

# Red Flags of Abuse

What to Look for When She Won't Say It Out Loud

A guide for pastors, leaders, counselors, and Christian friends

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## The Hard Truth

Most abuse victims will never walk into your office and say, “I’m being abused.”

Instead, they’ll cry, apologize, blame themselves, or tell half-truths that hide deep fear.

If you listen closely, you’ll hear it—not in what they say, but in what they can’t say.

 “The prudent see danger and take refuge...” —  
Proverbs 27:12

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## ? Why They Stay Silent

- Fear of not being believed
  - Misunderstood theology (“God hates divorce,” “I should submit”)
  - Protecting the abuser’s image
  - Hope for change
  - Spiritual shame
  - Feeling like a “bad Christian”
  - No safe plan or support
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## What She Might Say Instead

- “He just gets angry sometimes.”
  - “I need to work on submitting more.”
  - “He’s not abusive... he’s just really intense.”
  - “I know I push his buttons.”
  - “He’s not perfect, but he’s a good dad.”
  - “I just need to forgive and move forward.”
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## What to Watch For



### Emotional Red Flags

- Constant apologizing
  - Nervous laughter or avoiding certain topics
  - Confusion, shame, or blaming herself for everything
  - Emotional flatness or numbness
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### Behavioral Signs

- Jumps when her phone buzzes
- Becomes quiet when asked about her spouse
- Avoids eye contact when discussing home life
- Seems withdrawn, anxious, or over-accommodating



## Spiritual Indicators

- Talks about God with guilt, not peace
- Misuses verses about submission, suffering, or forgiveness
- Believes God is disappointed in her for wanting out
- Avoids church events or counseling sessions unless spouse approves



## Relational Warnings

- Isolated from family/friends
- Feels responsible for her abuser's emotional state
- Makes excuses for controlling behavior
- Always “checking in” or asking for permission



## A Biblical Response

You don't have to prove abuse to proceed with care.

You don't have to fix everything—just be faithful.

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”

— Philippians 4:5

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...”

— Proverbs 31:8

“Love... always protects.” – 1 Corinthians 13:7

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## **Gentle Questions That Open the Door**

- “What does conflict look like at home?”
  - “Have you ever felt afraid during an argument?”
  - “Do you feel safe saying no in your relationship?”
  - “Has anyone ever made you feel like your body doesn’t belong to you?”
  - “Do you ever walk on eggshells?”
  - “How do you feel when he’s angry or upset?”
  - “If a woman told you this same story, what would you want her to know?”
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## **Recommended Resource**

Is It Abuse? A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims

by Darby Strickland

This is one of the most biblically faithful and practical books available for understanding the patterns, tactics, and hidden realities of abuse—especially in Christian marriages. Written with deep compassion and clarity, this book equips pastors, counselors, mentors, and victims to name what’s happening and walk in truth.

“Victims don’t need us to fix everything. They need us to see clearly and stand with them.” – Darby Strickland

Available from [CCEF](#) or wherever Christian books are sold.

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## **Prayer for Discernment**

Lord, open my eyes to what You see.

Make me slow to speak, quick to listen, and full of compassion.

Give me discernment not to be deceived by charm or titles.

Help me walk with wisdom, protect the vulnerable,

And reflect Your heart for justice, mercy, and truth. Amen.



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“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save...” – Isaiah 59:1



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