

They told you

“Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22)

But did you know?

The verse just before that says, “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ”

They told you

“Wives, be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord” (Col 3:18)

But did you know?

The next verse says, “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”

AND most of Paul’s writings about marriage give equal rights and responsibilities to wife and husband. See, for example, 1 Cor 7.

They told you

“I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel...” (Malachi 2:16)

But did you know?

the verse continues “...and [I hate] covering one’s garment with violence.” This whole paragraph is addressed to husbands who destroy marriage through their sins.

They told you

Jesus prohibits divorce (Matthew 5:31 ff.)

But did you know?

In Jesus’ time, a man could divorce his wife without warning, cause or consequence to him. Women and children were left with no recourse and no resources. In this text, Jesus protects the vulnerable. He does not condemn them to a life of abuse.

They told you

Leaving your spouse makes you guilty of breaking marriage vows of “for better and for worse” AND if you divorce and remarry, it’s adultery (Matt. 5:32; Luke 19: 3-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-11)

But did you know?

The prohibition against adultery protects a marriage from breaches of trust. **Both** husband and wife make a vow to love, honor, and be faithful to the other. The abuser, through violence and other abuse, is the one who breaches trust and breaks vows—not the person who leaves in order to be safe.

They told you

You should love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you, and turn the other cheek. (Luke 6:27-29)

But did you know?

A spouse or other family member is not supposed to be your enemy! Jesus speaks here against seeking vengeance or escalating violence. When another’s violence does not stop, the only way you can prevent further escalation is by leaving the situation. You can pray for an abuser without subjecting yourself to continued abuse.

They told you

God doesn’t care about you OR how can you believe in God if these awful things happen?

But did you know?

You are not alone in these feelings. Many scriptures express the same things (i.e. Psalm 22, 55 or Job) Even Jesus seemed to feel betrayed and abandoned (Matt. 27:46) It’s OK for you to doubt God’s existence, question God’s love or be angry at God. Maybe someday you’ll feel different and want to forgive God for your suffering. For now, it’s OK to be exactly where you are in your feelings about God or religion.

Adapted from Did You Know by Ann Larson. Used with permission.



Domestic Violence

What Congregations Need to Know

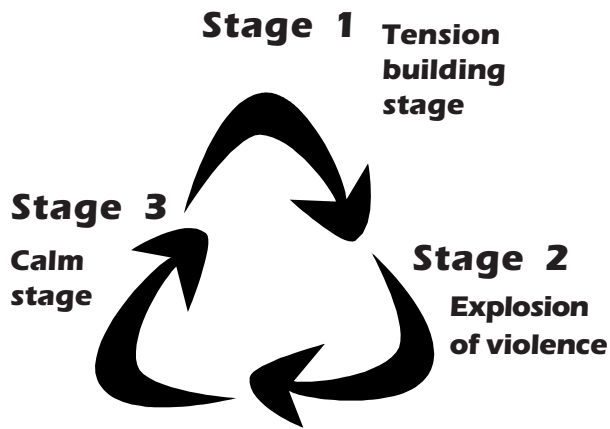
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What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behaviors used to control an intimate partner. It includes emotional, sexual, physical and financial abuse. It causes victims to change their behavior in response to the abuse. Domestic violence occurs in all socio-economic, racial, and religious groups. Sexual orientation is no protection, nor is age or gender.

Domestic violence is **not** “just a family matter”. It is a crime for which the abuser must be held accountable. When society “looks the other way,” it encourages abusers to continue their pattern of abuse.

Domestic violence is often cyclical. This is one reason it is so confusing and difficult for the victim to leave.



Cycle of Violence

During the calm or honeymoon stage, the abusers are often extremely remorseful, promising never to repeat the

violence and to go to the pastor for counseling. They may even shower their partners with gifts, flowers, and romantic dinners.

How Big is the Problem?

- A domestic battery occurs every 9 seconds.
- 2 to 4 **thousand** women a year are murdered and 2 to 4 **million** women a year are injured as a result of domestic violence.
- Nearly 1 in 4 American women between the ages of 18 and 65 have experienced domestic violence.
- Domestic violence is a leading cause of emergency room visits for women.
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 12 men in the pew have experienced domestic violence and their abuser is likely to be sitting next to them.

Who are the Victims?

Statistics show that 95% of victims are women. Sometimes men are victims and same-sex partners may also be abused. No matter who the victim is, domestic violence is a serious problem that churches and other religious groups must address, along with legal and social service organizations.

Who are the Abusers?

Statistics show that 95% of abusers are men. Many witnessed domestic violence as a child. Abusers are often good providers, charming, sober, and respected in the community and in their congregations. However, behind the home's doors, they are controlling, extremely jealous and threatening. An abuser with access to weapons greatly increases the risk of a potentially lethal incident.

What Can the Church, Synagogue, or Mosque Do to Prevent Domestic Violence?

- **Encourage clergy** to speak out against domestic violence from the pulpit.
- **Form committees** to address the issue of domestic violence.
- **Offer pre-marriage counseling** on dealing with conflict, equality, violence, and control.
- **Offer classes for youth** that encourage the values of gender equality and nonviolent conflict resolution.

- **Invite staff** from local domestic violence programs to speak to the congregation.
- **Offer meeting space** in your church, synagogue or mosque to the local domestic violence programs.
- **Support** local domestic violence programs with monetary donations, needed items or volunteer time.

Domestic violence is NOT “just a family matter.” It is a crime for which the abuser must be held accountable.

