

*The Journey to Forgiveness by Rev. Lenita Reeves, Pastor*

*An Excerpt from "Breaking the Silence: The Journey from Rape to Redemption"  
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**A**s a rape survivor and Christian, female minister, the Biblical account of Dinah's rape was, for a long time, one of the hardest passages of scripture for me to digest and understand. Once you have experienced the pain of rape, hearing the story of someone else's violation lights a fire of indignation within you. The flame is even greater when it is a Biblical account that evokes questions about the love of God: so I struggled with the account of Dinah in the scripture.

On the surface, the Biblical account of Dinah's rape presents no answers at all. It does not explicitly state Dinah's feelings or present her point of view in the text. The story is told from her brothers' and her father's perspectives. Yet, however seemingly hidden they may be, I discovered that the Biblical account of Dinah contains answers that bring healing to rape survivors and allow us to minister to others. That is why I have written Breaking the Silence.

You may not be a rape victim; but undoubtedly, you know someone whom rape holds in its grip. It is reported that one out of every six women is a victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> These statistics have been drawn only from the minority of rape incidents that are actually reported; so the number of women affected by rape is higher. It is unknown exactly how much higher the number truly is. If you were raped, it may be years since the violation was perpetrated—that's okay. This book is still a necessary source of healing and reflection. Often, rape victims carry their initial emotional scars for up to four years after the incident<sup>2</sup>.

I cried out to God in search of answers to the emotional problems that plagued me after being raped. I couldn't find a way to express how I felt and when I did make a few attempts, it seemed that no one understood anyway. Worse, when the issue was addressed within the

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<sup>1</sup> Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, "RAINN Statistics." RAINN. <http://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/sexual-assault-victims>.

<sup>2</sup> Clancy, Atosha. "Rape Trauma Syndrome." *MedAu Clinic*. <http://www.medicineau.net.au/clinical/psychiatry/rts.html>

confines of church walls, I was turned off by the male-dominated, traditional approach. I now understand—rape is to a woman what being castrated is to a man.

Examine the following two definitions of the word castrate and you will also understand.

To castrate means to:

- ❖ Render impotent, literally or metaphorically by psychological means, especially by threatening a person's masculinity or femininity<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Deprive of strength, power, or efficiency; weaken<sup>4</sup>

How is it that one recovers from such a demeaning, horrific, and inhumane experience? Let me assert that it takes more than a medical examination or a few trips through a prayer line because rape is not just a physical castration—it affects spirit, soul, and body.

In Breaking the Silence, I believe rape survivors finally have a sounding board, an understanding companion, and the Biblical revelation and instruction necessary for healing. I am not a psychologist so I have not written from a psychological standpoint. I have written with a focus on revealing what the scriptures have to say about rape. Because I believe the scriptures are a true source of healing, I seek to shed light on a subject that to date, the church has skirted and shied away from addressing.

I don't know that I ever blamed God for being raped; but, because of the marred image of men that resulted from my rape, I sure kept my distance from Him when it came to certain issues. Eventually, as I cried out, I found that God is neither our enemy nor is He the source of rape. His incredible love for us is an extreme juxtaposition to every image the word rape evokes. You will discover (or re-discover) that profound love as you read on.

So as painful as it may be, I invite you to hold fast the following pages and find the healing touch of God required to transform you from victim to victor. Even if you have not experienced the horrible act of rape, this resource will provide insight to how you can be a loving supporter to a sister or brother (yes men too can be victims of rape) who has. Whatever abuse you have endured, and whatever provokes you to question God's care and love for you

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<sup>3</sup> Merriam Webster's Dictionary. "Definition of castrate." Merriam-Webster, Inc. <http://www.merriamwebster.com>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

will be washed away. Take a step of faith and read further with me, your sister ~~survivor~~; no, your sister *conqueror*. Let's begin the journey from rape to redemption. One of the first stops on this journey is forgiveness.

### *Forgiveness Road*

*And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. – Genesis 41:46 (King James Version)*

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and yet, eventually, he was able to declare that what they meant for evil, God meant for good. Eventually is the key word. Joseph was 30 years old when Pharaoh appointed him governor of Egypt and, seven years of plenty passed before Joseph's brothers came looking for food during the famine. Even after 20 years (thirteen plus seven), Joseph's battle with forgiveness was evident in his voice. According to Genesis 42:7, "...Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, **but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them.**" The sting of unforgiveness in Joseph's voice clearly indicated that the pain resurfaced afresh and, he still had not come to a place of total forgiveness. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. What you say about someone and how you say it reflects how you feel about them. Unforgiveness was still in Joseph's voice (he spoke roughly to them) and attitude (he made himself strange unto them).

I think it is safe to say that you have experienced hurt in one way or another. Unfortunately, you may have experienced severe betrayal such as infidelity or may have even been raped or abused. Forgiveness after such instances rarely manifests overnight. Joseph is a clear example of this. After 20 years, he was still dealing with the pain of his brothers' betrayal and you or someone you care about may also be dealing with your own pain. It is important to emphasize that forgiveness begins with a decision but is most often a journey over time, rather than a quick trip.

Despite Joseph's 20-year journey from bitterness to forgiveness, the scripture indicates that God was with him the entire time. God was with him from the time he was sold into

slavery to the time he went to Potiphar's house to the time he went to prison to the time he went to Pharaoh's palace. I am not suggesting that it should take you 20 years to forgive—life is too short to waste 20 years in unforgiveness. I am suggesting that God is with you. Sometimes our soul (mind, will and emotions) has to catch up with our faith confession of forgiveness. Some dogmatic Christians will take offense to this, but consider that to forgive means to embrace the person as if the violation never happened. Most honest people would agree that embracing someone who inflicted severe betrayal; for example, a rapist, does not happen overnight. Eventually, if you stay committed to forgiveness, confess forgiveness, confess God's word and keep your heart open to Him, your confession will be a reality. This is what I believe the scripture means when it says forgive seventy times seven; keep on forgiving over and over and over and over.

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*The further you get from unforgiveness the further you get from stigma. The closer you get to forgiveness, the closer you get to honor. – Author*

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***A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches. The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. – Proverbs 11:16-17 (King James Version)***

Do "good" to your own soul. Forgive. Realize that your unforgiveness, anger, and resentment has no effect on your perpetrator; it only affects *you* negatively. While you sit in depression and unforgiveness, they have moved on. Do good to your own soul, release them, forgive them, and let God work in you so that you can move on to more honorable things. Jacob could have remained in anger and refused Shechem's proposal to marry Dinah because she had been raped (Genesis 34). If Jacob had remained in anger, his daughter would have remained in stigma. Instead, she had the opportunity to become the wife of an honored prince.

## **Pastor Lenita Reeves**

### **Short Bio**

**Pastor Lenita Reeves is a conference speaker, prophetic intercessor, and teacher serving as an assistant pastor and the first lady of Action Chapel Baltimore.**

**She began her service to the Lord in campus ministry as Deputy Director of Campus Ministries United. In the next phase of her ministry, God taught her the basics of pastoring while serving as a youth minister at Abundant Life Church and then, in Sober Watchman Ministries.**

**She attended Beulah Heights Bible College in Atlanta, Georgia and has been privileged to participate in international missions, preaching the gospel in the Caribbean, London, and East and West Africa. She met her husband, Pastor Cephas Reeves, on her first missions trip to West Africa and together, they currently lead the Action Chapel Baltimore church branch under the covering of Archbishop Duncan-Williams who ordained her into ministry as reverend and pastor in November of 2011.**

**Pastor Lenita's professional background includes work experience as an IT Consultant for Accenture, Manager of Instructional Technology for Sungard Higher Education and Director of Program Design for Laureate Education, Inc. She has a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Maryland, College Park.**