



# Understanding and Responding to Domestic Abuse

Webinars: October 28 and November 11, 2021

◆ Baptist Convention of New England in partnership with Called to Peace Ministries ◆

## Domestic violence is about power and control

- ◆ It is characterized by a pattern of abusive behaviors that are intended to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. They are any behaviors which intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.
- ◆ Abuse can be emotional, physical, sexual, economic, psychological, spiritual.

“Pattern of oppression... an offense to liberty that prevents women from freely developing their personhood, utilizing their capacities, or practicing citizenship, consequences they experience as entrapment.” — Evan Stark

◆ “When one person in the relationship clearly has more power than the other and consistently uses it to promote selfish interests, that’s a clear sign that the problem is far more than just a marital problem. The vast majority of domestic abuse incidents do not include physical harm.” — Joy Forrest

◆ “Coercive controlling violence (CCV) (or intimate terrorism) is violence that occurs in the context of coercive control, with the use of both violent and nonviolent tactics aimed at maintaining dominance over one’s partner.” — (Johnson, 2008)

## Statistics

- ◆ As many as 1 in 3 women will experience severe physical abuse at the hands of an intimate partner
- ◆ 90% or more of the victims of domestic violence are women
- ◆ In a Called to Peace ministries survey of nearly 200 Christian survivors of domestic violence, nearly 30% reported to be married to men who served in ministry in some capacity—22% had some seminary training
- ◆ More than 90% of males incarcerated in the US witnessed or experienced domestic violence as children
- ◆ 54% of the mass shootings in the US are domestic violence and the other 46% usually have ties to domestic violence
- ◆ 50% of all homeless women are fleeing domestic violence
- ◆ Researchers say 25 % of women having abortions worldwide were victims of partner violence
- ◆ A University of Washington in Seattle study indicated that 55-56% of couples in treatment for marital distress were violent, but the therapist did not know
- ◆ Church leaders largely do not understand DV and give advice that is harmful to victims. Over 70% reported that their churches did more harm than good
- ◆ Numerous studies show that evangelical men who sporadically attend church are more likely than men of any other religious group (and more likely than secular men) to assault their wives
- ◆ Between 2000-2006, 10,600 American women were killed by intimate partners. During the same time frame, 3200 American soldiers were killed in battle. For every woman killed, there were 9 other domestic violence related attempted murders

## Why the disconnect for pastors and church leaders?

- ◆ Many pastors were not trained in seminary on the dynamics of abuse. Actual counsel victims received from our 2018 survey:

- “Read this book on how to be a better wife.”
- “You need to work on being more submissive.”
- “Respect him more, and it will work out.”
- “You need to attend marriage counseling together.”
- “You caused him to do this.”

- “Pray more, read your Bible, have more sex.”
- “Just forgive and forget and you can move on.”
- “Let God handle him, suffer for Jesus.”
- “You need to love him more.”
- “He didn’t mean to hit you.”

- ◆ Our high view of marriage may lead us to elevate the institution over individuals
- ◆ Abusers are often very charming in public — “Enemies disguise themselves with their lips, but in their hearts, they harbor deceit. Though their speech is charming, do not believe them, for seven abominations fill their hearts.” (Prov. 26:24-25)
- ◆ Victims sometimes seem unreliable. They may seem stressed, anxious, emotional, or they cover it up, so we fail to believe when they finally speak up.
- ◆ We may have learned faulty assumptions: It’s a marital problem / Abuse is provoked (victim blaming) / If it’s not physical, it’s not abuse / It’s caused by mental illness, substance abuse, etc. What does this counsel have in common?
  - It places the burden of the abuse on the victim. (Prov 17:15)
  - It doesn’t provide the help the victim needs. (Prov 26:8)
  - It actually harms the victim and reinforces her oppression
  - It doesn’t reflect the character and heart of God. (Psalm 68:5-6)



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## Supporting the Oppressed: What can we do as the Body of Christ

### ◆ Believe them.

<http://www.chrissoles.org/news/2017/8/25/why-nobody-believes-the-victmi>

### ◆ Listen and avoid trying to take charge.

### ◆ Educate them on the dynamics of abuse.

<https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PowerandControl.pdf>

Here is an example of a behavior assessment describing abusive behaviors: <https://www.calledtopeace.org/resources/warning-signs-quiz/>

### ◆ Avoid betraying their confidence.

### ◆ Encourage them to document the abuse.

### ◆ Provide them with practical resources.

### ◆ Connect them to domestic violence informed support groups, counselors, etc.

Article on vetting biblical counselors - <http://www.chrissoles.org/news/2020/3/1/vetting-a-biblical-counselor-questions-a-counselee-should-ask-when-ever-abuse-is-present>

### ◆ Accompany them to court.

### ◆ Encourage them to find hope in God.

### ◆ Get training.

• <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2021/10/21/what-every-biblical-counselor-should-know-about-counseling-domestic-abuse-part-one/>

• <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2021/10/22/what-every-biblical-counselor-should-know-about-counseling-domestic-abuse-part-two/>

• Called to Peace offers in-depth training for faith-based domestic abuse advocates: <https://www.calledtopeace.org/join-us/become-a-faith-based-advocate/>

### ◆ Be patient.

### ◆ Understand victims may resist help.

## Getting prepared: Being proactive as a church

### ◆ Provide training for leaders and members.

SBC's Caring Well Challenge <https://www.caringwell.com/>

### ◆ Develop policies and procedures.

### ◆ Organize response teams.

### ◆ Bring awareness to the issues.

### ◆ Teach about God's character.

### ◆ Teach about godly marriage relationships.

### ◆ Develop close discipleship relationships.

## Connecting with our Panelists

◆ Kimber Huff — facilitator, Baptist Convention of New England ([khuff@bcne.net](mailto:khuff@bcne.net))

◆ Joy Forrest — founder, Executive Director, Called to Peace Ministries ([joy@calledtopeace.org](mailto:joy@calledtopeace.org))

◆ Jim Upchurch — Church Liaison, Called to Peace Ministries ([churchpartners@calledtopeace.org](mailto:churchpartners@calledtopeace.org))