

# Gabby Petito

For roughly two weeks Gabby Petito's name was on the television, on the radio, and in newspaper headlines. Gabby was a twenty-two-year-old woman from Florida, engaged in 2020 to Brian Laundrie. They went on a cross country trip of the United States as they decided to put off their wedding for a year due to COVID and the shutdown. This was to be the trip of a life time as they purchased a van for this adventure. On July 2, 2021 they started their journey and all seemed well.

Going from Florida to Kansas, to Colorado, to Utah they were posted their trip on social media still all was well. On August 12<sup>th</sup> the police were called as those nearby saw Brian and Gabby arguing. Once on the scene, the police questioned both Gabby and Brian. They saw scratch marks on Brian's face. The cause of this altercation was Brian's dirty feet and something Gabby said. Brian had hit Gabby but neither party wanted to press charges as they were "in love." As a compromise with the police, Brian was put in a shelter that night and Gabby stayed in the van.

On August 25<sup>th</sup> they were in the Grand Teton, Wyoming. Her last message to her mom came on August 30<sup>th</sup>. Brian appeared at his parent's home on September 1<sup>st</sup> without Gabby. Laundrie on advice of his attorney refused to answer questions or help in any way to find her. Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup> a young woman's body was found in the area their van was seen in the Grand Teton's. As of this writing Brian has disappeared and a manhunt is being conducted to find him. Such is a sad and disturbing story in the lives of two people. Let me make a couple of points from this real-life event.

Call me old fashion or an old fuddy-duddy but what business do two unmarried people have going across country living together in a van. God never intended sex to be casual as it is intended for people mature enough to make a commitment to each other. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Engagement is some commitment but it is not marriage, neither is dating or going steady. We have gone two or three generations now with people "living together" or "shacking up" and it has done great harm to our children, to the marriage relationship, and to

our souls. “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” (Hebrews 13:4) It seems odd to me, the one group who wants to get married, does not believe in God’s design for it, homosexuals; and the group who should be married doesn’t see the need for it.

Perhaps the greater lesson with Gabby Petito is one of abuse. Toxic relationships exist in many ways. Children are abused physically and mentally by parents or those around them. Likewise, spousal abuse takes on many different forms. Beatings, broken bones, bruises, scratches, are some of the signs of such abuse. Then there is the mental abuse of manipulation, verbal abuse, and selfish control of the other person, etc.

Abuse in any area is never to be tolerated. Fathers are told to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Ephesians 6.4. Husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church, Ephesians 5.25. Wives are to respect their husband and submit as we Christians are to submit to Christ, Ephesians 5.22,25. An abusive person is not serving God and should never be tolerated. While a teenager, a congregation I was visiting at, announced withdrawal from a deacon. He was apparently abusing his family at home. Let us not fool ourselves and think this never happens among Christians. To anyone in such a marriage I will tell you to go to the elders and explain what is happening. You should not stay in such an environment. Do not take this as permission to divorce and marry someone else as Jesus gave only one reason for such action, which is adultery, Matthew 19.9. But you should never allow yourself or your children to be abused.

To any person in a dating relationship, I will tell you to run away from such a person. If they are abusive while dating, they will be the same after marriage. If someone ever hits you or in any way is physically or emotionally abusive, leave and never look back. Do not think you will change them or can put up with such abuse, they will ruin your life.

For various reasons those suffering from abuse often blame themselves. If they were more loving, more understanding, etc. then the other person will stop the abuse. You are not the problem; the abuser is the problem. Again, get out and never look back as the abuser may ask for forgiveness and make promises to not

do it again, but my experience is they will eventually go back to their former behavior.

Gabby Petito like many others have died due to a physically abusive person as she was either unable or unwilling to get out. If this article helps one person to either not get in, or get out of an abusive relationship, it will have done good. – Dennis Tucker