

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Key Verse

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”
(Ephesians 5:25-27)

What IS Domestic Violence?



Domestic Violence is NOT

- A one-time event
- The victim's fault
- Caused by
 - Drugs or alcohol
 - Genetics
 - Stress
 - Unemployment
 - Poverty or money problems
 - Mental illness
 - Behavior of the victim
 - Anger
 - Out of control behavior



Domestic Violence IS...

- Under the law, domestic violence is the term used for actual or threatened physical harm, injury, or assault, sexual assault, or stalking directed against family or household members.
- In the counselor's view, domestic violence is a recurrent pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, or the credible threat of force used to ridicule, humiliate, and gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner.

Nancy Murphy, Northwest Family Life, Seattle, WA

Domestic Violence IS...

- From a biblical perspective, any form of abuse is an assault against men and women made in God's image, and therefore an assault against God.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness... My brothers, this should not be.
(James 3:9,10)



Domestic Violence IS...

- A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including
 - Verbal
 - Psychological/emotional/spiritual (psuchos)
 - Physical
 - Sexual
 - Social
 - Financial
- Like rape, DV is all about

CONTROL



Psychological/Emotional Abuse Escalates...

- Jokes & insults; silent treatment; Yelling, name calling
- Repeated & targeted insults
- Humiliation
- Threats of retaliation
- Personal degradation as a person, lover, parent, etc. Question mental health; suggest have mental illness
- Demands constant attention; jealous of children, others
- Threatens to divorce, leave



- SUICIDE

Physical Abuse Escalates...

- Pinch, squeeze, slap, shove, shake; Deny basic needs; hit, kick, choke; Targeted abuse, bruises
- Using household items as weapons; Restrain and hit; Abuse during pregnancy; Lacerations, broken bones, internal injuries
- Guns, knives; permanent injury



- HOMICIDE

Sexual Abuse Escalates...

- Minimizing sexual needs; criticism of sexuality; unwanted touching; withholding or demanding sex frequently
- Sexual insults, name calling, humiliation
- Incest, promiscuity, forceful sex, uncomfortable sex
- Sex with and after beating
- Sex with weapons
- Sex resulting in injury



- RAPE WITH HOMICIDE

Social Abuse Escalates...

- Plays on myths & stereotypes about women
- Uses privilege based on income, gender, race, immigration status, ability to speak English, etc to control
- Degrades culture, nationality, education, professional skill, religion etc of target
- Uses legal system, religion, friends etc to justify
- Totally isolates target from family, friends, support



- SUICIDE

Economic Abuse Escalates...

- Totally controls income/spending – no funds of own
- Limits victim's ability to improve skills, accept promotions, take higher paying job, get education
- Promotes "traditional" role of women (remember that "traditional" may not be biblical)
- Limits access to healthcare, etc
- Limits access to car/transportation. If permits use, may track mileage etc.



- LONELINESS, HOPELESSNESS, DESPAIR

How Big is the Problem?

- More than half of all women will experience violence from boyfriend/husband (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)
- DV results in more injuries requiring medical treatment for women than rape, TAs and muggings combined
- 30% of women murdered in the US are murdered by their husbands, ex-husbands or boyfriends (Bureau of Justice)
- Remember that most DV assaults are not reported
Why not?

How Great is the Danger?

- Very great, to everyone.
Destroys individuals, wrecks families, tears apart churches and undermines society
- Two most dangerous times are
 - When victim reports abuse to authorities (church or law enforcement)
 - When victim tries to leave the relationship



Who Commits Domestic Violence?

- 90-95% are men, but some perpetrators are women
- Usually lead typical lives on the surface, except they believe they have a right (God-given?) to control the lives of people close to them.
 - Spousal abuse
 - Child abuse
 - Elder abuse
- From every walk and every socioeconomic level
- May be outgoing and friendly, even "charming" – nice
- May be "spiritual" – even a leader in the church – friend of pastor

Why Do Women Stay?



- She loves her man
- She thinks this is normal for every family
- Was told by an authority (pastor) to "go home and be a better wife"
- Manipulated into believing it is her fault – she provokes him
- Isolated and has no support from others

Why Does She Stay?

- May be embarrassed to admit what is going on
- No financial means
- No transportation
- May be afraid for her life, or for her children's lives
- May be afraid of being alone. "A mean man is better than no man"
- May hate the violence but enjoys the make-up period (nice, gifts)
- Bible may be used as a club to dominate
- Has no idea of how to find help and resources
- Sees no other options
- Has nowhere to go

Do You Want to Help?

Keep three goals in mind:

- Safety for the woman and children
- Accountability for the perpetrator
- Restoration of individuals and, if possible, relationships

Failed Responses to DV

- 1. Compliance
 - Women who told their pastors were told to “Go home and try to be a better wife. Bill is a really nice guy.”
 - Underlying assumption is that the victim is the cause and if she were more submissive, he would not be provoked to do violence
 - Women not believed – assumed reports exaggerated
 - Women who told their doctors were treated for their symptoms (depression, anxiety) with little or no understanding of the causes
 - Pastors, doctors, nurses are generally more aware of the problem, but they often still don't see or believe it

Failed Responses to DV

- 2. Marital Counseling
 - Underlying assumption is that problems in the relationship cause the violence, and that improved communications should lead to loving harmony
 - Reality is that improved communications in the counselor's presence exposes and humiliates the abuser and may lead to escalating violence at home. If the woman is honest, the counselor puts her at risk. To survive, she learns not to be honest and never to seek help again
 - The issue is not communication; it is CONTROL

Failed Responses to DV

- 3. Anger Management
 - Underlying assumption is that uncontrolled anger causes domestic violence
 - But the problem is not uncontrolled anger: it is CONTROL
 - Many men have bad tempers but do not assault their wives. And many others are cool and methodical, not angry, as they use pain and humiliation to manipulate and coerce their wives into forced submission
 - Anger management may help, but it is not a sufficient tool by itself

Current Response to DV

- Mandatory Arrest Laws
 - Many states now have mandatory arrest laws that require police to take someone into custody when there is evidence of a physical assault or a credible threat intended to cause another person to fear imminent serious bodily injury or death.
 - Often accompanied by referrals to DV agencies and advice re: restraining orders.
 - Underlying assumption is that the perpetrator is responsible for his own actions.
 - Unintended consequence is that arrest may actually increase the likelihood of physical violence

Church Responses to DV

- In Puritan New England, the churches dealt swiftly and decisively with domestic violence, employing the power of the keys or church discipline (power to admit/exclude) by way of censure, admonition and ultimately excommunication.
 - *The First Church of Boston excommunicated Mary Wharton “for her reviling of her husband and striking of him and other vild and wicked Courses,” and Mercy Verin “for uncivill Carriage with Samuel Smith and bad Language to her husband.”*

Church Responses to DV

- *It gave the same treatment to John Webb “for his attempt of uncleanes and withdrawing from his wif and his impenitence after all” and to James Mattock for a number of marital offences, including the fact “that he denied Coniugall fellowship unto his wife for the space of 2 years together upon pretence of taking Revenge upon himself for his abusing of her before marriage.”*
- *It cast out William Franklin “for Rygarous and Cruell Correction of his servants, and for sundry lyes in his being dealt withall about it, both pryvately and publiquely.”*

(Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 14)

Church Responses to DV

- The Puritan courts also acted swiftly and decisively. A man's wife was not his slave or his servant.
- *When Daniel Ela told his wife Elizabeth that "shee was none of his wife, shee was but his Servantt," neighbors reported the incident to the authorities, and in spite of the abject Elizabeth's protest "that I have nothinge Agenst my husband to Charge him with," the Essex County Court fined him forty shillings.*

(Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 45)

Helping the Abuser

- Remember the three goals:
 - *Safety* for the woman and children
 - *Accountability* for the perpetrator
 - Restoration of individuals and, if possible, relationships
- Do not initiate a conversation about domestic violence with the perpetrator; you may endanger the woman and the children

Helping the Abuser

- If *he* approaches *you* and asks for help dealing with domestic violence,
 - Express your concern and let him know that you will be supportive of him and hold him accountable to deal with his violence
 - DV is a life-dominating sin and, like other sins, he will need to learn to put off the old self and put on the new (Eph 4:17-5:2). The doctrines of creation, the image of God, divine sovereignty (control), his views of self, women and children, sin and forgiveness, salvation and grace are all distorted and will all have to be relearned

Helping the Abuser

- Help him find a program designed specifically for perpetrators
- Pray with and for him that he may turn from his violent thoughts and behaviors and embrace the living God
- Find ways to work with community agencies and law enforcement to hold him accountable. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your local police department (Rom 13)
- Address any biblical and religious questions he may have, and make it clear that nothing in Scripture justifies abusive behavior.
- "Loose lips sink ships" – protect the safety of the victim and do not provide any information about her to him

Helping the Victim

- Remember the three goals
- If she comes to you for help, believe her and listen
- Be aware of signs of possible abuse (sunglasses indoors, avoidance of social events, unexplained injuries, frequent ER visits) but don't jump to conclusions. Some people really are just klutzy.
- Be patient; it may take a long time to get her story out
- Help her to make a safety plan
- Become familiar with local resources and talk to the DV specialist in your local police department

Helping the Victim

- She, too, needs to rethink the doctrine of creation, what it means for her to be made in God's image, her views of self, marriage and submission, etc.
- She will need practical support with finances, transportation, etc
- If safety requires her to "disappear" for a time, do not reveal her location even to well-meaning people
- Do not put her name out on a prayer chain
- Do not try to intervene personally in the middle of a violent event. Call 9-1-1 and be with her after the police have left.

(Many of the helping tips come from Nancy Murphy, *God's Reconciling Love*, 66-70)

Should You Do Couples Counseling?

Not yet, although hopefully that will be appropriate later. Let repentance do its work and meet as a couple for counsel only after a long period of no violence, no intimidation, and consistently respectful treatment.

- Couples counseling may endanger her for exposing his violence and abuse
- Couples counseling also allows him to stay focused on his criticisms of the victim instead of dealing with his own sins.



A Final Word...

“ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”
(Romans 15:13)



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