



# Speaking the Unspeakable

By Beth Foreman

**It's been over forty years** since the unspeakable happened to Lynn\*, but talking about it still brings her to tears.

"You'll have to bear with me because I still cry about it." She struggles with the memories.

Until recently, Lynn, an active woman in LWML, had not told her story to anyone except her pastor and her family. Lately, she has opened up even more to share her story so that others might be helped.

When Lynn shares her story with others, she begins by recalling Isaiah 64:8: *We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.*

And just what is her unspeakable story? "As a young girl — before I was even ten years old — I was sexually molested and then raped as a teenager," she says, slowly and softly.

The sexual abuse went on for years — long and painful years — but Lynn told

no one. For those who can't understand why she didn't tell anyone, Lynn explains. "I always thought I wasn't worthy of love. It was easy for me to say it was okay — the sexual molesting — but it wasn't."

Finally, after being threatened, Lynn went to her mother. "It was hard for me to tell her."

As expected, Lynn's mother blamed herself. "She felt like she should have seen it long before."

Her mother knew Lynn needed to talk to someone about the sexual abuse, so she brought her to a counselor. Lynn believes, however, that the counseling didn't help her face the abuse. "I put it in a closet. I thought I needed to move on and forget it."

So she buried her pain for the next fifteen years.

When her mother passed away, the pain "hit me right between the eyes." She knew she had to deal with her past, but she had no idea how. She wasn't raised in a Christian home, so "I didn't have the foundation of faith." But the Lord provided. "I had a good friend who listened to my story and my pain. She thought her pastor might be able to help me, and so she invited me to her church."

After several Sundays, Lynn felt comfortable and went to see the pastor. "We talked for hours. He was such a good listener. If it weren't for his willingness to listen and talk to me...I'm not sure where I'd be right now."

During that first visit, the pastor read Philippians 4:13 to Lynn. *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.* "I had never heard those words before." Lynn's world had been filled with darkness and for the first time, she saw some light.

For months, Lynn met with the pastor as he guided her through the healing process. "Some days I'd say, 'I feel worthless.' And right away, Pastor would pray with me." Then he'd talk about being in her "pain zone." Lynn found strength as they prayed together, trusting that God was hearing her prayers. "God helped me move out of that pain zone."

As with most victims of sexual abuse or rape, Lynn needed to hear that she wasn't responsible. "I didn't do those terrible things. Someone else did them to me."

Sexual abuses and rapes are often unreported for a variety of reasons: victims may feel ashamed, depressed, angry, or guilty, and reluctant to tell anyone. "A lot of women hide behind a veil." When women are in pain from sexual abuse or rape, they don't want anyone to know. "Yet when victims hear that it's not their fault, that they aren't the guilty party — and that God can take care of all that pain, when they let Him — then they can come to terms with the past and begin healing."

Indeed, the most profound message for Lynn's healing was in the Gospel. "I learned about Christ's death. He died on the cross for my sins and for the sins of those who did this to me. I needed to learn to forgive, just as God forgives us through Christ."

Lynn truly sees God's purpose as He opens doors for her to speak out against sexual abuse. "In my work, I find opportunities to talk with young women. If I can help even one young lady so that she isn't dealing with the same things I endured, then God is using me. God has a purpose for everything in my life."

*\*Not her real name*