



Was I Worthy?

I had been a victim of abuse for as long as I could remember. Did that affect how the Lord saw me?

Name withheld

ON THE SURFACE, my childhood was very normal.

We went to church and attended all of our Church meetings and activities. I went to school and played with my friends. As a teenager, I did all the things that normal teenagers do. I hung out with my friends and was in the choir and drama club. I went to prom. But there was a very dark secret underneath that happy, normal exterior.

From the time I was about two years old, I had been a victim of sexual abuse by my two older brothers. They also abused my sisters. We were too young to understand what was happening, but as I grew older, I began to understand a little. I felt dark and dirty whenever I was in the presence of my brothers.

My Confusion Grew

After attending a Young Women class where they taught about morality, I understood the meaning of virtue and chastity. I listened to my leaders plead with me and the others in my class to stay morally clean.

I wondered, "How could I be morally clean?" As far back as my memories could go, I had been a victim of sexual abuse. I couldn't help but wonder what the Lord thought of me. Was I a virtuous young woman? Was I worthy to date the righteous young men in my ward and school? Did the abuse I had suffered make me unworthy of a temple marriage?

I thought a lot about it. It didn't make sense to me that I would be considered unvirtuous when what happened to me was not my choice. Why shouldn't I be able to feel virtuous? Was I unworthy of the Lord's love? Did I require repentance?

I Just Tried to Forget

I honestly did not know. I felt that I was not to blame, but at the same time, I felt dirty and degraded and totally humiliated. I couldn't get the courage to tell my parents or anyone else. I did try several times, but I felt too embarrassed and I didn't know how to say the words. I just tried to forget that it was happening.

When I was 15 years old, my little sisters found the courage that I lacked. They talked to a counselor at school. A short time later, one of my brothers was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison. But still, for years afterward, I suffered with the same fears that I wasn't virtuous or worthy.

I Found the Courage to Get Help

Eventually, one day I got the courage to go see my bishop. He explained that the Lord does not hold me accountable at all for the sexual acts that were forced on me as a child and young woman. He assured me that it was not at all my fault. I stood blameless before the Lord. I was still virtuous!

With some counseling from professionals and help from my bishop, I have been able to leave the abuse—and the pain and suffering it caused—behind me. Now I really do have a happy and normal life. I was married in the temple to a righteous man, and we are raising our family happily.

Sometimes the past will intrude on my thoughts, however, and I can remember the anguish that I felt as I pondered my worthiness.

I wonder how many other young people are out there in a situation like the one I was in, feeling ashamed and humiliated, wondering about their virtue and where they fit in God's plan.

**“HE LOVES YOU.
HIS HEART
ACHES FOR YOU.
HE KNOWS THAT
YOU ARE NOT
TO BLAME.”**

To these young people I want to say, the Lord loves you.

His heart aches for you.

He knows that you are not to blame.

He knows that you are truly virtuous.

He will help you find the courage and strength to live your life with happiness. 🙏

RESOURCES FOR FINDING HELP AND HOPE

If you have been the victim of abuse, find help and hope by:

- Going to Church resources online at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/get-help/abuse](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/get-help/abuse) and “Abuse” at [topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics).
- Talking to your bishop or a leader you trust.
- Speaking up to someone who will help you. Abusers often threaten their victims not to tell others about the abuse. Don't listen to their lies.
- Knowing that it's not your fault and that the Lord loves you.

YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTS

“I solemnly testify that when another's acts of violence, perversion, or incest hurt you terribly, against your will, you are not responsible and you must not feel guilty.”

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 1992 general conference (*Ensign*, May 1992, 32).