

A SISTER EXPERIENCE

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Robbie's Journey: God Let Me Try It My Way

For years I believed staying in my abusive marriage honored God. It took time before I understood the difference between my will and His.

For most of my life, I believed that if I prayed hard enough and tried hard enough, things would work out the way I hoped they would. I believed that if something looked good and felt right, it must also be what God wanted for me.

Looking back now, I understand something I didn't understand then: sometimes God allows us to pursue what we think we want so we can eventually learn the difference between our will and His.

That lesson took me years to fully understand.

I met my husband through recovery. At the time I was working hard to rebuild my life. I had children and nearly two decades of sobriety ahead of me now, but back then I was still learning what a healthy life looked like. When I met him, he seemed kind, attentive, and thoughtful. He paid attention to the little things I liked. He remembered details. It felt like someone was finally seeing me.

My kids liked him too, which meant a lot to me. They thought he was fun and encouraged me to give the relationship a chance. They laughed and said things like, "You should go out with him," and "Can't you see that he likes you?" At first, everything felt simple. He was showering me with love and things felt right.

Looking back now, I realize he was also studying me. He was learning my likes, my dislikes, and what mattered most to me. At the time, it felt like love.

The first time something felt wrong, it didn't look like abuse. It looked like "respect." One evening we had gone out with family and stopped to eat while he stayed behind. When we returned, he pulled me aside and scolded me for not thinking about him when we decided to stop for food. He framed it as disrespect, saying that a wife should consider her partner before doing something like that.

From that moment on, I wasn't allowed to eat unless he was eating too. At the time, unfortunately, I didn't recognize this as control. I believed what he told me. I thought it was about honoring him and honoring our relationship.

HAGAR'S SISTERS

About a year after we met, we got married. We had started going to church together, and he told me that because we were sleeping together we needed to do the right thing and make it official. "This is what God wants," he said.

And I believed him.

I remember praying during that time, asking God to bless the marriage and give me this relationship. I thought I was praying for something good. It took me a long time to understand this, but I now believe that, in that moment, **God allowed me to have what I thought I wanted so that one day, I could see the difference between my way and His.**

After we got married, things began to change. Not all at once, but slowly enough that I didn't fully recognize it at first. Arguments became more frequent, and if I said something he didn't like, he would twist my words and use them against me later. Eventually I learned that the safest thing to do was to say as little as possible.

Over time, I lost my voice.

The only way I can describe it now is that I spiritually died. I was still alive and functioning, but the person I used to be disappeared. The abuse eventually moved beyond words. It became physical. It became sexual. And through all of it, Scripture was used to justify it.

He reminded me that men were the head of the household and that wives were meant to submit. I believed that leaving would mean breaking my vows to God. I had promised "until death do us part," and I took that promise seriously.

So I stayed.

After a couple of years, I finally reached out to a pastor for help. I hoped someone from the church could guide me and help us find counseling. Instead, I was told that because my husband was the head of the household, he would have to be the one to ask for help. The pastor said he couldn't intervene unless my husband reached out first. Think about that. In that moment, a church leader, someone I should have been able to rely on, sent me back into the darkness.

When I brought up counseling to my husband, he refused.

That was the end of the conversation.

I walked away believing there was no help for me. That moment kept me trapped for another ten years.

The relationship lasted fifteen years in total. Over time my health began to suffer. I barely slept. My body was constantly under stress. I lived in a constant state of fear, trying to predict his moods and avoid saying the wrong thing.

HAGAR'S SISTERS

Eventually, the truth began to surface in ways I couldn't ignore. I started noticing late-night messages on his phone from someone named Gina, and the infidelity was enough for me. When I confronted him, I also learned that Gina was actually a man. The betrayal was already there, but in that moment, something shifted. For the first time, I couldn't keep minimizing what was happening or telling myself it was something I needed to endure. **That became the breaking point for me.** I finally said the words I had never allowed myself to say before: This is over.

We eventually sold the house. I moved in with my mother nearly two hours away because I was afraid of how he might react once he realized he had lost control over me. His behavior became more erratic and unpredictable, and I felt safer putting physical distance between us.

Late one night, while scrolling on Facebook, I saw something that caught my attention. It was an ad for Hagar's Sisters.

At that point, I knew I needed healing. I didn't want the wounds from that relationship to bleed onto other people in my life. What stood out to me about Hagar's Sisters was that it was a place for women. After years of control and manipulation, the idea of speaking openly with other women felt safe.

As I was in the process of reaching out, I received news that shook my world once again. My husband had died by suicide.

The weight of that moment is hard to put into words. Grief, shock, confusion; all of it came at once. But what followed made it even heavier. At his funeral, someone close to him said something I will never forget: that if I had forgiven him and taken him back, he would still be alive.

Those words settled deep, and for a time, they felt impossible to shake.

When Hagar's Sisters eventually called me back, I remember asking a question that had been weighing on me ever since:

"Do I still qualify to be here?"

They told me something that changed everything.

Just because he died, they said, doesn't erase the damage that was done. I still deserved healing.

Through Hagar's Sisters, I finally found something I hadn't experienced in years: safety. **I met women who understood what I had been through.** I began to learn truths about faith that I had never been taught before:

- God does not ask women to endure abuse.
- Submission does not mean silence.
- And a godly man does not lead through fear, control, or violence.

HAGAR'S SISTERS

I'm deeply grateful for the new perspective Hagar's Sisters gave me. Looking back, I can say this honestly, without it, I don't know if I would still be here today. **It didn't just help me heal; it gave me a new life.** For the first time in years, I began to find my voice again.

More importantly, I began rebuilding my relationship with God, Not the version of God that had been used to control me, but the God who loves and protects His children.

Today, my prayers look very different than they used to. I no longer ask God to give me what I want or try to shape things into what I think they should be. Instead, I ask God for what He wants for me, even when I don't fully understand it. Because I've come to see something now that I couldn't see then—there was a long season where God allowed me to try it my way. I truly believed I was honoring Him. I thought I was being faithful by staying, by enduring, by holding on no matter what. But in reality, I was clinging to something He was never asking me to carry. And in His mercy, He didn't leave me there. He met me in the confusion, in the silence, and in the pain, and He began to gently lead me out of it. He lead me out of the lies, out of the fear, and into truth. Not a truth rooted in control or obligation, but one grounded in His love and care for me.

Today, I understand that God's will was never for me to live in abuse, and that God's way does not lead to bondage, but to healing.

I don't want my way anymore.

I want God's because I finally understand the difference, and I know where it leads.

Robbie

A Hagar's Sister