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Confronting Domestic Violence

Break the Cycle
of Abuse



Confronting Domestic Violence

Break the Cycle of Abuse



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Introduction

Behind Closed Doors

By Marian V. Liautaud

Lori (not her real name) leaned in closer and lowered her voice. "Phil has been physically abusive for the last 17 years," she confided. "When he's home on the weekends, I sleep in a tent with the girls so I don't have to be near him."

Alarmed by this revelation, I struggled for words to respond. "Oh, Lori," I stumbled, "I'm so sorry. I had no idea you were living through this. What are you planning to do?"





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Lori went on to tell me that she and her husband had never been to counseling. She seemed resigned to a life of abuse. I felt frustrated by her lack of urgency to change her situation. *Why wouldn't she flee and break free from the tyranny she has been living under*, I wondered silently.

As I sifted through articles on the topic of domestic abuse to create this download, I gained a greater understanding of the nightmarish Catch-22 women find themselves in when they live with (or date) a man who is abusive. Corrie Cutrer's two articles provide practical ways you can identify women who may be experiencing abuse and how to help.

On a more theological level, author Steven Tracy explores the real meaning of headship and how our distorted views of it can lead to male dominance. Together these and the other articles in this download provide a good overview of the issue of domestic violence, plus additional resources for help if you or someone you know is trapped in a cycle of abuse.

Soon after Lori shared her secret with me, I saw her again at a neighborhood party. I slipped her the business card of a local counselor who worked with domestic violence victims and perpetrators. Lori politely accepted the card, but I sensed she wasn't planning to make the call for help.





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Without being in her shoes, I can't fully appreciate all the reasons why she would hesitate to get help, much less why her husband would physically harm this beautiful woman who is my friend. Domestic violence is a complex issue that needs to be confronted head on. I'm grateful for the insights of the writers who share their stories and their wisdom in the articles contained on the following pages. And I'm grateful to you for taking a step toward helping to break the cycle of abuse that plagues couples throughout our country.

Peace,

Marian V. Liautaud

Contributing Editor, KYRIA downloads,
Christianity Today International



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Leader's Guide

How to use "Confronting Domestic Violence" for a group study



"Confronting Domestic Violence" can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the "Reflect" questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**



The Other Pro-Life Movement



How to recognize and help rescue the battered women among us.

By Corrie Cutrer

Many years ago Catherine Clark Kroeger faced a decision that would influence her life's course. Serving alongside her pastor husband, Catherine became aware of a woman in her church whose husband was physically abusing her.

Incredibly, several influential church leaders discouraged Catherine from getting too involved. "To them, I was destroying the home by encouraging the woman to get away from the abuse," she remembers.



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Then Catherine received a call from the battered woman's counselor, who said, "You've got to get either the husband or the wife out of the home, or you're going to have a murder."

So Catherine drove to the woman's house to pick her up and help her find shelter. "I decided preserving the life was more important at that time than preserving the family," Catherine says. It wasn't a popular choice among members of her congregation, but the woman likely is alive today because of it.

It was the first in a series of similar incidents that made Catherine realize the prevalence of domestic violence within Christian circles, and how women desperately need help. She went on to become a seminary professor, counselor at a local shelter, and coauthor of two books on domestic violence.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that one in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. And this statistic often excludes incidents of emotional and sexual abuse that go untold.

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women—more than cancer or traffic accidents. According to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, domestic violence is the cause of nearly a quarter million hospital visits every year.

In their book *No Place for Abuse* (IVP Books), Catherine and coauthor Nancy Nason-Clark reveal that 83 percent of American and Canadian clergy interviewed during a





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six-year study shared that at some point in their ministry they've counseled a woman who has an abusive spouse or partner. Additionally, Paula Silva, cofounder of Focus Ministries, a small Illinois-based organization that reaches out to battered women, reports that her ministry alone received 2,000 calls, e-mails, and visits in 2007 from Christian women in abusive situations seeking help.

"Saying that abuse isn't happening to women within the church is like saying sin doesn't happen," says Paula, who's also coauthored *Violence Among Us: Ministry to Families in Crisis* (Judson Press).

Catherine believes the church can create an environment where long-term abuse goes undetected. "Many churches today still promote a misplaced theology on the family where the husband's will always trumps the wife's, divorce is not an option, and submission is deeply misunderstood," she says. "We deny and minimize abuse because we have this glorified concept of what the Christian family ought to be."

Both Catherine and Paula believe Christian women could benefit from recognizing the various types of abuse in order to better help battered women. Whether it's a woman understanding her own abusive situation or friends and relatives recognizing danger in the life of a loved one, here are the main types of abuse that occur.

Emotional and Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse is when a spouse uses words to destroy his wife's self-worth while also aiming to control her. A woman may constantly feel as if she's walking on





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eggshells, trying not to say or do anything wrong in order to avoid an outburst of rage. Her husband may call her names, tell her everything's her fault, or even make fun of her.

She may have to constantly account for the time she spends away from her husband. "Cell phones have become electronic tracking devices a husband can use to trace his wife's whereabouts," Paula says.

At other times, an emotionally-abusive spouse can use a woman's faith against her. "My former husband would often tell me God was disappointed in me because I wasn't doing things the way my husband wanted them done when he wanted them done," says Paula.

Psychological abuse involves a spouse using isolation and intimidation to control his partner. He may keep her away from loved ones or coworkers. Or he may begin to threaten physical harm to himself, his wife, his children, or his wife's loved ones, pets, or possessions.

Often, psychological abuse serves as a precursor to physical abuse. If an abusive spouse causes harm to an animal or shatters a treasured possession, this indicates an increase in rage and willingness to cause physical harm to another person.

Physical Abuse

When a husband physically assaults his wife, the result could be cuts, bruises, black eyes, broken bones,





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dislocated limbs, or broken teeth. It involves hitting, slapping, pushing, biting, hair pulling, or even the denial of medical care.

"Physical abuse has all sorts of levels," Paula adds. "It can be the slightest bruise or even just a pinch. It could be a husband blocking an exit as an argument escalates, making it impossible for his wife to leave the room or their car. It's any physical act intended to instill fear and exert control over the other person."

Economic Abuse

Sometimes a husband will restrict access to a bank account or withhold money altogether as a form of abuse. "I once counseled a woman whose husband would only allow her to buy so many diapers for their baby each month," Paula says. "I've seen other situations where a husband required his wife to produce receipts for every penny spent."

"Another example is when a husband withholds clothing from his wife," Catherine says. "At one point I counseled the wife of a wealthy businessman. She was walking around in nothing but a rain jacket in the middle of a Minnesota winter. The husband would not allow her to spend money on a heavy coat."

Sexual Abuse

Like physical abuse, sexual abuse can vary. For Paula, who was married to an abuser for 28 years, it meant sex on demand. "I knew my body wasn't my own," she





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remembers. "If I didn't give in, there would be endless verbal attacks. 'God must be so disgusted with you for being this kind of wife,' my former husband would say. 'Don't you know this is what he commands?'"

"There were certain things he wanted me to do that I didn't feel comfortable doing," Paula says. "I felt like a prostitute."

Sexual abusers often force women into uncomfortable situations, Catherine says. "In more extreme cases, a man might force his wife into having group sex or sex with an animal. Or he might ask her to have sex with someone else while he watches. These things utterly demean a woman and cause a profound wound."

They also could result in gynecological problems for a woman, Catherine says, adding that one-third of abused women are battered during pregnancy.

Getting Help

Surprisingly, Paula says emotional abuse leaves the deepest scars in women. "It destroys the spirit," she says. "A woman tends to believe those false messages she's been told, even if she's out of the relationship. It's hard to shed the lies she's believed for so long."

That's why—regardless of the type of abuse—it's so important to get help. Check out these websites and hot-lines, and know that, with Christ's help, healing is possible.





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www.theraveproject.org

www.peaceandsafety.com

www.ncadv.org

www.focusministriesl.org

I-800-799-SAFE

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Reflect

- *Have you ever known anyone who has suffered any form of abuse as described in this article? What did they do to break free of the abuse?*
- *The author says emotional abuse leaves the deepest scars. In what ways do you think this is true?*



The Silent Epidemic



Countless Christian women are battered every day. Here's how to respond if you or someone you love is abused.

By Nancy Ortberg

Her husband's comments were so routine that for 20 years, Brenda Branson didn't realize she was a victim of verbal and emotional abuse.

"You breathe too loud," her husband would tell her. "Your smile is silly. You look terrible. Don't you have anything better to wear?"

It wasn't until Brenda realized his comments weren't true that she approached him. And that's when he picked up a chair and hit her with it. Brenda knew she had to do something, so she went to her pastor. Unfortunately he wasn't equipped





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to handle domestic abuse; his suggestions about submitting to her husband only made her home life more difficult. "Our church didn't know what to do with us," Brenda says. "They just wanted the problem to go away."

Brenda got the help she needed by forming a support group with another domestic-violence victim. Then in 1995 she cofounded Focus Ministries, one of the few Christian organizations devoted to helping victims of domestic violence while also training churches on how they can assist members who are being abused.

According to Detective Sgt. Don Stewart, a retired police officer who handled domestic violence cases for 25 years, one out of every four Christian couples experiences at least one episode of physical abuse within their marriage. In fact, battering is the single largest cause of injury to women—more than auto accidents, muggings, and rapes combined. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists reports that 3 to 4 million women are beaten in their homes every year. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, approximately 2,000 women are murdered every year by an intimate partner.

"Domestic violence has become an epidemic," says Brenda, who is no longer married to her husband. The enormity of the problem, combined with the fact law enforcement officials and church leaders often lack the skills to address it, led Don to author *Refuge* (New Hope), a book helping victims understand and flee from violence in their homes. "I consider Don to be





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a missionary who offers hope to hurting women and presents a wakeup call to the Christian community to get involved," says Brenda.

Don and Brenda answered questions on how battered women can get help, as well as how Christians can respond to this crisis.

Explain the different types of domestic abuse.

Don: Emotional and verbal abuse are the cutting remarks a spouse uses to destroy his wife's sense of self-worth. A man may label a woman fat or stupid. He may demean her personal accomplishments or scream at her that the dinner she cooked is terrible. Perhaps he yells at her because she's 15 minutes late coming home from work.

Physical abuse is when a man injures his wife in a nonsexual manner. Then there's sexual abuse—when a spouse forces sex on his partner. Most states have adopted laws protecting married women against spousal rape. But because there's so much shame involved for the woman, she may be hesitant to come forward about this.

Brenda: Emotional and verbal abuse can become so commonplace in a woman's relationship that she doesn't realize she's being harmed. It took me a while to realize my husband's attacks weren't my fault and weren't true. For example, we both used to work in our church's children's ministry. My husband often told me I was uncaring toward the kids. For a long time I struggled





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with this, until one day someone told me how blessed she was by the compassion I extended to her children. Suddenly I saw I'd been basing my identity on my husband's perception of me instead of God's.

What signs indicate verbal abuse may head toward physical abuse?

Don: When a husband starts saying things such as, "If you ever left me, I'd kill myself," or "If you don't do exactly as I tell you, I'm going to beat the daylights out of you." Those are clues the escalation from verbal to physical abuse may have begun.

Another sign is if a husband starts damaging household property that has sentimental value to his wife. A batterer never will demolish his prized possessions, but he often will shatter a piece of pottery or a family heirloom. If his comments intensify to the point he says something such as, "If you ever leave me, I'm going to kill you and the kids," or "I'm going to burn the house down," he's crossed a critical psychological barrier, and it's not long before he's going to act on his words. As soon as a woman no longer feels safe in her home, she needs to make arrangements to leave. She may have to leave only until she and her husband can get some counseling or until he's arrested and has gone through a treatment program—but she still needs to remove herself from the dangerous situation.

What are the typical personality traits of a batterer?

Don: Jealousy, hypersensitivity toward even the most constructive criticism, and the tendency to pressure a woman into a quick engagement, marriage, or live-in relationship. I encourage single women to watch out for





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these signs. Other indications include any use of physical force against you or an unusually harsh attitude toward children or animals. And any history of past battering should be of major concern.

How can we tell if abuse is happening in a woman's life?

Don: A batterer tries to isolate his victim. So if you see a woman being isolated from family, friends, or church, that's a red flag. The second thing to look for is if the woman's husband constantly monitors his wife's whereabouts. He may call her ten times a day at work, and if she doesn't answer each time, he demands to know where she was. Or if she doesn't arrive home in the evening at a precise time, he demands to know why.

Also, be on the lookout if a woman completely covers her body with pants and a long-sleeve shirt even when it's hot outside, or if she uses a lot of makeup. She could be trying to cover a bruise.

Should a friend who suspects abuse approach a woman about it?

Don: It depends on your relationship. If you're friends or even have a good, casual relationship, invite her to breakfast or for coffee, and approach the subject gently by asking, "Is everything OK? Tell me about your personal life. How is your relationship with your husband?" Don't condemn her or try to push her out of her relationship with her husband.

At some point you need to say, "I'm concerned about you. If you'd like to talk about anything that's troubling you, I'm here for you." If she opens up, emphasize that she isn't





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causing her husband's abuse. Tell her: "You don't deserve what's happening to you. God doesn't approve of any man who beats, controls, or retaliates against his wife. And whenever you're ready to leave, I'm ready to help."

You may want to make an appointment for the two of you to sit down with a pastor, social worker, or law enforcement officer and decide where to go from there. If you discover she's being abused but she's unwilling to do anything about it, you also need to consider the option of calling the police for her. This is a difficult judgment call; it requires prayer and knowledge of the situation. But it may help save her life.

How can we better empathize with an abused woman?

Don: Be careful not to criticize an abused woman, because until you've walked in her shoes, you can't appreciate the unbelievable hell she lives in every day. It's very difficult for a woman to walk away from an abusive situation—often the batterer is the full breadwinner in the family and she fears economic hardship. Nearly 50 percent of all homeless women and children in the U. S. are without a home because they're fleeing from domestic violence. Also, a woman may fear greater harassment from her spouse if she leaves, and this could prevent her from getting the help she needs.

What can the church do?

Brenda: Church members are so afraid of promoting divorce they often don't give women the help they need. Sometimes divorce is the end result of domestic violence, but I always tell church leaders that Focus Ministries doesn't promote divorce—we promote a woman's *safety*.





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That's why it's important that leaders learn how to properly advise abused women. The techniques people use to counsel couples with other marital problems don't work with domestic abuse.

For example, when I went to my pastor for help, he encouraged me to be extra loving to my husband, to make his favorite meals, to extend empathy and ask if he'd had a hard day when he seemed agitated. Both pastors and abused women often mistakenly think if the *woman* changes, then things will get better. That's not true. Even the most gentle "confrontation" with my husband set him off and made things worse.

Don: Church leaders also need to realize batterers can be manipulative. I know a woman in my community who went to her pastor for help because she was afraid of her husband. The pastor called her husband and asked that he and the wife come in for counseling. The poor woman was absolutely terrified to sit in a joint counseling session with her husband and said nothing while the husband smoothed things over. Shortly after this, the woman made a decision to leave her husband. One night when she thought he was away, she returned home to get some of her things. The husband was there hiding and beat the woman so severely that parts of her brain were exposed.

Leaders also need to work to dismiss misinterpretations of Scripture such as 1 Peter 3:1-6, which abusers often use to defend their actions. It's unbelievable how many Christian men think they're entitled by God to discipline and control their wives. As 1 Peter 3:7 reminds us, no man has a God-given right to punish or retaliate against his wife under





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any condition. And a woman shouldn't be led to think that through her submission and suffering she'll become a better person. To allow someone to abuse you does not bring glory to God.

Are there any steps we can take to reach out to the abused?

Brenda: Order training materials or invite someone in your area who's qualified to speak at your church to promote awareness. Most church members don't know how prevalent domestic violence is among Christians and have no idea how to deal with it. Also, find out what local support groups are available for abused women and have that information readily available.

Don: Organize a list of resources within your church you can utilize if you need to help an abused woman flee from a violent situation. She may need a vacant apartment, money for food and clothing, a car, or an attorney. Let women minister to women while men play a secondary role from a distance. Also, work to establish a relationship with your local women's shelter. Most women who work at these shelters are dedicated, passionate people who do wonderful things for abused women. Often these workers are willing to come to a church and provide the kind of instruction and tools church members need to react appropriately when they learn someone's being abused.

The church is in a great position to reach out to women who suffer so badly. My prayer is they'll do it.

This article first appeared in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN MAGAZINE, 2004.





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Reflect

- *In what ways does the church make it more difficult for victims of domestic violence to confront the issue?*
- *What does your church do to assist victims of domestic violence?*



Headship with a Heart



How biblical patriarchy actually prevents abuse.

By Steven Tracy

In 15 years of pastoral ministry, I have heard my share of confessions, accusations, and rationalizations. One conversation stands out above the rest and haunts me to this day. A man in my congregation confided in me that years ago he had physically and sexually abused several of his children. He had been arrested and participated in court-mandated counseling but had skillfully manipulated the system. His wife tried to protect the children, but the abuse continued for some time. When I asked him why he continued to abuse the children while he was on probation, his answer took my breath away. "I guess I did it because I was the head of the family, and it was my right to do whatever I wanted to my wife and kids."





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Headship with a Heart

I wish this were the only time I have heard a man use *male headship* to justify abuse. Unfortunately, I have heard twisted statements like this many times over. My wife, who is a family therapist, hears horrific stories of male authority turned malignant virtually every day.

Few phrases are more explosive in our culture than male headship. Feminists claim that patriarchy (the affirmation of male authority over females) is the basis for most social pathology and for virtually all domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. In their groundbreaking book on domestic violence, sociologists R. Emerson and Russell Dobash assert "the seeds of wife beating lie in the subordination of females and in their subjection to male authority and control. This relationship has been institutionalized in the structure of the patriarchal family." (*Violence Against Wives: The Case Against the Patriarchy*, Free Press, 1983) Others attack patriarchy even more virulently, calling it a "death sentence" for society (Russ Fink, *Stopping Rape: A Challenge to Men*, New Society, 1993).

Is male headship in any and all forms a death sentence? No, but a distortion of it often is. Widespread abuse of male power is both anticipated and condemned in Scripture. Genesis 3:16 sadly predicts that one effect of the Fall would be a power struggle between the sexes. "He shall rule over you" is no divine prescription, but a tragic predication of sin's effects on the human race. Scripture declares that in our fallen world, those with power (typically males) will use their power to exploit and abuse those with less power (typically females and children) (Micah 2:9; Isa. 10:1–2; Ezek. 22:6–12). Due to inborn





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depravity, males often need little or no training to abuse their power; it is their default setting.

As someone who has devoted much of his professional life to the protection of women and children, I am deeply concerned about the way patriarchy often fuels abuse. Because I am a Christian theologian, however, Scripture tethers my response. The concept of male headship first entered the church through the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23), not through a wife-beating chauvinist. Unfortunately, much contemporary discussion of male headship has gotten bogged down in etymological controversy regarding the meaning of the Greek word *kephale*, translated "head" in English. Some argue that we should render this word "source of life" (Gilbert Bilezikian and Catherine Clark Kroeger, for example) while others maintain the traditional definition "authority over." Detailed word studies, particularly those done by Wayne Grudem, convince many of us that *kephale* was used in the first century to denote authority over (see Eph. 5:23–24; Col. 1:18). Paul appeals to the creation order itself to establish the transcultural norm of male leadership (1 Cor. 11:8; 1 Tim. 2:12–13).

But for those of us who believe in the husband's household authority, this hardly settles the question of what godly male headship really looks like. More specifically, how can we prevent male headship from turning into male domination?

Paul, who introduced this vexing phrase, is the best authority to clarify its meaning. His instructive clarification has largely been lost in the gender roles





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debate. Paul's clarification of male headship is succinct and poignant: the man is the head of the woman, as God [the Father] is the head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). If we want to clarify healthy male headship, we must transcend human models and observe how the Father relates to the Son. Let me anchor this discussion in a brief description of the Father's relationship with the Son recorded in John 5:18–24.

The Gospel of John gives rich detail regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son. This passage begins with Jesus' scandalous claim of sonship to the *Father* (5:18). *Father* is a radical proclamation of equality with the Father. In fact, throughout this passage, which describes the Father's relationship with the Son, equality is repeatedly highlighted. This is an important starting place as we reflect on the nature of male headship, for feminists claim that male headship is predicated on assumptions of male superiority. John teaches that headship is based on equality. The Father's headship over the Son is specifically reflected in loving intimacy, sharing authority, honoring and protecting.

Loving Intimacy

In John 5:19–20 we see that while the Son does not act independently of the Father ("the Son can do nothing of himself"), this is not based on the Son's inferiority but on the intimate relationship he has with the Father. "For whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (v. 19) indicates an uninterrupted intimacy between the Father and the Son that is so intense that the Son not only will not but cannot act independently of the Father. This is further clarified in





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verse 20, which says "the Father loves [literally 'keeps on loving'] the Son and shows him all things that he himself is doing." The Father's headship over the Son is thus expressed in unbroken intimacy in which the Father continually loves and delights in the Son, and reveals his will to the Son he delights in. *In short, the work of the Father and the Son is the collaboration of intimate equals.* In this reading of biblical headship, submission is not a matter of mere duty, but a delightful response from a woman who is loved, partnered with, and trusted as an equal.

The importance of defining male headship in terms of loving equality between the man and the woman cannot be overemphasized. Physical and sexual abuse by men is shockingly prevalent in our culture. Domestic violence perpetrated by males accounts for more adult female emergency room visits than traffic accidents, muggings, and rapes combined. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, it is the greatest single cause of injury to American women. Abusive men often cite male headship/female submissiveness to justify their abuse. Ultimately, this is based on a perverted assumption of male superiority. Based on John's description of the Father and the Son, human male headship, defined as harsh authoritarian domination of an inferior, is destructive heresy.

Sharing Authority

In John 5:21–24 we find startling statements about the manner in which the Father shares authority with the





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Son. Jesus echoes the ancient Jewish belief that the Father has authority over life and death by asserting that "the Father raises the dead and gives them life." But Jesus then issues a completely unexpected declaration—"even so the Son gives life to whom he wishes" (v. 21). The assertion that the Messiah would have the authority to raise the dead was unknown in ancient Judaism. Jesus further demolishes the Jewish understanding of the Messiah's authority (v. 22) by declaring that "not even the Father judges anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son." In the Old Testament, the Lord God is said to be the ultimate judge, but since Christ is one with the Father, he is given the full authority to judge.

We clearly see here that the Father's headship over the Son does not preclude the Son's having great power and authority. In fact, since the Father and the Son are equals and in intimate relationship, we should not be surprised to find the Father sharing his authority with the Son (cf. Luke 10:22). Sometimes those who affirm male leadership seem to believe that male headship is compromised unless husbands and male elders absolutely wield all authority in the home and in the church. This is not what the headship of the Father over the Son teaches. In fact, the balance of authority within the Trinity should challenge us to exercise biblical headship by giving women authority in various spheres of life and ministry. Feminists have long argued that male headship necessarily denotes inequality. Christian men who insist on maintaining a monopoly on all domestic and ecclesiastical authority validate this misconception, and distort the example of headship within the Trinity.





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Does this Trinitarian model militate against males having final decision-making authority and females responding to male leadership? Not necessarily. To me it merely clarifies male headship. Christ was responsive to the Father's leadership during his incarnation. Repeatedly we read in John's gospel that Christ did the will of the Father and was responsive to the Father's authority (4:34; 6:38; 8:28). Even after Christ's earthly incarnation, he is still submissive to the Father's headship, for at the end of the age "the Son himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to him" (1 Cor. 15:28). At the same time, Christ's submission to the Father was based on equality and shared authority.

While it goes beyond the scope of this article to flesh out the full extent of female authority, we should note that in Scripture godly women have authority to proclaim the gospel (Acts 1:8; Phil. 4:2–3), prophesy (Isa. 8:3; Acts 2:17–18; 21:8–9), run a household (Prov. 31:10–31), manage commercial enterprises (Prov. 31:10–31), hold men accountable (1 Sam. 25:18–38; Luke 18:1–8; Acts 18:26), and serve as co-laborers with men in ministry (Judges 4; Rom. 16:1–6; Phil. 4:2–3).

Honoring and Protecting

One way men honor their wives is by protecting them. While protection is not explicitly noted in John 5:18–24, it is a logical application of loving and honoring. Furthermore, in the context of the final judgment, the Father does empower and protect the Son. This is particularly seen in Psalms 2 and 110, which speak of the Father's empowerment of the Son to triumph over his enemies. Is the protection of women explicitly linked





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Headship with a Heart

to male headship in Scripture? Absolutely, for this is a dominant biblical theme. Men are particularly called to protect and care for women and children (Deut. 25:5–10; Isa. 1:15–17; Jer. 22:2–3), for this is how God himself exercises his power and authority (Deut. 10:17–19).

Unfortunately, secular society and even the Christian church consistently fail to protect women, and often blame women for physical or sexual violence perpetrated upon them. World Health Organization research indicates that at least one in five of the world's females has been physically or sexually abused by a man or men at some time in her life. Violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer. In North America, more than one in four women experiences a violent outburst from her partner during her lifetime, and 30 percent of all women murdered are killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends. Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop called domestic violence "the greatest health threat in America."

In spite of these appalling statistics, James and Phyllis Alsdurf's survey of more than 5,000 Protestant pastors shows that pastors fail to take the husband's violence seriously and simply encourage wives to be submissive (*Battered into Submission*, Wipf and Stock, 1998). It would be difficult for a man to imagine how vulnerable women often feel in our culture. A woman who has been repeatedly treated with contempt and abused becomes emotionally numb. Typically she will underreport the violence. Therefore, a pastor must focus on confronting male abuses of power and protecting vulnerable women. Churches must begin to aggressively confront abusers,





Confronting Domestic Violence

Headship with a Heart

pursue all means possible to protect vulnerable women, and teach that male headship means protection, not domination.

Some Radical Implications

While feminists are correct to highlight the widespread abuses of male power, many of us believe the best solution is not to reject male headship but to clarify it. For us, 1 Corinthians 11:3 provides the best imaginable corrective to distortions of male authority by defining human male headship in terms of the Father's headship over the Son.

The radical implications of this text should not be overlooked. Based on 1 Corinthians 11:3, we should consider it just as heretical to imply male superiority over women as we consider it heretical to say that Christ is inferior to the Father. We should consider it utterly unbiblical for men to dishonor women, as we consider it utterly unbiblical to deny worship to Christ. Just as we would be offended by and oppose the teaching of anyone who would deny that the Father raised Christ from the dead and will empower him to have final victory over his enemies, so we should be deeply offended by and oppose anyone who fails to honor and protect women. The most instructive model for sex roles is the headship of the Father over the Son.

Steven Tracy is vice president of academic affairs and associate professor of theology and ethics at Phoenix Seminary in Scottsdale, Arizona.

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Headship with a Heart

Reflect

- *In what ways does the author's perspective challenge your thinking on the issue of male headship?*
- *The author says male headship is about honor and protection not dominance. How does Jesus' relationship to the Father support this statement?*



kyria

Hope Blooms

I'm escaping a lifetime of abuse and poverty, one brushstroke at a time.

Cybele Fluno, as told to Ronna Snyder



I knew we'd sunk to a new low when my two kids and I spent the day in a Wal-Mart because it was warmer than the RV we shared with my unemployed boyfriend, and the food sample trays were fuller than our shelves. But I was no stranger to poverty and hunger.

The physical abuse I suffered at my boyfriend's hands wasn't new, either. The harsh treatment I grew up with—including inappropriate sexual contact by adult men—formed a perverted sort of comfort zone. Warning signs that would alert a healthy person to steer clear of a relationship served more like street signs keeping me on the same road to ruin.





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Hope Blooms

Growing up, I found no solace in the church my family attended, which mixed Scripture with fear, condemnation, control, and abuse. The group my family was in didn't teach about a God of unconditional love and forgiveness. Yet at age 16, I called out to God from the depths of my battered being. Afterwards, I felt different—as though I'd just met someone whose heart I knew I could trust. Not surprisingly, when I told my mother about this, she and the church authorities scolded me.

A Way Out

I had *one* safe spot from the poverty and abuse of my youth—my art. The canvas was where I poured out emotions so deep I didn't have words for them.

Flowers fascinated me as their petals unfolded with hope and promise; when I painted them, the darkness of my life disappeared. As it did, I could dare to dream that no matter what the adults in my life said, perhaps God could love and empower me.

In high school I was awarded an art scholarship to Oral Roberts University—a major coup for an impoverished girl like me. While there, I finally was away from the grip of control and abuse.

Unfortunately, a family crisis brought me home from college, where I was making straight As. But strengthened by my time away, I finally left the cult. I met a youth pastor who swept me off my feet. Because he was from a legitimate denomination, he represented a new path to me—a healthy relationship within a healthy church.





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Hope Blooms

On our first date, the youth pastor proposed. We were married two weeks later. I soon learned that kind of impulsive, irrational behavior was his hallmark. It *might* have been a red flag had I known the warning signs of abusive relationships. I never returned to ORU, a choice I regret to this day.

Back to Abuse

It wasn't long before my husband—and his lightning-quick rage—controlled every aspect of my life. Despite the fact he also was an auto mechanic, I never had a working vehicle, which kept me at home under his control. He limited my social contacts, monitored what I read, and controlled all our meager finances. He had affairs with other women and admitted to lusting after men. Despite all this, we had two children right away.

Blinded by my years of childhood abuse, I clung to my distorted vision of the submissive wife. I believed my husband's lies that I was the one with the problem. When I confided in church leadership, many were duped by the mask of religiosity my husband wore. They encouraged me to pray more.

When we attended counseling, my husband was a master manipulator, appearing loving and attentive. Today I know marriage counseling often doesn't work with chronic abusers; they need abuser counseling.

Thankfully I still had one safe place—at my easel. But one day my rage-filled husband picked up my most recent creation and shattered it. With it went my last vestige of self. It was a long time before I painted again.





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Hope Blooms

As his violent behavior escalated, my husband drifted further from church—and from God. With my church's support, I eventually filed for a restraining order and a divorce.

A Harrowing Escape

Still oblivious to the red flags of abuse, I went through a series of relationships, wrongly thinking if I could find the *right* man, things might change.

Several years later, I was living with yet another controlling man. He was unemployed, and we were barely eking out an existence in an RV with my two children. He kept the gate around our meager home locked to prevent my escape. I'd drifted away from church, but I'd recently read a Christian book about love addictions and abuse. Remembering the time years before when I'd felt the Lord's presence, I offered a prayer I'd never uttered before: "God, if you deliver me from these types of relationships, I'll give you my entire life." Again I sensed God's powerful presence.

Five months pregnant, barely dressed, and without even a suitcase, I bolted for our truck. I knew the gas gauge was on empty. But my spirit, for the first time in perhaps my entire life, wasn't. Miraculously, the car started. I raced down the lane and was stunned to see that the gate was open. New to that town, I fled to the only safe place I knew: the library.

I madly searched the Internet for a nearby shelter. Swallowing my pride, I called the toll-free number of the





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domestic violence (DV) shelter in the next town. A kind female voice assured me she'd pick up the kids and me if we didn't have the gas. I told her I believed we did, and God didn't let me down. The gas gauge ran on empty all the way to the kids' school and the shelter.

We had no money, no clothes, not even toothbrushes—let alone paint brushes—but we *were* going somewhere. I just knew it.

Finding Shelter

For weeks I met with DV counselors. As a struggling Christian, I needed to learn that while God *did* want me to have a gentle spirit as a wife, this didn't mean God wanted me to be a doormat.

As I grew stronger, we moved to another shelter, where I continued in counseling, joined a Bible study, and scoped out a few churches. I memorized the warning signs so I could spot potential abusers, and I stayed celibate. I repented for *my* mistakes and sins, owning the fact I'd allowed this kind of treatment to repeat itself in my life. I drew closer to God.

Hearing of my long-dormant artistic talents, the staff at the homeless shelter gave me some art supplies three weeks after I delivered my baby girl. When they gave me a canvas, I asked God to be with me as I painted. A flower burst forth. The same thing happened with each new canvas they gave me. More flowers appeared, beautiful metaphors for my slowly blossoming life.





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My Bible-study leader, who also wrote for the local paper, showed my paintings to some local art critics. They compared them to the work of famed floral painter Georgia O'Keefe. The reporter wrote a front-page article on my work accompanied by pictures of my paintings. A local gallery asked me to have a showing. There, my first customer bought a painting. Others followed.

God's Masterpiece

It's been three years since then, and the flowers continue to burst forth on my canvases. While I still use a pseudonym as a last name when signing my paintings and doing interviews (an ex still stalks me), and finances are tight, things are getting better. I replaced my clunker of a truck with a like-new used car, and I just bought my first home. There's no man—except Jesus—calling the shots in my life. I continue with counseling, and I'm part of a ministry that intercedes for others in abusive relationships.

Like the flowers I once again paint, I'm blooming with hope. I know God wants nothing less from me as he repaints my life, one brushstroke at a time.

This article first appeared in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN MAGAZINE, 2007.





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Hope Blooms

Reflect

- *Have you or anyone you know ever been in an abusive relationship? What were the red flags that indicated the relationship was unhealthy?*
- *How did you or the person you know find the courage to leave the situation?*



My Abusive “Christian” Marriage



I couldn't believe this was my reality.
And I couldn't see a way out.

By Gwyneth Nelson

“Did Daddy do that?” my daughter asked. Lying on the floor in the doorway of her room, I was stunned as I realized my daughter had just witnessed undeniable physical abuse. Tom's* anger had escalated into unrestrained rage, and he'd thrown me into our daughter's bedroom. Confused, I began to question my situation: Was I really experiencing domestic violence in my Christian home?

I'd denied the truth so long I was unable to recognize what was really happening. The abuse had started subtly and grown insidiously. My husband and I claimed to be Christians, so how could our marriage be abusive? Unable to give my four-year-old daughter



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any more excuses, I said, "Yes, Daddy did that." Then I locked us in her room and crawled in bed with her until she fell asleep. That night I resolved to stop the impact of domestic abuse in my daughter's life—a difficult decision that finally pointed me in the direction of healing.

Control Issues

It was inconceivable to me that I'd ever be in such circumstances. Born and raised in a loving pastor's family, I was steeped in conservative evangelical culture. As a "good girl," I got good grades, participated in extra-curricular school activities, and was a leader in the church youth group. I lived to please others, worked hard to offend no one, and had an internal drive to create a wonderful life. Though I had a relationship with Christ, I lived as if the good life depended on my good performance.

I met Tom at the Christian liberal arts college we both attended. He was handsome, intelligent, and interesting—always looking for adventure and fun. His father was a pastor, so we'd been raised in similar Christian cultures. Tom often discussed theology and doctrine, and he cared genuinely about people's salvation. Our wedding was a large, elaborate, God-centered event. I envisioned our marriage to be a shared life of service and impact for God's kingdom. I also believed that if I performed well, my marriage would go well and we'd have a good life together.





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Though, looking back, I realized Tom was very self-centered while we were dating, I hadn't seen any red flags about the abuse that was to come. But early on I saw signs that life was going to be very different from what I'd envisioned. After returning from our honeymoon, Tom expected to use the entire closet in our bedroom while I used a closet in another room. He said this was because he'd moved into the apartment first. We went to the bank to put his name on my checks, but he didn't want my name on his. He monitored my purchases, even though I was working full-time and we weren't struggling financially. He was more concerned about controlling what I bought than how much money I spent. If I didn't comply with Tom's expectations or get his permission, he'd become angry and yell. For example, when I purchased drinking glasses and a shower curtain, he raged at me because he'd expected to choose those items himself. I'd eagerly anticipated freely organizing and decorating our home. Instead, I began to adjust to the practice of gaining approval for things such as hanging a picture on the wall.

Six months into our marriage, Tom began to come home from work late—often into the next morning—without telling me his plans. More than once I called the police and hospitals, concerned he was hurt or in trouble. Upon returning home, he'd ridicule me for worrying. He insisted that if I inquired about where he was or when he'd return, I was controlling him. He chided me for what he called my lack of trust in him. More than once, he yelled so loudly at me that the neighbors knocked at the door and asked if everything was all right. Embarrassed and ashamed, I said everything was fine.





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But as I began to internalize Tom's accusations and criticisms, both my confidence and my self-worth began to crumble. I couldn't confidently discard old food from our refrigerator without fearing a blow up because I'd mistakenly tossed something Tom wanted to eat. When he said I was addicted to worship music, I spent less time listening to praise songs. As my self-worth eroded, I questioned my ability to be a loving wife and mother, and whether I was truly a woman of faith.

Keeping Up Appearances

On the outside we looked put-together, especially in our Christian circles. Tom appeared spiritually mature. He prayed eloquent prayers, participated in deep theological discussions, and often referenced Scripture to support his insights. We hosted small group meetings, led Sunday-school classes, and hosted fun parties for our Christian friends. I did everything I could to establish the appearance of the godly partnership I desired.

But behind closed doors, things weren't fine. Unable to predict when the switch would flip on Tom's anger, I walked on eggshells. Without warning, I'd suddenly become the object of Tom's uncontrolled, frightening rage. Sometimes as I tried to back away, he'd corner me. He'd grab me by the shoulders and yell in my face. Sometimes he'd shake me and drop me to the floor. Before leaving for work one day, he screamed, "You're insolent, impudent, and intransigent!" He punctuated this rant by punching and cracking the closet door as he stormed out of the house. Episodes like this were common.





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Because our situation was so intense, I was in constant conversation with God. I pored through Scripture to find direction and connection to my Savior. I took to heart Tom's accusations that I was ungodly, unsubmitive, and prideful, and constantly confessed my sin. I also took seriously the scriptural reference to forgive 70 times 7, so as Tom's rages continued, I focused on forgiveness and mercy.

Though I rarely received bruises, the ever-present threat of physical harm was devastating and, at times, immobilizing. By far, the most harm I received was emotional. He'd call me a self-righteous b**** or a f***ing "good-girl" and end a tirade with a Scripture reference: "I'm just speaking the truth in love." He repeatedly told me what was "true" about me: I was controlling, disrespectful, unsubmitive, and self-important. I lost confidence in my ability to identify reality. "Truth" had been verbally twisted and used against me. The fear and constant threat of attack rendered me an emotional weakling.

My natural response was to work harder on myself. As a college-educated woman with a corporate career and a deep desire to serve God, I thought I must be capable of turning things around. *Surely, I reasoned, Tom loves me. I just have to respect him more. Sometimes I am self-righteous and controlling. If I could be more humble, then things would be better.* But nothing made a difference. As a result, I retreated into a quiet shell. I became smaller and Tom became bigger, louder, and more domineering.





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All the while, I was tenacious about hanging on to allow every opportunity for God to work a miracle and heal our relationship.

Going Public

Things became worse after our daughter was born. Tom continued a chaotic schedule. When he was home, his anger often erupted unprovoked. My daughter witnessed many verbal rages. Although directed at me, she was clearly affected by them. She began to respond as I did—trying not to disturb Tom and doing her best to please him.

When a situation involving Tom's family members caused him great pain, I suggested we go to counseling to consider how to respond. He was open to this as it gave him a chance to talk about the shortcomings and dysfunction of others in his family. Eventually his focus shifted from his family, and he began to blame and accuse me. Driving to appointments, he'd warn that I shouldn't disrespect him in front of the counselor. And then during our sessions, Tom did most of the talking, attempting to convince the counselor I was controlling and disrespectful.

Our counselor made recommendations, and Tom's participation was marginal. For example, Tom was asked to call an accountability partner when he felt he was going to rage. But when the rage occurred, he'd tell me that because he hadn't truly raged he didn't need to call the friend. During counseling sessions, if I said something Tom disliked, he'd rage in the car on the way home and drive dangerously as he blustered.





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But even with counseling, our situation didn't seem to get better. Typically the worst of Tom's rage was limited to our home, with only the three of us present. However, I was stunned and ashamed when my mom spent several days with us and witnessed Tom's manipulation, control, and chaotic schedule. Erratically driving the four of us to an event, Tom raged in the car. Mom confronted him, saying that if he was going to continue to drive that way he needed to stop and let the rest of us get out of the car. He simply grew silent and continued his dangerous driving. She became so uncomfortable with the hostility that she called my father to arrange an earlier flight home.

After my mom witnessed the abuse, I felt ready to speak up. I called our counselor and asked if I could talk to him without Tom in the room. I wrote what I intended to say to help ensure I'd actually say it. Choking through tears and shaking fearfully, I read my notes—and opened another door to truth and healing.

The counselor listened intently and acknowledged that what I revealed clarified things for him. His next recommendation was for both of us to bring support partners into our sessions. We were to go to others in the body of Christ we could trust, those who would hold us accountable to truth and compassionate action, and ask them for support. Through this I learned to accept one of the most important truths about the healing process: God uses the community of believers to facilitate his healing. Tom used this opportunity differently. He redirected his accounts of my perceived





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shortcomings and provocations to his support partners and was unwilling to accept their pleas for him to take responsibility for his anger.

At the insistence of the counselor, I shared the messy truth about my marriage with my family and four close girlfriends. I wasn't afraid of telling them, but I was terrified to actually face the abuse. No one was surprised to hear what was happening. Rather, they expressed relief as my story finally reconciled the inconsistencies they'd witnessed in my marriage. They began the long journey with me toward healing and resolution. My support partners sat in counseling sessions with me and cried and shook in anguish while listening to Tom's hostile accusations. As a result, they feared for my physical and emotional safety and checked in with me often. Family and friends wanted me to separate, and they faithfully and respectfully stood by me until I was ready.

Through this extremely difficult time, they educated themselves about domestic violence, which was a vital blessing to me. Together, we learned there were no easy answers. They prayed, searched Scripture with me, and listened as I processed my confusion and fear. They gave their time and emotional energy and experienced their own pain as they helped me.

Counselors and pastors made many appeals for Tom to be accountable to other men for handling his rage. These attempts to stop the abuse were unsuccessful, and, nearly two years after Tom threw me into our daughter's room, I made the decision to separate. I wanted restoration, and I knew that if Tom and I separated, divorce was possible—but





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I needed to do what was best for my daughter's and my health and safety. I wondered how divorce would affect my daughter. I also knew how the church viewed divorce and wondered if my church would accept my decision. And worse, I wondered how God would respond to me.

Finding God Faithful

After several years of separation, Tom and I divorced. I'm now a single mom with the daunting responsibility of providing financially for my daughter and me. Our new life isn't easy, but I feel grateful every day. My daughter is healthy and thriving. Due to the abuse, she's in my full legal custody. However, she sees her dad regularly. This requires me to communicate with Tom, and he's often abusive in phone conversations and e-mails. So I continue to wade through the wake of domestic violence. However, from experience I know it's possible to put victimization behind and find renewed direction, passion, and purpose.

The grief I experienced over the failure of my marriage was overwhelming, and the recovery process has been grueling. But God hasn't abandoned me. Rather, he's drawn me closer to him. I learned God's grace is completely reliable, and he can handle the messy truths in our lives. And the most awesome realization is that God wants to use me. As God now regularly opens doors of ministry to me, I'm charged with telling my story and sharing his message of grace. Throughout my recovery, I clung to Psalm 18 from *The Message* as a source of comfort:





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*But me he caught—reached all the way
from sky to sea; he pulled me out
Of that ocean of hate, that enemy chaos,
the void in which I was drowning.*

*They hit me when I was down,
but God stuck by me.
He stood me up on a wide-open field;
I stood there saved—surprised to be loved!*

Gwyneth Nelson is a pseudonym.

*This article first appeared in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN
MAGAZINE, 2009.*

Reflect

- *What Scripture verses minister to a woman's need for truth and self-worth?*
- *In what ways would meditation on God's Word help a woman maintain a clear perspective about her value?*



Why Does She Stay?

Why we ask the wrong question about domestic violence.

By Camerin Courtney



In 2009, a celebrity couple made news when the male singer beat his pop star girlfriend. The question plastered across tabloids: Why does she stay? By and large, the story seemed to be about the woman—the victim. How it's surprising that someone so beautiful and successful could be the victim of domestic violence. How it's dumbfounding that she could go back to this man who professes love for her but who also allegedly left her with cuts and bruises all over her face. How her decision to stay with her abuser is damaging to the young women who look up to her, and potentially to her career.



Confronting Domestic Violence

Why Does She Stay?

While this is all certainly worth discussing, I can't help but wonder: Where is the perpetrator in this story?

Why aren't we asking why someone so successful could have such a difficult time handling his anger in appropriate ways? Why aren't we talking more about the repercussions of his unacceptable actions—both to his career and to the young people who look up to him?

Why? Because, for the most part, domestic violence is seen as a women's issue. My awareness of this domestic violence double standard was raised at a Christian conference on gender and justice a couple years ago. During a talk on domestic violence, author Jackson Katz raised the point that when it comes to cases of domestic violence, our typical question is "why does she stay?" when the more foundational and troubling question is "why does he hit?"

Our focus stays on the victim, further victimizing her and casting a blind eye to the systematic manipulation, control, and threats she often has endured at the hands of her abuser. The simple question "why does she stay?" isn't that simple when you learn more about the ongoing issues associated with domestic violence.

Sometimes she stays because he's threatened to kill her or her loved ones if she ever leaves him. Sometimes she stays because he's broken her spirit and will so much that she doesn't have the strength to leave. Sometimes she stays because she thinks it's the Christian thing to do to stand by your man and submit to his headship, no matter what.





Confronting Domestic Violence

Why Does She Stay?

Our collective asking "why does she stay?" perhaps reveals our collective ignorance to the complexities of domestic violence. Yes, this is an important question to ask. But it shouldn't be our first—or only—question.

Domestic violence isn't just about the woman's role, the woman's decision. It's also about the man's actions. Why does he hit? Why does he need to control this person he supposedly loves? Why does he have such a difficult time handling his anger?

And why aren't we also asking these questions when we discuss the issue of domestic violence?

Only when we look at the broader issue, ask the right questions, and bring men into the discussion will we be able to make any sort of dent in the national epidemic of domestic violence.

This article first appeared on TodaysChristianWoman.com, 2009.

Reflect

- *When you hear a story of domestic violence, what is the first question that surfaces in your mind?*
- *What other reasons can you give for why a woman stays with a batterer?*
- *What kind of help do you think should be available to perpetrators of domestic violence?*



Prevent Gender Violence

10 Things Men Can Do
By Jackson Katz



1. Approach gender violence as a **MEN'S** issue involving men of all ages and socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. View men not only as perpetrators or possible offenders, but as empowered bystanders who can confront abusive peers.

2. If a brother, friend, classmate, or teammate is abusing his female partner—or is disrespectful or abusive to girls and women in general—don't look the other way. If you feel comfortable doing so, try to talk to him about it. Urge him to seek help. Or if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, a parent, a professor, or a counselor. **DON'T REMAIN SILENT.**



Confronting Domestic Violence

Prevent Gender Violence

- 3.** Have the courage to look inward. Question your own attitudes. Don't be defensive when something you do or say ends up hurting someone else. Try hard to understand how your own attitudes and actions might inadvertently perpetuate sexism and violence, and work toward changing them.
- 4.** If you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been sexually assaulted, gently ask if you can help.
- 5.** If you are emotionally, psychologically, physically, or sexually abusive to women, or have been in the past, seek professional help NOW.
- 6.** Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence. Support the work of campus-based women's centers. Attend "Take Back the Night" rallies and other public events. Raise money for community-based rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters. If you belong to a team or fraternity, or another student group, organize a fundraiser.
- 7.** Recognize and speak out against homophobia and gay-bashing. Discrimination and violence against lesbians and gays are wrong in and of themselves. This abuse also has direct links to sexism (eg. the sexual orientation of men who speak out against sexism is often questioned, a conscious or unconscious strategy intended to silence them. This is a key reason few men do so).





Confronting Domestic Violence

Prevent Gender Violence

8. Attend programs, take courses, watch films, and read articles and books about multicultural masculinities, gender inequality, and the root causes of gender violence. Educate yourself and others about how larger social forces affect the conflicts between individual men and women.

9. Don't fund sexism. Refuse to purchase any magazine, rent any video, subscribe to any website, or buy any music that portrays girls or women in a sexually degrading or abusive manner. Protest sexism in the media.

10. Mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women. Volunteer to work with gender violence prevention programs, including anti-sexist men's programs. Lead by example.

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Reflect

- *What other ways can men help break the cycle of domestic violence and be an advocate for those who are victims?*
- *Share this list with the leaders in your church. What is their response to it?*



Additional Resources

Books, Bible studies, and articles to help you further.



Books:

No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence (Intervarsity Press, 2001) It's a leading cause of injury and death to women worldwide. Sadly, not even the church is immune from the scourge of domestic violence. This immensely helpful guide illustrates the gravity of the problem through stories and statistics; explores relevant Scriptures; and provides counseling tools, sermon outlines, Bible studies, and more. You *can* make a difference!

Violence Among Us: Ministry to Families in Crisis (Judson Press) by Brenda Branson & Paula J. Silva. One in every four women experiences family violence. The challenge for every pastor and counselor is to go beyond a casual awareness of the problem—to move past apathy to conviction, and to turn empathy into compelling action.



Confronting Domestic Violence

Additional Resources

Violence Among Us address the questions: How common is domestic violence in the church? What keeps a victim trapped? How does family violence affect children, the church, and society? And what can the church do to prevent family violence?

Refuge: A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence & Abuse by Donald Stewart (New Hope Publishers, 2004). A veteran policeman with in-depth experience in domestic violence cases compassionately shares the Lord's love for women caught in the cycle of flawed thinking and the bondage of abuse. Sgt. Stewart offers practical help and strategic advice, as he affirms your biblical worth!

Hotlines:

National 24-hour Women of Substance Crisis Intervention Hotline: **1-866-862-2873**

National Domestic Violence Hotline: **1-800-799-7233**

Ministries:

Peace and Safety in the Christian Home:
www.peaceandsafety.com

FaithTrust Institute: **www.faithtrustinstitute.org**



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