

■ NO PLACE TO GO

Fourteen-year-old Julie had no place to go. Her father had been having a sexual relationship with her since she was nine. At first, she was frightened, but her father said he loved her and that it was normal for a father to express his love. She loved him too and didn't want to hurt him. As Julie got older, though, she realized that something was wrong—very wrong. Her father had warned her not to tell anyone, and she hadn't, but she couldn't keep it to herself any longer. Julie felt guilty that she hadn't stopped this a long time ago. Obviously, she must be partly to blame.

Something else bothered her as well. There were a number of times, as Julie's father had been leaving her room, that Julie's mother had seen him. Her mother had never said anything. Julie wondered if her mom knew.

Julie decided to talk to her minister. She pleaded with him to keep what she said in strictest confidence. Rev. McKirdy promised not to tell a soul. Julie nervously told him her problem. She was not prepared for his response. Rev. McKirdy did not believe her. He tried to suggest that maybe Julie was fantasizing or that maybe she misunderstood what her father was doing. Rev. McKirdy reminded Julie that her father was a deacon in the church and a very devout man of God. He told Julie to pray.

It was a difficult decision, but Julie decided to tell her boyfriend. She believed Mike would understand. Mike looked at her with disgust. "Come on, Julie, with your father? This has been going on for five years? That makes me sick. Why didn't you tell somebody? Why didn't you do something about it before now?" Julie could tell that Mike was genuinely shaken up. When she didn't hear from him for the next few days, she knew their relationship was finished. Julie really felt alone now. She had to do something. She decided to risk talking to her mother.

Julie waited until her father had left for work and then asked her mom to sit down. Julie forced the truth out. Her mother flew into a rage; she was yelling and crying and threatening all at the same time. She told Julie never to bring up the subject again. She told Julie she was wrong to accuse her father of such a horrible act. Julie was crushed. She believed that her mother had known the truth all along but was afraid to admit it.

Julie felt bitter, alone, and depressed. She went to the medicine cabinet and took out her mother's bottle of sleeping pills. She locked her bedroom door and swallowed the entire bottleful. As Julie became more and more drowsy, she kept asking herself why no one had been willing or able to help her.

- ▶ Who was most responsible for Julie's suicide?
- ▶ Rank the characters in order from most responsible to least responsible: Mrs. Donaldson, Mr. Donaldson, Julie, Mike, Rev. McKirdy.
- ▶ Provide a reason for each of the rankings.

● Scripture Guide: Leviticus 18:6–12
John 15:12

Romans 8:35–39
Romans 15:1