

What Others Say about *Don't Plant Your Seeds Among Thorns*

“The Catechism observes that God’s original plan for marriage has been ‘seriously disturbed’ by sin (1608). As a result, man and woman’s ‘mutual attraction, the Creator’s own gift, changed into a relationship of domination and lust’ (1607). In *Don't Plant Your Seeds Among Thorns: A Catholic's Guide to Recognizing and Healing from Domestic Abuse*, Jenny duBay compassionately discusses the true nature of marriage while providing resources and hope for those who aren't experiencing authentic companionship in their relationships. Drawing from the Catechism, the Theology of the Body, and various other trusted Catholic resources, Jenny opens the way to genuine healing for those seeking freedom from abusive relationships.” – **Christopher West, Th.D., best-selling author, popular podcaster, and President, Theology of the Body Institute**

“Jenny duBay has written a marvelous book, *Don't Plant Your Seeds Among the Thorns*, that covers the topic of intimate partner abuse thoroughly and sensitively. As a survivor herself, she understands its deceitful trap, its traumatic impact as well as the courageous steps necessary to escape it. Significantly, her book addresses the problem from the point of view of the Christian faith. Jenny duBay plumbs the meaning of scripture and helps victims and survivors connect their faith with the evil they have experienced. She emphasizes the need for spiritual healing and guides the wounded along pathways to a new and regenerated life. Her book should be required reading for all parish ministers.” – **Fr. Charles W. Dahm, O.P., Director of Archdiocese of Chicago Domestic Violence Outreach, from the “Foreword”**

“Jenny duBay has created a tender wake-up call for wounded wives in abusive marriages. She brilliantly blends Holy scripture and

church teachings with the truth around abuse in marriage. Her candid psychoeducation is balanced with gentle, directed encouragement toward spiritual truths that wives need to understand because so often misinformed church leaders and culture are teaching the opposite. She doesn't skirt around the toughest of issues – sexual violence in marriage. Jenny's heart for women to find their assertive spirit through Jesus and find empowerment to make choices based on safety is very clear. I highly recommend this book to any Catholic woman who is struggling to make sense of a confusing marriage.” – **Bonny Logsdon Burns, Certified Partner Coach through the Association of Partners of Sex Addicts Trauma Specialists and co-host of Hope for Wives podcast.**

“With candor and conciseness, Jenny duBay has written a book that brings clarity and practical wisdom for men and women who may find themselves stuck in the suffocating cycle of domestic abuse. I am certain that this compendium of insight into abuse, the Church's teachings on marriage, and steps to escape such physical and mental violence will assist many in pursuing the respite they desperately need and in a manner that corresponds with the Church's long-standing wisdom.” - **Angela Erickson, host of the Integrated with Angela podcast**

“In a caring and heartfelt manner, Jenny duBay has gifted us with a comprehensive book about intimate partner violence, from a Catholic perspective. She provides practical information and describes ways to recognize an unhealthy relationship and journey to a space of hope and healing for all harmed or who cause harm in this way. Also, it is a must-read for all those accompanying people on their path to live a safe and sacred life free of violence.” – **Sharon O'Brien, Ph.D., Co-Founder and Executive Director of Catholics for Family Peace, Initiative of National Institute for the Family**

“In ministry, I encounter women daily who are living in marriages characterized by manipulation, blame, coercion, denial and other forms of violence – emotional and spiritual as well as physical or sexual violence. These abusive experiences are a profound violation of our human dignity! Intimate partner violence leaves women feeling confused, alone, filled with despair and even suicidal. I am grateful to Jenny duBay for writing this book. With a solidly Catholic voice, Jenny addresses the oft-underemphasized reality of domestic violence and spousal abuse within Catholic marriages. The truth, clarity and practical advice contained in this book make it an invaluable resource for those enduring such trauma, and for those of us walking alongside of God’s wounded daughters.” – **De Yarrison, CPCC, foundress of You Are Made New Ministry and Laura Ercolino, foundress of Hope’s Garden**

“Jenny duBay’s *Don’t Plant Your Seeds Among Thorns: A Catholic’s Guide to Recognizing and Healing from Domestic Abuse* is not simply a book, but a lifeline for those seeking healing, understanding, and hope in the context of the Catholic Faith. Throughout this work the author’s wisdom and empathy shine through each page, which results in the illumination of a definitive path towards the reclaiming of one’s dignity and becoming a survivor of abuse, especially abuse within the institution of marriage.” – **Christina M. Sorrentino, author of *Belonging to Christ: Catholic Poetry* and contributor to Missio Dei’s book, *The Eucharistic Revival Project***

“Should Catholics stay in an abusive relationship? Jenny duBay answers this question with such clarity and heart in her book *Don’t Plant Your Seeds Among Thorns*. Comprehensive, practical and healing, this book is a must-read for anyone suffering from an abusive relationship. Coming from an expert and survivor of domestic abuse, the author will guide you as you seek to understand, forgive, move on and heal from the trauma of abuse. There is hope and

healing even when all else seems lost.” – **Jocelyn Soriano, author of various self-help and Catholic books including Mend My Broken Heart and 366 Days of Compassion, book reviewer, and writer of the Patheos column “Beloved”**

“Jenny duBay is an author who writes with a deep understanding of God’s mercy, through which she hopes to communicate God’s love to others. She has a particular calling to provide healing to those who have suffered from domestic violence, and a desire to provide hope to those who feel forsaken. For any who are seeking inspiration or direction from the brokenness of life, I whole-heartedly endorse her writings. In her word’s, God’s love is waiting for you.” – **Michael Snellen, founder of I AM Catholic and Catholic Creators**

Don't Plant Your Seeds Among Thorns

A Catholic's Guide to Recognizing
and Healing from Domestic Abuse

Jenny duBay

En Route Books and Media, LLC
Saint Louis, MO



ENROUTE
Make the time

En Route Books and Media, LLC
5705 Rhodes Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63109

Cover credit: Sebastian Mahfood

Copyright © 2024 Jenny duBay

ISBN-13: 979-8-88870-169-0
Library of Congress Control Number:
Available at <https://catalog.loc.gov>

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Dedication

To my children, Takoda and Keariel Peasley, who have been incredibly understanding and patient with me throughout this entire journey and have also been continual sources of unconditional love.

My mother: To my mother, Kathy Daley—who has been a fount of advice, maternal care, and support.

Finally, *to my brother*, Dave DuBay, who made sure I was safe both physically and emotionally during my roughest years, and who has always been there for me when needed. I knew I could turn to him in any emergency, and although that never happened, just the knowledge of such support was balm to my soul.

Thank you, all. From the depths of my newly-awakened soul.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to thank my husband for his encouragement and support of my ministry.

I'm so grateful to all those who read drafts of this book and provided their professional feedback (obviously any potential errors are mine): Dr. Sharon O'Brien of Catholics for Family Peace, Fr. Charles Dahm of the Domestic Violence Outreach program in the archdiocese of Chicago, and Dr. Christauria Welland of Pax in Familia, among so many others. Your love and support have given me the inspiration to keep moving forward.

A special note of gratitude goes out to Fr. Roch Drozdzik of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Goldsboro, NC, who generously allowed me to use his beautiful church as a setting for my author photos. A great pastor and an exceptional homilist, Fr. Roch has been a Spirit-filled blessing to the Catholic community of Goldsboro.

And, of course, I can't forget my siblings in Christ, those who have always had my back, supported my work, and encouraged my mission. I give immense thanks to Laura Ercolino and De Yarrison of Hope's Garden and You Are Made New Ministry, who helped me understand that I'm truly beloved by our divine Bridegroom. My heart is also with all my sister Roses at Hope's Garden, who have supported and encouraged me along the path toward healing and wholeness. Thanks also goes out to Fr. Benjamin Roberts of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Monroe, NC—who helped me grow closer to St. Dymphna, the new patroness of domestic violence

survivors—and to the spiritual family at my home parish of St. Brendan the Navigator in Camden, ME.

Table of Contents

Foreword by Fr. Charles W. Dahm, O.P.....	v
Introduction	1
Chapter One: An Overview of Domestic Abuse	11
Chapter Two: The Serpent and the Maiden: The Dangers of Covert Abuse.....	31
Chapter Three: Verbal Attacks and Psychological Violence.....	45
Chapter Four: Pride of Place: Why Isolation is So Common in Abusive Relationships.....	57
Chapter Five: Assaulting the Sacred: Sexual Coercion in the Marriage Bed.....	75
Chapter Six: The Most Abused Verses in the Bible	93
Chapter Seven: Discerning God’s Will for Your Life	115
Chapter Eight: If You’ve Had to Leave: Exploring the Possibility of Annulment.....	141
Chapter Nine: Is He Capable or Willing to Change?	165
Chapter Ten: Grief, Healing, and the Triumph of Recovery.....	187

APPENDICES

Appendix A: An Abuse Dictionary.....	205
--------------------------------------	-----

Appendix B: Are You in an Abusive Marriage? Here are 30
Warning Signs 217

Appendix C: Finding Support..... 223

Appendix D: Creating a Safety Plan (from DomesticShelters.org)
..... 227

Appendix E: Prayers to St. Dymphna and St. Paul 239

Appendix F: A Daughter's Poem of Love: Soaring After Domestic
Abuse 241

Bibliography 247

Foreword

Domestic violence is rampant in the United States, and most people don't know it. Sadly, priests and pastoral ministers are also unaware. They don't realize a great number of their parishioners have suffered from domestic violence. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least one in four women has been either hit, sexually assaulted, or stalked by her spouse or partner. These victims, including some men, have been traumatized by it and would love to hear and see their church address the matter.

Jenny duBay has written a marvelous book, *Don't Plant Your Seeds Among the Thorns*, that covers the topic thoroughly and sensitively. As a survivor of domestic violence herself, she understands its deceitful trap, its traumatic impact as well as the courageous steps necessary to escape it. Significantly, her book addresses the problem from the point of view of the Christian faith. Jenny duBay plumbs the meaning of scripture and helps victims and survivors connect their faith with the evil they have experienced. She emphasizes the need for spiritual healing and guides the wounded along pathways to a new and regenerated life. Her book should be required reading for all parish ministers.

I have been a Catholic priest for 60 years, and for half of those years, I never spoke about domestic violence even though I saw some serious cases. Not until I hired a pastoral counselor on my parish staff did I learn how pervasive it is. The counselor told me one day that most of her clients were women, and most of them were victims of domestic violence. I had no idea, and I knew many of

those women. But I didn't see the problem. She opened my eyes. She taught me how to discover the hurt and how to respond to it.

The more I learned about domestic violence, the more I talked about it. The more I talked about it, the more victims came to me for assistance. Our counselor was overwhelmed. In a few years, we had to hire five more counselors – three for victims, one for their children and another for those who cause harm. Victims came from far and wide because they received a faith-based response to their struggle. And this pastoral program brought life to our parish because many survivors wanted to give back to their community, volunteering in a wide variety of ministries.

Although the United States Bishops have written a beautiful pastoral letter about domestic violence, “When I Call for Help,” few priests and pastoral ministers know about it, and fewer have read it. The bishops are clear and forceful. In the first paragraph, they state: “We declare as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is *never* justified. Violence in any form is sinful; often, it is a crime as well.” They conclude the letter stating, “We emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage.”

Those are words of words of liberation for many women and some men. That is the position of the Catholic Church. We all have to get the message out.

Most people know someone affected by domestic violence, whether they grew up in a family plagued by it, experienced abuse in their own intimate relationship, or are currently struggling to free themselves from abuse. We all need to reach out to these victims or survivors and offer our compassionate understanding and support.

We have to help them understand they don't deserve abuse; they don't have to tolerate abuse, and they don't have to feel guilty about suffering abuse.

We thank Jenny duBay for helping get the word out about the Catholic Church's position. Her book adds greatly to the limited Catholic literature on the subject. She is also helping all of us, especially survivors, understand the multifaceted dynamics of domestic violence, the teaching of sacred scripture, and the ways to find safety, peace, and love.

Fr. Charles W. Dahm, O.P., Director
Archdiocese of Chicago Domestic Violence Outreach
www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org

Introduction

“A lover is simply the one who seeks what is profitable for the beloved: so that if any are not pursuing this, even if he makes ten thousand professions of his love, he is actually more hostile than any enemy.”

(St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13)

The Catholic Church understands the true nature of marriage. The marital union isn't merely a piece of paper and a few words spoken between two people, followed by a fun party. It's not a gold band, or a promise to remain faithful—until disagreements pop up or someone more exciting comes along. For Catholics, marriage is a sacred sacrament, an indissoluble union that, according to *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is “a partnership of the whole of life ... ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring” (CCC 1601). Love is “the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being” (CCC 1604).

Yet what happens when the indissoluble becomes desecrated, when the sacrament promised at the altar in the presence of God proves to have been a lie? What happens when the early excitement of a loving relationship and future family are replaced with anxiety, confusion, turmoil, and even cringing fear? Sacred Scripture describes well how such betrayal feels:

My heart is in anguish within me,
Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.

It is not an enemy who taunts me—
then I could bear it;
it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—
then I could hide from him.
But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend.
We used to hold sweet converse together;
within God's house we walked in fellowship.
(Ps. 55:4,5,12-14)

Every day, around the world, millions of women are crushed by the trauma of living with a spouse who controls, mistreats or otherwise violates their sacred personhood. One out of every three women has been or currently is a victim of abuse within their own homes.¹ Yet even if you're among those statistics, you might be unaware of the truth of your situation. Instead, you may be full of self-blame and doubt—especially during the times when your spouse is acting kind, charming, even remorseful.

It's common for victims to minimize their experience, to believe their partner when he says they merely have "regular" relationship or communication problems. Victims often tell themselves, "It's really not that bad. Sure, sometimes he calls me stupid or an idiot, but at least he's never called me anything worse." Or, if he does make it a habit to hurl even the most brutal insults, a target may try to minimize the situation by thinking, "Well, at least he's never hit me." If

¹ World Health Organization, "Violence Against Women," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

he is physically violent, “at least he’s never broken a bone.” If he has broken a bone, “At least I’ve never been knocked unconscious.”

And on ... and on.

This minimization isn’t a deliberate effort to excuse the behavior of a partner who is acting abusively, but rather an unconscious defense mechanism that attempts to make sense of the nonsensical. To be the partner of an abusive spouse is to live in constant anxiety. Developing coping strategies is a necessary part of living in a toxic environment.

Yet living in that environment doesn’t have to be permanent. Healing begins with awareness, education, support, and guidance from the Holy Spirit. These are all things this book will help you develop.

I know quite a bit about the emotional, psychological, and even physical trauma that comes as a result of domestic abuse, but I didn’t arrive at this understanding on purpose. I didn’t seek it out through in-depth research, courses, and professional certifications—all that came later. I learned about domestic abuse the painful way: hands-on. I’ve been in the middle of the fire and thankfully, through the grace of God, I’ve made it straight through.

That’s why I’m here, now, in the vocation God has since blessed me with. Through suffering comes grace. That’s what I aim to show you in this book: the ugly face of domestic abuse, and the glorious glow of healing.

But this book isn’t about me—*Don’t Plant Your Seeds Among Thorns* is also about you. If you’ve struggled in a chaotic, anxiety-filled, confusing, or violent relationship (keeping in mind that not all violence is physical) and are wondering if your spouse might be

abusive, you've come to the right place. If you're utterly confused and need to find out what abuse actually is, you'll find out in the following pages. If you realize that you've been a victim and need help and healing, you'll find it here. If you're wondering how your sacramental marriage could have become so toxic, and what the Catholic Church teaches about abuse, divorce, and annulment, I provide information.

There have been countless secular books written on the topic of domestic violence, along with excellent podcasts, videos, articles, and other resources. However, there's a hole in the field of domestic violence awareness within the Catholic Church. Although domestic abuse can easily be considered a global epidemic, it's rarely talked about within local parish communities. Many—if not most—priests aren't trained to deal with a parishioner who may come to them with the confusion and anxiety that result from being abused by a spouse.

Fr. Chuck Dahm is the founder of the Domestic Violence Outreach program in the Archdiocese of Chicago, and I asked him what the educational requirements are for seminarians regarding domestic violence awareness. He confirmed that most seminaries in the U.S. don't offer courses on this crucial topic. In the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) document, "Catholic Response to Sexual and Domestic Violence and Abuse," the Church acknowledges that there's a tremendous lack of education among clergy and laity alike regarding intimate partner violence.

One area for growth is raising awareness ... less than 1/3 of respondents reported priests or deacons preaching about sexual/domestic violence or abuse ... Training is not often

offered to marriage tribunal workers regarding domestic abuse ... The inclusion of information about sexual and domestic violence and abuse in marriage preparation was noted by just under half (45%) of respondents.²

This needs to change. And it is, but slowly.

In 1992 (revised in 2002) the USCCB issued a document entitled, “When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women.” In this publication, the U.S. bishops firmly state:

We emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. Some abused women believe that church teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abusive relationship ... Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage.³

Well-established organizations such as Catholics for Family Peace (<http://www.catholicsforfamilypeace.org>), Pax in Familia (<http://paxinfamilia.org>), and the Domestic Violence Outreach program through the Archdiocese of Chicago (<https://pvm.arch-chicago.org/human-dignity-solidarity/domestic-violence-outreach>)

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Catholic Response to Sexual and Domestic Violence and Abuse,” <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/domestic-violence/upload/Catholic-Response-to-Sexual-and-Domestic-Violence-Report-Final.pdf>

³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women,” <https://www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/when-i-call-help-pastoral-response-domestic-violence>

are doing excellent work educating church leaders and domestic abuse advocates within various dioceses across the United States. Even so, up until now a book for abuse survivors, written from a Catholic perspective and detailing what abuse is, what can be done, and the support available to Catholics in sacramental marriages, has been lacking.

I aim to fill that void.

Targets of intimate partner violence aren't stuck or doomed to a life of confusion, neglect, mistreatment, crazy-making, gaslighting, circular communication, name-calling, criticism, and all the rest. "Wives must be submissive to their husbands" (Eph 5:22) has long been taken out of context. This verse is also a victim of abuse—but more on that in chapter six.

In this book, I cover such topics as what domestic abuse is, the trauma of sexual assault and coercion, verbal attacks and isolation, and the evils of manipulative control within intimate relationships. I also discuss the sacrament of marriage, what *indissoluble* means, betrayal of the marital bond, and the Catholic declaration of nullity (more commonly known as an annulment). Biblical misconceptions and how to heal are also discussed.

But, unlike most books on domestic violence, I also examine the possibility that an abusive partner might change. I do this for several reasons. First, this is a question countless women have asked me. They want to know if there's any hope that the gentle and seemingly kind man they fell in love with can permanently return, or if he never truly existed. Unfortunately, there's no black-and-white answer to that question. It's true that throughout this book I'll talk about the possibility of changing, and my outlook tends to be more

optimistic than you might expect. If you've read anything else about domestic violence, particularly information that discusses the "narcissistic abuser," my positive outlook on the possibility of change may seem at odds with what nearly everyone else is saying.

And it is. The vast majority of publications aren't hopeful about change, and some even label all abusive personalities as selfish people devoid of empathy and with no desire whatsoever to live their lives in a new and loving way.

Sadly, that's often true—except when it's not.

We're all made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), and—in the words of the Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*—we all "bear within ourselves an eternal seed."⁴ Whether or not we allow that seed to blossom is another matter. It's important not to categorize all abusive personalities as if they're exactly the same, because that's simply not true. In chapter nine, I detail the four classic "abuser types," how they differ, and what it takes to authentically change.

Regardless of which of the four categories an abusive person more closely resembles, it's crucial to remember that we must always err on the side of caution. If a situation isn't physically safe, hope of reconciliation is never recommended. In that case, a solid safety plan designed with the help of professionals is essential since the most severe violence (including murder) happens when a woman is leaving or has already left her partner. Appendix D will provide resources for creating a solid safety plan. This is crucial, particularly if your partner:

⁴*Gaudium et Spes*, 18, in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Marianne Lorraine Trouvé (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1999).

- Has already been physically abusive
- Owns a weapon or weapons
- Threatens violence
- Threatens to kill his spouse, children, pets, or himself
- Goes on drinking binges
- Is involved with drugs
- Victim feels constant terror, fear and anxiety, even if she can't pinpoint why

If you've been a target of abuse, you need to heal, and that's the aim of this book: education, which will then lead to healthy empowerment of your true self. An honest assessment of your personal situation is crucial. All this, and more and will be covered in greater detail in the chapters to come.

At the back of the book, you'll find an appendix containing several sections, including a series of questions to determine if your relationship may be abusive, a full list of resources, how to craft a safety plan, and more. I also include a list of abuse terms, which provides an easy reference to common phrases and words used in this book to describe various tactics of manipulation.

In closing, I need to mention a few housekeeping items. First, throughout the following pages I'll be referring to the individual who uses abusive tactics in the relationship as "he" and the target victim as "she." I realize men are also victims of abuse. However, the vast majority of domestic violence victims are women—statistically,

in 85% of cases.⁵ If you happen to be a male target of abuse, please feel free to change the pronouns around in your head to make a more enjoyable reading experience. Really, I won't be offended.

Another thing we should always remember is that we're all survivors, which is a healthier viewpoint than thinking of ourselves as victims. It's certainly true that we're victims as well—victims not only of intimate partner violence but of betrayal of the worst kind, of heartbreak and a complete shattering of all we thought to be true about our spouse and our sacred marriage. However, we can't allow ourselves to be victims of despondency and despair, which is what will happen if we focus on a victimhood status.

We're survivors. Whether you're now free of your confusing and destructive relationship or still involved with your partner, if you're reading this book, *you are a survivor*. And you don't have to travel this path alone. All of us who have endured the immense suffering of domestic abuse are more resilient than we realize. All of us are still here and will be stronger for our experience.

However, for the sake of clarity I use *victim*, *survivor*, and *target* interchangeably—but always remember, above all you're a survivor.

I also want to mention that I have a degree in theology, not psychology (although I am a certified trauma-informed Catholic life coach). As I mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, my

⁵ Domesticshelters.org, "Domestic Violence Statistics: The Hard Truth About Domestic Violence," <https://www.domesticshelters.org/articles/statistics/domestic-violence-statistics>. See also John Gottman, Ph.D. and Neil Jacobson, Ph.D., *When Men Batter Women: New Insights into Ending Abusive Relationships* (NY, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 34-36 and Christauria Welland, Psy.D., "Violence and Abuse in Catholic & Christian Families: Preparing an Effective and Compassionate Pastoral Response."

experience in domestic abuse is because I've "been there, done that," and as a result I've now dedicated my life to research, education, and helping others heal.

I'm the founder of Create Soul Space, a Catholic ministry that supports, empowers, and encourages domestic abuse survivors. I'm also an ICF-accredited trauma-informed life coach specializing in helping women heal and recover their true, God-given selves after the trauma they've endured. In addition, I author two active blogs:

- <https://www.createsoulspace.org>
- <https://www.prodigalparishioner.com>

am a freelance writer for numerous Catholic publications, and serve as a facilitator at Hope's Garden.

- <https://hopesgarden.com/join-our-community/>

And now, this book.

Always remember that no matter how dark your day may seem, how crazy and confusing your life, how much you feel unloved and rejected, "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light" (Luke 8:16; 11:33). You have that light. You are that light. You can let your Christ-light shine again, no matter how dim it may now seem. There is hope. Christ is your hope. God doesn't want you to plant your seeds among thorns (Jer. 4:3).