

The Heart of an Abuser

I. Searching for the Cause

Mark 7:21-23: “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Our behavior flows from the desires of our hearts.

Contributing Factor: Something that contributes to the situation, but is not the cause.

- Drugs and alcohol
- Growing up in an abusive family

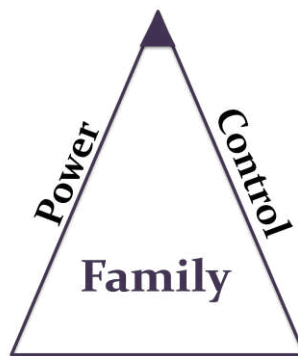
Symptom: Something that indicates abuse is present, but is not the cause.

- Anger

II. The Three Desires that Cause Domestic Abuse

1. Power and Control

An abuser views the family as a pyramid of power with room for one person on top.

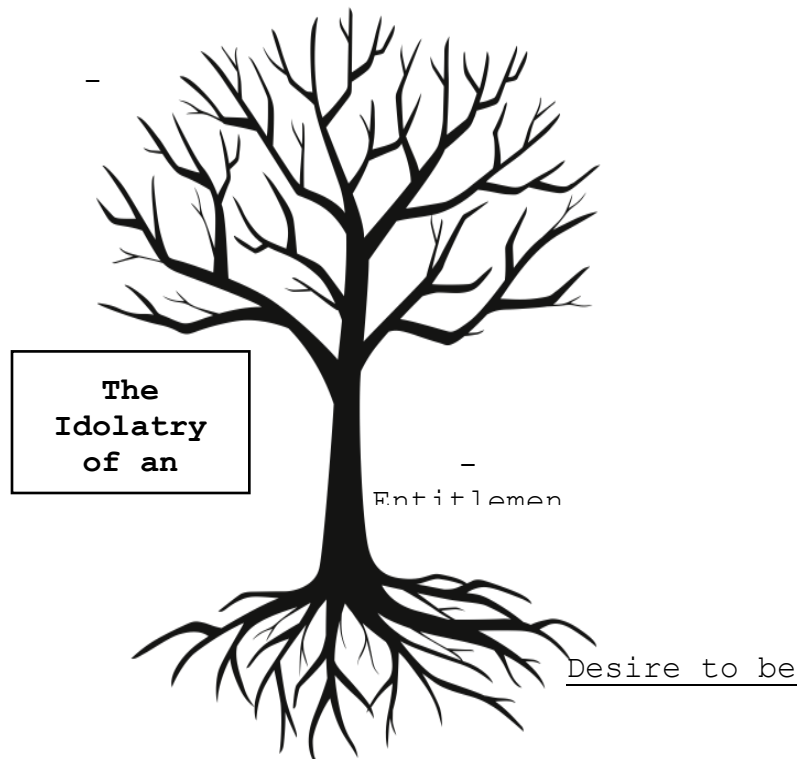


2. Entitlement

Entitlement: the abuser’s belief that he has a special status and that it provides him with exclusive rights and privileges that do not apply to his partner. -Lundy Bancroft

The basic mindset of an abuser: “I want what I want when I want it, *or else.*”

3. A Desire to be God



III. Self-Deception

An abuser's heart contains an intricate web of self-deception.

Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

Justify: the abuser gives a reason for why his actions were legitimate under the circumstances.

Case Study

Michelle and Steve have been married for 18 years, and they have two school-aged children. Steve runs their family business selling modular homes, and Michelle is a physician's assistant. She senses that there is something wrong with their relationship, but she can't pinpoint what it is. Most of the time she feels that Steve demands too much of her. But other times she wonders if she is being an unsubmitive and quarrelsome wife, like Steve says. Part of her thinks she could be imagining the whole thing, and needs to see a psychologist.

Yesterday was a tough day for Michelle. Like always, she woke up early to cook Steve breakfast. He emerged from the bedroom just as Michelle was leaving for work, and complained that she had cooked him the same thing two mornings in a row. Michelle explained that they were running low on food, and she needed to go to the store. Steve became very agitated, and said that she needed to keep track of things better so that this doesn't happen. Michelle responded, "I don't have time for this. I'm going to be late for work." She started to leave, but Steve stood between her and the door, and began to yell at her for disrespecting him. He said that she had no right to leave the room while he was talking to her. He commanded Michelle to sit down on the couch. She did, and then she listened to him rant for 20 minutes, saying that she was a selfish woman who didn't care about his needs. Michelle finally apologized and left for work. She was almost a half hour late.

After work Michelle came home and made dinner for the family. Then she sat down to manage their finances. Things were looking very tight. As usual, the modular home business had a shortfall, and she needed to use half of her paycheck to cover it. That left considerably less money for household expenses. If this continued to happen every month, Michelle was concerned that the business would fold and that her credit rating would drop. When Steve wanted to start the business three years ago, he could not get financing because of his debts. So Michelle had to put all of the financing in her name.

Michelle went into the living room, where Steve was watching TV, and asked why the business was doing so poorly. She knew that he liked to sleep late and golf in the middle of the day, which meant he was often not there when customers wanted to look at houses. Steve became very angry, and said she had no right to act like his boss. He was the head of the home, and her job was to submit to him and trust his judgment. Michelle responded, "But how can I trust an irresponsible child?!" Steve was enraged. He picked up a lamp and threw it against the wall. Michelle ran into their bedroom, shut the door, and used her cell phone to call her best friend. Steve burst into the room and yelled, "What did I tell you about leaving the room when I'm talking to you?!" When he saw that she was on her phone, he grabbed it and threw it on the hardwood floor, breaking it. He yelled at her for talking to others about him behind his back, and said that she could no longer have a cell phone if she was going to use it to ruin his reputation. Then he stormed out of the room. That night Michelle slept on the couch.

Abusive Behavior	Root Desire