. It can be a critical early-warning sign of an abusive personality. According to Patricia Evans in her excellent book *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, not all verbal abuse becomes physical, but virtually all physical abuse is preceded by verbal abuse.

Verbal abuse, also called verbal battering, is a particularly insidious form of domestic violence. Though it doesn't leave outward scars, it is calculated to assassinate the character and kill the inner person with cruelty; belittling, put-downs; shaming; name-calling; intimidation; raging; silence; criticizing; blaming; twisting the truth and rewriting history; and strategic "forgetting." All types of verbal abuse are designed to inflict injury. Sticks and stones may break our bones, but words can break our spirits and our hearts. Recovery from verbal abuse may take much longer to heal.

## Questions:

1. Read the list of the *Types of Verbal Abuse* and identify those you have experienced.
2. How does each category of verbal abuse give the abuser power and control?
3. How does each category of verbal abuse attempt to silence the victim and make her more powerless?