

Addressing Domestic Violence

Resources For Clergy

A crash course on everything you need to know in order to understand the scope and extent of this prevalent problem and the devastating damage done by domestic violence. Included are resources and suggestions for introducing the critically important issue of domestic violence into the worship practices and ministry of any religious community.

Domestic Violence Essential Information

- **One in every four** women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.
- **95%** of all domestic violence victims are women.
- **Every two minutes**, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted.
- Domestic violence occurs in four basic categories:
 1. **Physical assault**
 2. **Sexual assault** – any unwanted sexual contact
 3. **Psychological assault** – including isolation from family and friends, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation and control of where the partner is allowed to go and what the partner is allowed to do
 4. **Attacks or threat of attacks** against other people, property and pets
- Both batterers and victims come from all walks of life, races, religions, economic statuses, sexual orientations and educational backgrounds.
- Common reasons victims stay are fear that the abuser will become more violent if she leaves; that he will try to take the children; and that she can't make it on her own.
- The co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse is over 70%.
- There are more than **two million reported cases** of physical abuse or neglect of children in the U.S. **every year**.
- **Almost 5 children** die every day as a result of child abuse.
- Children witnessing violence between their parents or caretakers is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.
- Boys who witness domestic violence are **twice as likely** to abuse their own partners and children when they become adults.
- Nationwide, nearly **1 in 10 high school students** (8.9%) has been hit, slapped or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Approximately **1 in 3 adolescent girls** in the U.S. is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.

Domestic Violence Do's and Don'ts

In dealing with a battered woman or victim of any form of abuse or domestic violence.....

- **DO believe her. What she tells you is only the tip of the iceberg.**
- **DO** reassure her that this is not her fault nor God's will for her.
- **DO** give her referral information. (see attached)
- **DO** respect and support her choices, even if she initially chooses to return to the abuser. She has the most information about how to survive.
- **DO** offer to help her develop a safety plan. (Keep cell phone on hand at all times; set aside funds; copy important papers, keep change of clothes hidden; house exit plan; plans for taking children).
- **DO** protect her confidentiality and do not give information to church officials.
- **DO** assist her with any religious concerns and assure her of God's constant love. Pray with her.
- **DO** help her see that her partner's violence has broken the marriage covenant.

- **DON'T minimize the danger to her.**
- **DON'T** tell her what to do.
- **DON'T** react with disbelief, disgust or anger.
- **DON'T** blame her for his violence even though she may blame herself.
- **DON'T** recommend marriage counseling since their issues need to be addressed separately, at least initially.
- **DON'T** encourage her to forgive him and take him back.
- **DON'T** encourage her dependence on you and do NOT become emotionally or sexually involved with her.

In dealing with an abusive partner....

- **DON'T approach him or let him know that you know about his violence unless you a) have the victim's permission; b) she is aware that you plan to talk to him and c) you are certain that his partner is safely separated from him.**
- **DON'T** meet with him alone or in private. Meet in a public place.
- **DON'T** allow him to use religious excuses for his behavior.
- **DON'T** pursue couples' counseling with him and his partner if there is any history of violence in the relationship.
- **DON'T** give him any information about his partner or her whereabouts.
- **DON'T** allow him to deceive you with minimization, denial or lying. Be leery of "conversion experiences" which may or may not be genuine.

- **DO refer to a program which specifically addresses abusers.**
- **DO** name the violence as his problem; not hers.
- **DO** pray with him and assure him of your support as he seeks help.
- **DO** find ways to work with community agencies to hold him accountable.

Domestic Violence Scripture References

Scripture	Summary
Gen: 21: 8-20	The story of Abraham's casting out of his slave woman with his son introduces ways in which families are torn apart and children are left homeless.
Ps. 31: 10-15	The cries of pain in this Psalm echo the misery of many who feel depressed and despised because of the pain they suffer in their relationship with their partner
Ps. 55: 4-8; 12-14; 20-21	There is clear anguish of the victim who names the enemy as "companion" and "friend." Verse 20 can readily be translated as physical abuse.
Ps. 140	The plea here is to be delivered from evildoers who are violent.
Prov. 19:19	This passage speaks of men with great anger having to pay the price and encourages us not to rescue them.
Micah 6: 8	The familiar words in this verse can be heard as a charge to those who abuse to instead walk humbly with their God.
Mal. 2: 13-16	One who is faithless with his wife is chastised.
Luke 13: 10-17	Jesus' healing of the crippled woman on the Sabbath is a challenge to all of us to reach out to women who are afflicted by domestic violence.
Luke 17: 1-4	This passage contains Jesus' words cautioning us not to let "one of these little ones stumble," which can clearly be applied to child abuse.
John 10: 10	Jesus came to provide abundant life, clearly what is missing when women and children live in a violent home.
I Cor. 7: 3	This passage gives a clear witness to the importance of equality and respect in a marriage relationship.
I Cor. 13	The familiar love passage encourages people to find the way of love in the midst of violence.
Gal 3: 28	All are one in Christ – no separate standards for men and women.
Eph. 5: 21-33	This often misinterpreted passage encourages husbands to love their wives just as they love their own bodies.
Col 3: 8	Challenges us to set aside anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech – which is verbal and emotional abuse.
Col. 3: 18-21	This is a repetition of the Ephesians 6: 1-4 passage.
I Pet. 3: 7-9	This is a less familiar but similar passage admonishing husbands to respect their wives and not to repay abuse for abuse but rather always repay with a blessing.

What You Can Do

Become a Safe Place

Make your church, temple, mosque or synagogue a safe place where victims can speak of their pain and seek relief and healing. Display brochures and posters that give local hotline numbers and the National DV Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

Educate the Congregation

Routinely include information in newsletter, on bulletin board and in marriage preparation classes and counseling, and in sermons. Sponsor education seminars on violence against women.

Speak Out

Speak out about domestic violence and sexual assault from the pulpit. (See attached “Domestic Violence Scripture References). As a faith leader, you can have a powerful impact on people’s attitudes and beliefs. Make sure scriptural and theological messages do not support a view of women as subordinate to men or children as property of adults.

Partner with Existing Resources

Include your local domestic violence or sexual assault program in your mission budget. Adopt an agency and provide volunteers to help with their programs and outreach as well as in support of victims in residence.

Intervene

If you suspect violence is occurring in a relationship, speak to the victim separately. Help the victim plan for safety. Let the victim know of the community resources available to assist them. Do not attempt couples counseling. Do not approach the abuser unless the victim agrees. (See Domestic Violence Do’s and Don’ts, above.)

Identify and Provide Resources

Maintain a library of printed and video resources on domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and the role of the church, temple, mosque or synagogue. Develop a utilization plan for these resources.

Other Possible Actions

- Offer meeting space for educational seminars or weekly support groups.
- Sign up for professional training in order to increase your awareness.
- Adopt policies for keeping children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse within your facilities and programs.
- Volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors at the local domestic violence/sexual assault program.
- Participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Month each October and Child Abuse Prevention Month each April.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES

Hotlines

- **1-800-799-7233** (SAFE) – National Domestic Violence (DV) Hotline
- **1-800-222-7233** (SAFE) – Dayton Area Hotline – Artemis Center and YWCA
- **937-426-2334** – Greene County Hotline – Family Violence Prevention Center

Group, Counseling, Shelter and Other Resources

- **1-800-222-2000** – National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence
- **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** – www.ncadv.org
- **Family Violence Prevention & Serviced Resource Centers** – www.acf.hhs.gov
- **Ohio Domestic Violence Resource Center** – www.ohiolegalservices.org
- **Listing of Ohio Domestic Violence Shelters** can be found at www.actionohio/ohiodvshelter.htm
- **1-800-934-9840** – Ohio Dom. Violence Network Line (Columbus)
<http://www.odvn.org/>
- **937-461-5091** - Artemis Center – Dayton’s Domestic Violence Resource –;
www.artemiscenter.org.
- **937-461-5550** – YWCA.
- **937-426-6535** - Family Violence Prevention Center of Greene County,
www.fvpcgc.org.
- **206-634-1903** - FaithTrust Institute – www.faitrustinstitute.org
- **800.343.2823** - Jewish Women International – www.jwi.org
- *What Every Pastor Needs to Know* by Al Miles

- Contact your denomination’s national offices to locate resources available through your own denomination

About the Author: Richard W. Todd lives in Dayton, OH and is a member of Bellbrook United Methodist Church, Bellbrook, OH. Dick currently serves as the Volunteer Coordinator of the Family Violence Prevention Center of Greene County and has a passion to better equip clergy to address the issue of domestic violence. You can contact him at: cedarman34@yahoo.com or 937-306-8445.

Latest Revision: January, 2013