

Pinpoints of Light

Escaping the Abyss of Abuse

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Pinpoints of Light

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Dedication:

I dedicate this book to survivors of domestic violence, to my wonderful supportive husband and friend Scott, and to our nine children—especially my first five who survived the abuse with me. Healing happens with, through, and over time.

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Introduction:

Mental illness. Addiction. Pain. Fear. Control. Abuse. What images do those words stir in your mind's eye? For me those words paint a darkening abyss filled with millions of gallons of heaviness, guilt, and duty trapping me in tangible darkness. My former spouse could not see us or find us because he was locked away in his own mind of mental illness and then became trapped by substance abuse.

He had suffered painful experiences in his childhood, and that pain warped and twisted his mind and genetic mental illness runs in his family. I share the stories as he told them to me: sometimes during drunken depressed states and other times with sober clarity, to give background. I describe abuse in two ways: the hunter and the caged animal. Both ultimately have control as the foundation. His mental illness was awakened from his pain, and as stress was added to it, he needed to control everything. How? As a caged animal strikes out at anyone to free itself; others are damaged in that process.

In nine years of marriage, we went through various stages; incredible rays of sun, to dimming light, to growing darkness, to finally inky blackness of the abyss of abuse. Why do I share this story? I write it for the victim. Why? Because there is more than hope, there is light, and I want you to know that you have worth within you more than you can ever know.

I am an author, speaker, and life strengthening coach who help the *battered, beaten, and broken* discover their *strength* to heal so that they become a victor in light! My story is what I learned as I descended into this dark abyss and how I found pinpoints of light that led me back out of it. The events that occurred will be told in the most accurate way I can: from my journals.

It brings me hope to know this book will give each reader an opportunity to learn the processes I used when escaping my abyss of abuse. My clients, their advocates, and the supporters deepen their value and their self-worth because they learn that they are WORTH it!



Section 1

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Childhood Pain: When Pain is not relieved, the
Results are Reckless

Chapter 1

Dusk or Dawn: Overcoming Darkness and finding Light!



Dusk or dawn? In a photograph, how can you tell if the deep pink hues of light are rising by degrees as dawn, or falling by degrees as dusk? Light in the dawn of the morning rises gently by degree minute by minute until the sun has risen filling the day with light, with warmth, and with life. Darkness, however, dims the light. As light begins to fade degree by degree the darkness begins to enfold and snuffs out the rest of the light as in dusk.

Light beckons for it to be followed. Throughout the day, you see the brightness of light; you feel warmth, energy, and heat. Darkness is black, and cold and can race from the corners of the room to snuff light out. Darkness is even tangible. Light, however, can fill a room giving it hope, heat, and brilliance. Light slices through darkness leaving a path to follow. Light, no matter how dim, how small, can be seen through the darkness as a point to fix upon. Even in the inky tangible darkness, we can fix our eyes towards that pinpoint of light. When we use light, we can find direction through the black storms of our lives, just as lights in the harbors give safe travel around the barriers of the sea.

No one in this life is free from having dark times or trials in their lives. All darkness (no matter what caused it) feels the same for all of us. It means no light, no direction, and being hopeless.

The darkness that I faced did *not* descend all at once or like when a switch is turned off and darkness snuffs out the light suddenly. My darkness was teasing. It would feel like a dawn, but in reality, it was dusk. My dark sharp voice began in a subtle way to darken my life. The evidence that my voice of darkness was turning on me by varying degrees was so subtle it was like twilight slowly snuffing out the rays of light replacing them with degrees of darkness allowing for the black to slowly creep in. The slowness of each word and negative thought that my voice produced was another degree snuffing out the power of light and getting darker and darker was what I faced, and I suddenly realize I was in the dark.

For years the darkening power cast out my light by its powerful negative talk. I had been through counselors, through therapy, done confessions; but nothing would really penetrate that dark entanglement of thorny, sharp, thick, forest of words that barraged my brain. The entanglement was so dense that I had lost all hope of finding light or peace. If I was given a slightest flicker or flame of hope,

it's cold steely breath of a word would blow it out causing gray black smoke to rise instead.

I had fallen for the trap of the negativity by believing the dark words. It was a very passive aggressive voice that I had been trying to please. I had become my inner child, weak and vulnerable. I was facing a dark demon and all I did was try to please it. I never fought the hard entanglement of words. I let the words ensnare me and pull me in to more crushing darkness. Suddenly as the last layer of darkness grabbed at me and I was ready to be snuffed out, I saw a pinpoint of light through the sharp black entanglement of thorns.



The light was like a still small voice, and it pierced me to the center of my soul. The light sliced through the sharp thorny darkness leaving a narrow pathway for me to follow. The heat of the peaceful light had seared the thorny words. The light, in this new dawn of the quiet strength from the morning, rose gently by degree minute by minute until the sun had risen filling my life with light. The sharp thorns that cut, snagged, and held me down had been severed by the light and had released me.

I started to gain focus with this ray of hope. The ray of hope had shed a new light on the things that I was currently doing: I was in college; I was exposed to new friendships and experiences with people who loved life. They had a love for things that I used to and it rekindled the fire for those things I thought I had lost in the darkness. I saw and longed for true friends who were talking with me again, I was cheering and tumbling again, and I was finding the gospel again. Those were pieces of this ray of hope; my new light.

One night I had—a dream—an awakening—I found myself floating in the air looking around me at the many choices of my life. I didn't see darkness, rather a lack of light. As the light touched my skin and radiated off my face, it felt like the sunlight of a happy memory. There was gentleness here in the white, bright light—there was also warmth. It was filling my soul.

With each step, I felt like I was home. The light held me; it encased me, it filled me, and suddenly, I felt my Heavenly Father's loving arms around me. I was quiet in His beam of light. He allowed me, a fallen, pain filled, hurt little girl to be with Him—my Father. I was encased in this light—His light! I then began to feel a sense of my home; like my mom and dad were here supporting me and walking with me in His light. I saw others, felt others who loved me. I begin to hear the gentle strains of music that added to the light as it beckoned me forward.

Suddenly, I glanced behind me. What I saw was a tunnel of darkness, a black inky hole—void of any light—I had just come from there. I had been rescued out of the inky hole by the light. I turned my head sharply from looking behind me and focused myself on the beam of light. I enjoyed the warmth, music, and the

love I was encased in. What had changed? Why had the light come? What had happened? One thing, and only one thing: there is opposition in all things; my darkness changed to light!

In my childhood and youth, I had experienced the darkness, and it was time to make a choice. I chose light. I made a choice to stop listening to the sharp dark voice that pulled me in to an entanglement of darkness. I just stopped listening—and suddenly light—Heavenly Father's appeared! I was not going to allow the dark power of my negative thoughts take me to such blackness again. I could only give my all to the light and trust in it to see where it will take me. I must trust in the light, that my Heavenly Father knows me and that His love is real, true, and that I could trust it. As I stood in that light at age 20, I saw my pinpoint ray of light; my dawn out of the darkest nights I had experienced. I left the darkness for the light!

Chapter 2

Be seen and not heard: Where is the Love?



I had been married for about seven months when I was going through some of my husband's things. My hands stroked the binding of an old photo album. As I opened it a small photo fell to the floor. It was slightly faded with age. I saw heavy dented, slightly rusty equipment and excavators rested their heavy loads on the red clay, muddy ground. In the background, scaffolding surrounded the cool gray cinder block walls. The walls teamed with tight curly black-haired workers with brown sweat-stained skin. Their skin was covered by tank-top shirts and tattered shorts. Their bare feet scrambled, clung, and stuck to everything they were climbing on. They held trowels heavy with mortar and smeared and stacked more cinder blocks adding to the wall.

The warm pacific wind gently blew off the blue waters filling the island with cooling breeze. That breeze tousled the blond hair of a four-year-old boy as the palm trees swayed in the background. The sun had burned and kissed the freckled face nose causing it to peel again and again. His eyes looked in the direction of the camera but not directly at it—just slightly beyond it.

This was one of the earliest photos I had ever seen of Thad. He was about four years old. His blond hair and freckles really stood out among the islanders. Thad spent his early years on construction sites in Fiji. The picture perfectly captured Thad's childhood: construction, being at job sites with his father, and him just looking beyond the reality that faced him.

From the stories I had heard, Thad was always seen (especially on the islands), but rarely was ever heard by his father. His father knew best. Thad's father moved the family to Fiji when Thad was a small boy. His father was in charge of several construction projects on the island and as a small child, Thad was taken to various building sites throughout the islands.

I was told that Thad's eyes would light up when he looked at the plumbing and played on the different structures like a jungle gym. He even began handing the workers their tools; his friendship with the workers was real, but soon it was time to leave and go to another site. He was to go, be seen, but not heard.



<CALL OUT>

When you are not heard as a child, it leaves an imprint on you that you are not of value or of worth.

<CALL OUT>

Next to: As a child you feel that no one is listening

When you are not heard as a child, it leaves an imprint on you that you are not of value or of worth. As a child you feel that no one is listening, then you will figure out behaviors to make sure that you are heard. You will 1) act out, 2) yell, 3) repeat yourself, 4) talk softly forcing people to listen, or 5) stop talking all together and retreat in to your mind to avoid the pain of rejection. Do any of these feel familiar? Pain will motivate people to do what they can to numb it, run from it, or deal with it. The pain that was deep in my former husband began in his childhood years. I only heard a few of those pain-filled stories when we were married. He shared this story with me during a particular night of pain.



Sitting on the woven mat cross-legged, five-year-old Thad tried to hold still. “Sit!” was the final word of the teacher. She was a large woman, hair pinned up with a large teak wooden comb and wearing her regular floral Muumuu. Thad’s wiggles and movements came from deep down inside and seemed to control him. As he tried to sit cross-legged, he grabbed the sides of his pant legs with his small calloused hands trying and willing himself to hold still. His freckled face and blue eyes stood out of the dark sea of black hair and chocolate eyes. He was the outsider, the one that didn’t seem to fit; the troublemaker. He shut his eyes and held the sides of his pants tighter. He would not move! He did not want to be “tabled”, again.

The teacher was reading a story to the class. All the children sat with him on the woven mat as an ocean breeze gently blew across the room through the open windows. Her booming voice was loud and was laced with mockery as she read the story. She knew the words, and the children didn’t. She knew the letters, and the children didn’t. She knew the counting, and the children didn’t. For her, the control of the classroom was her power; not the knowledge she should have been imparting.

Suddenly, through the open window a small island bird flew in landing on a shelf. The bird nodded and looked side to side and up and down until it seemed to catch Thad’s eye. Thad’s eyes followed the moment of the bird as the teacher’s booming voice began to move from the forefront to the background of his mind.

The story seemed to fade away and the colorful feathers of that bird seemed to get brighter and as Thad’s eyes stared, the colors seemed to invite him to take a closer look. He leaned forward and looked with intent. The striking blue head, red crested chest, light splash of green on the back the neck, and the darker green wings of the bird seemed to call at him—drawing him in bit by bit. He watched the bird’s head bob up and down and the teacher’s voice faded and faded. He could see the colors up close and the textures of the smooth feathers as they blended

together green. He reached out to touch and suddenly the bird took flight! It was as if the spell had been broken and he was back in the classroom.

Thad found himself *off* the woven mat and on the other side of the classroom next to the bookshelf. There was no booming voice—it had faded to silence. There was no story in the background, and the dark faces of his classmates were staring at him, not beside him. He could not believe how he had gotten there by the shelf. He quickly shut his eye and said to himself, *He was on the mat!* He was on the mat! He willed it to be true. He was on the mat—not next to the shelf. The mat!

Suddenly Thad's feet were lifted off the floor and he found himself standing on the table! The voice boomed loud for all the class. The shaming of the blonde freckled face outcast had begun—again. He was not to be followed, he was not a leader, and he was trouble! Since this was Thad's third offense, he was told to pull down his pants and stand in his underwear while the class laughed and the teacher boomed more shaming words to which no one came to rescue him from.

Why no rescue? The way that Thad shared it with me he said that no one listened. He explained that once while headed towards a construction site, Thad told his dad what school was like and what being "*tabled*" meant. His dad turned to him and said, "then pay attention and you won't be *tabled*." That was it. The gavel had been struck. Thad's story—his words—did nothing: no sympathy, no support, no talking to the teacher, and no emotional rescue for Thad. Thad was to be seen and not heard.

Chapter 3

The Fort: How Dreams Shatter



One dark night in October 2001, Thad shared this next story with me during one of his sober pain filled nights. We had been married for 4 years when he shared this story with me. Through his hate filled and shame filled words he shared this story with me.

Upon returning from the Islands, his father moved the family to a little piece of country. They lived on a large one-acre plot of land with a backyard that spilled down a large hill and into a gully filled with grasses, scrub oak, and animals. This was Thad's version of heaven. He had space to run, things to do, and time to create!

Being essentially alone, Thad needed things to do and places to explore. Socially, Thad had a few friends in elementary school, a few at church, but as time went on, his friendships dwindled due to his social awkwardness, so he sought refuge in his mind and with what he could create.

The creative process came quickly for Thad as the family began construction on their new home. His life was consumed by construction as his dad built the house brick by brick. During that time, Thad was almost always found outside, exploring, building, tinkering, inventing, and creating something. He was always making things with his hands and he was successful at it. He was very bright and knew how things worked. He also tinkered with things until he figured it out.

He said that at seven years old, Thad decided to build a fort in the gully. Thad scavenged his home job site for things he could use: discarded boards, nails, tools etc. Some days he just couldn't find what he needed. Many of his scavenger days, he'd biked down the hill on towards the gas station for candy, soda, or for things he would need for his projects. Each time he would pass a dumpy old garage packed full of treasures! He would slow down just to get a peek at the boards, the old glass windows, the old doors, and so forth.

One spring Saturday morning when Thad went down the hill, he noticed someone in the garage. He applied his brakes on his bike and slowed down long enough to see his neighbor. The man looked up and smiled at Thad. Thad waved and smiled as he went past. Thad went passed the old garage a few more Saturdays until finally one day, he stopped at the open door of the garage and walked in.

Thad's seven-year-old eyes had fallen upon a treasure trove of building possibilities: boards, rusty tools, nails, wavy glass, a wagon wheel, rusted plow, and six panel doors with the door knob that still worked! The neighbor suddenly

appeared from behind an old chest of drawers. He was wiping off white slime from his calloused hands on a mangy rag, brushed the sweat off his grimy brow, and with a zipper sound, adjusted himself then stepped out to meet Thad. That was the first time the two met, and it would not be their last.

Thad was a trusting kid; he was essentially friendless, and he always needed things for his projects. Soon a relationship was formed, and trust was built between him and the neighbor. When Thad's dad was too busy with the family house, Thad would ask for advice on his project from his neighbor. Spring melted in to early summer, his trips to the garage were more and more frequent. Thad's tinkering around in the garage to find more tools and ideas for his projects meant that time he spent with the neighbor increased as well and weeks gave in to months.



The slow heat of July gave way in to the depths of an August summer. With his bare feet, a dry, brown, hot, dusty, trail was kicked up by a seven-year-old. The blond sweep of hair was being tossed back by a cool breeze rising up out of the gully. The freckled face hung down with blue eyes fixed on the dirt trail as he stepped closer to home. With his eyes cast downward, he saw the white salty blotchy stain was still on his pant leg. He froze where he stood and looked at that stain.

He quickly reached down and grabbed a handful of dead grass and tried to brush it off. It was just smearing it on to his hands and deeper in to his pant leg. Looking at his hands he could see the stain was also in between his fingers. His stomach dropped. Why had he gone back to the garage? He needed just a few more nails to finish the fort. The quick trip to garage for those nails to finish his fort was just supposed to be like all the others over the summer: say hi, grab a few nails, and out the door to finish the project. However, this trip in to the dark garage was like none other.

The garage was a place of trust. It was a place to find the materials, gain advice on how to nail the boards, how to fix the windowpane, and the doorknob. That garage had helped him to form The Fort—The Fort had been the project for the summer. Since his father was too busy to help because of all the work on their personal house, Thad sought the advice of his neighbor. With his own hands he had drawn his very first of many house plans, but now these hands were stained with dirt and slippery goo.

He continued to kick up the dirt as he walked the long walk home, while he continued to rub his hands clean of the experience in the garage. He simply trudged through the gully up the sunbaked hill, to his home never to return to The Fort again.

The neighbor, the garage, the acts that happened there was never talked about. He never told anyone. He kept the secret for nearly two decades.

When Thad told me about the abuse, he had a sense of shame in his voice as he told me the story. I remember looking in his eyes. They were wrinkled with pain. I saw the tender feelings of him wanting to feel loved, but instead the emotions of pain and shame was all that he could feel.

The demands from the neighbor and the emotional damage it caused Thad rolled in to him like a dark, deep, cold, ocean wave pounding against the side of a ship ready to take it down to the bottom of the sea. That emotional damage and the pain that it caused had to be dealt with in either healthy or unhealthy ways, and unfortunately the unhealthy way was chosen.