

I grew up in the '60's. So I may share some of the same memories that you do. In the midst of space exploration, war protests and rock n' roll, my family had a dirty little secret. We never told anyone about the drinking, mental illness or violence that filled our lives. We never mentioned that "home" was a scary place where you never knew who would be the next victim of the verbal and physical abuse. Once when I was about eleven years old, my mom got up enough courage to talk to a pastor about my dad and what our family was like. I remember that my mom came out of the church crying because her only effort to reach out for help was met with little support or comfort. In fact, my mom was told that to seek safety from her situation would mean disconnection from her church. So we stayed and endured the abuse until I finally left home at age seventeen.

Now that I am an adult I can appreciate the fact that the ministry professional in whom my mom confided had little to offer in the way of protection or shelter. Those programs and laws arrived much later. I can also appreciate the confusion that must erupt when a church that pledges to honor the institution of marriage must feel when confronted with family violence. Do you feel like you could be better informed in the ways that you advise people on this issue? It really is a matter of life and death!