

What is verbal abuse according to the Bible?

The Bible does not have a particular chapter on verbal abuse. In fact, the term "abuse" is not found in the Bible. Nevertheless, that does not mean the concept of abuse is missing and it does not mean the Bible does not address what we describe as verbal abuse. It does.

In her handouts at a counseling seminar, Elyse Fitzpatrick identified biblical descriptions of abuse. They are:

1. Afflicted - brow beaten, depressed, oppressed, ravished.
2. Fatherless - to be lonely, bereaved, orphaned.
3. Weak - to be worn out, to grieve, to put to pain, to be without strength.
4. Oppressed - to press down, distress, afflict, crush, force to rage, to be violent against, bruise, discourage.
5. Helpless - weak, thin, needy, poor.
6. Brokenhearted - burst, break, crush, destroy or quench the heart.
7. Humbled- humiliated, depress, bring low, to be made low.

When does verbal abuse occur?

1. When you are consistently slow or unwilling to listen; you have a habit of interrupting (Prov. 18:13; James 1:19).
2. You are quick to speak (Psa. 106:33; Prov. 15:23, 28:29:20; Jas. 1:19)
3. You lie in order to manipulate things in your favor (Ex. 23:1,7; Psa. 34:13; 58:3; Pro. 6:16-19; 14:5, 25; 26:24; 28:24; Hos. 4:2; Mk. 7:21-22).
4. When you are argumentative, quarrelsome or contentious (Prov. 17:14; 20:3; Rom. 13:13; Eph. 4:31; 1 Tim. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:24)
 - Argumentative means to bicker, dispute, squabble, wrangle
 - Contentious means to compete, to engage in controversy, to be adversarial (Pro. 18:6; 21:19, 22:16; 25:24; Jer. 15:10; 1 Cor. 11:16; Gal. 5:19-20)
5. When you refuse to try to understand the other person's opinions (Pro. 18:2, 13, 15; Phil. 3:15, 16)

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6. Not listening to the other well and then reacting or drawing improper conclusions (Pro. 25: 8; 18:17; 27:2; 18:13; Job 13:5).
7. By attacking one who criticizes or blames you (Rom. 12:17, 21; 1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9)
8. Through nagging (Pro. 10:19; 16:21, 23; 17:9; 18:6,7; 21:19; 27:15).
9. Responding verbally to others with uncontrolled anger (Pro. 14:29; 15:1; 25:15; 29:11; Eph. 4:26, 31).
10. Calling the other names, mocking or making fun of another (Pro. 12:18; 16:24; Matt. 7:12; Eph. 4:29,30; Col. 4:6).
11. With murder by mouth (Pro. 11:9; Matt. 5:21, 22).
12. Using language or tone of speech that provokes children to anger (Eph. 6:4)
13. Cutting another down with gossip. Gossip means to reveal or discuss personal facts about another person for no legitimate purposes; it often betrays a confidence. It is used to diminish a person's reputation in the eyes of another (Prov. 11:13; 16:28; 20:19; 26:20; 2 Cor.12:20; 1 Tim. 5:13).
14. By slander –speaking false or malicious words about another, also used to diminish a person's reputation in the eyes of another (Lev. 19:16; Pro. 10:18; 50:20; 2 Tim. 3:3; Ti 2:3; 3:2; Jude 1:10)
15. Speaking harshly (Pro. 15:1; 1 Sam. 25:10-11).
16. Using words that discourage (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25).
17. Through cursing instead of blessing (Psa. 109:17).
18. Frequently grumbling and complaining (Phil. 2:14; Jas 5:9)
19. Using rotten talk. This is speech that tears down, is non-beneficial, or presumptive (Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:26; Jas. 4:11-12)
20. By scolding (Mark 14:3-5; Pro. 15:1; Col. 4:6; Matt. 16:22, 23; 18:15; I Cor. 16:14)
21. Destroying with words rather than building up (Ex. 20:16; Pro. 11:19; 12:18; Jas. 3:5-6 cp. Acts 20:32; Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph.6:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:1-4).
22. Using words that speak down or cut down another (Jas. 4:11). Condemning instead of commending ((Phil. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3).

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23. Making rash judgments. That is condemning another without proper investigation (2 Sam. 16:4; 19:24ff; Matt. 7:1-3; John 9:12ff; 1 Cor. 4:5).

24. Telling stories (tale bearing) that injure others (Prov. 11:13; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20).

When is one considered to be a verbal abuser?

When the preponderance of the above qualities is evident and the overall tone of the home is sinfully negative and oppressive because of one's words.

Here are additional Bible passages to consider:

Psa. 141:3; Prov. 18:21; 25:11; Job. 19:2; Matt. 12:34-37; Jas. 3:8-10; 1 Pet. 3:10; Eph. 4:25-32

What to do?

After reading through these characteristics, do any or all apply to you? Do any of these things describe someone in your family?

1. If you are guilty of practicing any of these verbally abusive traits, then admit it to God and seek his help to repent (turn away from your sin and turn by faith to God).

It is possible you are not even a Christian with saving faith. Perhaps you do not even know or understand the good news of Christ? Read [Do You Know God's God News?](#) or find someone who can present the biblical view of salvation by Jesus Christ alone through grace and faith alone.

Pray for God's Spirit to give you spiritual understanding (Ephesians 1) and a new heart.

You need to very seriously consider whether you are indeed a believer in Christ. Go to Jesus Christ to forgive you as a rebellious sinner, to redeem you by taking you out of the slavery of the world, the flesh and the devil, and change your life (see Romans 6; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10, etc.)

2. After you admit and repent, turn to God for daily grace to change your heart and your behaviors.

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3. When you are tempted to express yourself in an abusive manner, stop and think. Take time to calm down and then practice doing the opposite. Plead with God to empower you to make a significant change.
4. Go to the individuals in your family with whom you have been verbally abusive and seek forgiveness. What you do is tell your spouse, child, parent, or other family member what you did and admit that it was wrong and sinful. Do not say you are sorry. Instead, tell them specifically what you did and ask forgiveness. Actually say, "Will you forgive me?"
5. Daily practice putting off the wrong, the abusive behavior, and the sin, and put on what is right and good (Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 4).
6. Recruit godly and wise people you trust to keep you accountable.
7. Pray for radical change of your life.