

"A Cry for Help"
A Time of Prayer Based on Psalm 6 (NIV)
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The book of Psalms is a favorite for daily devotions. We find in the Psalms every emotion known to our human hearts, expressed in meaningful ways. We often read this book at Deborah's House so that the women at the shelter can learn to express their deepest fears and share them with God, in private or with one another. I am sharing, with her permission, portions of a letter that one of the women at the shelter wrote. I related her experience to Psalm 6, as she realized how God heard her cry, rescued her from a terrible situation, is healing her wounds, and is delivering her to a new life.

**Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint;
heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.**

I was 17 when I got married—when the abuse started. He changed drastically. As we were dating he was caring, loving, and very respectful. He liked to surprise me and paid attention to the little details. But then, so suddenly, he became jealous of everybody I saw, man or woman. When he sent me to the store, I had to be sure to come back very quickly. When I returned, he would insult me and accuse me, demanding to know why it took me so long. Then he began beating me.

My soul is in deep anguish.

As soon as we were married I became pregnant, and even so, he beat me without caring whether he would hurt the baby. He beat me with his fists and he whipped me with electric cables. He broke broom handles over my back, my legs, my pregnant belly. He had a lot of problems with alcohol, and with crystal meth though I didn't realize this at the beginning. He worked driving a taxi and I had to accompany him on his route every day because of his jealousy. He kept me next to him all day long, for twelve hours, without anything to eat. He was afraid I would escape at any moment.

How long, Lord, how long?

Because of the immense physical abuse that I endured, my baby, a boy, was born at only seven months into my pregnancy. This became another motive for accusations and beatings, as he told me that the baby could not possibly be his; he accused me of being a whore. When my baby was two months old, my husband came home one night, drunk, stoned, and angry because he had fought with a friend. For no other reason he began to beat me severely. He took off the dog's chain and used it to hang me by my neck from the rafters. I lost consciousness and woke up on the floor many hours later.

I am worn out from my groaning.

When I opened my eyes, he dragged me to the bed and continued beating me. The baby was there next to us and wouldn't stop crying, so my husband began punching him in the face until he was completely black and blue. As I struggled to get my baby away from him, he threw me hard against a dresser and I hit my back. Suddenly, I could not move; I had lost all strength in my legs. Even so, he continued beating me until he was exhausted and satisfied.

My son was anemic because of the poor diet we had. I couldn't provide for him as I was not allowed to have any money of my own. I had to wait for my husband to buy food, which he never did. I begged for milk for the baby and my husband would say that's what I was for. He wouldn't even let me change the baby's diapers because they cost too much.

I never had any control over my own body, not even birth control. So, secretly, when my first child was born, I asked the doctor to put in an IUD. I didn't want to get pregnant again because I knew that another child would suffer just as my first baby was suffering. But this also led to new problems. As I wasn't getting pregnant again, my husband began to feel that he wasn't capable of being a father, and that therefore the first baby wasn't his. Once, he sexually abused me so badly I suffered a severe hemorrhage. By some miracle, he agreed to take me

to a doctor. To avoid more conflict, I asked them to remove the IUD. Soon after, I was pregnant once again.

**All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.
My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
they fail because of all my foes.**

Finally, one day, as he was preparing to torture me again, I left from the house running. Without any idea where I would go, I just went out into the street running as fast as I could. I knew he would follow me and so I thought that as soon as I saw the first open door, I would go in and beg for help. Without realizing it, the open door I found was a government office for child and family welfare services. There they called the police to help me try to get my son back. But by the time we got to the house he had taken my son, along with all of our documents and important papers. He wouldn't have many places to go. My husband had just lost his taxi, because he hadn't been making payments. (As time had moved along, he spent more days abusing and torturing me at home than out working.) I suggested that they look for him at his brother's house. There they found him and got my son for me. The day I escaped was the 23rd of November, 2010, my son's second birthday. Without even planning to, I had escaped from my house. By the grace of God, I was brought to Deborah's House.

The Lord has heard my weeping.

Being here is wonderful because I'm surrounded by people who, without even knowing me, have given my child and me the best of their love and attention. Everything I own in this world they have given me, from food and clothing, even the greatest of my emotions—happiness. My son smiles now, which he had never, ever, done before. So do I!

Today, as I write this, I am six months pregnant. In Deborah's House, they took me to my first ultrasound, something that I hadn't even known existed before. I know that I'm going to have a precious baby girl; the great difference is that *this* child will be born in a place filled with love, care, and attention. I give thanks to God because places like this exist, where they tend to all my needs, psychologically, spiritually, and physically. They've given me legal help to protect my rights and to seek justice for what has been done to us.

Blessed be God and blessed are those who make it possible for places like this to exist.

The Lord has heard my cry for mercy.

My bad experiences were horrendous, but I'm sure that in this shelter my good experiences will be far greater still. As time passes on, little by little, instead of fear in my mind and in my heart there will only be immense happiness. I could spend a lot of time sharing what my husband did to me but I would rather spend my time enjoying my son and my pregnancy.

When I arrive back home to my family in Veracruz, I want to put into practice all that which Deborah's House has taught me—most importantly: to live well with my children and my mother. I cannot turn back time but I can begin to live a life truly happy in the company of my God and my family.

The Lord accepts my prayer.

Rescue those being led away to death;
hold back those staggering toward slaughter.
If you say, "But we knew nothing about this,"
does not [God] who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not [God] who guards your life know it?
Will [God] not repay everyone according to what they have done?
Proverbs 24:11-12 (NIV)

Questions for discussion:

- What does this story, and how it relates to the Psalm, say to you?
- What does the Proverbs passage say to you in relationship to the story?
- Are there names or faces of women and/or children that you are feeling God's urging to lift up in silent prayer?
- What else might you be feeling God urging you to do?