

BREAKING THE SILENCE



What are the Different Names for Domestic Violence?

Domestic Abuse
Family Violence
Intimate Partner Violence

Domestic Violence
Child Abuse
Elder Abuse

The above terms all refer to a pattern of violence within a household or between people who have a relationship with one another. It can include physical violence but also includes emotional, sexual and financial abuse. For the purposes of this training this pattern is referred to as domestic violence.

Usually, domestic violence involves a male abuser (also called batterer) and a female victim (also referred to as a survivor). However, it is important to note that as many as 15% of cases of domestic violence occur where the victim is a man. Because of this, it is important to not make judgments or snap decisions. Look at the situation objectively and give each victim the benefit of reasonable doubt.

Domestic violence victims are also found in heterosexual and homosexual relationships, teenage relationships and in elder abuse cases. It crosses all barriers and is major problem.

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that often starts out with emotional abuse and escalates over time.

Battering behavior includes but is not limited to:

- **Financial** - Controlling finances, movements and isolation of the victim.
- **Emotional** - Withholding love, attention or sex, belittling, name-calling and put-downs, manipulation, threats of personal or self-harm, manipulation.
- **Medical** - refusal to allow victim access to medical care, withholding of medications, making the victim take medications or drugs.
- **Spiritual abuse** - destroying the victim's religious material, Bible etc., forcing the victim to worship in a manner contrary to the beliefs of the victim, manipulative acts of repentance by the abuser to control the victim.
- **Physical abuse** - any act of physical violence
- **Sexual abuse** - sexual violence including sexual assault and/or rape.

To be able to help clients it is important to understand the dynamics of this ever escalating cycle of domestic violence.

The Cycle of Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence Cycle Stage I: Honeymoon Stage

Just like in the beginning of a relationship all is sweetness and light. The abuser will do, say or promise anything.

The abuser may use phrases such as:

- *I love you more than you'll know.*
- *I'm no good without you.*
- *No one will ever love you like I do.*
- *"Honey", "Darling" or "Dear" are used often.*

Flowers may arrive & public displays of affection are prominent. The victim may receive expensive or elaborate gifts. The abuser wants applause from the world for being a "good" person so they put their best face forward. This is also the stage where they are most likely to show up in church or public events with the victim.

Victims want to believe the abuser. They are either just getting to know each other or the victim wants to believe what the abuser is saying. Hints at future abuse in this stage are often minimized or ignored.

It is also a time when the abuser may begin to isolate the victim.

The abuser may say things like:

- *I love you so much. Don't you want to spend time with me today?*
- *Don't go to work today. Stay home.*
- *Why would you want to go to your mom's when you can be here?*
- *Don't you see how much I need you?*
- *Why don't you want to be with me? Don't you love me?*

This makes it easier for the cycle to escalate.

Note: In a cycle of domestic violence the honeymoon stage lessens and may disappear completely in a faster spinning spiral.

Domestic Violence Cycle Stage II: Tension Building

In this stage the abuser begins reacting to real or imagined stresses. The abuser is tense and finds fault with everyday occurrences. The freshly cleaned house may not be clean enough. The steaming hot dinner is too hot or too cold. There may be minor explosions or flare ups. Doors may be slammed. Names are being called. Put downs are increasing. Phone calls may be monitored. Odometer readings may be recorded. Controlling behavior is increasing.

The couple may argue. There is intimidation. There are threats.

The abuser may say things like:

- *You are nothing without me.*
- *I can't believe I ever saw anything in you.*
- *You wouldn't have anything if it weren't for me.*
- *If you leave me I will kill you.*

Or alternatively they may threaten suicide, claim to be dying of cancer or similar illness or accuse the victim of having an affair.

Victims feel afraid and helpless to stop the cycle from escalating. They start to blame themselves for the abuse that is to come. Often, they will report the feeling of "walking on eggshells". They may become compliant and try to do anything to keep the next stage from happening or they may do something that they feel will trigger the next stage of the cycle to "get it over with".

Note: This stage is often equated to a "simmering pot". Pressure builds and eventually there is an explosion.

Domestic Violence Cycle Stage III: The Explosion

The strain becomes too much and abuse occurs.

This includes hitting, kicking, sexual assault, choking etc. It may be less severe at first. If the cycle has been going on long it may be more severe or last longer. This stage may involve weapons or objects leaving the victim in need of medical care they may or may not get. Drugs or alcohol may be involved but that is not always the case.

The victim may try to cover up the injury or make excuses citing "clumsiness" or "tripping over my own two feet". Some victims will try to seek help after this stage. They may intentionally avoid family or friends for fear they will realize something is not right. This increases the victim's feelings of isolation.

The abuser or victim may blame alcohol, drugs or stress as an excuse to hit. *There is never a reason for domestic violence.*

Note: If the victim survives, the honeymoon period starts and the cycle continues.

Fortunately, education can help potential victims recognize the signs that their significant other could have an abusive personality.

Violence Wheel

The chart below is a way of looking at the behaviors abusers use to get and keep control in their relationships. Battering is a choice. It is used to gain power and control over another person. Physical abuse is only one part of a system of abusive behaviors.

ABUSE IS NEVER A ONE TIME EVENT

This chart uses the wheel to show the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. Each part shows a way to control or gain power.



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
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Signs of a Battering Personality:

Warning signs can **INCLUDE** but are not **LIMITED** to:

- Firm belief in male privilege.
- Disrespects boundaries.
- Belittles others for fun.
- Excessively charming.
- Verbal abuse.
- Isolation.
- Jealousy.
- Breaks objects.
- Abusive to animals or others.
- Quick involvement.
- Past battering.
- Is easily insulted.
- Blames others if things go wrong.
- Tries to hide behavior from others.
- Sudden mood swings
- Threats of violence.
- Controlling behavior
- Any use of force in a disagreement.

Remember, you are not a counselor and cannot fix a batterer or the situation.
These behaviors are warning signs that a person could be abusive.

Remember abuse is a crime but the decision to report domestic violence is up to the victim. It is always a good idea to learn about the mandatory reporting laws on child abuse and elder abuse of your area **before** you need the information. Find out what the hotline numbers are for your state. Keep this information in a referral list and update it at least yearly.

NEVER TRY TO TALK WITH AN ABUSER AND A VICTIM TOGETHER.

If counseling is needed for either the abuser or the victims always refer to the appropriate agency or mental health center. Victims may need emotional support. Abusers need to be referred to a Batterer's Intervention (or similarly named) group. Research these numbers and add them to your reference list.

It is always up to the victim whether or not to leave the abusive situation. There are many reasons why a victim may not choose to leave. The victim is the one who knows the situation best and has developed coping methods to deal with an abuser.

Why Won't the Victim Leave?

There are many reasons why victims feel they cannot leave including:

Fear

- Most victims who are killed in abusive relationships are killed after leaving.
- They may have heard stories of shelters and be afraid.
- They may fear that family and friends will reject them.
- No one will believe them.
- They are afraid they will be "caught" getting help and the abuse will escalate.

Love

- The victim loves the abuser.

Emotional

- The victim wants to believe the abuse will never happen again.
- They may see the abuser as a protector.

Pressure from

- Children
- Family
- Friends
- Church
- Society
- Self

Beliefs

- Marriage is forever, no matter what the cost.
- This is the way relationships are.
- When you love someone you forgive everything.

Financial

- The victim may not have a job, money, transportation etc.

Other

- Shame or embarrassment
- Someone they know may have had it worse.
- They may be in a relationship with a police officer, politician or official.
- They may be in a relationship with a pastor.

Lack of support

- The victim may not have access to support.
- The victim may not know how to get help.

Ways to Help

1. Listen:

Listen to the victim and be nonjudgmental. Some victims have had had horrific or outrageous acts done to them. They may have been forced to be involved in activities that are shocking. The cultures and backgrounds of the person we work with may be very different from ours. Each individual is different and reacts to violence with a different background and different set of values.

Give the victim plenty of time to tell you what is happening. Don't rush. Don't act harried or hurried. Be reassuring. Avoid rushing to tell the victim what she or he must do. As they talk to you they may come up with the right answers.

Reassure the victim that she or he is not alone and there is help available.

2. Provide Information:

Be proactive instead of reactive. Find out how to contact your local shelter or program before you need it.

Make sure the victim knows that domestic violence is a crime. Some people do not know this or have the idea that what they are experiencing doesn't fit.

Ask the victim if it is safe for them to have the contact information for the shelter. If they feel it is safe then provide them with the information. Sometimes the victim will be afraid the abuser will find the information and it will escalate the violence.

3. Be encouraging, not enabling.

Encourage the victim to call the local crisis center or police department. Unless the victim is in immediate danger try to avoid calling the police on behalf of the victim. It is not unheard of for a victim to beg a family member or friend to call the police for them; only to have the police arrive and the victim back out because of fear. Do not go to the scene. Doing so may put you in jeopardy.

If the victim needs a place to stay encourage them to call a shelter. When an abuser can't find a victim they will begin looking for the victim at the home of family members and friends. A shelter is not only a secure location but the shelter will have advocates and staff that can help the victim through the legal process and the emotional pain.

Safety Planning

If a victim of domestic violence is thinking of leaving, a safety plan is a must. Some of the things on the list seem obvious at first glance. However, when the victim is under pressure or scared important items can be forgotten. Planning ahead gives the victim the best possibility of getting out safely and securely and can provide some control in an out of control situation.

1. Getting away safely:

Ask the victim if she/he has a safety plan. If not encourage them to contact someone at a shelter or legal aid who can help them draft a safety plan. The safety plan will have the answers and information that is needed for questions set out below.

How will victim get out of home if in danger? If there are children how will the victim get them out? What will they need? Plan a course out of the home.

Where will the victim go? How will the victim get there? Are plane or bus tickets needed? What about a train or taxi?

They may need to hide these items for quick access. Alternatively, they may want to give some of the items to a trusted friend for safekeeping.

If you are a victim, tell at least one trusted friend what you are planning to do, where you are planning to go and how you will get there. If possible, tell your friend when you are leaving and call your friend when you arrive at your destination.

If a victim has children they may not want to tell them they are thinking of leaving. The abuser may sense a change is coming and apply pressure or force children to reveal a victim's plans. Or, the children may accidentally say something to tip off the abuser.

2. Personal Needs:

- Car and house keys.
- Cash - not ATM or Credit cards.
- Regular medications - at least a few days worth.
- Formula or diapers.
- Toys and comfort items.
- Critical personal care items.

3. Important papers such as:

- Birth Certificates
- Marriage License
- Divorce Papers
- Custody Papers
- Passports
- Immigration Paperwork
- Insurance Information
- Orders of Protection

4. Numbers and Contact Information for:

- Bank Accounts
- Insurance (Car, Health, Home)
- Credit Cards

5. Shelter:

It is important to be aware of the Domestic Violence shelters in your community. It will be helpful to have their number to call in case you or a victim needs to call. Shelter services vary so you may want to have the number to several DV shelters in your area.

Generally, it is best to discourage the victim from staying anyplace that the abuser is familiar with.

But, there may be rare situations where a victim cannot go to a shelter. She or he may not want to leave pets behind. Disabilities and shelter capacity may be an issue or there may not be a shelter in your area.

When working with a victim keep in mind that shelters are often safer than the home of a friend or loved one. Abusers typically will look to family members and friends as possible points of refuge for the victim. Next, abusers will often check local hotels or motels. This can make a shelter the best choice.

Shelters can be a vital source of emotional support to the victim. They can also provide important legal understanding and help the victim navigate the stormy waters of the legal system.

Legal Remedy - Order of Protection

1. Protection Order

Tennessee

A protection order is a paper which is signed by a judge and tells someone who is hurting you or scaring you to stop or face serious legal consequences. It offers civil legal protection for victims of:

- domestic abuse,
- sexual assault, and
- stalking.

Both male and female victims may be eligible for a protection order.

Virginia

A family abuse protective order is a civil court order that is designed to stop violent behavior and keep your abuser away from you.

Georgia

A Family Violence Protection Order is a written statement from a court that tells the abuser to stop the abuse or face serious legal consequences. It offers civil legal protection from domestic violence to both female and male victims.

2. Definition of Abuse

Tennessee

In terms of getting a protection order, **domestic abuse** is when a household or family member does any of these things to you:

- physically hurts you,
- tries to physically hurt you,
- threatens you with serious physical harm,
- confines your movement or imprisons you in any way (like locking you in a room), or
- destroys or damages your property on purpose and maliciously.
- attempt to inflict, physical injury on any animal owned, possessed, leased, kept, or held by you.

Rape is when anyone:

- forces you to have sex without your consent,
- has sex with you if you're 13-18 years old and they're 4 or more years older than you, or
- has sex with you when you're under 13.

Stalking is when someone **repeatedly** harasses you. You have to be harassed more than once for it to count as stalking.

Harassment is when someone contacts you without your consent, in a way that distresses you. It includes things like:

- following you without you saying it's okay,
- coming up to you when you ask them not to,
- constantly calling you,
- keeping on showing up at someone's house or job (whether or not they come inside),
- sending you threatening emails, and
- dropping things off on your property that distress you.

To count as stalking, the harassment must also make you feel:

- terrorized,
- frightened,
- intimidated,
- threatened,
- harassed, or
- molested.

Your fear has to be "reasonable" - that a reasonable person in your position would be scared or terrorized, too.

For the purposes of getting a protection order, you're considered a victim of stalking if anyone has:

- stalked you,
- threatened to stalk you, or
- made you scared that they're going to stalk you.

Virginia

Domestic violence is referred to as "Family Abuse." Family abuse is when your family or household member hurts you using:

- violence
- force
- threats that result in bodily injury or place you in reasonable fear of bodily injury

Georgia

"Family violence" includes:

- Rape
- Hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping
- Stalking
- Criminal damage to property
- Restraint against your will
- Criminal trespass
- Unwanted touching, forcing you to take part in sexual acts against your will
- Threats of violence
- Other felonies

3. Who Can Get an Order of Protection:

Tennessee

Protection orders in Tennessee are designed to protect victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

If **anyone** has stalked you or sexually assaulted you, you can ask the court for a protection.

If you someone has abused you, though, you need to have a **special relationship** with them to get a protection order. You can only seek a protection order because of domestic abuse if the abuser is:

- your husband or ex-husband; or
- your wife or ex-wife; or
- someone you live with or used to live with; or
- anyone you are dating or used to dated; or
- anyone you are having a sexual relationship with or used to have a sexual relationship with; or
- a same-sex partner you've lived with, dated, or had a sexual relationship with; or
- anyone you are related to by blood or adoption; or
- anyone you are related to by marriage or used to be related to by marriage.

Virginia

You can get a protective order if you have been abused by:

- A current or former spouse
- A parent, child, stepparent, stepchild, brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, grandchild, or grandparent, regardless of whether or not you live together
- Your mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, if you live with that person.
- Anyone you have had a child with, whether or not the two of you have been married or have ever lived together
- Any individual (or their child) who lives with you or has lived with you (in an intimate relationship) within the past 12 months

Georgia

You can get a protective order if you have been abused by:

- A current or former spouse
- A parent, child, stepparent, stepchild, brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, grandchild, or grandparent, regardless of whether or not you live together
- Your mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, if you live with that person.
- Anyone you have had a child with, whether or not the two of you have been married or have ever lived together
- Any individual (or their child) who lives with you or has lived with you (in an intimate relationship) within the past 12 months

4. How Much Does it Cost? Do I Need a Lawyer?

Tennessee

There are no fees for filing for a protection order. A Victim does not ever have to pay for the filing, issuance, service, enforcement or appeal of an order of protection.

You do not need a lawyer to file for a protection order. However, you may wish to have a lawyer, especially if the perpetrator has a lawyer. If you can, contact a lawyer to make sure that your legal rights are protected

Virginia

There is no filing fee to get a Protective Order.

You do not need a lawyer to file for a Protective Order, but it may be helpful to have a lawyer, especially if your abuser has a lawyer. Even if your abuser does not have a lawyer, if you can, it is recommended that you contact a lawyer to make sure that your legal rights are protected

Georgia

There is no cost for filing for a Family Violence Protection Order.

No, you do not need a lawyer to file for a Family Violence Protection Order, but it may be better to have one.

If your abuser has a lawyer, you should try to get one too. Even if your abuser does not have a lawyer, it is recommended that you contact a lawyer to make sure that your legal rights are protected.

5. How Can a Protection Order Help Me?

Tennessee

A protection order may:

- order the perpetrator not to call you, contact or otherwise communicate with you, directly or indirectly
- order the perpetrator not to stalk you
- award you custody of your children
- require the perpetrator to pay spousal and/or child support
- award you sole possession of your residence (in other words, force the perpetrator to move out & let you stay there) or force the perpetrator to provide alternative housing for you
- require the perpetrator to pay for the costs of the court proceedings
- require the perpetrator to attend counseling programs that address violent behavior or substance abuse problems
- forbid the perpetrator from possessing, owning or buying firearms
- award the custody, care and control of your animal.
- order the perpetrator to do anything else you ask for and the judge agrees to.

Virginia

- Order your abuser to stop abusing you
- Order your abuser to stop contacting you or your family or household members
- Order your abuser to leave your house, and give you temporary possession of the house (This does not change who owns the house on paper)
- Order your abuser to not shut off the utilities, and to restore utilities, if applicable
- Give you temporary possession of any jointly owned motor vehicles and prevent your abuser from using the vehicle.
- Require your abuser to provide suitable alternative housing for you and other family/household members, and to pay deposits to have utilities connected or restored in this housing
- Order the abuser to participate in treatment, counseling or other programs
- Grant you temporary custody of your children or temporary visitation for any children you have in common with the abuser
- Grant you a temporary child support order for the support of any children you have with the abuser.
- Provide any other relief necessary to protect you and your family.

Georgia

A Family Violence Protection Order can:

- Tell the abuser to leave you alone
- Give you possession of the house and force the abuser to leave (ask the court to have the sheriff send someone home with you to enforce this part of the order)
- Make the abuser give decent alternate housing for a spouse, former spouse, or parent and children
- Give you temporary custody of your children and award you temporary support payments from the abuser and set temporary visitation rights
- Order help getting personal property of the victim
- Order the abuser to go to counseling
- Lead to your abuser's arrest if he breaks the order

6. What Types of Protective Orders are there? How Long Do They Last?

Tennessee

Temporary Protection Orders (TPOs)

These are also known as "ex parte" orders. Temporary protection orders are short-term orders that are designed to protect you until you are issued an extended Protection Order. They may be granted without the perpetrator's knowledge, although the authorities will notify him if you are granted one. You can ask for a TPO at the same time as you ask for an Extended Protection Order (EPO).

A temporary order lasts 15 days, or until the full hearing for your Extended Protection Order (EPO).

Extended Protection Orders (EPOs)

EPO's are only issued after a full court hearing. They protect you for a longer period of time and can offer you a wider variety of protection measures than a temporary order.

Extended protection orders last up to one year. Before your order expires, you can ask for a one-year extension.

Virginia

Emergency Protective Order

An Emergency Protective Order is designed to give you immediate protection, and can be given on the weekends or after business hours when the courthouse is not open. It also can be given ex-parte by a judge, if he/she believes that you are in immediate danger. Ex-parte means the abuser does not have to be present or know that the order has been requested. However, your abuser will have to be served (given the order) before it takes effect.

You can petition for an emergency order with a magistrate at the Court Service Unit of a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, or at a General District Court or Circuit Court. A law enforcement official may also request that one be given to you.

An Emergency order lasts for 72 hours. If it expires at a time when the court is not in session, the order will be extended until 5pm of the next business day the court is in session. An additional 72 hour extension may also be granted, if you are hospitalized or otherwise incapacitated.

The judge or magistrate should provide written information regarding protective orders that shall include the telephone numbers of domestic violence agencies and legal referral sources on a form prepared by the Supreme Court.

Preliminary Protective Orders

A preliminary protective order is the first step in obtaining a Permanent Protective Order. It is similar to an emergency order, but law enforcement officials cannot request a preliminary order for you. You must file a written petition yourself at the intake office of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations courthouse. To fill out the petition before you go to court, you can use the [I-Can system](#).

Preliminary orders last up to 15 days, unless the court continues the case for longer.

If the respondent fails to appear at this hearing because the respondent was not personally served, the court may extend the protective order for a period not to exceed six months. The extended protective order shall be served as soon as possible on the respondent.

Permanent Protective Order

A permanent protective order offers more lasting protection against domestic abuse. The order will last up to 2 years. It can only be granted after a full court hearing where both you and your abuser have an opportunity to tell your own sides of the story to a judge.

A permanent protective order takes effect after it has been served (given) to your abuser. You should be notified when your abuser is served.
Georgia

Temporary Ex Parte Order

A Temporary Ex Parte Order is designed to protect you until the court hearing you must have for a Family Violence Protection Order. You can receive a temporary order without a court hearing, and without your abuser's knowledge. ("Ex parte" means without your abuser present).

A judge will grant the temporary order only if she or he believes that you are in immediate danger. Temporary orders last up to 30 days, or until your court hearing if it is being heard in another county in the same circuit. They can be extended beyond 30 days by agreement with both parties. This is called a consent order.

Family Violence Protection Order

A Family Violence Protection Order can be issued after a court hearing in which you and the abuser both have a chance to tell your sides of the story. Family Violence Protection Orders last up to one year, but can be extended for up to three years, or permanently.

7. How Do I Get an Order of Protection?

Tennessee

Step 1: Get the necessary forms.

To start your case, you will need to fill out the necessary forms for a protection order. You can obtain the forms from the civil clerk at the courthouse. Most shelters and other domestic abuse prevention organizations can provide support for you while you fill out these papers and go to court.

Step 2: Carefully fill out the forms.

On the petition, you will be the "petitioner" and the perpetrator will be the "respondent." In the box provided for explaining why you want the protection order, write briefly about the most recent incident of violence, using specific language (slapping, hitting, grabbing, threatening, etc.) that fits your situation. Include details and dates, if possible. Clerks and magistrates can show you which blanks to fill in, but they cannot help you decide what to write.

Step 4: Go to the courthouse to file the forms.

You will need to file the forms in the county courthouse where the abuser lives or in the county where the abuse occurred.

Step 5: Ex parte hearing.

When you return your petition to the court clerk, s/he will send it to a judge. The judge may wish to ask you questions about your petition. If you request a temporary order to protect yourself until your hearing for the EPO, the judge will decide whether or not to grant you the temporary order. This is called the ex parte hearing. If the judge believes you or your child is in serious and immediate danger, s/he may give you a temporary order which is good for 15 days, until your full court hearing. Whether the judge or magistrate grants you temporary order or not, you will be given a court date for a full court "hearing" within 15 days. This hearing will be in front of a judge at the time shown on the Notice of Hearing. At this hearing, the perpetrator and you will both have a chance to explain your sides to the judge.

Note: If you received a temporary order, keep it with you at all times.

Step 6: Service of process.

After you file the petition and a hearing date has been set, the court will order the appropriate authorities to serve the perpetrator with a notice of hearing. If you have been granted a temporary protection order, the police or sheriff will serve the perpetrator with that as well.

Step 7: What will I have to prove at the hearing?

As the petitioner requesting a protection order you must:

- Prove that the respondent has committed acts of domestic abuse, stalking, or sexual assault (as defined by the law) and
- Convince a judge that you need the protection of a protection order because your safety is at risk.

Step 8: Full court hearing.

On the day of the hearing, you must go to the hearing to ask for an EPO, which will last for up to one year. At the hearing, a judge will decide whether or not to give you your EPO. See the next few questions for information about what will happen at the hearing. Again, it is very important for you to go to the hearing. If you do not go to the hearing, your temporary protection order will expire. You may wish to hire a lawyer to help with your case, especially if the perpetrator has a lawyer. You can also represent yourself. If the perpetrator shows up with a lawyer, you can ask the judge for a "continuance" (a later court date) so that you have time to find a lawyer.

Virginia

Step 1: Go to court to file and obtain a petition

You can file a petition for a permanent order at a juvenile and domestic relations court or circuit court. Go to the clerk of court and tell him or her you want an application for a protective order. If you are in immediate danger of abuse and the court is closed, you may get an emergency order by going to the nearest police department. If you are issued this order, it will only be good for 72 hours, or until the court is open again.

Step 2: Fill out the necessary forms

The clerk will provide you with the forms that you need to file. On the complaint for protective order form, you will be the "petitioner" and your abuser will be the "respondent." Write briefly about the most recent incidents of violence, using descriptive language - words like "slapping," "hitting," "grabbing," "threatening," "choking," etc. - that fits your situation. Include details and dates, if possible. **Be specific.** It will also be important to write any previous court action you have taken against your abuser. Be sure to write your name and a safe mailing address and phone number. If you are staying at a shelter, give a Post Office Box, not a street address. If you need assistance filling out the form, ask the clerk for help. Some courts may have an advocate that can assist.

Step 3: A judge will review your petition

After you finish filling out your application, bring it back to the court clerk. The clerk will forward it to a judge. The judge may wish to ask you questions as he or she reviews your application. The judge will decide whether or not to issue the preliminary order, and if you seek a permanent order the judge will set a date for a hearing.

Step 4: Service of process

The court will send a copy of your preliminary protective order (if the judge granted you one) and a notice of hearing to the sheriff or police so that they can serve your abuser with these papers. The abuser must be served with the notice of hearing before the hearing can take place. If the sheriff cannot find the abuser to serve him with this notice, then the judge may wish to postpone the hearing. Be sure to have your preliminary order extended, if this is the case.

Step 5: The Hearing

Your hearing will take place within 15 days from the time you file the petition.

You must go to the hearing. If you do not go to the hearing, your preliminary order will expire and you will have to start the process over. If you do not show up at the hearing, it may be harder for you to get a protective order in the future. If the abuser has received notice of the hearing, but does not show up, the judge will most likely continue with the hearing without the abuser present. The judge may, however, decide to reissue the preliminary protective order and schedule a new hearing. This is likely to happen if the abuser had not received notice of the hearing. **Continuance.** You have the right to bring a lawyer to represent you at the hearing. If you show up to court and your abuser has a lawyer and you do not, you may ask the judge for a continuance to set a later court date so you can have time to find a lawyer for yourself. It is a good idea to see a lawyer if you think your abuser will challenge custody or child support, or if you have been severely injured or expect an injury to last a long time. If the court does issue a continuance, the court should also reissue or extend your preliminary order since your original one will probably expire before the rescheduled hearing.

Step 6: What will I have to prove at the hearing?

As a petitioner requesting a protective order, you must:

- Prove that the defendant has committed acts of domestic violence (as defined by Virginia law) against you (or your minor children).
- Convince a judge that you need protection and the specific things you asked for in the Complaint (petition).

Georgia

Step 1: Obtain the Petition

You can file for a Family Violence Protection Order at the Superior Court in the county where your abuser lives. If your abuser does not live in Georgia, then you should go to the Superior Court where you reside, or where the abuse happened. If the abuser recently moved to another county, you may be able to file in the county where you live. Go to the courthouse and speak with the civil clerk of court. Ask for a petition to file for a Family Violence Protection Order. The clerk will give you the forms that you need to file. If you need help filling out the form, ask the clerk for help. Also, you can get help through one of the domestic violence organizations.

Step 2: Fill out the forms.

Here is a list of forms you will need to fill out:

- Petition for Temporary Order/Family Violence Protection Order
- Temporary Family Violence Protection Order
- Family Violence Protection Order for the judge to sign.

Step 3: Carefully fill out the Petition

On the Petition, you will be the "Petitioner" and the abuser will be the "Respondent". Be specific. Write briefly about the most recent incident of violence, using descriptive language (slapping, hitting, grabbing, threatening, when the police were called, etc.) that fits your situation. Include details and dates, if possible.

Step 4: There are no court or filing fees

In other words, you shouldn't be asked to pay anything.*

Step 5: Ask the bailiff for a Temporary Family Violence Protection Order

If you are in immediate danger, you can ask for a Temporary Family Violence Protection Order. Tell the bailiff or the judge that you have a Family Violence Petition and want to have an "ex-parte" hearing. In some courts, the judge may meet with you in his/her chambers - the equivalent of a judge's office. Give the judge your Petition. You will be sworn in. Tell the judge about your case. Tell the judge what you want (examples: custody of children, your abuser to leave the house). Domestic Violence Organizations often help people get through the ex-parte process. **Your abuser does not have to be present for this first hearing.**

Step 6: Service of Process

If the judge gives you a Temporary Family Violence Protection Order, bring it to the clerk's office to have it filed. Then take a copy of the filed Temporary Family Violence Protection Order to the sheriff's department (NOT the police department) so that they sheriff's office can serve the papers on your abuser. You will need to fill out information about your abuser's address, workplace and work hours, social security number, and a physical description. If your abuser does not get his paperwork before the hearing, the hearing will be rescheduled.

Step 7: The Hearing

Whether the judge grants you a temporary order or not, you will be given a court date for a "hearing" of your Petition within 30 days. This hearing will be in front of a judge. **Your abuser will have a chance to be present at this hearing.** You **must** go to the hearing. If you do not go to the hearing, your Temporary Family Violence Protection Order will expire and you will have to start the process over. If the abuser does not show up for the hearing, the judge may still grant you a Family Violence Protection Order, or the judge may order a new hearing date.

8. What if the Perpetrator Violates the OP?

Tennessee

Violating a protection order is against the law. There are 2 ways to get help if the perpetrator violates the protection order.

Through the Police or Sheriff (Criminal).

If the perpetrator violates the protection order, call 911 immediately. In some cases, the respondent can be arrested right away and held in jail for at least 12 hours. Tell the officers you have a protection order and the respondent is violating it. If the respondent is arrested, then the District Attorney can prosecute the perpetrator because it is a crime to violate a protection order. If found guilty of a violation of a protection order, the respondent may be put in jail.

Through the Civil Court System (Civil).

You may file for civil contempt for a violation of the order. The perpetrator is in "civil contempt" if he or she does anything that your protection order orders him or her not to do. To file for civil contempt, go to the clerk's office and ask for the forms to file for civil contempt. If the respondent is found to be in violation of the order, the court may extend the order of protection up to five (5) years. If the respondent is found to be in a second or subsequent violation of the order, the court may extend the order of protection up to ten (10) years

Virginia

Call the police, even if you think it is a minor violation. It is a crime and contempt of court if the abuser knowingly violates the order in any way. An abuser can be arrested, fined and jailed for violating the protective order. It is a good idea to write down the name of the responding officer(s) and their badge number in case you want to follow up on your case. You should also make sure the police or sheriff write a report on the incident even if the abuser is not arrested--- this is required under Virginia law: (19.2-81.3). The report will be a valuable piece of documentation if you try to modify or extend your order.

In addition to calling the police, if you want criminal charges to be pressed, you will most likely need to file the charges with the Magistrate's office (in a few counties, you can go through the Commonwealth Attorney's office).

Georgia

First **call the Sheriff's Office or Police** and report that you have a Family Violence Protection Order, and that the abuser is still bothering you. Tell the police what happened. If the police refuse to arrest him, take the officer's name and ask to speak to his superior. Violation of a Family Violence Protection Order can be a felony offense under the stalking law. Family Violence Protection Orders can also be made permanent.

9. What Happens if I Move?

Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia

If you move within Tennessee, Virginia or Georgia your order will still be valid and good. It is a good idea to call the clerk of court where you received the order originally to tell them your new address so that they can contact you if necessary.

Additionally, the federal law provides what is called "Full Faith and Credit," which means that once you have a criminal or civil protection order, it follows you wherever you go, including U.S. Territories and tribal lands. Different states have different rules for enforcing out-of-state protection orders. You can find out about your state's policies by contacting a domestic abuse program, the clerk of courts, or the prosecutor in your area.

If you are moving out of state, you should call the domestic abuse program in the state where you are going to find out how that state treats out-of-state orders. If you are moving to a new state, you may also call the National Center on Full Faith and Credit (1-800-903-0111) for information on enforcing your order there.

The Impact

The impact of domestic violence is felt by the individual victim, the abuser and society as a whole.

Victim

- Denial
- Depressions
- Physical injuries
- Financial Emotional
- Grief, Sadness
- Housing
- Loss of Job
- Panic Attacks
- PTSD
- Relationship Issues
- Sleeping Problems
- Spiritual Issues

Children

- Sleeping Problems
- Behavioral Issues
- PTSD
- May abuse others
- May become a victim or an abuser
- Low Self-Esteem
- Spiritual Issues
- Drug Use
- Young Marriage
- Promiscuity
- Self-Harm

Family and Friends

- Denial
- Trust Issues
- Uncertain how to act
- Depression
- Try to rescue
- Overwhelmed

Society

- Fearful
- Denial
- Uncertain how to act
- Overwhelmed

Spirituality

- Feelings of Abandoned
- Brokenness
- Denial
- Vulnerability
- Uncertainty
- Difficulty in church relationships
- Distrustful atmosphere
- Disbelief
- Denial

How the Church Can Help

1. Talk about it

- Preach it! Domestic violence is never ok.
- Pray for victims and abusers during your worship prayer time.
- Display the Hope Quilt or educational materials in a high traffic area in your church.
- Regularly publish the local hotline phone number in the church bulletin.
- Ask an advocate from your local center or from Hope for Healing.Org to come speak at worship or to a group meeting.
- Put Hope for Healing.Org or your local domestic violence program in your church budget.
- Collect items (such as used cell phones) on an ongoing basis.
- Get involved! Encourage your church group to volunteer with Hope for Healing.Org or your local domestic violence program.
- Get training for yourself or your church. Host domestic violence training for your district or for your church.

2. Create an atmosphere of safety.

- Never counsel an abuser and a victim together.
- Be open and willing to talk.
- Check your church's Safe Sanctuary policy. Be sure everyone would know what to do and where to go in the unlikely event of an emergency.
- Make sure a land line telephone is within easy reach of the sanctuary and not just locked away in the pastor's office. Put the church address on all church telephones.
- Put up posters and resource displays.
- Host a self-defense class.

3. Local resources:

- Allow the local authorities to do their job if called in.
- Do not try to assign blame or take sides.
- As Pastor do not get yourself caught in the middle
- Know your local resources and make appropriate referrals.
- Provide resource materials as appropriate.

4. Be Real:

- Acknowledge that domestic violence is a problem that isn't going to "just go away".
- Pray with the victim and offer appropriate, helpful, scriptures.
- Be supportive and nonjudgmental.
- Provide Christian friendship.
- Allow the victim to express pain and concerns.
- Encourage and help the victim to seek out local resources.

5. Be willing to go the extra mile:

- Does the victim need food?
- Can the church help put gas in the car?
- Does the victim and children have clothing? Toys? Diapers?
- Is there someone to watch the children during a court hearing?
- Look at ways to help with pets or special needs.

6. Hold the abuser accountable.

7. Realize that domestic violence is a criminal act and is outside of God's will.

- Pray with the abuser.
- Do not rush into forgiveness.
- Do not push the victim to forgive before she or he is ready.
- Provide appropriate pastoral care to all parties.
- Beware of the sudden interest in "finding God".
- Do not allow the abuser to blame the victim.
- Do not allow the abuser to deny or minimize the behavior.
- Refer the abuser to an appropriate Batterer's Intervention Program.
- Do not allow the abuser to be in a position of authority within the church.
- Don't hesitate to call on outside resources.

Why Should the Church Address Domestic Violence?

As Christians, we reject that abuse is part of God's plan. Yet worldwide the numbers are sobering. Some statistics say that 1 in 3 women are victims of domestic abuse. Other statistics put the number at 1 in 4. The numbers for men seem to range from 1 in 5 to 1 in 8. Even one person being abused is one too many.

The bottom line is that chances are you know someone who is now, has been or will be abused. The problem is that these numbers may represent the tip of the iceberg. Abuse is underreported for a variety of reasons. What we can count on is that if the numbers are as they seem, most of us know someone who has been, is or will be a victim of domestic abuse.

Victims and abusers often seek support from the spiritual community. Traditionally, the faith community has reached out to minister to the incarcerated. Until recently little has been done to fully prepare the church when it comes to dealing with abuse. Even less has been done to reach out to victims.

Sadly, victims are in all walks of life. They are young, old, educated, illiterate, rich, poor and of every race, religion and nationality. Domestic abuse holds victims in emotional, physical and spiritual bondage. The result is a pattern of continued brokenness within families that often spills over into the church setting. The key is to recognize the signs and symptoms of the cycle of domestic violence.

This training will help you learn what to look for and how to be a better resource for victims.

Some victims will never talk to others about being abused and seek help. Others will talk about it and seek help but will continue to live in the situation. As Christ's ambassadors we are called to love both the victims and the abusers and we must honor the choice the victim makes. Leaving is not easy. Sometimes it is deadly. We may not always be able to stop the cycle but we can recognize some of the symptoms and be ready to help if asked.

Sadly, over the years, the Bible has been used as a tool to both liberate and keep a victim captive. As you work with victims it is important to overcome traditions and understandings that may keep a person in an abusive relationship.

Anytime the Bible is misused in such a way it is called Spiritual Abuse. When Spiritual Abuse occurs in a relationship the end result not only distances the victim from a particular church but from God. This leads the victim to feel even more abandoned and alone.

To combat this aspect of domestic violence let's take a look at the following scriptures. In small groups, examine your assigned passage. Discuss their relevance to domestic violence. Pick one person to present your group findings to the class. Pay

attention to the presentations of other groups and make notes as you feel led. Later, go back and meditate on each of these passages for greater understanding.

Psalms 55

1 Corinthians 10: 31-32

Ephesians 5:3-8

Ephesians 5:21-23

Ephesians 5:25-33

James 1:27

No matter how many times you think you've heard the same story each victim is unique. There may be many other reasons why a victim will stay. Picture yourself in the following actual scenarios. What are the obstacles? What do you think you would do? How can you as a church help?

Scenarios for Role Play

- You are 19 and a teenage mom. All you can remember as a child is the abuse your mom faced. Promising yourself that your life would be different you saw marriage as a way out and became pregnant. You and your boyfriend are living together and will be married one day. You have no job and no car and are pregnant again. You have heard that you don't deserve to be abused but you aren't sure anymore...
- For the past 30 years you've taken it. Now, your last child has finished college and is living on his own. You hear your husband slam the car door and mutter under his breath. You have never worked outside of the home. The college education you had is outdated. You wonder how you would explain leaving to your children. What will you say when your grandbaby is older? ...
- You are the wife of a pastor. He is well loved and well respected by his congregation. You have three beautiful children and are deeply involved in the church. No one suspects he is beating you. The parsonage goes with his job, which he will lose if you leave. Even worse, he may not be able to work as a pastor again.
- You are a construction worker in your mid-twenties. All the guys at work talk about is being "the man". Its dark and time to leave and your stomach clenches. You don't know what you are going to find at home. Will things be thrown at you or names called? You pass off the pinch marks on your arms as bruises from the job. You see a billboard advertising the Family Violence Crisis Line and wonder...

Stats

Websites accessed October 2006.

1. *75% of domestic homicides occur after the victim has left the perpetrator.* (Murray Strauss, University of Durham, N.H.) Taken from the Knoxville, TN Police Dept. Website http://www.cityofknoxville.org/kpd/dvu_stats.asp
2. *Approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.* (Jay G. Silverman, PhD; Anita Raj, PhD; Lorelei A. Mucci, MPH; and Jeanne E. Hathaway, MD, MPH, "Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 286, No. 5, 2001) Taken from the Family Violence Prevention Fund Website <http://www.endabuse.org/resources/facts/>
3. *On the average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends every day.* (Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief, Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001. February 2003.) Taken from the National Domestic Violence Hotline Website http://www.ndvh.org/educate/abuse_in_america.html
4. *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began studying patterns of violence in 1980.* Centers for Disease Control Website <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm>
5. *1:10 American women are at risk for breast cancer.* American Cancer Society
6. *Nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives.* (1998 Commonwealth Fund). Taken from the Family Violence Prevention Fund Website <http://www.endabuse.org/resources/facts/>
7. *Domestic violence includes slaps, pushes, shoves, threats, emotional and financial abuse, false imprisonment, and any other behavior that batterers use to control and coerce victims.* American Bar Association Multidisciplinary Response to Domestic Violence <http://www.abanet.org/domviol/mrdv/identify.html>
8. If a girl is raped by her boyfriend it is domestic violence because they have a relationship with each other.
9. *Up to 10 Million children may be affected by domestic violence each year.* Child Welfare Information Gateway <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/domesticviolence.cfm>
10. Of those victimized by an intimate partner, 85% are women and 15% are men. Bureau of Justice Factbook <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/vi.pdf>
11. *One half of wife-batterers also regularly assault and abuse their children, according to M. Straus, R. Gelles, and C. Smith, "Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families, 1990 and U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, A Nation's Shame: Fatal child abuse and neglect in the United States: Fifth report, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 1995* Taken from Open Site.Org http://open-site.org/Society/Issues/Violence_and_Abuse/Family_Violence/Statistics/

Bibliography:

Knoxville Police Department; Knoxville, TN
Domestic Violence Unit Information
Website
http://www.cityofknoxville.org/kpd/dvu_stats.asp

National Coalition Against Domestic
Violence
<http://www.ncadv.org>

American Cancer Society Website
<http://www.cancer.org/>

Family Violence Prevention Fund
<http://www.endabuse.org>

American Bar Association
<http://www.abanet.org/>

Centers for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway
[http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/
/domesticviolence.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/domesticviolence.cfm)

Bureau of Justice Factbook
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/vi.pdf>

American Academy of Experts in Traumatic
Stress
<http://www.aaets.org/>

Help Guide.Org
[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_v
iolence_abuse_types_signs_causes_effects.htm
#results](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_types_signs_causes_effects.htm#results)

Other Resources

Does God Still Love Me?; Gayle Crabtree, ISBN 978-1-4116-9933-5

Domestic Violence Sourcebook; Dawn Bradley Berry, ISBN 978-0737304190

Keeping the Faith; Marie Fortune, ISBN 978-0062513007

National Information & Hotlines

Hope for Healing.Org

153 E. Broadway Blvd. #113
Jefferson City, TN 37760
Office: 1.865.933.8769
Toll-Free: 1.866.401.HEAL (4673)
Website: www.hopeforhealing.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Hotline: 1.800.799.SAFE (7233)
TTY: 1.800.787.3224
Website: www.nvdh.org

National Organization for Victims Assistance

510 King Street, Suite 424
Alexandria, VA 22314
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Hotlines: 1-800-TRY-NOVA (1-800-879-6682)
(703) 535-NOVA (6682)
Website: www.trynova.org

Faith Trust Institute

Executive Director: Rev. Marie Fortune
2400 N. 45th Street #101
Seattle, WA 98103
Phone (206) 634.1903
Fax: 206-634-0115
<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>

Tennessee Domestic Violence Shelters

- Tennessee Task Force Against Family Violence P.O. Box 120972 Nashville TN 37212 615-327-0805 (800)356-6767 State Hotline
- Haven House, Inc. P.O. Box 134 Alcoa TN 37701 Business #: 615-983-6818 Hotline/Crisis: 615-982-1087
- The Health, Opportunity, Protection, Encouragement Center H.O.P.E. P.O. Box 1561 Athens TN 37303 Business #: 615-745-5289 Hotline/Crisis: 615-745-5289
- Abuse Alternatives, Inc. P.O. Box 3388 Bristol TN 37625 Business #: 615-968-7957 Hotline/Crisis: 615-764-ABUS
- Women Are Safe P.O. Box 2 Centerville TN 37033 Business #: 615-729-9885 Hotline/Crisis: 615-729-3358
- Family Violence Services Shelter P.O. Box 6234 Chattanooga TN 37401 Business #: 615-755-2840 Hotline/Crisis: 615-755-2700
- United Methodist Urban Ministries Safehouse P.O. Box 324 Clarksville TN 37041 Business #: 615-648-9100 Hotline/Crisis: 615-552-6900
- Harbor Safe House P.O. Box 367 Cleveland TN 37364 Business #: 423-479-9339 Hotline/Crisis: 423-476-3886
- Hope House Maury County Center Against D.V. P.O. Box 1961 Columbia TN 38401 Business #: 615-381-8580 Hotline/Crisis: 615-381-8580
- P.O. Box 1183 Cookeville TN 38501 Business #: 615-526-5197 Hotline/Crisis: 615-526-4730
- Battered Women, Inc. P.O. Box 3063 Crossville TN 38557 Business #: 615-456-0747 Hotline/Crisis: 615-484-4642 Toll Free: (800)641-3434
- Northwest Safeline P.O. Box 1831 Dyersburg, TN 38025 Business #: 901-285-6470 **Hotline/Crisis #: 901-285-7233**
- Hannah's House P.O. Box 152 Fayetteville, TN 37334 Business #: 615-433-6604 **Hotline/Crisis #: 615-438-0701**
- Home Safe in Sumner County 650 North Water Street Gallatin, TN 37066 Business #: 615-452-5439 **Hotline/Crisis #: 615-452-4315**
- CHIPS Route 1 Box 536 Erwin, TN 37650 Business #: 615-743-4743 Hotline/Crisis#: N/A
- Wo/Men's Resource & Rape Assistance Pro. WRAP 49 Old Hickory Blvd. Jackson, TN 38305 Business #: 901-664-9727 **Hotline/Crisis #: 901-664-9727 Toll Free #: 800-273-8712**
- SAFE House, Inc. P.O. Box 3426 Kingsport, TN 37664 Business #: 615-246-1619 **Hotline/Crisis #: 615-246-2273**
- Kent C. Withers Family Crisis Center/Child & Family 2460 E. 5th Knoxville, TN 37917 Business #: 615-673-3066 **Hotline/Crisis #: 615-637-8000**
- Serenity Shelter P.O. Box 3352 Knoxville, TN 37927 Business # 615-673-6551 **Hotline/Crisis #: 615-971-4673**
- Victim Advocacy Program YWCA 420 W. Clinch Ave. Knoxville TN 37902 Business # 615-523-6126 **Hotline/Crisis #: 615-637-5263**
- Home Safe in Wilson County P.O. Box 1376 Labanon, TN 37088 Business #: 615-452-5439 **Hotline/Crisis #: 615-444-8955**

- The Shelter Inc. P.O. Box 894 Lawrenceburg, TN 38464 Business #: 615-766-0795
Hotline/Crisis #: 615-762-1115
- Domestic Violence Crisis Center P.O. Box 802 Lenoir City, TN 37771 Business #: 615-986-3199 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-988-7867
- Madison Domestic Violence Shelter Box 419 Madison, TN 37116 Business #: 615-868-1643 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-860-0003
- Families In Crisis, Inc P.O. Box 621 McMinnville, TN 37110 Business #: 615-473-6543 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-473-6221 Toll Free #: 1-800-675-0766
- YWCA Abused Women's Services 766 S. Highland St. Memphis, TN 38111 Business #: 901-725-5861 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 901-458-1661
- Mid-Cumberland Mt. Ministry Family Violence Hotline P.O. Box 706 Monteagle, TN 37356 Business #: 615-924-3380 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-924-8484
- C.E.A.S.E (Community Effort Against Spouse Abuse) P.O. Box 3359 Morristown, TN 37815 Business #: 615-581-7029 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-581-2220
- Domestic Violence Program, Inc. P.O. Box 2652 Murfreesboro, TN 37133 Business #: 615-896-2032 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-896-2012
- Salvation Army 631 N. 1st Street Nashville, TN 37207 Business #: 615-242-0411 **Hotline/Crisis #:**
- YWCA My Sisters House c/o 1608 Woodmont Blvd. Nashville, TN 37215 Business #: 615-790-9686 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-790-9686
- YWCA Shelter and Domestic Violence Program 1608 Woodmont Blvd. Nashville, TN 37215 Business #: 615-297-8756 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-297-8833
- Safe Space/CCADV P.O. Box 831 Newport, TN 37821 Business #: 615-623-7734 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-623-3125 Toll Free #: 1-800-244-5968
- YWCA of Oakridge 1660 Oak Ridge Turnpike Oak Ridge, TN 37830 Business #: 615-482-0005 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-482-9922
- Home Safe in Robertson County P.O. Box 362 Springfield, TN 37172 Business #: 615-452-5439 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 382-0829
- Haven of Hope P.O. Box 1671 Tullahoma, TN 37388 Business #: 615-857-9011 **Hotline/Crisis #:** 615-684-7133

Virginia Domestic Violence Shelters

- Virginians Against Domestic Violence 2850 Sandy Bay Rd. , #101 Williamsburg VA 23185 804-221-0990 (800)838-8238
- Alexandria Domestic Violence Program 421 King St. , Ste 400 Alexandria VA 22314 Business #: 703-838-4911 Hotline/Crisis: 703-838-4911 Toll Free: (800)838-VADV
- Fairfax Victim Assistance Network 8119 Holland Rd. Alexandria VA 22306 Business #: 703-3606910 Hotline/Crisis: 703-360-7273
- Northern Virginia Family Service 5249 Duke Street Suite 308 Alexandria VA 22304 Business #: 703-370-3223
- Route One Corridor Housing, Inc. P.O. Box 6465 Alexadria VA 22306 Business #: 703-768-3400
- Amherst County Commission Against Domestic Violence P.O. Box 1157 Amherst VA 24521 Business #: 804-946-7446
- Arlington Community Temporary Shelter, Inc. P.O. Box 1258 Arlington VA 22210 Business #: 703-522-8858 Hotline/Crisis: 703-237-0881
- Victims of Violence 1725 North George Mason Drive Arlington VA 22205 Business #: 703-358-5150 Hotline/Crisis: 703-358-4848
- Abuse Alternatives, Inc. 2022 Euclid Ave Bristol VA 24201 Business #: 703-645-9499 Hotline/Crisis: 615-764-2287
- Shelter for Help in Emergency (SHE) P.O. Box 3013 University Staion Charlottesville VA 22903 Business #: 804-293-6155 Hotline/Crisis: 804-293-8509
- Chesterfield City Victim/Witness Assistance Program 101000 Iron Bridge Road P.O. Box 554 Chesterfield VA 23832 Business #: 804-796-7087
- Safehomes Systems 115 West Main Street Covington VA 24426 Business #: 703-965-4490 Hotline/Crisis: 703-965-3727
- Services to Abused Families, Inc. P.O. Box 402 Culpeper VA 22701 Business #: 703-825-8876 Hotline/Crisis: 703-825-8876
- DOVES, Inc. P.O. Box 2381 Danville VA 24541 Business #: 804-799-3683 Hotline/Crisis: 804-791-1400
- ACTS: Turning Points Box 74 Dumfries VA 22026 Business #: 703-221-4951 Hotline/Crisis: 703-221-4951
- Family Violence Prevention Program 420 S. Main Street Emporia VA 23847 Business #: 804-348-0100 Hotline/Crisis: 804-348-0100
- Bethany House of No. Virginia 5901 Leesburg Pike Falls Church VA 22041 Business : 804-998-8811 Hotline/Crisis: 804-256-3526
- Rappahannock Council on Domestic Violence P.O. Box 5923 Fredericksburg VA 22403 Business #: 703-373-9373 Hotline/Crisis: 703-373-9373
- Warren County Council on Domestic Violence P.O. Box 1831 Front Royal VA 22630 Business #: 703-635-9062 Hotline/Crisis: 703-635-9062
- Henrico City Area Mental Health Center Domestic Violence Treatment 10299 Woodman Rd. Glen Allen VA 23060 Business #: 804-261-8500 Hotline/Crisis: 804-261-8484

- Middle Peninsula - Northern Neck Comm. Srv. Bd. COPE P.O. Box 427 Gloucester VA 23061 Business #: 804-693-7959 Hotline/Crisis: 804-693-COPE Toll Free: (800)542-COPE
- Virginia Peninsula Council on Domestic Violence P.O. Box 561 Hampton VA 23669 Business #: 804-722-2261 Hotline/Crisis: 804-723-7774
- First Step: A Response to Domestic Violence, Inc. P.O. Box 621 Harrisonburg VA 22801 Business #: 703-434-0295 Hotline/Crisis: 703-434-0295
- Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter 1 Loudoun, S.E. Leesburg VA 22075 Business #: 703-777-6552 Hotline/Crisis: 703-777-6552 Toll Free: 703-771-7845
- Victims Witness Office of Loudoun County 20 East Market Street Leesburg VA 22075 Business #: 703-777-0417
- Project Horizon P.O. Box 529 Lexington VA 24450 Business #: 703-463-7861 Hotline/Crisis: 703-463-2594
- CHOICES - Council on Domestic Violence for Page County, Inc. 15 S. Court Street Luray VA 22835 Business #: 540-743-4414 Hotline/Crisis: 540-743-4414
- YWCA Family Violence Prevention Program 600 Monroe Street Lynchburg VA 24504 Business #: 804-528-1041 Hotline/Crisis: 804-528-1041
- Citizens Against Family Violence, Inc. P.O. Box 210 Martinsville VA 24114 Business #: 703-632-8701 Hotline/Crisis: 703-632-8701
- YWCA Women in Crisis Program 253 W. Freemason St. Norfolk VA 23510 Business #: 804-625-4248 Hotline/Crisis: 804-625-5570
- HOPE House P.O. Box 447 Norton VA 24273 Business #: 703-679-7240 Toll Free: (800)572-2278
- Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence P.O. Box 3 Onancock VA 23417 Business #: 804-787-1329 Hotline/Crisis: 804-787-1329
- CARES, Inc. (Crisis Assistance Response Emergency Services) P.O. Box 1142 Petersburg VA 23804 Business #: 804-861-0849 Hotline/Crisis: 804-861-0849
- Family Violence Prevention Pro. Child and Family 1805 Arlington Boulevard Portsmouth VA 23707 Business #: 804-397-2121 Hotline/Crisis: 804-399-6393
- Help and Emergency Response (H.E.R.) P.O. Box 1515 Portsmouth VA 23705 Business #: 804-393-7833 Hotline/Crisis: 804-393-9449
- Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley P.O. Box 306 Radford VA 24141 Business #: 703-639-9592 Hotline/Crisis: 703-639-1123 Toll Free: (800)788-1123
- Domestic Violence Intervention Project c/o Richmond 501 North 9th Street Richmond VA 23219 Business #: 804-780-6900 Hotline/Crisis: 804-780-6924
- YWCA - Women's Advocacy Program 6 North 5th Street Richmond VA 23219 Business #: 804-643-6761 Hotline/Crisis: 804-643-0888 Toll Free: 804-796-3066
- Family Violence Program Family Service of Roanoke P.O. Box 6600 3208 Hershberger Road, NW Roanoke VA 24017 Business #: 703-563-5316
- The Turning Point - The Salvation Army 815 Salem Avenue, SW Roanoke VA 24016 Business #: 703-345-0400 Hotline/Crisis: 703-345-0400
- Total Action Against Poverty's Women's Res. Ctr. 145 Campbell Ave. SW P.O. Box 2868 Roanoke VA 24001 Business #: 703-345-6781
- Franklin County Family Resource Center P.O. Box 4 Rocky Mount VA 24151 Business #: 703-483-5088 Hotline/Crisis: 703-483-1234 Toll Free: (800)838-8238

- Halifax Cty. Comm. Action - Domestic Violence Pro. P.O. Box 799 South Boston VA 24592 Business #: 804-575-7916 Hotline/Crisis: 804-275-1000
- Alternatives for Abused Adults P.O. Box 1414 Staunton VA 24402 Business #: 703-886-4001 Hotline/Crisis: 703-886-6800 Toll Free: (800)56-HAVEN
- The Genieve Shelter 123 Bank Street Suffolk Va 23424 Business #: 804-925-4365 Toll Free: (800)969-HOPE
- Family Crisis Services P.O. Box 487 Tazewell VA 24651 Business #: 703-988-5583
- Fairfax County Women's Shelter P.O. Box 1174 Vienna VA 22183 Business #: 703-435-4940 Hotline/Crisis: 703-435-4940
- Family Advocacy Network Services (FANS) 2nd Judicial Court Service Unit Juvenile Court Building Municipal Ctr Virginia Beach VA 23456 Business #: 804-427-4426
- Samaritan House 2697 International Pkwy. Parkway II Suite 107 Virginia Beach VA 23451 Business #: 804-430-2642 Hotline/Crisis: 804-430-2120 Toll Free: (800)838-VADV
- Virginia Beach Department of Social Services 3432 Virginia Beach Blvd. Virginia Beach VA 23452 Business #: 804-431-3373 Hotline/Crisis: 804-463-2000
- The Haven P.O. Box 713 Warsaw VA 22572 Business #: 804-333-5370 Hotline/Crisis: 804-333-5433 Toll Free: (800)22-HAVEN
- AVALON P.O. Box 1079 Williamsburg VA 23187 Business #: 804-258-5022 Hotline/Crisis: 804-258-5051
- The Shelter for Abused Women P.O. Box 14 Winchester VA 22604 Business #: 703-667-6466 Hotline/Crisis: 703-667-6466
- Response, Inc. P.O. Box 287 Woodstock VA 22664 Business #: 703-436-3136 Hotline/Crisis: 703-459-5161
- Family Resource Center, Inc. P.O. Box 612 Wytheville VA 24382 Business #: 703-228-8431 Hotline/Crisis: 703-228-7141 Toll Free: (800)838-VADV

Georgia Domestic Violence Shelters

- Albany; Liberty House of Albany, Inc.; Crisis Line: (229) 439-7065
- Athens; Project Safe, Inc; Crisis Line: (706) 543-3331
- Atlanta; Partnership Against Domestic Violence, Inc.; Crisis Line: (404) 873-1766
- Augusta; Safe Homes of Augusta, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 736-2499
- Blairsville; Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 379-3000
- Blue Ridge; North Georgia Mountain Crisis; Crisis Line: (706) 632-8400
- Brunswick; Glynn Community Crisis; Crisis Line: (912) 264-4357
- Canton; Cherokee Family Violence; Crisis Line: (770) 479-1703
- Carrollton; Carroll County Emergency Shelter, Inc.; Crisis Line: (770) 834-1141
- Cartersville; Christian League for Battered Women, Inc. (Tranquility House); Crisis Line: (770) 386-8779
- Cedartown; Polk County Women's Shelter, Inc.; Crisis Line: (770) 749-9330
- Clayton; Fight Abuse in the Home (FAITH), Inc.; Crisis Line: (888) 782-1338
- Columbus; Columbus Alliance for Battered Women, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 324-3850
- Conyers; Project Renewal Domestic Violence Intervention Program, Inc.; Crisis Line: (770) 860-1666
- Cornelia; Circle of Hope, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 776-4673
- Cumming; Forsyth County Family Haven, Inc.; Crisis Line: (770) 887-1121
- Dahlonega; NOA's Ark, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 864-1986
- Dalton; Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 278-5586
- Decatur; International Women's House, Inc; Crisis Line: (770) 413-5557
- Decatur; Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence, Inc. (Women Moving On); Crisis Line: (404) 688-9436
- Douglasville; S.H.A.R.E. House, Inc.; Crisis Line: (770) 489-7513
- Dublin; Women in Need of God's Shelter, Inc.; Crisis Line: (478) 272-8000
- Fayetteville; Fayette County Council on Domestic Violence; Crisis Line: 770-460-1604
- Gainesville; Gateway House, Inc.; Crisis Line: (770) 536-5860
- Greensboro; Circle of Love Center, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 453-7135
- Hartwell; Northeast Georgia Council on Domestic Violence; Crisis Line: (706) 376-7111
- Hinesville; Tri-County Protective Agency, Inc.; Crisis Line: (912) 368-9200
- Jesup; Wayne County Protective Agency, Inc.; Crisis Line: (912) 588-0382
- Lafayette; Family Crisis Center of Walker, Dade, Catoosa, Chattooga Counties; Crisis Line: (706) 375-7630
- Lawrenceville; Partnership Against Domestic Violence, Inc.; Crisis Line: (770) 963-9799
- Macon; Crisis Line & Safe House; Crisis Line: (478) 738-9800
- Marietta; YWCA of Northwest Georgia; Crisis Line: (770) 427-3390

- McDonough; Flint Circuit Council on Family Violence, Inc. (Haven House); Crisis Line: (770) 954-9229
- Morrow; Association on Battered Women of Clayton County, Inc. (Securus House); Crisis Line: (770) 961-7233
- Rome; Hospitality House for Women, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 235-4673
- Savannah; Savannah Area Family Emergency; Crisis Line: (912) 629-8888
- St. Marys; Camden Community Crisis Center, Inc.; Crisis Line: (912) 882-7858
- Statesboro; Citizens Against Violence, Inc.; Crisis Line: (912) 764-4605
- Thomasville; Halcyon Home, Inc.; Crisis Line: (229) 226-6666
- Tifton; Tifton Judicial Circuit Shelter, Inc. (Ruth's Cottage); Crisis Line: (229) 387-9664
- Troup; Harmony House, Inc.; Crisis Line: (706) 885-1525
- Valdosta; Battered Women's Shelter, Inc. (The Haven); Crisis Line: (229) 244-1765
- Vidalia; The Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc.; Crisis Line: (912) 538-9935
- Warner Robins; Warner Robins Salvation Army; Crisis Line: (478) 923-6294
- Waycross; Concerted Services, Inc.; Crisis Line: (912) 285-5850

Prayers for Domestic Violence Awareness

For Adult Victims

Lord, statistics say that 1:3 women worldwide will be a victim of abuse in her lifetime. We are told that in the United States 1:4 women and 1:9 men will be victims. Our hearts are saddened. We carry emotional scars of unspent tears, sleepless nights and ever present fear. Domestic violence rips families apart even when we are together. It is a cancer that has spread through all walks of life, into all parts of society.

Heal us Lord.

Break this cycle of wickedness and despair and give us your protection for we know that the most dangerous time for us is when we leave an abuser. Be with us and give us courage as we create safety plans or activate them. Meet our needs for shelter, food, clothing, finances, spiritual strength, and take care of our other needs as well.

Help us as parents to teach our children that abuse should never be condoned.

Most of all Lord, let us be healed. Make us free to the people You want us to be and no longer be the scapegoat of an abuser.

In You we put our faith,

Amen

For Child Victims of Domestic Violence

As child victims of domestic violence we are the nameless, the faceless, the collateral damage among adults in chaos. We live in a world shattered beyond our control. Ours is a home of confusion. We see, we absorb, we learn. We stifle our cries for mercy. Our pleas are silenced even before we can learn voice them. We learn quickly that the world is not a safe place. We yearn for a happiness that we cannot find so we remain silent, seeing and hearing, but without a voice. God help us, we plead. We pray believing that only You can hear us and only You care. Send light into our darkness. Reach into our hearts and bring love where fear resides. Send us a rainbow, so we can believe in a future filled with peace. Be our comfort. Let us grow up in the knowledge that in Your eyes we are worthy of being loved. Help us love others in return for the love You give us. Show us how to live lives filled with promise and hope.

In you we pray,

Amen

For Youth Victims of Domestic Violence

Lord, please hear this prayer. Statistics say abuse is a part of 1:3 teenage relationships and another 1:3 teens say they know someone who is being abused. We are weak and heavy laden with the burden of domestic violence. Unlike our backpacks at the end of a school day, abuse is a burden we can't put down. We carry it with us all day every day.

We pray for those teens in our schools, our youth groups, and in our lives who are victims - both in their dating relationships or in their homes. We ask that they may be given peace, healing and courage to be free from harm. We pray for those who are abusers, that they may be given healing, knowledge and courage to turn from their evil acts and embrace healthy love. Friends of victims can be overwhelmed. Give our friends steadfast faith and patience to endure.

Domestic violence sometimes spills over into our schools. We ask for protection, for safety.

Lord, we pray for the teachers, guidance counselors, school resource officers, youth group directors, parents and all those who come in contact with youth. Even as You guide Your church, let these adults serve as positive role models for us to follow.

It is in your mighty name that we pray,

Amen

Family and Friends

Lord, how easy it is to be an armchair quarterback! When we see friends or family members struggling as domestic violence victims we want to act. We want to bundle victims up, put them in the car and carry them to safety. We want to tell the victim exactly what should be done and how to do it. Then, we want to see that the victim follows our advice, now. When that doesn't happen, we judge and criticize - and in so doing, we become a surrogate abuser. Forgive us for this tendency we pray.

Lord, help us be supportive - not reactive. Our friends and family members who are victims need us to be non-judgmental and caring. They need to know they are still worthy of being loved, no matter how bad things get. They need us to be educated, rational and calm. This is hard to do when someone we love is hurting! Help us with this. Help us to see beyond missed lunches and unreturned phone calls. Give us Your patience, Your grace, your compassion and help us be Your hands and arms as our friends need us.

When our friends are batterers we may need a double portion of Your grace. We don't understand how someone could hurt someone they love - someone we love. We are angry that someone we know could be so cruel. We don't want to hear it, see it or admit it - but we know that domestic violence is a pattern that involves all aspects of society - and that includes us.

Break through our denial Lord. Help us hold abusers accountable with Christian love and compassion instead of a quick form of forced forgiveness. Help us give space and time to allow for healing on all levels, by all parties, victim, abuser and children.

Heal us all, as friends and family Lord. We need you too.

In Your Name,

Amen

Congregations and Church Leaders

Traditionally, the church has turned a blind eye to victims of domestic violence. We have failed to hear the cries of the beaten, the abusing and the children. We pray for your forgiveness. Like Jericho, it is time for the walls that keep victims in silence, to come crashing down. May those walls never be rebuilt! As a church, may we never fail to hear the hushed cries of the suffering?

Lord, give us the tools we need to be better equipped. Anoint us with the holy-boldness we need to face this problem head-on. Let us not refrain from holding an abuser accountable or hold back when helping a victim or children.

Give us this day all that we need to reach out to your hurting children - of any age - and remind them of just how much You love them.

In You we pray,

Amen

Batterers

Lord, Your Word tells us that love is patient and kind that it is not jealous and does not boast. Help us to be patient and kind when dealing with abusers.

We do not like to think that someone we know would choose to hurt someone else that we know. To us, this is incomprehensible! But we know that there would be no victims if there were no abusers. We also know that domestic violence is a learned behavior about power and control. And we know that battering doesn't have to happen that it is a choice - either conscious or unconscious - on the part of a batterer.

Lord, we come before you to ask you to help batterers choose better. Let Your Word be the curative that illuminates the path to healing. Show them can clearly see the way to get help. Escort them along the road so they may put down their weapons of words, fists, finances, jealousy and other abuses.

We ask that you bring healing where there is insecurity; give courage where fear is keeping an abuser locked in a cycle of violence; give education so that the cycle may be broken.

And Lord, help us see abusers as people created by you and loved by you. Let us never fail to pray for them, see them and to hold them accountable.

In Your Name,

Amen

Praise and Victory

Lord, we come before you a weary people; a tired people; an overburdened, overwhelmed, needy people. We are sick and tired of the evil called domestic violence that permeates our society. We are so burdened down that we forget who is really in control. For just as when you were on the cross we sometimes fail to see the glory that is in You; that is You. Forgive us we pray.

We thank you for your resurrection Lord! For the hope that it gives us all, for the healing that it brings, for the comfort that it provides.

Dealing with domestic violence is too much to bear alone. We rejoice in the knowledge that after we accept You as our savior, anything done to us is done to You; anything that has been done to us in the past, was done to You. That you know our circumstances, our hearts, and that you bring healing and love to all areas of our lives. We thank you for being here with us!

Through you, we have hope that one day the violence will end. A day will dawn when all of your people will walk hand-in-hand as equals, side-by-side, in joyous harmony. A morning is coming when all of our children will laugh and play as innocents in a garden; where fear will not be known and abuse is non-existent.

We believe in that day Lord, we see it and we anxiously wait on it.

Until, and after, that day dawns, we as your people will praise your unending name!

Glory to God in the Highest, on earth, peace and goodwill to all!

In You, For You, By Your Holy Name,

Amen!

Bulletin Insert

I Corinthians. 13:4 *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” NIV*

Love never hits, belittles or makes you feel afraid.

What is it?

Domestic violence is pattern of escalating behavior where an abuser controls a victim. It often starts out as name calling or put downs but gets worse over time. It can include emotional, physical, financial, sexual and spiritual abuse or attacks on property or pets.

How prevalent is it?

1:4 women, 1:9 men in the US are victims of Domestic Violence at some point in their lives. Source: CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey 2005

Where does it happen?

Domestic violence knows no boundaries. It happens in every part of society and involves victims of every age, race, gender and socioeconomic level.

What can I do?

Believe the victim. Be encouraging and pray for all involved. Find out about local help resources before you need them. Work with your pastor on ways the church can network with Hope for Healing.org or your local domestic violence program.

What if I am a victim?

The agency below can help you develop a safety plan and find resources in your community.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

Domestic Violence Readings

Reading 1

Adapted from the prayer of Francis of Assisi, Italy 13th Century
The Prayer of St. Francis

Liturgist: Lord, make us instruments of your peace;

People: Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

Liturgist: Where there is injury, pardon;

People: Where there is doubt, faith;

Liturgist: Where there is despair, hope;

People: Where there is darkness, light;

Liturgist: And where there is sadness, joy.

People: Lord, forgive us when we fall short and grant that we may seek to:

Liturgist: comfort hurting sisters and brothers rather than to be comforted.

People: To understand, rather than to be understood.

Liturgist: To love, rather than to be loved.

All: Amen

Reading 2

Adapted from 1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV.

Liturgist: Love is patient, love is kind.

People: Lord, help us to be patient and kind with one another in our lives and in our homes.

Liturgist: Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

People: Lord, forgive us when we are boastful, proud or envious.

Liturgist: Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

People: Help us be God-seeking instead of self-seeking; calm our anger. Thank you for forgiving the wrong we do toward You and against each other.

Liturgist: Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

People: Lord, we solemnly reject the evil of domestic violence. We rejoice that in your truth we are set free.

Liturgist: Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

People: In you Lord, we have hope. Through you, we will persevere.

Liturgy

Liturgist: For too long the church has turned a blind eye, and a deaf ear, to victims of domestic violence. Forgive us for our shortcomings as we seek to do better.

People: Lord, hear our plea.

Liturgist: Give us courage to believe victims and to find needed resources so that we may minister to those caught in the web of domestic violence.

People: Lord, hear our plea.

Liturgist: Help us bring healing and hope to victims and to the children of victims.

People: Lord, hear our plea.

Liturgist: Help us never fail to hold abusers accountable. Let us not rush to quickly forget even as we move to forgive.

People: Lord, hear our plea.

Liturgist: Guide us in our struggles to understand, to console and to heal.

People: Lord, hear our plea.

Liturgist: Let us never fail to reach out to those who are spiritually broken, just as you Lord, reached out to us in our brokenness. In doing so, may we help restore all who are affected by domestic violence to bring them into a right relationship with you.

People: Lord, hear our plea.

Domestic Violence Awareness Pulpit Helps

Scriptures -

There are no doubt other scriptures which may be used. It should be noted that this list is meant to be a starting point for your own research and is not intended to be exhaustive.

Genesis 2:21 - Eve was created to be a helpmate for Adam. God did not intend for Eve to be a doormat for abuse. She was intended to be a helper. Sometimes, the best way to help a person is to say "No". As in, "No, I will not be abused."

2 Samuel 13 - The rape of Tamar by her half-brother. When viewed through the context of domestic violence other elements come in to play in addition to the sexual assault.

Psalm 55 - Also known as the Survivor's Psalm. Key elements include: the concept of shelter, flying away from harm. Another element is that the enemy appears to be a spouse - an equal - whose words are "sweet" as often found during the honeymoon stage of domestic violence.

John 13:34 - We are given a commandment to love one another as Christ loved us. Refer back to 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 for a definition of love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - The definition of what a loving relationship should be.

Ephesians 5:25 - Instructions for how much a husband should love his wife. In this passage he is called to present his wife without stain or blemish. In other words, without bleeding or bruises...

Youth Domestic Violence Awareness Skit

You need 4-6 people. It is preferable to maintain an equal female to male ration. While there are only a few speaking parts "extras" can be added to be in the group.

Setting: Ming and Cassie are talking. They are then joined by the rest of the group who want to make after school plans before going to the youth group meeting later. The teens are at school. They all friends who know each other and are talking when the subject of domestic violence comes up...

Characters:

Girls:

Cassie
Ming
Tanika

Boys:

Tony
Carlos
Steve

Ming and Cassie are talking. They are then joined by the rest of the group.

Tanika: *So, what's going on? Are you guys going with us to youth group? I have to pick something up at Wal-mart on the way over.*

Steve: *Sounds like fun.*

Tony: *Count me in.*

Ming: *I can't wait to get to youth group!*

Cassie: Looks away, pretends not to hear.

Tanika: Looks concerned at Cassie. Says brightly, *"Yeah, I can't wait to see the rest of the movie."*

Ming: *Me either. It's one of my favorites!*

Tony: *It's ok. There's no cool car chases though.*

Carlos: *Yeah! Car scenes would be cool!*

Steve: Notices Cassie, who's still looking away says: *"Cassie, you seemed to be enjoying it last week."*

Cassie: Shrugs noncommittally. Looks at her cell phone. Seems nervous. Then looks away.

Ming: *Seeming concerned. Cassie, you're coming with us right. You're always up for shopping and the youth group.*

Cassie: *Maybe next time.*

Tanika: *Sounds like shopping and fun are just what you need! Hey, did you ever get a skirt to go with that terrific blouse you bought last time?*

Cassie: *No. In fact, I took the shirt back.*

Tanika: *Why?*

Cassie: *My boyfriend. He told me to take it back. He said he didn't like me wearing it.*

Carlos: *Huh?*

Steve: *He what?*

Ming: *Cassie, you looked great in that blouse. I thought you liked it.*

Cassie: *I did, but... (looks down at her cell phone). Excuse me guys, I have to get this call.*

Cassie: *Turns away from the group. Nods. Acts like she's talking. Hangs up. Seems frustrated.*

Ming: *Well, I sure am looking forward to youth group. (Less enthusiasm.)*

Steve: *Yeah, me too. (Less enthusiasm.)*

Carlos: *I guess. (Watches Cassie thoughtfully.)*

Tanika: *It'll be fun. You'll see. (Tries to brighten the group. Looks at Cassie.)*

Cassie: *Hangs up the phone. Turns back to the group. "My boyfriend is coming. I've got to get going. Turns to Steve, Tony and Carlos. I'm sorry. He just doesn't like to see me talking with other guys.*

The group seems shocked - except for Carlos who speaks up.

Carlos: *Hold on Cassie. I'm concerned about you.*

Cassie: *I'm all right. I just have to go. (Seems nervous.)*

Carlos: *Remember when I was dating my ex-girlfriend. You're reminding me a lot of stuff I went through. It was domestic violence.*

Ming and Tony: *Together "Domestic Violence?!?"*

Tanika: *Yeah, a lady came to our class. She said that domestic violence is about power and control.*

Carlos: *That's right. It starts out with controlling behavior and escalates from there.*

Tanika: *Like calling you every other minute or telling you what to wear or do...*

Cassie: *Indignantly. I am not a domestic violence victim. (Angrily) Besides, he's only ever hit me once! (Puts hand over her mouth in surprise.) Oops! I shouldn't have said that. I've really got to go.*

The group responds almost in unison:

Steve: *He did what? Hold on Cassie, let's talk about this.*

Tanika: *Cassie, that's not right that he did that!*

Ming: *You don't have to put up with that.*

Tony: *No way! That's lame! Cassie, are you ok?*

Carlos: *Are you afraid to be around him sometimes?*

Cassie: *Starting to break down. No, I'm not ok. I am afraid and I don't know what to do.*

Tanika: *Puts her arm around Cassie.*

Ming: *Starts to comfort Cassie.*

Carlos: *It's not your fault Cassie. Abuse is never the victims fault.*

Steve, Ming, Tony: *Nod in agreement.*

Tanika: *You need to tell an adult Cassie. There is help available.*

Cassie: *But who? I mean... I can't tell my parents.*

Ming: *Tell a guidance counselor.*

Tony: *What about a teacher?*

Steve: *Talk to the School Resource Officer.*

Carlos: *What about talking to our youth director? I bet they can help.*

Cassie: *No, I'm afraid to say anything. What if they don't believe me?*

Tanika: *Confidently: They'll believe you.*

Carlos: *We believe you, but we can't make you tell anyone.*

Ming: *Cassie, don't say that. Our youth director is always there for us!*

Cassie: *Well, maybe you're right but... (looks at phone)...*

Tanika: *You don't have to answer that.*

Steve: *If it's him, let it go to voice mail.*

Ming: *We're here for you Cassie. We care.*

Cassie: *Well, maybe it wouldn't hurt... (Looks undecided for a minute..)*

Cassie: *I don't like being scared...I'm texting him to say I'm busy tonight. (Then turns off her cell phone.)*

Tanika: *Atta girl Cassie!*

Tony and Steve nod encouragingly

Carlos: *Great decision!*

Ming: *Good choice!*

Carlos: *You do need to tell your parents though.*

Cassie: *How?*

Tanika: *Links arms with Cassie and starts to walk off. Tell you what, stick with us after school. Then, we'll go to church and talk with the youth director.*

Ming: *Right behind them. Yeah, it'll be clearer after you talk there.*

Carlos: *Remember Cassie, abuse is never the victim's fault. It's going to be ok.*

Cassie: *I feel better already. I can't wait to get to youth group!*

Steve: *Me too!*

Tanika: *It's a great movie!*

Tony: *Shakes his head. Yeah, but still no car chases. It really needs a good car chase.*

Ming: *Smiles. Well, there are some things we just can't fix.*

Group: Laughs, then heads off the set.

Carlos and Cassie come back together to address the audience:

Cassie: *1 out of every 4 women in the United States will be a victim of domestic violence in her lifetime.*

Carlos: *And 1 out of every 9 men.*

Cassie: *If you are afraid of the person you are with it's ok to get help.*

Carlos: *Find someone to speak with. Tell our pastor or call the hotline listed in the bulletin.*

Cassie: *And remember, abuse is*

Carlos: *never*

Cassie: *the victim's fault.*

Links arms. Exits the stage.

CREATING A VICTIM FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Talk about domestic violence and sexual assault from the pulpit.

Establish yourself as a safe person to talk with. Maintain regular office hours. Have an inviting, friendly office. Some victims have reported feeling comforted just by seeing a stuffed animal or teddy bear in the pastor's office.

It took a lot for the victim to walk in. Try to hear the victim out without rushing, leaping to conclusions or judging.

Domestic violence education is a must. Get training so you will know what to do or say, be able to make the right referrals and to help a victim create (and follow) a safety plan.

Establish yourself as a safe person. Maintain confidentiality to the fullest extent allowed by law. The safety of the victim and family is at stake. Be honest and up front about boundaries. **If you make a promise make sure it is a promise that you can fulfill!**

When talking with a victim allow for emotional space. The victim should decide what to do.

Know the reporting laws for your state and follow them. In most states reporting is left up to the victim. It is not mandatory and could be potentially dangerous to force a victim to report before the victim is ready. Currently, reporting is only mandatory for child abuse or elder abuse - **NOT** - domestic violence.

Get awareness materials and posters from your local domestic violence agency or shelter. Put these up in key locations throughout the church.

Put safety cards in both bathrooms. (Both women and men can be victims.) Get these from your local domestic violence agency or shelter. Replace the cards as needed.

Review your Safe Sanctuaries Policy every six months. Make any necessary changes to better protect victims.

Gatekeepers can make all the difference! Arrange for a trusted person to serve as a gatekeeper when you preach about domestic or sexual violence. Before you speak, tell the congregation if you are going to discuss material that could be potentially difficult. Give permission for anyone who becomes upset to exit the sanctuary quietly. Tell them that an intercessor will be there to help them. The gatekeeper is to check in with anyone who leaves to be sure they are ok. Train the gatekeeper ahead of time to pray with the person and help them get whatever they need - including a ride to a shelter if need be. The Gatekeeper should then follow up with you immediately after

the service. Otherwise, all information should be kept fully confidential to the extent of the law.

Publish the domestic violence hotline number in the bulletin on a regular basis. Use either the national hotline of 1.800.799.SAFE or the number for your local agency.

See our information on "How Churches Can Help" or contact us for more information.

History of the Battered Women's Movement

Historically women have been considered the property of their husbands. Maryland became the first state to make wife beating a crime in 1883, until that time, men were not only allowed but also expected to keep their wives under control by any means they felt necessary. This included beating, chastising, or in Roman times even killing their wife for adultery, being drunk in public, or attending public games. Traditionally, the criminal justice system in the United States has chosen to limit the amount of force a man could use against his wife rather than viewing spouse abuse as a crime. In fact, until the early part of the 20th century, husbands were instructed by law to beat their wives with a stick no greater than the thickness of their thumb; thus the coining of the phrase "rule of thumb".

In 1895 some states began adopting the "Married Women's Property Act", which gave women some rights to own their own property and made a husband's conviction for assault sufficient ground for divorce. This act signifies the beginning of a shift away from the concept that women are their husband's property. Still, convictions were rare and violence in the home was not considered a problem.

Another obstacle that has kept husbands from being held accountable is "spousal immunity". This legal principle says that wives and husbands cannot sue one another for civil wrongs or "torts". In essence, if a stranger on the street assaulted a woman she could sue him for damages such as medical bills lost wages or pain and suffering however, she could not take her husband to court for the same violation. These measures were put into place for the purpose of preserving harmony in the home. In 1962, the California Supreme Court threw out a woman's assault case against her husband on the theory that allowing the case to proceed "...would destroy the peace and harmony of the home and thus be contrary to the policy of the law."

This historical information is presented to illustrate how the acceptance of domestic violence is built into the fabric of our society and culture. Indeed, a poll taken as recently as 1970 found that 1 out of 5 Americans, women included, approved of a man hitting his wife in certain circumstances.

Concurrent with these prevalent attitudes, there were no services available to assist victims of domestic violence until recently. The first contemporary American shelter, Haven House, opened its doors in 1964 in San Gabriel, California. Similar services also emerged for sexual assault victims in the early seventies. There were no books published on the subject of domestic violence until 1974 when Erin Pizzey released *Scream Quietly or the Neighbor's Will Hear* in England. A short time later, American activist Del Martin authored her ground-breaking work *Battered Wives*, which is still significant today.

The pioneers of the Battered Women's Movement were almost entirely survivors of domestic violence working together with lesbian women and feminists to create safe places for battered women and children as well as social change. In 1975, the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed a task force on battered women. The National Coalition against Domestic Violence was established shortly afterward in 1978 to organize the various grass roots shelters and service programs around the

nation. In 1980, the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) was founded in Duluth, Minnesota, creating one of the first systems to coordinate the efforts of police, prosecutors, civil and criminal courts judges, shelters, probation social service agencies, mental health professionals, and others involved in the effort to end domestic violence. This is now referred to as the coordinated community-wide response. DAIP's method for intervening with men who batter, *Power and Control; Tactics of Men Who Batter*, has served as a model for other communities throughout the country.

Today, the face of the battered women's movement has diversified to include many men and other interested professionals while striving toward the same principles; creating safety and justice for women and children while promoting social change. The laws have seen dramatic changes over the past fifteen years. Law and police policy changes have made the arrest of batterers mandatory in many jurisdictions. Prosecutors have established systems in which the abuse can be tried without the victim's direct involvement. Although we have seen dramatic improvements in the criminal justice system and battering is finally being looked at as a crime, the quality of justice a victim received depends largely on the community in which she lives. In many jurisdictions abusers are released without any consequences at all. It is still a commonly held belief that battering is the woman's fault. Illustrated by those who continue to ask "why doesn't she leave? instead of "why does he batter?"

Ending domestic violence requires that entire communities work together to develop a coordinated community-wide response which will hold abusers accountable for their actions while maintaining safety and justice for victims. Often times we assume that women have the resources necessary to allow them to "just leave," but even the best shelters cannot meet all the needs of every battered woman. (child care, job opportunities, medical insurance, affordable housing, etc...). This community-wide effort requires participation from the entire criminal justice system, clergy, mental health, medical providers, social service agencies, employers, educators and community members.

Considering that virtually all of the progress against domestic violence has been made in just over 20 years, there is great reason to be proud and hopeful. Today every state has a domestic violence coalition, at least a few shelters, and laws that make domestic violence a crime. Much remains to be done, but much has been achieved.

The Domestic Violence Source Book, Dawn Bradley Berry, Lowell House, Los Angeles, CA 1995.

Domestic Violence and Rural Women

For women in rural America, the very characteristic of rural communities can serve as roadblocks to documenting domestic violence and to receiving appropriate services, and can actually “entrap” women in violent relationships. In reality, many of the circumstances inherent in rural communities increase the danger for women who experience abuse and violence.

Geographic and social isolation, real concerns about confidentiality in small communities, and limited mental and physical health services can limit the options for women in abusive and violent relationships. Geographic isolation increases the response time of law enforcement officials, should the domestic violence be reported. Further, firearms in the house are a fact of life in many rural communities and thereby increase the level of severe danger for the woman and her children. These women may believe it is best to remain silent and “not rock the boat” or anger their abuser.

Additionally, the closest women’s shelter or related services may be many miles away and in a town or city that is unfamiliar to the woman. If she does not drive or have access to her own transportation, she must rely on someone else for transportation. Most rural areas do not have much in the way of public transportation.

Women in more isolated rural communities may not have safe or easy access to legal assistance, and therefore not be aware of the legal options (order of protections) available to them.

Additionally, women in small, tight-knit communities may be reluctant to report abuse because everyone knows everyone, and service providers (law enforcement officials, social workers, judges, etc) are often related to the perpetrator or victim. As a result the woman may be reluctant to report the violence because they do not want to “embarrass and shame” their families or they may believe nothing will be done.

Domestic shelters in rural communities have the added challenge in maintaining security for the women and children. It is much more difficult to keep the location of the shelter secret in a small community. Therefore, it is important that local law enforcement officials assist in securing the safety and well-being of the women, children, and workers at the shelter.

Physical and mental health services are often limited or non-existent in rural communities. Again, the woman may be faced with transportation issues that prevent or decrease her access to health care. She may also be faced with a lack of health insurance, or if she is on her abuser’s health insurance program, deal with the anger that may result if he/she learns the woman received health care.

In short, women in rural communities often encounter challenges to accessing help that women in more populated areas do not. The characteristics outlined above often prevent abused women in rural settings from talking and disclosing their abuse, and seeking appropriate help. They are often aware that there are few resources and options available to them. It is important that service providers avail themselves of the unique characteristics that abused women in rural areas confront.

Chamberlain, L. (2002), Domestic violence: A primary care issue for rural women. *National Women's Health Network*, 2-5

Krishnan, S. Hilbert, J., & Van Leeuwen, D. (2001). Domestic violence and help-seeking behaviors among rural women: Results from a shelter-based study. *Family and Community Health*.

“Is Leaving Better?”

By

Stephanie Rogriquez

Yet another woman was killed by her estranged husband in Indianapolis, and yet again the question was asked, “Why don’t these battered women leave?” Well they do. She left and she paid the ultimate price for daring to do so. Statistics gathered the National Coalition Against domestic Violence tell us that this woman wasn’t unusual, that women who leave their batterer are at a 75% greater risk of being murdered than are women who stay. Battered women leave all the time and are punished for it. Those who are not killed for their insolence are often so severely punished by society that they quickly go back or jump into another equally abusive partnership.

We do leave and the majority of us have children and we get assigned a new role. We transform, as if by magic, from wives and mothers (pillars of our civilization) into horrid society murdering beasts. We become SINGLE MOTHERS.

I made that change some time ago. A fear for my life and for the lives of my children pushed me to abandon everything I had and to move hundreds of miles from the only home my children had ever known. Believe me; I had cause to re-think that decision many times over the first few years. Not only did I become a single mother when I left, but my family became an entirely different kind of family, somehow less valuable without a man. Less valuable and a lot more vulnerable. Let me tell you about one night in particular.

We’d been here for about four years the night that my neighbors sent a representative to knock on my door. We were sitting on the dining room floor (just till we got a dining room table, mind you) eating our bologna sandwiches, (It was always bologna sandwiches when the gas was cut off) not feeling too sorry for ourselves about the gas; at least it was summer we weren’t freezing, when there came a knock on the door. I peeped cautiously out from the sheet on the window to make sure it wasn’t some welfare worker or anybody else likely to make trouble about what we didn’t have. Satisfied that it was a neighbor of mine, I opened the door. She didn’t waste any time, this neighbor of mine but told me quickly and clearly why she had come. Some of the neighbors had gotten together it seemed, and they’d decided that they would like for me to move, and as quickly as possible if I didn’t mind. Just like that-please move. I stared for a moment wondering if the could do that-ask me to move-I didn’t know. The problem? The crime I’d committed that merited throwing me out of the neighborhood? I hadn’t mowed my grass and it was beginning to look really bad on the whole neighborhood she said.

Now after four years on our own, it still took every penny I could get my hands on to pay m rent and feed my children, we still didn’t have beds to sleep in or furniture to sit on, we had no money and no utilities but these neighbors hadn’t come to me with the offer of loaning me a lawn mower, No. There had been no helping hand at the end

of their outstretched arm, only a pointing finger. Was I insensitive to the needs of my community? Perhaps, but on top of everything else I just couldn't see how I could manage to get a lawn mower. We moved. And as quickly as possible.

That was quite a while ago, but things like that are still going on. Just this year I saw my landlord evict the woman from the house next to mine (also an escaped battered woman, also with small children) for the offense of having her utilities disconnected for non-payment.

These are the types of treatment that crush the strength a woman has mustered to get out of an abusive situation. Her strength alone can only take her so far. After that she needs the help of others. It doesn't have to be money. It could be something as simple as the loan of a lawn mower. Maybe some compassion, a little understanding, some patience, whatever it is, people in the community, not just agencies and institutions, but individuals in our society must be prepared to stand behind or women in trouble. Don't listen to political hogwash telling you that mothers who find themselves without husbands are a threat to you and to all of society. Be prepared to extend at the end of your outstretched arm, not a pointing finger, but a helping hand.

Battered women do leave their abusers. Apparently in droves because that woman I mentioned in the beginning, the one who died, couldn't find room in a shelter that night. They were already full, of women who had already left.

I say the question is no longer, "Why don't they leave?" I say the questions now are "Why aren't they safe when they leave?" and "What can we do to help them stay gone?"

What are Your Rights in a Relationship?

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...

- To express your opinions and have them be respected
- To have your needs be as important as your partner's needs.
- To grow as an individual in your own way.
- To change your mind.
- To not take responsibility for your partner's behavior.
- To not be physically, emotionally, or sexually abused.
- And, you have the right to break up and fall out of love with someone and not be threatened.

ARE YOU BEING ABUSED?

ASK YOURSELVES THESE QUESTIONS...

- Are you frightened by your partner's temper?
- Are you afraid to disagree?
- Are you constantly apologizing for our partner's behavior, especially when they have treated you badly?
- Do you have to justify everything you do, every place you go, or every person you see just to avoid your partner's anger?
- Does your partner put you down, but then tells you that they love you?
- Have you ever been hit, kicked, shoved, or had things thrown at you?
- Do you not see friends and family because of your partner's jealousy?
- Have you been forced into having sex when you didn't want to?
- Are you afraid to break up because your partner has threatened to hurt you or themselves?

ARE YOU BEING ABUSIVE?

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS...

- Do you constantly check up on your partner and accuse them of being with other people?
- Are you extremely jealous or possessive?
- Do you have an explosive temper?
- Have you hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown things at your partner?
- Do you constantly criticize or insult your partner?
- Do you become violent when you drink or use drugs?
- Have you threatened your partner or broken things in their presence?
- Have you forced your partner to have sex with you or intimidated them so they are afraid to say so?
- Have you threatened to hurt them?
- Have you threatened to hurt yourself if they break up with you or leave?



MISSION&PHILOSOPHY

Men Stopping Violence is a social change organization dedicated to ending men's violence against women.

Men Stopping Violence works locally and nationally to dismantle belief systems, social structures, and institutional practices that oppress women and children and dehumanize men themselves. We look to the violence against women's movement to keep the reality of the problem and the vision of the solution before us. We believe that all forms of oppression are interconnected. Social justice work in the areas of race, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation are all critical to ending violence against women.

OUR HISTORY

In the early 1980s, two Atlanta therapists, each with a history of involvement in progressive social change work, decided to pursue working with men who batter. Independently, Dick Bathrick, M.A., and Gus Kaufman, Jr., Ph.D., had been reading about the still-new battered women's movement and had begun to inquire locally about the advisability of conducting a program for batterers. First they approached Susan May who was then Executive Director of the Coalition for Battered Women, asking if a program for batterers would be useful to their shelter. Her response was, "Only if you don't create more work and more pressure for battered women and their advocates. Go ahead and we'll let you know whether it's working for women."

Soon after they began their first batterer's group in Atlanta, Kathleen Carlin, who was then Executive Director of the Cobb County YWCA Women's Resource Center, hired them to run a group for court mandated batterers. The arrangement that ensued was one in which Dick and Gus would teach the batterers classes (then called "groups") under the supervision of Kathleen and another advocate, Leigh Ann Peterson.

For all four, as well as for the men in "group," this structure proved extremely challenging—indeed radical. It was unheard of for men to talk together about the ways they view and treat women; even more so for their discussions to be taped, listened to and commented on by women. The arrangement shed light on the function of male collusion and secrecy, the shift required for men to hold battered women's reality central, and the work involved in men's taking direction from women advocates.

Within a short time it became clear that the work would be most effective if a woman played primary leadership organization. Kathleen left the shelter to become the founding executive director of Men Stopping Violence in 1982.

MSV honed its analysis and expanded its work over the ensuing years, moving always toward a sharper focus on social change but maintaining the work with batterers as both a "laboratory" for men learning the work and an entree into the community. A significant new work area was added in 1994 when MSV won one of four national cooperative agreement awards with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct research into effective community intervention to end battering.

In 1996, Kathleen was diagnosed with lung cancer, and passed away after a six-month battle with the disease. A planning committee was appointed from among board, staff, women's advocate consultants, and the community at-large to design and recommend an organizational structure that would meet current philosophical and programmatic needs. The results of this in-depth process were a new team structure for programmatic and administrative functions; the naming of Ulester Douglas and Dick Bathrick as Co-Executive Directors; the creation of a two-woman consultancy to the organization; and a new by-law requiring that women constitute a majority on the Board of Directors.

This structure remained in place from 1998-2003, when Shelley Serdahely became the Executive Director, giving Ulester Douglas and Dick Bathrick an opportunity to move back into the programmatic leadership roles at which they excelled.

Men Stopping Violence continues to evolve through a continual process of examining internal lessons and external demands. However, our vision of safety for women remains constant, and our commitment to staying in the work for the long haul is firm

An Open Letter to Christian Domestic Violence Victims in the Church

May 04, 2009 by
Gayle Crabtree

Dear Sister in Christ,

I notice that you seem on edge in church sometimes and have seen that this usually happens when you are with the man you love. The two of you always look so nice together. That long sleeve jacket of yours looked sharp Sunday. The way it matched his tie was perfect. I was so taken with it that I forgot to ask why you would wear long sleeves on such a hot day.

Wednesday we thought you were coming to our monthly ladies Bible Study. You were in charge of the program and had talked about it for weeks. We all looked forward to it. Then you called that night to say you couldn't make it. Your voice broke as you quickly hung up the phone. You had to go. I understand and hope that you are okay.

Domestic Violence was a component of my life once too. It always starts out with controlling behavior. Maybe he tells you what to wear or where to go? Then life's pressure builds and he lashed out and hits you, beats you, or worse. When he's done he brings you candy, buys you things, and promises it will never happen again. But it does. It always does.

Honey you don't deserve to be beaten. God did not intend for women to be abused. If you want help it is okay to ask for it. Sometimes it's hard. I know. But you are not alone.

Did you know that one in 3 women worldwide will be a victim of abuse in her lifetime? Some of us are right here in church with you. We are your silent sisters in Christ. Most of us struggle with how to talk about it. Words fail us sometimes. That is why I am writing this letter to you.

Did you know that there is a National Domestic Violence Hotline? You can call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). They'll be glad to help you create a safety plan. You don't have to leave if you don't want to. But if you do want to leave they can help.

A husband and wife relationship was meant to be healthy. It is God's perfect way of taking care of each other. Do you think that your man is taking care of you if you have to hide bruises?

God put Eve on this earth to help Adam. Telling our "Adams" that no, we won't be abused is just as important in a relationship as teaching a child how to pick up toys. Standing up to abuse isn't breaking a marriage vow, abusing someone is.

The church is here to bring healing and hope. So, talk with our pastor. See what resources there are right here in our community. Pastor may know about them. There are free resources at <http://www.hopeforhealing.org/clergy> to help Pastor talk about it.

Dear sister above all know that you are loved. God put people on this earth to let you know that. It may take some looking to find us but we're here. We love you and we know that you are stronger than abuse. We will pray for you and your abuser and children too.

Stay safe,

In Him,

A sister in Christ.