

Repentance and Forgiveness

by Peggy Harris W.A.S.H. Board Chair

The names have been changed in this story. There are many people who never reach a conclusion to an ongoing story in their personal life. Here is one story that did reach an end that was an answer to prayer.

Her brother Roger, between the ages of 7 and 12, repeatedly raped Lucy. When she went to a family doctor and it was found she was not a virgin she was asked who did this to her. Because her brother had told her not to tell and if she ever did he would kill her, she picked the name of a youth in the neighborhood and said that he had done it.

After an investigation it was determined that the accused youth could not have done the rapes but the authorities never discovered who had done it. Lucy grew to adulthood and confided in a sister (one of several siblings) as well as a nephew who was a psychiatrist. The nephew in later years had contact with Roger and tried to lead him to confess his youthful wrongdoing but never told Roger he knew what he had done.

Years later at the funeral of a sister, Lucy saw the young man she had falsely accused years earlier. She approached him and said they needed to talk. They found a quiet corner and she asked his forgiveness for falsely accusing him of raping her. Remarkably, he accepted her apology.

During a conversation with Roger when he was an elderly man, Lucy tried being an example and asked him to forgive her if she had ever wronged or done harm to him in their childhood or grown up years. Roger finally admitted what he had done but excused it as just childish playing around (we were just kids), without parents around and exploring newly found sex information. Lucy let him know that the experience had hurt her terribly and all these years she had felt wounded in her soul, spirit and physical being.

Then shortly before Roger's death he had another conversation with Lucy. By this time he had fully accepted the Lord into his life and sought her forgiveness for the terrible wrong he had done to her as a child.

There are several aspects to this fascinating story. Even though few people may experience the repentance and forgiveness Roger finally asked Lucy for, it is important for a victim of abuse to forgive the perpetrator's actions. This helps to bring closure and healing to the wounded soul. This does not mean that the perpetrator should not be held accountable for the crime of abuse.

Lucy accused an innocent person of this crime. She was very fortunate that someone was able to prove him innocent. She had to carry the guilt of that false accusation for years. We need to remember that a child searches frantically sometimes to provide an answer even when it's the wrong one. An important question she should have been asked is: Were you threatened with harm if you tell who did this?