

Definition

Is someone in your congregation a victim of Domestic Violence?

Does the person she loves . . .

- * Threaten to hurt her or her children?
- * Say it's her fault if he hits her, then promise it won't happen again (but it does)?
- * Put her down in public or keep her from contacting her family or friends?
- * Throw her down, push, hit, kick, choke or slap her?
- * Force her to have sex when she doesn't want to?

Just one "yes" answer means that your congregant is a victim of Domestic Violence.

Domestic Violence is defined by the American Medical Association as "The physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse of an individual perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner."

The effects of domestic violence are impossible to measure. Domestic violence is often shrouded in silence.

The Christian faced with Domestic violence at home can turn to scripture for support and guidance from the teachings in the Bible. They may also seek the counsel of a pastor. Sadly, a well-intentioned but uninformed pastor can make matters worse by providing dangerous advice.

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me

Then I could bear it.

Nor is it one who hates me, who has exalted himself against me,

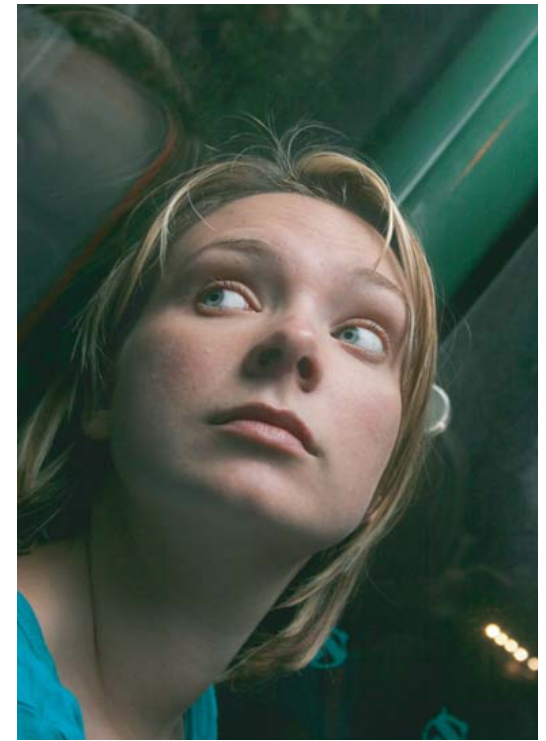
Then I could hide myself from him.

But it is you, a man my equal,

My companion and familiar friend.

We who had sweet fellowship together...

Psalm 55:11-12



Domestic Violence

What Every Pastor Needs to Know

How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic violence?

Women who are being battered are as different from each other as non-battered women. They come from all walks of life, all races, all educational backgrounds, and all religions. A battered woman might be a corporate executive who occupies a board room or a stay-at-home mother. Anyone experiencing the patterns of abuse identified in this flier is a victim of domestic abuse.

What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Listen to the woman and believe her. Tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her.

Tell her she is not alone and that help is available.

Let her know that without intervention, **abuse escalates in both frequency and severity over time.**

Seek expert assistance. Refer her only to specialized domestic violence counseling programs, not to couples counseling. Help her find a shelter, a safe home, or advocacy resources to offer her protection. To suggest that she merely return home places her and her children in real danger.

Hold the abuser accountable. Don't minimize his abusive behavior. Support him in seeking specialized batterers' counseling to help change his behavior. Continue to hold him accountable and to support and protect the victim even after he has begun a counseling program.

If restoration of the relationship is to occur, it can be considered only after the above steps have taken place.

What does the United Methodist Church say about domestic violence?

The United Methodist Church seeks for women to live without violence and abuse and does not support violence in the family or other relationships. The Book of Resolutions provides a more in-depth look at domestic violence which is called out as a sin, and how the United Methodist community should react.

- * Create a church **climate of openness** acceptance, and safety that encourages victims to speak of their pain and seek relief and healing.
- * Encourage all clergy and lay leaders to work collaboratively with community agencies on prevention strategies and to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of victims, offenders, and other family members.
- * **Adopt policies** and procedures for keeping children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse in church facilities and programs.
- * Re-examine and change if necessary scriptural and theological messages, cultures and traditions that validate violence or abuse or support a view of women as subordinate to men or children as property of adults. **Pay particular attention to church teachings on repentance and forgiveness.**
- * Participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Month every October and child abuse Prevention month each April
- * **Preach on domestic violence** and sexual abuse topics; urge congregants to host or cooperate in community education events and to highlight opportunities for involvement in prevention and service activities.

What should I avoid saying or doing?

- * **Do not attempt to counsel families suspected of domestic violence together.** You would be setting up a potentially explosive situation.
- * Do not urge reconciliation prematurely. **An abuser will say or do anything to get back with an abused spouse.**
- * **Do not tell the victim that her abuser is a "great guy".**
- * Do not infer that you do not believe her.

What resources are available to support me?

- * Georgia Domestic Violence Hot Line
1-800-334-2836
- * National Domestic Violence Hot Line
1-800-799-7233
- * National Sexual Assault Hot Line
1-800-656-4673
- * Department of Family and Children Services
1-800-869-1150
- * Local Church/Contact person:

*The eyes of the Lord are on the Righteous,
and His ears are open to their cry . . .
When the righteous cry for help,
the Lord hears and rescues them
from their troubles.
Psalm 34*