



Isaiah 53 Personalized for Sexual Abuse

In her book *On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse* Diane Langberg advises victims of sexual abuse to rewrite the Isaiah 53 passage of the Suffering Servant as a way to help them see how Christ can identify with their suffering. She says:

“Turn what you read into a prayer. Use the word of Scripture to help you articulate your pain, your questions, your fear, your anger... Rewrite the Scripture passages as you read. Personalize them. Take Isaiah 53, and write it so it speaks about your life. Then look hard at the similarities in your life and the life of Jesus (p. 182).”

The example below is an attempt to rewrite Isaiah 53 to put the experience of sexual abuse into words. Dr. Langberg provides another example of rewriting Isaiah 53 in her book on pages 182-186.

Isaiah 53 (ESV)	Isaiah 53 Personalized
1. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?	1. I spoke and no one believed what I said. They thought I was a liar or a lunatic. Even when there was great reason to believe me, they refused. The truth was supposed to set me free, but it made me an outcast.
2. For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.	2. I was a young child. He knew and “loved” me. I was weak and vulnerable in his care. Was it my body? Was there anything about the body of a child that could allure such destructive passion? If so, I’ll hide my beauty. I’d rather not be seen than attacked. To be known is dangerous.
3. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.	3. Oh, the way he looks at me now. He hates me. He looks at me, knows what he did, and despises me as his reminder. I feel like others can see it too, and reject me. When I speak people back away from me. I want comfort. I keep getting rejection. I am sadness. Grief is my best/only friend. People find it easier to pretend nothing happened and turn their eyes (literally and figuratively). I represent what people want to forget.
4. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.	4. Is this worse than the cross? Is this what made you cry “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” instead of the nails? I know why people thought God had abandoned you. I have thought the same of myself.
5. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.	5. You did this voluntarily? You bore this so we would not be alone in this moment? I don’t yet know how it is supposed to heal me, but I am amazed. I can’t get anyone to believe me and You would join me. You must want peace for me worse than I do!
6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.	6. I have run from my pain in so many directions: people-pleasing, promiscuousness, cutting, thoughts of suicide, perfectionism, denial, withdrawal, and more. None of them worked, yet You bore the penalty and walked the journey of each road to buy me back and set me free. That kind of love is so foreign to me it scares me.

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.
8. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?
9. And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.
10. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.
11. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.
12. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the any, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

7. You too were tortured and silenced. You surrendered Your voice because they took mine. They took Your clothes too and You said nothing. You plunged fully into the depths of my pain to rescue my drowning soul. I was so silenced I could no longer call to You, yet You came.
8. People scorned You because of Your suffering. I too have been judged for my suffering. I judge myself and wonder if it was “my fault.” I want to scream, “No I wasn’t asking for it!” You were cut off from the “land of the living.” I feel as if I walk though life with a dead soul. I hate being ostracized because of someone else’s sin.
9. I hate being grouped with the “dirty people”—hookers and sluts. But that is how I feel, dirty. I did not give myself to another, but I do not get to be “pure” and do not feel I can associate with the “pure.” But I didn’t do anything wrong. I have to believe that. It’s true. Why is it so hard to believe?
10. I don’t know how to talk of Your involvement in my suffering, God. You were not blind. You were not sleeping. Your character does not change? God, be patient with me if I skip this question for a while. I fear I want survival more than redemption right now. Work with me at a pace my soul and mind can bear. I’m trying to pray “I believe. Help my unbelief.”
11. When/if I find comfort for this pain, I would gladly share it with the world, or at least anyone who would care to listen to me. Help me believe that peace is more than a fairy tale like unicorns. I long to join with Christ in His journey through suffering to life—life unshakable and impenetrable.
12. Pray of me, Jesus! Pray for me! I am beginning to realize if I have held up under this weight for this long, I must be in “the strong.” You identified with me in my suffering. Help me identify with You in your victory over sin, suffering, and death. Instead of losing myself in the crowd, in my numbness, or in the dots on the ceiling (where there is no life). Let me lose myself in You (Life Itself)!