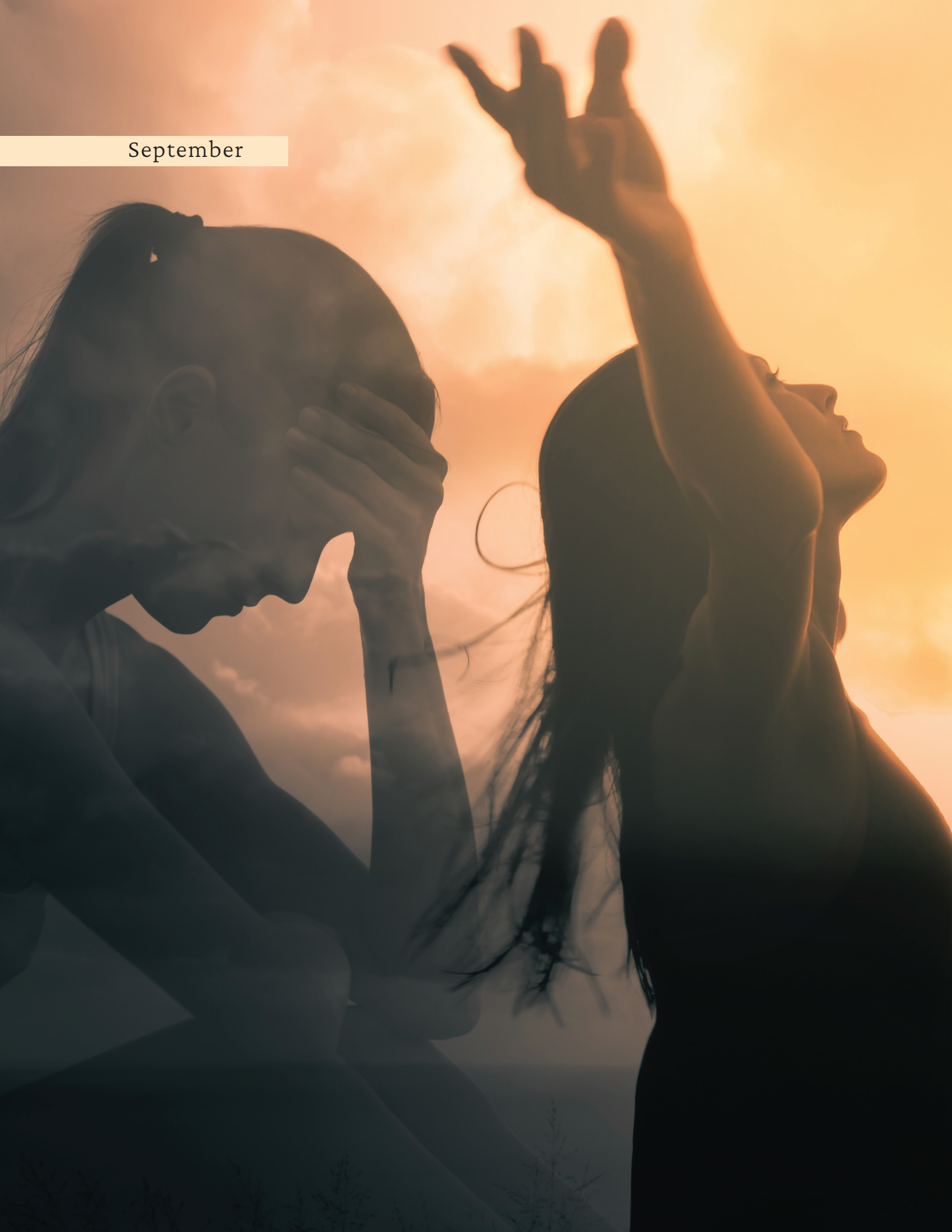


September



Victim to Victor

BY LEE ANN WILFONG

1 Samuel 25:1-42; Key Verse: 1 Samuel 25:3

Before discussing the unassuming ‘star’ of this story, let’s review the background. David was mourning the great judge Samuel’s death while hiding from maniacal King Saul, who wanted him killed. He and his men were suffering from sorrow, weariness, fear, and hunger. David sent his young men to ask for food from Nabal, the property owner in the wilderness where they were hiding. No doubt David had heard about this rich man who, according to verse two, had great possessions. Unfortunately, Nabal also possessed a nasty personality. His wife, Abigail, however, had a very different countenance. Verse three gives an overview of the two people in this household.

Nabal: Churlish (a bear of a man, harsh, rude, and brutal; a drunk, unmanageable, stubborn, and ill-tempered). His name means “a fool.”

Abigail: A woman of good understanding and beautiful countenance. (She had brains as well as beauty!) Her name means “cause of joy.”

What an ill-matched couple! Given the traditions of

that time, Abigail was very likely part of an arranged marriage. With all his riches and possessions, Nabal was a great catch to a father seeking a husband for his daughter. But, soon after the wedding, Abigail discovered a very different husband than her father had imagined. She suffered pain and sorrow from the man who should have been her protector. However, Abigail did not bemoan her lot in life; she knew God, and although she lived in an unhappy home, she remained a saint who honored her marriage vows.

When David’s ten young men peaceably approached Nabal to ask if he would share some food with them, his response was rude and abrupt, “No!” He did not attempt to hide his selfish, brutal nature!

Seeing Abigail, one of Nabal’s servants related the incident to her, revealing the miserly nature of her abusive husband. This was probably not the first time she had heard of Nabal’s brutish behavior toward others; she was not surprised since she had also witnessed and received his reviling ways. Historian Charles J. Ellicott made this observation: “Having

often acted as peacemaker between her intemperate husband and his neighbors, on hearing the story and how imprudently her husband had behaved, saw that no time must be lost, for with a clever woman's wit, she saw that grave consequences would surely follow the churlish refusal and the rash words..."

Ellicott's perspective reminded me of one word that isn't found in the Bible but certainly describes Abigail: enabler. Though a common word in our culture, it wasn't used in biblical times, but that doesn't mean enabling didn't exist! Abusive men are usually drawn to loving, helpful women who want to care for them. While that is an admirable characteristic in a God-ordained, mutually loving marriage, unfortunately, it is destructive in a marriage where one partner is an abuser. Abusers need mild-tempered and loving women (to put up with their wicked ways!). This is just what Abigail was. When she had taken her marriage vows, she had meant them—"for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health—till death do us part." An abused woman believes she must cover for her husband's ways, smoothing things over with those he has wronged while appeasing her abusive spouse. Abigail immediately extended hospitality, kindness, and generosity to these men who sought help. Hiding her actions from Nabal, she gathered food supplies and drinks for their guests. Knowing it was the right thing to do, she took the gifts to David.

You can follow the rest of Abigail's story in verses 18-42. Her nightmare marriage ended when her evil husband Nabal died suddenly. For too many women, the nightmare continues for years and, in some instances, can end tragically—with the victim's death.

Thrust into a marriage full of abuse and heartache, it would be reasonable to label Abigail a victim. However, she continued to live a life that pleased God and glorified Him with her generosity, love, and endurance. Because of her goodness, she prevailed and eventually entered into a marriage with David. The Bible says David "communed with her" (verse 39) and took her as his wife. Abigail's circumstances did

not dictate her life; she persevered, and God rewarded her with another husband and a child. She was not content to settle for victim. She endured her persecution and abuse and became a victor! Even if she had perished at the hands of her abuser, Abigail was still a victor because she trusted in God to protect her and love her.


Now, fast forward about 3,000 years to our present day. Even after all these years, one sad thing is true—abusive husbands still exist.



Let me tell you about Jacque, a beautiful, young woman I knew for years. Her parents are long-time, faithful members of our church. As a young girl, Jacque was saved, baptized, joined the church, and was active in the youth department. If you were to use one word to describe Jacque, it would be 'sweet.' She

had a sweet nature and was never accused of being a bully or brat, as far as I know. When she graduated from high school, she attended a university about an hour from her home. While there, she met a man who asked her to marry him. Married in her home church, Jacque looked so happy on her wedding day, so excited to be starting her new life with Clay.

Jacque was quite successful in the insurance field during their marriage, even moving into a management-level position. Clay, however, never held a job



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for very long. Jacque's income paid the bills and supported him. Moneywise, she could do that and still live a comfortable life. But unfortunately, they were childless. Jacque saw specialists and tried everything. Finally, she had invitro-fertilization, and it worked—she was pregnant with triplets! She was beyond the

moon excited and successfully delivered three beautiful babies! Always ready to lend a helping hand, her family became her main supporters. Cheryl (Jacque's sister) and her husband often babysat the three babies on weekends. During these visits, Cheryl learned that Jacque's life was not as great as they thought. Jacque shared with her about incidents when Clay's temper boiled over. Finally, when the triplets were four, Jacque knew the situation had to change. Until then, she had been the target of the abuse but knew the children were suffering and might soon be victims of this monster.

Jacque did what a true, loving mother would do. Separating from Clay, she moved away from him and his abuse, then filed for divorce. Clay had continually threatened that divorcing him would seal her death certificate. Because Jacque knew he would kill her, she had to protect her three beautiful children. Her main focus was their safety!

Jacque was intelligent enough to cover any loopholes Clay might find to evade the law and take custody of the triplets. Without giving too many details, she secretly confided in her older sister and a few close friends. She also kept a secret journal on her office laptop in which she chronicled the multiple times Clay had abused and threatened her, sometimes in the presence of the children. Because she knew Clay so well, it was almost as if she were preparing for her death. Buying some time, she continued to try to appease him as she settled everything for her children.

Tragically, Jacque's fears proved accurate. One afternoon in June, she and Clay met at the attorney's office to sign the Separation Agreement. To avoid more abuse, she had allowed him a short visitation with their son (one of the triplets). He told her that she had to come to their former home if she wanted to get the boy. That was not the original plan, but Jacque agreed. Clay had manipulated the whole situation, knowing she would respond the way she did.

The last image of Jacque was a security video of her withdrawing money from her bank account. Money

to be given to Clay so she could get her son. He had demanded; she had acquiesced—her last act in life.

A book could be written about all the events that transpired from that point until two years later when Clay finally revealed where he had hidden Jacque's body. I will not go into detail. Just suffice it to say that his grand finale was strangulation after a painful abuse session. Jacque could undoubtedly be labeled a victim. But, in her death, she ensured her children would be delivered from this monster; they would not have to endure his abusive nature. I believe that Jacque was repentant and remorseful for choosing this evil man as her partner in life, and she suffered the consequences of that bad choice. But I also believe Jacque pled with God to protect her babies from this man. And He answered her prayer—God was with those three children through the entire horrible

aftermath. God continually placed people who loved them and protected them in their lives, just as their mama had prayed.

Jacque was intelligent and forward thinking and left all the evidence needed to prove Clay was a liar and an evil man. She did what she could to protect her children. And she succeeded. Then, she trusted God to do what she could not do and protect them after her death. My friends, I don't call Jacque a victim; I proclaim her a VICTOR!

And now, here's "the rest of the story." Over ten years ago that fatally dark day tragically ended Jacque's life. Today those triplet 'babies' are healthy, happy, beautiful/handsome Christian teens who know they are loved by their aunt and uncle (their adoptive parents). Every day they celebrate the life of their fiercely loving mama who gave her life for their safety as she trusted God to protect them. These teens revere the memories of their VICTOR mom!

Sadly, thousands of abused women live in the world today. They made an unfortunate choice of partners and now are imprisoned with monster spouses who make their lives living nightmares.

Do you know someone who may be an Abigail or a Jacque? As unthinkable as it is, someone reading this study has a friend or family member hiding an abusive partner's true nature. How can we help? Visit a domestic violence shelter, research the signs of abuse victims, and be a trusted friend by a woman (or child) who might be fearful for her life and well-being. Ask what can be done to end abuse, then do your part. Ask God for discernment to recognize the signs of abuse and pray for courage to help some woman who fears she cannot help herself. Help turn victims into victors! *W*

***About the writer:** Lee Ann (Ames) Wilfong lives in Park Hills, Missouri, with her husband Vernon. They have two adult daughters, Megan and Tracy, a son-in-law Kurt, and a grandson, Malachi. Lee Ann is involved at Leadington FWB Church. She serves on the WNAC Board and chairs the Missouri FWB Women's Ministry.*

HELPING OTHERS

- + We must teach young women and men biblical standards for marriage. Find Bible verses that give insights into a God-directed marriage.
- + Before you can help an abused woman, you must first love her and help her know you are her supporter, a mentor she can trust with her darkest secrets. This takes time and effort. Find Scriptures that offer comfort and hope. Using God's Word, encourage her with verses that show her God loves her and will be with her, no matter her circumstances.