

**The Dilemma of  
Christian Battered  
Women: When Prayer  
isn't Enough**

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# **Why This Should be Important to Domestic Violence Helpers**

- **83% percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians.**
  - **53% of Americans are Protestants**
  - **22 % are Catholics**
  - **8 % are other Christians, such as Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses.**
- **Church is one of the few places many victims are allowed to go. There they may receive advice that doesn't focus on safety.**
- **Christian victims must feel welcomed & understood in DV agencies & shelters.**

# **“Why it happens” MYTHS**

- It's caused by **extreme stress**
- It's an **anger problem**
- It's caused by **alcohol or drugs**
- It happens when the abuser  
**“loses control”**
- It is often **“provoked”** by the victim

# **“What it is” MYTHS**

- It's about two people who **“fight with each other”**
- It's a **relationship problem or marital conflict**
- It's a **communication problem**
- It's caused by **mental illness**

# **MYTHS OFTEN HELD BY PASTORS**

**#1 There are no abused women in my congregation**

**#2 Christian victims need only ‘faith, prayer, a positive attitude, and God’s grace’**

**#3 Domestic violence occurs in certain cultural, racial & socioeconomic groups, and in urban areas**

**#4 Victims can stop the battering by changing their own behavior. This will save their marriages & families.**

# Complex Scriptural Issues

**1. Marriage roles:  
Headship & Submission**

**2. Divorce**

**3. Suffering**

**4. Forgiveness**

## **An Abuser's Favorite Verse**

**“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”**

**Ephesians 5:22-24  
(Written by the Apostle Paul)**

**“Submit yourselves  
to *one another*  
because of your  
reverence for Christ.”**

**Ephesians 5:21**

**“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy. . . In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves also himself. . .”**

**Ephesians 5:25-28**

# **DIVORCE**

**“For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts.”**

**Malachi 2: 16-17**

**“What God has joined together, let no one put asunder.”**

**Matthew 19:6**

# **SUFFERING**

**“Take up your cross and follow Me.”  
Jesus**

**Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23**

**Many people misinterpret “cross” as some burden they must carry in their lives: a miserable relationship or an illness, for example. They say, “That’s my cross to bear.”**

**Such an interpretation is not what Jesus meant. This instruction to his followers was about giving up anything that might get in the way of their doing the will of God.**

**Forgiveness**

**FORGIVENESS** does not mean forgetting the abuse or pretending that it did not happen. Neither is possible. Forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse. Rather, forgiveness means that the victim decides to let go of resentment and set herself free.

# DV EMPOWERMENT BASICS

- **Validate her experiences**
- **Explore her options**
- **Advocate for her safety**
- **Build on her strengths**
- **Respect her right to self-determination**

**Mental Health Guidelines for Domestic Violence**

**Susan Schechter**

# Primary Goals for Faith Helpers

- **SAFETY** for the woman and children
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** for the abuser
- **RESTORATION** of individuals, and  
**IF POSSIBLE**, relationships  
**OR**  
**MOURNING** the loss of the  
relationships

## SEEING A COUPLE TOGETHER BEFORE THE VIOLENCE IS STOPPED CAN

- **Endanger the battered woman, who may face violence or threats of violence for revealing information in the session**
- **Lend credence to the myth that battered women are responsible for the violence inflicted upon them**
- **Ignore the denial, minimization and deception that occurs when the focus of counseling is on the couple's interaction vs the abusers behavior**
- **Indicate that the helper condones violence or that violence is acceptable or not important**

- Reinforce stereotypical gender roles, ignoring the victim's right to choose whether or not to save the relationship
- Increase the victim's isolation. She may 'lie' about the violence or fear to speak of it, discouraging her from taking action.
- Imply that the victim has responsibility for helping the abuser change.

*Helpers must understand that manipulation is inherent in a batterer's refusal of anything other than couple's counseling.*

# Secular Helpers SHOULD

- Provide her with appropriate faith resources – handouts, DVD's, books, etc.
- Discuss the common religious 'resources & the roadblocks' with her
- Refer her to faith-based programs
- Arrange cross-trainings for staff

- **Encourage her to ask her clergy if they have received training on domestic violence *before* choosing to disclose abuse to them**
- **Offer to accompany her to meetings with clergy, or offer to arrange for clergy to visit her**
- **Arrange with churches to invite and transport her to services in her tradition**
- **Contact and collaborate with clergy members**

# “Changing Men, Changing Lives”

- **Ty Schroyer and Barbara Jones-Schroyer collaborated with the DAIP to create a culturally specific class for Christian men who are abusive. It is a faith-based curriculum and video documentary, providing a Christian perspective for organizations working to address domestic violence.**
- <http://www.changingmenchanginglives.org/>

# The Change Process, A Journey through the “5R’s”:

- **REMORSE:** guilt, sorrow for actions; doesn't mean change!
- **REPENTANCE:** Willing to do whatever it takes to turn away from actions; acknowledges wrong doing
- **RESTITUTION:** Amends, joins program(s), tells the truth
- **RESTORATION:** Healing of self, relationship with God and others (but not necessarily the marriage)
- **RECONCILIATION:** When the marriage relationship is able to be restored

**“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. . . So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8;13**

# Helpful Scriptures

- **“Husbands love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”** (Col. 3:19)
- **“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are.”** (1 Cor. 3:16-17)
- **“Rid yourself of all such things as these; anger, rage, malice.....“** (Col. 3: 8)
- **“Do to others as you would have them do unto you.”** (Matthew 7:12)

- **"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15)**
- **The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates everyone who loves violence." (Psalm 11:5)**
- **You are my hiding place. You will preserve me from trouble. You will surround me with songs of deliverance. (Psalm 32:7)**

# Resources for Christian Victims

- **Refuge From Abuse** Catherine Clark Kroger, PhD  
Nancy Nason-Clark, PhD
- **Keeping the Faith –Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse** Rev Marie Fortune
- **When Love Hurts** Rev Karen McAndless-Davis
- **Healing Hearts- A Bible Study for Women**  
Rhonda Encinas
- **The Study Bible For Women**  
Oxford Press edited by C. C. Kroeger, PhD
- **Addressing DV in the Christian Home – Facebook group**
- **Denominational statements** <http://www.interfaithpartners.org>

**United Methodist Women**

**DV resources**

<http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/domestic-violence>

**Anguished Hearts Bible study - Presby. Against DV Network**

**888-728-7228**

**FaithTrust Institute**

[www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org)

**RAVE (Religion And Violence E-Learning)**

[www.theraveproject.com](http://www.theraveproject.com)

**JULIE'S Website**

[www.domesticviolenceexpert.org](http://www.domesticviolenceexpert.org)

**BIBLICAL EQUALITY RESOURCES**

**Let My People Go: A Call to End the Oppression of Women in the Church**

**Bob Edwards**

**Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) [www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org)**

**The Junia Project <http://juniaproject.com/>**

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