

*'Suffer the
Little
Children
To Come
Unto Me'*



A testimony of God's power to heal
those who have been abused as children



maranatha

Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me

This booklet is published by the Maranatha Community. For obvious reasons its author must remain anonymous. It is printed without any amendment. It is hoped that it will be an encouragement and inspiration for those who have experienced the trauma of abuse in their childhood.

Introduction

I have been inspired to write this testimony because of the evidence of the great healing power of God and the miracle He has performed in my life.

I would like to give thanks to God for blessing me with wonderful Christian friends and teachers and for the Maranatha Community who have been used by God to give me great healing.

I would also like to thank Sister Kathleen O'Sullivan for 'Light out of Darkness' and the deeper awareness of my own sin that it enabled me to find - also the profound and beautiful awareness of my relationship with God that it enabled me to deepen.

To anyone reading this booklet, I know that God has led you to read it - as He led me to write it - and I can only ask you to open your heart to the Lord and let Him in, surrender your life fully to Him and allow him to heal and mould you, and you will find peace.

This is the story of my journey from darkness into light.

May God bless you.

*As the deer pants for the water,
So my soul longs after You,
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship you.*

*I want you more than gold or silver,
Only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
And the apple of my eye.*

*You-re my Friend and You are my Brother,
Even though You are a King.
I love you more than any other,
So much more than anything.*

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
To You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship you.*

Martin Nystrom

Part One :

"We should not commit sexual immorality"

(1 Corinthians 10 v8)

I could hear that voice..... shouting me over and over again..... and I carried on playing....., pretending I couldn't hear....., blocking it out.

Then the tone of the voice changed and my little heart started pounding and I knew I had to go inside....., inside to my dad so that he could 'love' me.

I never knew God was with me, then. I was so small and tiny and I always felt so alone and frightened.

My dad forced himself on me, and forced me to do vile disgusting things to him. I didn't like it and afterwards I would cower in my room sobbing and retching at the memory of what he'd just done.

This went on for about 6 years on a regular basis - maybe two or three times a week, and everything he could possibly do to me was done, including attempted rape. Fortunately, I was too small and actual intercourse never took place but I can remember him trying to penetrate me and the excruciating pain I felt. No matter how much I struggled or cried, he seemed oblivious to what I was feeling and seemed to turn into some sort of monster, shouting at me and getting violent. I was confused and I didn't understand what was happening to me - after all I was only 6 years old when it all started.

Then my mum started being cruel to me, treating me 'differently' than my brother and sister, frequently hitting out at me and I always felt she hated me. I can remember her holding me by the hair and repeatedly banging my head off the wall. I would clean for her and run errands for her, I would give her breakfast in bed and help her in any way I could. I was practically begging her to love me but I never felt as if she did....

I knew my dad must love me though because he always stuck up for me and made me feel special. I didn't dare tell anyone what was happening. It was our 'secret' and if anybody found out then I would have nobody in the world to love me as I would be sent away and so would my dad - 'because nobody would ever understand the love we felt for each other'. I had to believe my dad - he was my dad and I loved him.

I did well at Junior School and was well liked but towards the end of my Junior School years I was trusted to serve in the snack bar and began to steal money. It was only very small amounts, I didn't need it or want it, but I just stole it - maybe I wanted to get caught - maybe it was my first cry for help!

D A R K N E S S

CONFUSION.... REJECTION.... FEAR....

PAIN.... HUMILIATION.... NAUSEA....

DISGUST.... BEWILDERMENT.... LONELINESS....

Part 2 :

"He has taken away all my wealth and destroyed my reputation" (Job 19:9)

The only thing I ever associated with love as I grew up was sex. All men ever seemed to want was sex so I imagined that this was the way to make men like you.

I allowed my friend's brother to abuse me - and at the same time he was abusing her. It was not like my dad though, it was like a game. My uncle also tried to abuse me. An old man I knew offered to pay me money if I touched him or if I let him touch me. By now I was getting angry at men so I took his money and laughed at his weakness and stupidity. I started to fight back! The abuse by my dad had stopped but the damage was done - I had been touched by evil and I started to rebel.

By 13 years of age I was smoking, experimenting with various soft drugs, drinking and generally rebelling against society and against any kind of authority. I stole money from school and frequently played truant. I was sent to see a child psychologist and after a few visits she came to the conclusion that I came from a good home and did not really have any problems and so I was discharged. By this time I was acting really hard and getting into fights all the time. People were scared of me and it felt good - no one was ever going to hurt me again!

My dad had changed - I now noticed that he had violent outbursts where he would smash pots and pans and hit out at my mum. I often saw bruises on her arms and he began to punish any disobedience with hard and strict regimes. I can remember my brother and I having to kneel over the stairs while he lashed us with a thick leather strap.

He forced us to eat every scrap of food on our plates even if we were heaving because we were full. I can remember refusing to eat rabbit (we had a pet rabbit outside and it seemed wrong to be eating rabbit for tea). He made me sit there for hours with a plate of cold potatoes, gravy, veg and rabbit and tried to force me to eat it cold. As I tried to stop myself from being sick he warned me menacingly that if I was sick I would suffer for it and that I would still be made to eat the food, even if I had to eat it for breakfast the next day.

I'd taken pain-killers on a regular basis from about the age of 13 and when I was about 14 years old I made my first threat of suicide. I was told by my mother that if that was what I wanted to do then I should hurry up and get on with it. She then went to the shops leaving me alone in the house for about an hour so I could decide if I wanted to live or die. That sort of rejection at 14 years old was very hard to take.

After I left school I calmed down a bit and settled into a job. I was going steady and things looked good but after 18 months in a relationship with my boyfriend, he beat me unconscious one night leaving me with a fractured skull and in a coma for three days.

When I recovered I felt angry that yet again a man had hurt me and I began to drink a lot and generally have a wild time. I got involved in an incident in a pub and the police were called in and I ended up being arrested for assaulting a police officer, under-age drinking, disturbing the peace, etc, etc.

At 17 I left home and not long after took an overdose. I really wanted to die at that point in my life - my parents weren't interested in me and my life seemed to be going nowhere but I was rushed to hospital and had my stomach pumped. I saw a psychiatrist the next day who pronounced me fit and well and sent me home. Nobody ever seemed interested enough to probe deeper.

Then I met Gary and fell in love but he had drink problems, his mother was an alcoholic and his brothers were heavily into the drugs scene. Although we had many problems because of his family background and drink problems and my psychological problems, we decided to get married.

My parents greatly opposed the marriage (my dad had always hated me going out with boys and hated that fact that he had 'lost' me). Straight after our wedding they begged me to leave Gary. (Incidentally, they knew nothing about his family or his drink problem). Their wish that my marriage would fail only succeeded in giving me the determination to make my marriage work.

REBELLIOUSNESS.... ANGER.... REJECTION....

VIOLENCE.... HARDNESS.... DETERMINATION....

Part 3 :

"And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it: they will long to die, but death will elude them". (Rev. 9:5-6)

We struggled in the early years of our marriage. We had no money and Mary was born five months after our wedding. Louise followed soon after and times were very hard. Gary still had a drink problem and I began to suffer from deep depression. I struggled on thinking it was just post-natal depression and I would get over it, but one day I completely broke down when I was with my friend and everything just came tumbling out about my dad and how he had abused me. I'd mentally blocked everything out, practically since he stopped abusing me. My friend instantly contacted my Health Visitor and I can remember her first visit - I knelt down with my head buried in the carpet unable to look at her because of my deep shame and guilt about what I was telling her. And so began my nightmare of trying to come to terms with what had happened to me.

I was shunted from one psychiatrist to another and from one psychologist to another and I attended sex therapy sessions. I went to practically every hospital in Manchester trying to find someone who could help me. I went to Prestwich and Bridgewater - where I was admitted for a spell, but where they too failed to help me. I also had hypnosis sessions.

Eventually I became addicted to tranquillisers. I took sleeping tablets and any other drugs I could get my hands on, which was made easier by the fact that Gary's brothers were heroin addicts. I smoked draw and can't even remember some of the drugs they gave me to blot out the pain. I do remember taking heroin and saying that it was rubbish because it didn't give me a high. (Looking back I was probably so pumped full of other drugs that the small amount of heroin I took probably had little effect).

My children had been placed in a day nursery full time because I was so ill and just couldn't cope with them. My Health Visitor was wonderful and without her I think I would have killed myself. She visited me at least once a week and quite often, when I was really bad, would visit me every day. I only had to ring her up and she would drop everything to come and see me. She drove me to various hospital appointments when I was particularly ill and always seemed to be there when I needed her most. I really do believe that without her support I wouldn't be here today.

When I came off drugs I suffered horrendous withdrawal symptoms and was seriously ill for about six months. I had the shakes, blackouts, hallucinations and paralysis, to name but a few. I had nervous breakdowns and various illnesses relating to severe trauma and stress. At one point I had no periods for over a year.

After 13 years I was termed 'untreatable'. The doctors wanted me to tell them every detail of what my dad had done to me - but my mind simply couldn't

cope with that and I felt as if they were enjoying it in some perverse way.

I couldn't even recall these things for myself without going crazy - it was all too traumatic and the scars of my past were too deep. Finally, they told me to 'pull myself together and put it all behind me'. I felt even more worthless - as if I was some sort of freak and I resigned myself to the fact that this was how I was going to be for the rest of my life and that until the day I died I would be living in the very depths of hell.

Throughout my married life my mum and dad had treated me abominably. They never treated my two daughters as their grandchildren and never took the time to get to know them. I could write a book alone on the mental cruelty they inflicted upon me and my family over the years. It was not in my imagination. Family members who regularly witnessed this mental abuse have said it was appalling the way they treated me.

When I came out of Bridgewater Hospital I was so ill my husband knew that there was more to my illness than I was letting on. (I told him I had gone in there partly because of my drug addiction and also because I was frigid - we'd had very severe sexual problems in our marriage so this was feasible, I thought). I couldn't tell him what was really wrong with me - it was still my secret shame.

How could I explain that I could never leave him alone in the house with our daughters, how could I tell him why I went hysterical if he went in the bathroom when they were splashing about in the bath, how could I tell him that when we had sex he took on the form of my dad and every time we had sex I was reliving what my dad had done to me.

How could I explain why I would never touch him sexually in any way - not even to kiss him fully on his lips. How could I tell him I hated sex, how could I tell him of the pictures I saw in my head every time we had sex, and of how I cried for hours after - hating myself and feeling so dirty and ashamed.

How could I tell him I waited for him to go to sleep and then crept downstairs so I could let all the frustration and anger out, how I sat there till daylight came, sobbing and thumping myself and pinching myself and pulling my hair and banging my head on the wall - how I spent these hours wishing I could kill myself, wishing I could end this torture and escape from my vile and disgusting memories.

I simply couldn't tell him.

The night I came out of Bridgewater he asked me if I'd been abused and I nodded 'yes'. He respected my wishes not to cause trouble and simply told my dad to stay away from me.

Then the real mental cruelty started.

My mum and dad went to see my brother and sister and told them. My dad accused me of being a whore at 12 years old saying I had seduced him. He said I'd been begging him for months to leave my mum so that I could have him for myself and that I'd threatened to ruin their marriage if he didn't leave my mum and come away with me - and the lies went on and on and on....

Christmas 1992/93 was very bad. I was so ill and depressed and started thinking that the children were older now - they could look after themselves and maybe the time had come to end it all once and for all.

They sensed something was very wrong and briefly I told them what had happened to me. All the time I kept thinking 'how can I leave them alone in this corrupt world'. This always stopped me from taking my life - although it was always on my mind, wondering if I could fake an accident so that they would never have to know that I'd taken my own life.

I was getting worse and worse and was waiting for an emergency bed to go into a psychiatric ward. I had very much given up on myself and felt that the end was sadly drawing nearer and nearer for me.

DEPRESSION.... SHAME.... FRUSTRATION....

HELPLESSNESS.... ISOLATION.... SELF LOATHING....

DESPERATION.... GUILT.... BITTERNESS....

SELF PITY.... ANGER.... FEAR.... HATRED

Part 4 :

"I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things". (Mal. 3:10) "My saving power will rise on you like the sun and bring healing like the sun's rays". (Mal. 4:2)

Quite by chance I met Katy and after telling her a little about myself she arranged a meeting with two Christian ladies, Joan and Ann.

I didn't really want to go and meet with them and I quite honestly thought I would end up spending 2-3 boring hours listening to them preaching God to me, but because I didn't know Katy too well I felt I had to go because all the arrangements had already been made.

I don't really know what we talked about that night but somehow, before I left, I'd committed my life to Christ. It was February 5th 1993.

The next day I felt totally confused and wondered what was expected of me. I remember saying to Ann that I would never go to Church - my dad had been a regular Church-goer and was supposedly an upright and Christian person of good moral standards, so I felt that Church-goers were hypocrites. I'd also said that I would never ever be able to forgive my mum and dad for hurting me so much and totally destroying my life. I remember Ann just smiling and saying 'you will'.

Two days later (which was a Sunday) I sat bolt upright in bed and blurted out 'I'm going to Church'. I was absolutely amazed because something fantastic had happened overnight. Before I had gone to bed the night before I had simply said to God "Well, here I am. My life is worth nothing as it is so I give my life totally to you. Do what you will with it". I sat in Church that Sunday morning not even knowing what had made me go - but most important of all, a great healing had taken place. I could openly and honestly forgive my mum and dad for everything they had done to me. All the pain and trauma had gone - all the hatred and anger and bitterness - all the negative feelings, gone! To this day I am still amazed that God wiped those feelings out of my life. The biggest miracle was the way I was able to forgive my dad and the way all my feelings about what he had done disappeared. I give thanks for the miracle and the transformation that occurred that day.

In the Bible there are stories of Jesus walking among the people healing the sick and making the blind see and when people read their Bibles they are amazed at the miracles He performed - but Jesus is walking among us now, so closely, healing and loving and performing miracles. What God has done to me is a miracle!

Four weeks after becoming a Christian I attended a Maranatha Gathering. For anyone who doesn't know, Maranatha is a community of Christians who gather together and whose aims - through the power of the Holy Spirit - are for unity, healing and renewal. Maranatha means "Come, Lord Jesus".

The thing that was most apparent at this meeting was the immense love I could feel present. I had truly never experienced such a feeling of love before. I have attended many Maranatha's since and I have shed a lot of tears there. God's presence has been so evident and I have received a lot of healing through prayer, worship and Christian support.

In September 1993 I started the 'Light out of Darkness' course which has taught me so much. At first I felt quite depressed as I became more aware of my own sinfulness but I also realised that we have to be aware of our sinfulness if we are to develop and grow as Christians. Again, I shed a lot of tears as I struggled with things in my life that I had to face but when I finished the course I felt that I had a deeper relationship with God and I'd learnt a lot about myself and my relationships with other people. I also learnt that God has an immense and incomprehensible ability to forgive us for our sinfulness. Because of the deeper awareness of myself, I feel I am better equipped now to deal with relationships in my life and therefore great healing has taken place.

It's a wonderful experience to look back and see where God has been moving in your life. When I look back I realise just how much God has healed me and how much he is enabling me to learn and grow as a Christian.

Now I praise God for my past; for how could He have filled me with His Holy Spirit?; how could He have shown me how great and immense His love is for each and everyone of us?; and how could I have trusted Him so completely and stood so firmly in my faith without God's great healing power and the presence of the Holy Spirit evident in my life?

Although I was able to forgive instantly, by the grace of God, I feel that God unblocked this area of my life because of the number of negative emotions I felt. You see, God heals you where your need is greatest and He alone knows our greatest needs. Other people I know have been healed in areas that I am still struggling with. I've still got a lot to learn and I've still got a lot of areas in my life that need healing. It is an on-going process.

I still have difficulties in my sexual relationship with Gary but we seem so much closer in our day to day relationship and I know I will be healed of any problems in this area of my life.

I've never really admitted this but I think I have an eating disorder. I'm overweight. I constantly think about food. I binge until I'm, sick and bloated and can't move and then I diet. I get depressed about my weight and am self-conscious. My sister has similar problems - maybe it is to do with our childhood and being forced to eat everything put before us - I don't know - but I do know and trust that God will heal me - in His time.

I continue to take pain-killers on a daily basis and at the moment I can't envisage stopping but I do know and trust that when God knows I am ready, He will help me.

When I surrendered my life to Christ, he healed the biggest problem in my life overnight. He removed all the mental traumas that were driving me mad and causing me to be so depressed that I wanted to end my life. That is all He needed to do then and slowly, gently, He is nursing me back to good health, peace and immense joy.

A year ago I felt guilty because I heard Christians saying that they loved Jesus and I couldn't say that I loved Him truly from my heart, but now I love Him so much my heart aches - and my desire to serve Him is so strong. I feel like a tiny baby in God's family - just starting out on life's journey with God - being taught and guided and growing in His love and grace, and I feel truly blessed.

I've recently been given a beautiful present off a very dear friend. It is a small child lying the palm of Jesus' hand - and that is exactly how I feel. Jesus has His arms wrapped securely around me and it is a wonderful feeling to experience the immense warmth and love He generates. Now I have truly found my Father.

AMAZEMENT.... LOVE.... JOY....

PEACE.... SECURITY.... COMFORT....

FORGIVENESS....

L I G H T

*O Father of the Fatherless
In whom all families are blessed,
I love the way you father me.
You gave me life, forgave the past,
Now in your arms I'm safe at last,
I love the way You father me.*

*When bruised and broken I draw near,
You hold me close and dry my tears,
I love the way You father me.
At last my fearful heart is still,
Surrendered to Your perfect will,
I love the way you father me.*

*If in my foolishness I stray,
Returning empty and ashamed,
I love the way you father me.
Exchanging for my wretchedness
Your radiant robes of righteousness,
I love the way You father me.*

*And when I look into Your eyes
From deep within my spirit cries,
I love the way You father me.
Before such love I stand amazed
And ever will through endless days,
I love the way You father me.*

*Father me, forever You'll father me,
And in Your embrace I'll be forever secure.
I love the way You father me,
I love the way You father me.*

Graham Kendrick

maranatha

Maranatha is a free, open and loving Christian Community, committed to Unity, Healing and Renewal. Its members include Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Salvationists, Pentecostalists and members of the United Reformed and Evangelical Churches. We are all one in Christ and our aim is to be more effective as Christians in the places where we live, worship and work.

The Maranatha Community, 102 Irlam Road, Flixton, Manchester, M41 6JT

Tel: 0161 748 4858 Fax: 0161 747 7379

Email: info@maranathacommunity.org.uk www.maranathacommunity.org.uk

Acknowledgements

"As the deer pants for the water" © 1983. Reproduced with the kind permission of Restoration Music Limited. Administered by Sovereign Music UK, P.O.Box 356, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 8WP, UK.

"O Father of the Fatherless" © 1992. Reproduced with the kind permission of Make Way Music, P.O.Box 263, Croydon, Surrey CR9 5AP, UK. International copyright secured. All rights reserved.

