

Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence

Chris Moles

Definitions:

“A pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.”

“An abuse of power, manifested through selfishly motivated patterns of behavior intended to exercise or maintain control over one's partner.” - Moles

What are we talking about today?

Common forms of domestic violence we may encounter

1. Battering – An ongoing use of coercive and controlling actions, including acts of intimidation and violence targeting a victim whose safety and sanity is reduced. (This is what we are talking about when we say domestic violence).
2. Resistive Violence – Includes both legal and illegal use of force which is used by victims of battering to mitigate, manage, or incite their abuser’s use of coercive or controlling tactics.
3. Non-battering related violence – This is neither an ongoing attempt to exert control nor a response to that coercion. It is not innocent but may not fall into the above categories. This may include...
 - a. Pathological violence – in which ending or managing the pathology would end the violence.
 - i. Drugs and alcohol are among the most “suggested” pathological causes of violence. However, there is no known pathological cause of domestic violence

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(battering).

- b. Incident of couple's violence – One or both parties use violence, but it is not part of an ongoing pattern of coercion and intimidation; no element of entrapment is present.

Do substances cause domestic violence (battering)?

If you ask this question of a room full of destructive men you may expect an overwhelming, yes. But, the same may be true for the general public and even victims who see the correlation between substances and abuse. Why then do we claim that substances do *NOT* cause domestic violence? While the connection is clear there is no evidence to support the claim. In fact, despite the level of impairment these factors remain consistent in regards to domestic abuse.

1. The abuser generally chooses the time, place, and victim which indicates he remains in control of his actions.
2. The majority of heavy drinkers, for instance, are not battering.
3. The majority of abusers have also abused while sober/clean.

“Although intoxication may trigger an individual episode of violence, not all who become intoxicated become batterers. It is important to note that a batterer's violence does not always stop when he stops using. There are many recovering alcoholics/addicts who continue to batter.¹”

¹ Larry Bennett & Lawson, M. (1994). Barriers to cooperation between domestic violence and substance abuse programs.

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There is a link²

- Between a quarter and half of the women receiving victim services for domestic violence have substance abuse problems.
- Between 70-80% of women in substance abuse treatment are victims of domestic violence.
- Over 50% of the men in Batterer Intervention Programs have substance abuse issues and are 8 times as likely to batter on the day in which they have been using.
- Half of partnered men entering substance abuse treatment have battered in the past year.

Potential Landmine

One potential problem that biblical counselors encounter regarding the co-occurring nature of addiction and domestic violence is the temptation to address only the addiction as the root. The reality is that the addiction and the violence are symptomatic of the heart.

How domestic violence may manifest in conjunction with specific addictions

Alcohol

Stimulants, Amphetamines, Cocaine

Marijuana

² Larry Bennett and Patricia Bland, Substance Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence. VAWAnet

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Heroin, Opiates, Pain-killers

Sexual Addictions

Gambling

Biblical care for the controlled and controlling

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Matthew 6:24

“...the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”

James 1:6b-8

- Identify the problem/problems: The heart desires more of what it wants, and will be briefly satisfied. At the root, both addiction and domestic abuse are about idolatry.
 - The addict is in bondage to a substance while dominating his wife as well.
 - Each represent a need for gospel transformation including confession, repentance, and transformation.
 - The addict may use his addiction to maintain control over his partner.
 - Using to justify his violence.

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- Using as a direct form of abuse.
- Introducing his partner to substances as a means of keeping her dependent.
- Address the motives:

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.”

James 4:1-2

Control is often the goal

“Intimate partner violence is at its core an attempt to dominate and control by whatever means necessary”³

Controlling others may include physical violence.

Intimidation	Manipulation	Threats
Verbal Abuse	Emotional Abuse	Economic Abuse
Using the Children	Spiritual Concerns	Isolation
Blame-shifting	Accusations	Destruction of Property
Animal Abuse	Suicide/Homicide	Shaming

- Promote the mind of Christ:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

³ Bancroft Lundy, The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the impact of domestic violence on family dynamics

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Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” *Philippians 2:3-11*

Paul does not simply give us a command to be humble but a course in humility.

Compare and contrast this man’s abusive behavior, and controlling motivation with the mind of Christ.

- Look for evidence of change:

We should therefore expect to see changes in how this man relates to...

- 1. God**
- 2. Others**
- 3. Self**

“Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” *Matthew 22:37-40*