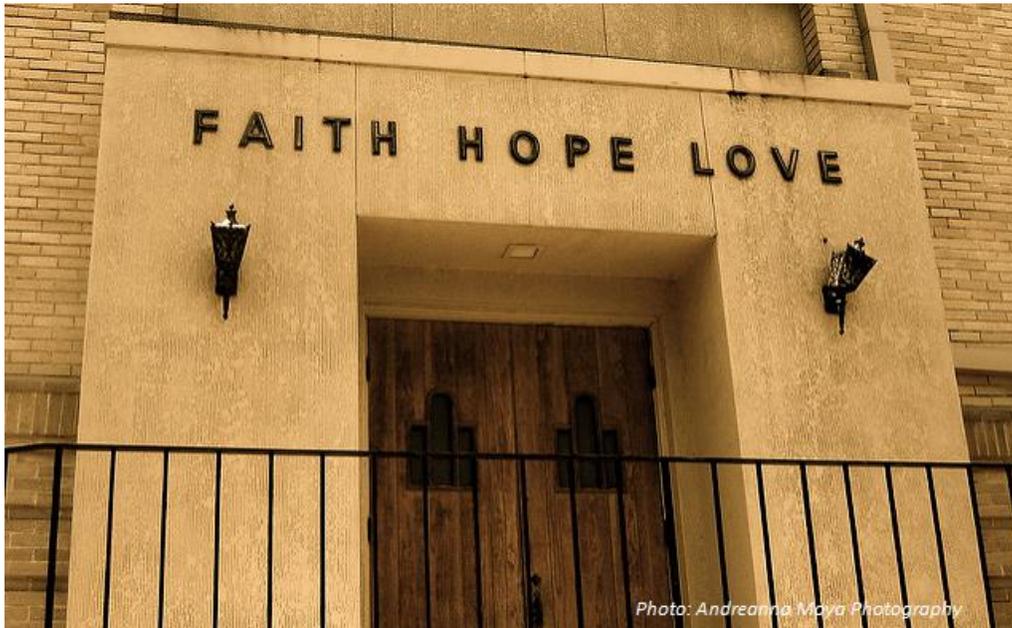




My story by S.B.



Last January I found myself making one of the scariest yet bravest decisions I've ever made. After being in a short yet destructive marriage I chose to pack up my kids and I and leave an abusive marriage. It had gotten to the point that I had to choose if I was going to love my husband or myself. I knew I couldn't do both.

A couple months prior to leaving my husband I had met with the owner of a nonprofit organization that helps women such as myself heal emotionally after living with abuse. I shared my situation with her and she referred me to TMWF to see how they could help me. I made the call to TMWF the next day and began to meet with my counselor frequently and shared what had been going on in my life. One thing that has stuck with me from my counselor is that there is a difference in surviving and thriving. Through our sessions I began to recognize that I had been living in survival mode for years and was not thriving in life whatsoever. The more I attended sessions and read about the cycle of abuse I became aware. I became aware of just how destructive my marriage was, how my childhood dysfunction had shaped my adulthood choices, as well as how to embrace and feel my emotions and trust my God-given instincts. Through these things I came to the life-shattering conclusion that my marriage was holding on for all the wrong reasons and that to have the life God promised me I had to leave this time and not look back.

My counselor talked to me about creating a safety plan and I did so immediately. As the time drew nearer for us to move I consulted with the TMWF attorney for legal advice and they were able to help



me start the process of separation and custody arrangements. The attorney shared with me the facts of how dangerous things can get when a women leaves an abusive partner and suggested that I seek refuge in an undisclosed safe house where I could find some peace and decide the next steps to rebuilding my life as a single mother. The thought of going to a shelter terrified me but the thought of continuing to live with mental and emotional abuse that was escalating scared me more. I knew I could not keep subjecting my children and I to the behaviors I had made excuses for my entire marriage.

I only had a short window of time when I could move without being stopped by my husband and I felt strongly that this time 1 year ago was the right time.

I took a huge leap of faith, trusted the legal advice I was given by the TMWF attorney and agreed to relocate into the shelter with my infant. My older children lived with family where they could finish out the school year in a stress free environment.

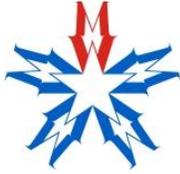
Living at the shelter was a humbling experience that I'll always remember. I still remember the numbness my body had when I parked my car and got ready to walk into the shelter. I didn't know what to expect. I was so afraid.

To my surprise my baby and I were welcomed in with love, smiles and encouragement. I learned quite a bit in those weeks at the shelter but the greatest thing that I learned was that I was much stronger than I believed.

I also realized that no matter what religion someone follows there is no excuse not to show someone hurting love and encouragement. The ladies that I lived with were strong women. There was something about these ladies that I admired and it was their strength, hope and endurance. My second roommate impacted my life the most. Hearing her story made me cry everyday but also opened my eyes to the fact that when it comes to the best interest of my children there is no distance too far to stop fighting and giving up is never an option. There was a community there and I also learned that while there are no handouts in life, there are still good people in this world who still lift a helping hand.

After I felt it was time to leave the shelter I lived with friends for 9 months. During those nine month I continued to see my counselor and my case worker who helped me apply for affordable housing so that my older children and I could be reunited in a place of our own. I truly appreciate how patient and kind my case worker and counselor have been with me since the beginning of this journey. While waiting on an apartment I had several challenges to overcome and many days of doubt but I had to remember that giving up is not an option. I was not only a single parent again but I was also separated from my older children that are in grade school.

I worked odd jobs here and there to help myself and I also allowed those who care about me to help as well.



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About 3 months ago I was blessed with the perfect job. A couple weeks after starting my job I picked up the keys to my new place. My case worker knew of a ministry that helped furnish homes for families and she gave the ministry my information. Days after I moved in my apartment was fully furnish. That was an amazing day!

It's been a little over a year since I began services with TMWF and I still receive counseling as needed which helps me see just how far I've come with my journey of emotional healing. I'm no longer the confused, scared, and codependent person I was. I am a stronger, confident and courageous warrior who continues to fight the good fight for my children and I. I've been blessed to have crossed paths with some strong and caring women to help me navigate through this past year and I'm forever grateful for them.

My life and the lives of my children has been forever changed, they have been restored to a peaceful place and none of this would have been possible had I not reached out to TMWF. This organization is full of some of the kindness most generous people I've ever met.

My story is still being written. I am still awaiting a hearing for my divorce to be finalized. I've chosen to move forward and enjoy my new life with my amazing children. Our lives have never been better. As scary as it was to leave a life that so many envied I know that the richness of joy my life has now is priceless!

Thank you for hearing my story!