

enditnow Emphasis Day 2013

Resource Packet

“Jesus Is Your Refuge”

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SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

General Conference
World Headquarters



Department of Women's Ministries

12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland

April 10, 2013

Dear Sisters in Jesus:

Joyful greetings. One of the stories in the Bible that always turns my heart upside down is the story of Tamar, daughter of King David, who was raped by her half-brother, Amnon found in 2 Samuel 13. What a sad story of lust, rape, greed, depravity, hatred, and so much more. Can you imagine how Tamar felt when her brother Amnon cast her out in disgust after raping her? Where could she go? Who would champion her cause? Who would stand beside her in the condemnation of her brother? Would justice be served?

Some 4,000 years and more later, women, children and men who have been abused are asking the same questions. Who will help me? Where can I go? Who will stand by my side and walk through the darkness with me to give me the support and strength I need for this terrible journey? Sad but true. Many are hurting. Too many.

So my sisters, what can you do? What can we do together? One thing is to ensure that your church calendar has “**enditnow** Emphasis Day” set for the fourth Sabbath of August each year. If you cannot get that day then ask for another day. The important thing is to have the day of emphasis on abuse, and to work with the other departments in your church, such as Youth, Family, Children, Health, etc.

Educating ourselves and our membership on this issue is paramount to change. We are God’s hands and feet. His arms of love to a world in need. Will you take up the challenge to be sure that this day is promoted in your church? We are counting on you, our sister-leaders, to help us keep the issue of abuse before our membership. Remember, abuse is everywhere, in the community but also in the homes of church members!

Thank you for your help and for joining us in General Conference Women’s Ministries raise the banner high that we must “**enditnow!**”

Joyfully,



Heather-Dawn Small, Director

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Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra are the Family Ministry Directors for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Dr. Claudio was born in Colombia, South America, while Dr. Pamela grew up in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia.

Dr. Claudio Consuegra has served as pastor in various conferences throughout the United States. He has also been a law-enforcement, hospital, and hospice chaplain, a marriage and family counselor, and conference department director and administrator. Dr. Claudio holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theology from Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University), a Master of Science degree in Counseling Psychology, with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Counseling, from Radford University, and a Doctor of Ministry degree (DMin) in Family Ministries from Andrews University.

Dr. Pamela has served as an Adventist teacher, academy (high school) principal, and Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Pamela has a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University), a Master of Science degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Radford University, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) in Leadership from Andrews University.

Drs. Claudio and Pamela have a rich background in the area of family ministries, having worked as a husband/wife team in numerous conferences and hosting a live call-in show for LifeTalk radio for three years. In addition, the Consuegras are both published authors of books and numerous magazine and journal articles.

They have two daughters: Diana, a graduate of Columbia Union College, is an English teacher at North Dallas Adventist Academy, and Hadassah, a graduate of Andrews University, is a medical student at Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine. They also have a son-in-law, Gregory Anderson, who is pursuing a Masters degree in Communication Disorders at Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri.

Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra are passionate about building strong, healthy marriages and families for God's Kingdom.

SUGGESTED ORDER OF SERVICE
enditnow Emphasis Day - August 2013

Prelude

Responsive Reading: SDA Hymnal- "*The Christian Home*" 827

Invocation

Hymn of Praise: SDA Hymnal- "*Love at Home*" 652

Scripture Reading:

Ephesians 4:29-32 NIV "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Offering

Prayer for the offering

Children's Story:

"If I Could Eat my Words"

Pastoral Prayer

Special Music

Sermon:

Jesus Is Your Refuge

Hymn of Response: "*Lord Bless Our Homes*"
(*Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal # 654*)

Benediction

Postlude

Children's Object Lesson:

"If I Could Only Eat my Words"

NOTE: This object lesson will need adult or older children as helpers. Each small group will need one older helper. Before the children's story time, purchase several travel-sized tubes of toothpaste, several paper bowls, and tooth picks.

Have you ever heard the expression, "If I Could Only Eat my Words"? Can we eat our words? Words cannot be taken back. Once we speak a word, we cannot put it back in our mouths.

Today, we want to do an experiment. I have some helpers to assist me.

Divide the children into several small groups. Give each older helper one small tube of toothpaste, one small paper bowl, and a toothpick. The children in each group take turns squeezing all of the toothpaste out of each tube into the bowl.

Explain that the toothpaste coming out of the tube represents all the words that come out of our mouths. Sometimes the words are sweet and kind. But sometimes we say things that are mean and that hurt our friends and those we love. We wish we hadn't lost our temper. We wish that we had not been unkind, and we try to take it back.

Now, give each group a tooth pick and allow each to attempt the task of putting all the tooth paste back into the tube. It is impossible.

The lesson? Words are like toothpaste. Once they're piped out, they cannot return.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:29-32 NIV "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Let's pray that Jesus will help us to say only words that are kind and loving to each other so we will not have to worry about taking them back.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, please help us say words that are always kind and loving. Help us to realize that we cannot take back our words. We cannot put them back in our mouths. Help us to say things that are loving and kind. Amen

Sermon

Jesus Is Your Refuge

[There is a seminar "Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse" which accompanies this sermon resource. Announce when and where this will be when appropriate before, during, or after the sermon.]

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish people have held an ideal standard for Jewish family life that is manifested in the term *shalom bayit*. *Shalom bayit* signifies completeness, wholeness, and fulfillment.

The traditional Jewish marriage is characterized by peace, nurturing, respect, and *chesed* which roughly means kindness; or better yet, loving-kindness, through which a married couple becomes complete. In Jewish culture, a marriage is described as a "match made in heaven," and is treated as a holy enterprise. It is believed that God's presence dwells in a pure and loving home.

For example, the Jewish betrothal ceremony is referred to in classical rabbinic literature as *Kiddushin* which means hallowing, sanctification, consecration. By declaring the marriage union sacred, a couple stands sanctified before God. It is in a relationship where both husband and wife recognize each other as creations in God's image and treat each other accordingly. Moreover, this sanctity of the marital union reminds the Jewish husband and wife to express their holiness through marriage and to build a home based on mutual love, respect, and *chesed*.

The greatest praise the Talmudic rabbis offered to any woman was that given to a wife who fulfills the wishes of her husband. The husband too was expected to love his wife as much as he loves himself, and to honor her more than he honors himself. Indeed, one who honors his wife was said, by the classical rabbis, to be rewarded with wealth. In the same way, a husband was expected to discuss with his wife any worldly matters that might arise in his life.

Tough love was frowned upon; the Talmud forbids a husband from being overbearing to his household, and domestic abuse by him was also condemned. It was said of a wife that God counts her tears.

All of this would lead to Shalom Bayit! A peaceful, wholesome, kind home. A home where there is *Shalom Bayit* will be a home where domestic violence should not exist.

Domestic violence is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, a denial of God's plan for our lives and our marriages. And yet, you and I know that domestic violence happens, even among the household of God. One of the reasons domestic abuse happens in Christian homes, in Adventist homes, is because we don't even know what domestic abuse is.

What Exactly Is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence, spouse abuse, battering, family violence, and domestic disputes all describe the mistreatment of a one person by another with whom he or she lives or has lived. It might be a woman abused by her husband, or even a husband abused by his wife; it might be children abused by one or both parents, and it can be the elderly abused by their children or caregivers. Or it might be abuse of the vulnerable because of mental or physical conditions.

While in some places it is mostly women and children who are abused, men are also abused by women. An estimated one of every two marriages have experienced at least one episode of violence between spouses.

Abusive behavior takes many forms and is not limited to physical actions. But there is often a combination of physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse and neglect.

It can be considered a pattern of living, in which a member of the household uses violence and emotional abuse to gain control and by which they dominate others.

Who is affected? The young, the middle aged, and the old.

Therefore, family violence is everyone's concern. Maltreated people impact the wellbeing of our entire church and our community. Children carry the terrible lessons of violence and neglect with them into adulthood.

Misuse of Religion Can Be Harmful

Often there is a religious component to dealing with abuse, and that is while acknowledging domestic abuse, the sanctity of marriage is put above one's personal safety.

Some women believe this is God's will for them, and, sometimes, even their pastors or elders encourage them to stay in harmful, dangerous relationships because they don't understand abuse either. Both the church leader and the victim has been taught marriage is forever, even if it is physically dangerous. Well intentioned, usually conservative male clergy, often perpetuate domestic violence without realizing it.

Christian teaching about marriage has traditionally focused heavily on Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Corinthians, and Colossians. Misinterpretations and misplaced emphasis on these texts have actually led to the horrible idea that wives and children must submit to abuse from husbands and fathers. Rather than being "the Good Book," the Bible has been used as a book to justify domestic violence.

Societal and Cultural Views Can Also Be Harmful

In some places, among some cultures, people still believe, "Everyone smacks their girlfriends and wives around from time to time; it's no big deal."

Kitty Genovese. You may not recall the name, but you probably heard the story concerning this young lady. In 1964 Kitty Genovese was brutally attacked as she returned to her Queens, New York, apartment late one night. She screamed and hollered as she fought for her life for a full 30 minutes. As she was beaten and abused, 38 people watched the episode from their windows. Yet, not one person so much as walked over to the phone to call for help. Kitty died that evening as 38 witnesses silently looked on.

Likewise, the sad thing is that sometimes we become aware of abuse taking place in our church or family, but we don't want to get involved. It's not our business, some say. It's no big deal, add others.

But it is a big deal! Domestic violence is always wrong! It is a crime! It is a sin! It needs to stop!

Domestic violence can lead to murder, and it often does. Rarely a week goes by without mention of local domestic violence in our newspapers.

Children Are Affected by Domestic Violence

- Approximately 50 - 75% of batterers who abuse their spouse, also beat their children.
- There is the report of a man who kicked his pregnant wife in the stomach trying to cause her to abort their child.
- Another man suffered a broken arm as a young child because his mother wanted a girl instead of a boy.

[Here you could interject any local or personal stories you may know. Please be careful to not share too many explicit details which could identify victims of abuse]

Many studies have also shown that often those who have been abused as children become abusers themselves. In fact, even those who have witnessed abuse in their home, even if they have not been abused themselves, may grow up to become abusers.

One of the ways that we, as a church, can begin to deal with this serious problem is to learn more about how domestic abuse takes place, how it develops, and how it persists.

A Note: As there is no gender neutral pronoun in English, as we describe the batterer and the victim/survivor we will use male pronouns for the batterer and female pronouns for the victim/survivor. While that is the most common case, please remember that domestic abuse can happen to everyone. There are male and female batterers and male and female survivors, too.

A Story

In order to learn more about domestic abuse, let me share a story:

A young woman married someone who seemed loving while they dated, but within the first year of marriage, he began to beat her. Before she knew it, she had three young children. No one in the family knew her secret because her husband threatened to beat her even more if she told anyone. Their story is actually quite common. What are some of the typical steps?

- First the couple begins experiencing increased tension.
- The battered woman will often deny her needs and feelings so as to defuse the batterer's anger. In doing this, she accepts responsibility for his behavior and actually escalates his anger.
- This tension eventually escalates into a major destructive incident where the batterer completely loses control of his anger.
- This rage blinds his control over his behavior and can last for hours or days.
- He wants to teach her a lesson and the woman is often severely beaten.
- After the violence, often there is a period of calm, sometimes with kindness and contrite loving behavior from the violent one.
- The batterer knows he's gone too far and becomes extremely loving and tender.
- He will ask for forgiveness, truly believing she has learned her lesson and that he will never beat her again.

- And he may be sincere, until the next time he gets angry for whatever reason or no reason at all.

This story, this cycle, may be repeated many times, with the same result each time.

So Why Do Women Stay?

This is probably one of the most commonly asked questions: “Why do you stay?” Or the variation, “Why don’t you leave him?”

- We need to understand: there are many home, society, church, and financial realities. In particular women experiencing domestic violence experience powerlessness, hurt, guilt, shame, isolation, impaired trust, depression, helplessness, anger, humiliation, embarrassment, degradation, low self-esteem, and fear.
- Often the woman denies the abuse and excuses her abuser’s behaviors.
- Many women are convinced their batterer will change. But the batterer will not change as long as they stay together.
- Often there is a fear of exposure, retaliation, or making the home situation even worse. They hear him say things like, “If you leave me, you’re going to get it,” or “You think this is bad? Just try leaving,” or “I’ll kill you before you can leave me,” or “I’ll hunt you down and kill you if you leave me,” or “I’ll kill you, the kids and then myself.” Sometimes they hear all of these.
- Battered women suffer from low self-esteem, do not believe in their abilities, or their decision making abilities. Their bodies, their emotions, and their self-esteem are battered.
- Family and cultural issues pressure many women to stay.

Where Is the Church in This Story?

Both the church and society at large have historically been reluctant to believe such brutality and coercion can take place in “normal” or religious homes. However, some of the most dangerous abusers are the most overtly religious, law abiding, and outwardly respectable citizens. These can include leaders in church, society, and in the workplace.

Well-meaning church members tell abuse victims, “Surely you are mistaken. He is such a nice person. (Or maybe even a church leader). You must be causing him to lose his temper;

maybe he only does this when he drinks a little and hits you a lot.” Denial is the greatest barrier to getting help.

But we and they must first acknowledge that abuse is taking place. And when someone reports abuse, we need to believe it until it is proven to be a false report.

Good News

And the good news is that God can and does change lives when we cry out for help. Here is God’s good news for domestic violence victims: Jesus wants to be your refuge.

Let’s look at the experience of King David. David was the second king of Israel. Saul had been chosen to be the first king of Israel, but his repeated disobedience and rebellion proved him unfit to be the political and spiritual leader of this nation. So God replaced him with a young shepherd boy by the name of David. King Saul was jealous of David and twice tried to kill him by throwing his spear at David. He tried to employ his son, Jonathan, and his daughter, Michal—who happened to be David’s wife—to trap and arrest David. Eventually, David had to flee for his life.

It was while fleeing from Saul that he wrote some of his songs; we call them psalms. One of them is Psalm 142. We will be reading from the New English Translation. Let’s read it together:

Psalm 142

(a *maskil* of David when he was in the cave)

1 To the Lord I cry out;

to the Lord I plead for mercy.

2 I pour out my lament before him;

I tell him about my troubles.

3 Even when my strength leaves me,
you watch my footsteps.

In the path where I walk
they have hidden a snare for me.

4 Look to the right and see!

No one cares about me.

I have nowhere to run;

no one is concerned about my life.
5 I cry out to you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my shelter,
my security in the land of the living."
6 Listen to my cry for help,
for I am in serious trouble!
Rescue me from those who chase me,
for they are stronger than I am.
7 Free me from prison,
that I may give thanks to your name.
Because of me the godly will assemble,
for you will vindicate me.

In this psalm, King David, gives us six (6) steps to dealing with abuse.

1. Resolve to leave your abuser.

The introductory words of the psalm tells us that it is a *maskil* of David when he was in the cave. A *maskil* is a contemplative poem, a prayer set in the form of a poem. It also tells us that David was in a cave, probably either the cave of Adullam¹ or the cave at En-gedi.² He was in this cave hiding from King Saul.

David had already been anointed by the prophet Samuel,³ and Saul knew that.⁴ Some might have said to David, "You have been chosen to be king; stay where you are!" Or "It is God's will that you stay where you are!"

But David knew that he needed to leave a very harmful, dangerous situation. He understood what it is like to be persecuted, abused, in danger for his life. It is like being in a cave, fleeing from an enemy that is a relative of yours (Saul was David's father-in-law).

God knows you, He sees you! He understands the "cave" you are in! He has not forgotten you!

2. Admit your pain and need to God.

Let's look again at verse 1 and 2:

¹*To the Lord I cry out;/ to the Lord I plead for mercy.*

²*I pour out my lament before him;/ I tell him about my troubles.*

The darkness of the cave is an analogy for the darkness abused victims feel while in their horrible, painful situation. It is like a black hole from which they can't see a way out.

While in your cave, cry out to Him. Admit the abuse. Tell Him of your pain. Tell Him of your troubles. Tell Him you feel helpless and maybe even hopeless.

You may feel like David himself and with him say,

*"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent."*⁵

You may feel like He doesn't listen to you because you're still in your cave.

David experienced what you feel, and he cried out "My God, Why have you abandoned me? Why do you not hear me?"

But the lesson from David is, don't give up! Keep raising your words up to Him. God does hear! God does listen! And He will respond!

3. Figure out your limits.

Now to verse three and four:

³*Even when my strength leaves me,/ you watch my footsteps.*

In the path where I walk / they have hidden a snare for me.

⁴*Look to the right and see!/No one cares about me.*

I have nowhere to run;/ no one is concerned about my life.

David must have felt physically and emotionally exhausted. He writes that his "strength" left him. He knew his father-in-law, his relative, was also his enemy. And he recognized that Saul was setting a snare, a trap for him.

If you are abused, you know what that is like. It doesn't matter whether you say or do something or if you don't do or say anything, your abuser will be angry and find a reason to hurt you.

Some people will wonder what it was that the victim did or said to trigger the abuse, but the victim knows there was nothing that he or she did or did not do—it would not matter anyway. The abuser simply exploded and the spouse was the convenient excuse.

As a church family, when we ask the victim what they did to cause him or her to become angry, we are simply re-victimizing the victim.

David's words of verse 4 show his feelings of loneliness, as if there was no one, not one person, not one friend, not one member of the family to help him out, not one person to support him and to encourage him. If you feel that way, it is a strong indication you may be in a very controlling, abusive relationship. Abusers tend to isolate their victims from everyone who could provide them with help and support. Abusers tend to limit the resources their victims have in order to control them even further. And the victim may feel they don't have a way out, no one to go to, nothing to help them escape.

Now, if you are the abuse victim, it is at this point, if you have not yet come to realize it or accept the fact, that you should know you are in an unhealthy relationship, and you need to find a way out. You do not have to put up with it! You do not have to live like this! It is not God's plan for you to live like this.

By the way, abuse in the church is nothing new. Many years ago Ellen White the following words to a hopelessly mistreated wife:

"I have received your letter, and in reply to it I would say, I cannot advise you to return to D unless you see decided changes in him. The Lord is not pleased with the ideas he has had in the past of what is due to a wife. . . . If [he] holds to his former views, the future would be not better for you than the past has been. He does not know how to treat a wife.

I feel very sad about this matter. I feel indeed sorry for D, but I cannot advise you to go to him against your judgment. I speak to you as candidly as I spoke to him; it would be perilous for you to again place yourself under his dictation. I had hoped that he would change. . . .

*The Lord understands all about your experiences. . . . Be of good courage in the Lord; He will not leave you nor forsake you. My heart goes out in tenderest sympathy for you"*⁶

4. Affirm your confidence in God.

David continues his prayer in verse 5:

*⁵I cry out to you, O Lord;/ I say, “You are my shelter,
my security in the land of the living.”*

The marvelous thing about David’s prayer, at this point, is that he knows his situation is NOT hopeless. In the deepest, darkest time of his life— his personal cave—he still knew God was his shelter, his security.

On Psalm 51 David also uttered words of confidence in God:

*“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, Until these
calamities have passed by.”⁷*

5. Get a hold of God’s help.

Let’s look again at verse 6 and the first half of verse 7:

*⁶Listen to my cry for help,/ for I am in serious trouble!
Rescue me from those who chase me,/ for they are stronger than I am.
⁷Free me from prison,/ that I may give thanks to your name.*

We can identify with David’s plea, particularly if we are the ones being persecuted and abused. It is when we are under those circumstances, when we feel helpless and our foes are much stronger than we are, we can cry out to Him, because God knows a way out from our situation.

6. Expect God to fulfill His Promise.

And now to the last half of verse 7:

Because of me the godly will assemble,/ for you will vindicate me.

If you are being abused, remember, “God is your refuge!” It may seem as if your situation is hopeless, the walls of your cave seem to be closing in. Please remember,

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”⁸

You may choose to continue living in that cave, hiding from your enemy, fleeing from your troubles even though trouble follows you, but it is not a healthy place to live. God will help you to find a way out safely just as He did for David.

Please remember,

“In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, And my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us”⁹

CONCLUSION

Jesus wants to be your **refuge**.

He wants to provide for you, surround you with His arms so your home can become a shelter, a place of safety.

May our churches become shelters for those who live in the cave of domestic abuse. To do these things, this local church need to set up a practical plan. You need to work together with victims to find practical ways of helping them get to safety and begin a new life.

May you, if you are the victim of domestic abuse, receive the help from your church family you need so you can be a survivor, no longer a victim.

May our homes be *Shalom bayit*—a place of completeness, wholeness, and fulfillment.

May our marriages be characterized by peace, nurturing, respect, and loving-kindness, through which we become complete.

Seminar

Breaking the Cycle of Violence

In this seminar we are going to look at how to break the cycle of domestic violence. (If you heard the Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day sermon you heard some of the background on abuse.) Before we can talk about breaking the abuse cycle, we need to look at some biblical background information on relationships.

At least four times Jesus used the same words to describe the relationship that should exist among His disciples:

- John 13:34(NKJV): A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
- Again in vs. 35: By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Two chapters later, Jesus stated His words even more strongly:

- John 15:12: This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
- And again in verse. 17: These things I command you, that you love one another.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Is love a feeling or a decision? How do the texts above help us understand which it is?
2. Can love be commanded?
3. Can you love someone and at the same time abuse them?

(Allow for a few minutes (5-10) for discussion of these questions in groups of 3-5 persons each.)

Jesus wasn't simply suggesting, or inviting, or encouraging us to love one another. . . He was commanding us to love one another if we are going to be His disciples.

That's why when abuse takes place among those who call themselves His disciples it is really disobedience, a contradiction, an outright rebellion to His word. And yet, as sad as it is, abuse happens even in our congregations. It is our responsibility, as Christ's disciples, to stop abuse among our members and in our communities.

Ellen White has some advice to the family as to how a family should be. She writes, "Allow nothing like strife or dissension to come into the home. Speak gently. Never raise your voice to harshness. Keep yourselves calm. Put away faultfinding and all untruthfulness. Tell the children that you want to help them to prepare for a holy heaven, where all is peace, where not one jarring note is heard. Be patient with them in their trials, which may look small to you but which are

large to them.

“When fathers and mothers are converted, there will be a thorough conversion of their principles of management. Their thoughts will be converted; their tongues will be converted. . . .

“There will be no loud, angry talking in the home. The words will be of a character to soothe and bless the hearer. . . . Take all the ugly features out of the voice.

“We must subdue a hasty temper and control our words, and in this we shall gain great victories. Unless we control our words and temper, we are slaves to Satan. We are in subjection to him. He leads us captive. All jangling and unpleasant, impatient, fretful words are an offering presented to his satanic majesty. And it is a costly offering, more costly than any sacrifice we can make for God; for it destroys the peace and happiness of whole families, destroys health, and is eventually the cause of forfeiting an eternal life of happiness.”¹⁰

The first step to take in order to stem this tide of abuse is to be educated as to what abuse is, how to identify it, and how to help the victims of abuse.

Statistics on Domestic Violence

Unfortunately, abuse happens all around the world, in the church and outside the church.

“According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPP), one in every three women in the world has experienced sexual, physical, emotional or other abuse in her lifetime. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that in forty-eight surveys from around the world, 10-69% of women stated that they had been physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. The WHO also reports that studies from a range of countries show that 40-70% of female murder victims were killed by an intimate partner. A 1997 UNICEF publication reports that between a quarter and one half of women around the world have suffered violence at the hands of an intimate partner.”¹¹

Types of Abuse¹²

Almost always, in an abusive relationship, it's about power and control. Though there are no typical victims of domestic violence, abusive relationships do share similar characteristics. In all cases, the abuser aims to exert power and control over his partner.

Although a lot of people think domestic violence is about anger, it really isn't. Batterers do tend to take their anger out on their intimate partner. But it's not really about anger. It's about trying to instill fear and wanting to have power and control in the relationship.

There are many types of abuse and they are all difficult to experience. Let's begin by exploring the different ways abuse can occur so you can better identify them. Remember, each type of

abuse is serious and no one deserves to experience any form of it.

1. Emotional Abuse/Verbal Abuse

This type of abuse includes non-physical behaviors such as threats, insults, constant monitoring or “checking in,” excessive texting, stalking (*see below*), humiliation, intimidation or isolation.

Examples of behaviors that qualify as emotional or verbal abuse:

- Calling you names and putting you down.
- Yelling and screaming at you.
- Intentionally embarrassing you in public.
- Preventing you from seeing or talking with friends and family.
- Telling you what to do and what to wear.
- Using online communications or cell phones to control, intimidate, or humiliate you.
- Blaming their abusive or unhealthy behavior on your actions.
- Stalking you.
- Threatening to commit suicide to keep you from breaking up with them.
- Threatening to harm you, your pet, or people you care about.
- Making you feel guilty or immature when you don't consent to sexual activity.
- Threatening to expose your secrets such as your sexual orientation or immigration status.
- Starting rumors about you.
- Threatening to have your children taken away.
- Any act by deeds or words that demean, humiliate, or shame the natural worth and dignity of a person as a human being.

You are being stalked when a person repeatedly watches, follows, or harasses you, making you feel afraid or unsafe. A stalker can be someone you know, a past boyfriend or girlfriend, or even a stranger. While the actual legal definition varies from one state to another, here are some examples of what stalkers may do:

- Show up at your home or place of work unannounced or uninvited.
- Send you unwanted text messages, letters, emails, voicemails, or phone calls.
- Leave unwanted items, gifts or flowers.
- Constantly call you and hang up.
- Use social networking sites and technology to track you.
- Spread rumors about you via the internet or word of mouth.
- Call your employer or professor.
- Damage your home, car or other property.

2. Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is using money or access to accounts to exert power and control over a partner. Financial abuse can be very subtle: telling you what you can and cannot buy or requiring you to share control of your bank accounts. At no point does someone you are dating have the right to use your money or tell you how you spend it—that is control. Here are some examples of financially abusive behavior; much of it is outright stealing:

- Giving you an allowance and closely watching what you buy.
- Placing your paycheck in their account and denying you access to it.
- Keeping you from seeing shared bank accounts or records.
- Forbidding you to work or limiting the hours you do.
- Preventing you from going to work by taking your car or keys.
- Getting you fired by harassing you, your employer, or coworkers on the job.
- Hiding or stealing your student financial aid check or outside financial support.
- Using your social security number to obtain credit without your permission.
- Using your child's social security number to claim an income tax refund without your permission.
- Maxing out your credit cards without your permission.
- Refusing to give you money, food, rent, medicine, or clothing.
- Using funds from your children's tuition or a joint savings account without your knowledge.
- Spending money on themselves but not allowing you to do the same.

3. Physical Abuse

Any intentional use of physical force with the intent to cause fear or injury, like hitting, shoving, biting, or using a weapon is physical abuse. Examples of physical abuse are:

- Scratching, punching, biting, strangling, or kicking.
- Throwing something at you such as a phone, book, shoe, or plate.
- Pulling your hair.
- Pushing or pulling you.
- Grabbing your clothing.
- Using a gun, knife, box cutter, bat, mace or other weapon at you.
- Smacking your bottom.
- Forcing you to have sex or perform a sexual act (this is also sexual abuse).
- Grabbing your face to make you look at them.
- Grabbing you to prevent you from leaving or to force you to go somewhere.
- Deprivation of sustenance—food, water, shelter and ordinary comforts enjoyed by the rest of the family.

4. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse refers to any action that pressures or coerces someone to do something sexually they don't want to do. It can also refer to behavior that impacts a person's ability to control their sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity occurs, including oral sex, or rape.

Other examples of sexual assault and abuse are:

- Unwanted kissing or touching.
- Unwanted rough or violent sexual activity.
- Rape or attempted rape.
- Refusing to use condoms or restricting someone's access to birth control.
- Keeping someone from protecting themselves from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Sexual contact with someone who is very drunk, drugged, unconscious, or otherwise unable to give a clear and informed "yes" or "no."
- Threatening or pressuring someone into unwanted sexual activity.

5. Digital Abuse

This is a new area of abuse, but becoming increasingly prevalent. The use of technology such as texting and social networking to bully, harass, stalk or intimidate a partner is abuse. Often this behavior is a form of verbal or emotional abuse perpetrated through the use of social media. In a healthy relationship, all communication is respectful whether in person, online, or by phone. It is never ok for someone to do or say anything that makes you feel bad, lowers your self-esteem, or manipulates you. You may be experiencing digital abuse if your partner:

- Tells you who you can or can't be friends with on Facebook and other sites. (Note that this is between adults, not parent and child).
- Sends you negative, insulting, or even threatening emails, Facebook messages, tweets, texts, or other messages online.
- Uses sites like Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and others to keep constant tabs on you.
- Puts you down in their status updates.
- Sends you unwanted, explicit pictures and demands you send some to them in return.
- Pressures you to send an explicit video.
- Steals or insists on being given your passwords.
- Constantly texts you and makes you feel like you can't be separated from your phone for fear that you will be punished.
- Looks through your phone frequently, checks up on your pictures, texts, and outgoing calls. (Again, parents can do this to minor children).

6. Religious Abuse

Religious abuse takes place when a person uses his/her religious beliefs, doctrines, or convictions, or any religious writings, in a way that humiliates, negates the other person's

freedom of the will, or coerces them into submission or unwilling obedience. Religious abuse also refers to any abuse that is administered under the guise of religion and can include psychological trauma and harassment:

- Trying to force another to do something or perform some acts by quoting Scripture texts even though those texts are being taken out of context.
- Claiming superiority or greater knowledge of doctrines or of the Bible (particularly when that knowledge is misused) to subdue the other person.
- Abusing the other person and using religious beliefs or biblical texts to support such abuse.
- Demanding secrecy about anything that is done or said at home as a proof of obedience and loyalty to the family, on religious grounds.
- Taking advantage of an ecclesiastical position (pastor, priest, elder, etc.) to take advantage of parishioners, children, or family members to induce them to do things that are unethical, immoral, or even illegal.
- Sexual abuse by clergy or religious leaders while in the exercise of their ecclesiastical position.
- Submission to spiritual authority without any right to disagree; intimidation.
- Unreasonable control of a person's basic right (personal autonomy) to make their own decisions (freewill, volition) on spiritual or natural matters.
- Forcing one to make financial contributions to a religious group that they do not wish to support.

QUESTION FOR THE GROUP:

Don't raise your hand, but do you know of anyone who has been or is being abused in any of the ways mentioned?

A Note:

For the purpose of this seminar, we will look at the dynamics of domestic partner abuse, particularly of men toward women. Due to the lack of a gender-neutral pronoun in the English language, as we describe the batterer and the victim/survivor we will use male pronouns for the batterer and female pronouns for the victim/survivor. While that is the most common case, please remember that domestic abuse can happen to everyone. There are male and female batterers and male and female survivors, too. (In areas where this seminar is translated, please use gender neutral terms and pronouns).

We also need to be aware of abuse toward children (all by itself a complete new seminar), and the growing problem of parental abuse, particularly elder abuse (also a separate seminar).

THE CYCLE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic violence often follows a pattern. It may seem unpredictable—simply an outburst related just to the moment and to the circumstances in the lives of the people involved. In fact, however, domestic violence follows a typical pattern no matter when it occurs or who is involved. The pattern, or cycle, repeats; the level of violence may increase each time. At every stage in the cycle, the abuser is fully in control of self and is working to control and further isolate his victim.

Understanding the cycle of violence and the thinking of the abuser helps survivors recognize they truly are not to blame for the violence they have suffered and that the abuser is the one responsible.

The Domestic Violence Cycle describes a pattern that most abusers follow. Learning about the cycle can help clear up some confusion that survivors have, and can help make some sense out of what is happening.

Establishing the Visual

(Note to the presenter: It would be helpful to make a clock face with movable hands and perhaps labels for the four phases and move the hands for each phase.)

The domestic violence cycle is cyclical in nature. Imagine a clock face, with only the 12, 3, 6 and 9 showing. Imagine the clock at the 3:00 o'clock position. But, instead of the 3:00, there's a label that reads:

The False Honeymoon Phase –



The False Honeymoon Phase is just like it sounds. The batterer is very nice to the victim, bringing her flowers and candy, being affectionate and cuddly, calling her by pet names, and so on. This is a wonderful time, and the survivor loves it. Why wouldn't she? It's what she's always dreamed of.

Unfortunately, the False Honeymoon Phase doesn't last. The only reason that it exists is because the batterer has done something bad and is trying to make up for it. He has beaten his wife or girlfriend, has vented his anger, and now he's afraid she'll leave him or call a domestic violence prevention agency. So he pulls out all of the stops, turns on the charm, and works hard to

convince her to stay.

This is what makes domestic violence so confusing. Counselors say they can't count how many times a survivor has reported, "But sometimes he's sooo sweet! And he's not a monster! We've had some good times too!"

This is all true. She isn't imagining things; she isn't making excuses. There really were good times. It was during this honeymoon phase.

The "Normal" Phase



Imagine the clock face again, and picture six o'clock," there at the bottom. Imagine that there's a label there that reads, "The 'Normal' Phase." The False Honeymoon Phase slides quietly and subtly into the "normal' phase." Things are still good; they've just settled down a little. The batterer is no longer actively romancing the survivor with candy and flowers and pet names, but they are both enjoying normal life. Things are pleasant and happy, and the survivor has decided that she definitely is not going to leave him. He has obviously turned over a new leaf, and he is treating her well. If it could only stay this way, everything would be wonderful.

Another tactic an abuser may use after he has chosen to be violent is to become the thoughtful, charming, loyal, and kind person with whom the victim fell in love. He may take her out to dinner, buy her flowers and convince her he will change. This can be a huge incentive for women to stay or return to the abuser because they believe that this time he really will change.

During this stage, the abuser may use different tactics to achieve his goal to regain power over the victim. The abuser may act as though nothing happened—everything is normal. This can be confusing for victims, as they do not understand how he could pretend nothing happened.

If the victim has visible injuries, she will have to explain how she got them. This is designed to maintain the normalcy of the relationship. The goal of this stage is to keep the victim in the relationship and paint a picture that the relationship is as normal as any other may experience.

The Rising Tension Phase



Now picture where the 9:00 is on the clock, three-quarters of the way around. That should be labeled “The Rising Tension Phase,” and the “Normal” phase slides quietly and subtly into this phase just as subtly as the honeymoon phase slid into the normal phase.

Things are still good. The survivor has pretty much decided that her troubles are behind her. But there is an edge in the air. The survivor realizes that tension is building, and she doesn't know why. She may try extra hard to be agreeable, and may overlook some warning signs, because she is reluctant to admit that the good times may be coming to an end.

After a while, she has to admit that the “normal” times are gone. The batterer becomes more and more angry. More and more of the abusive traits are returning to rear their ugly head—insults, name-calling, drinking, neglecting the family, and so on. The tension builds and builds.

The Explosion



Then you get to the “12:00” on the clock—the explosion. It can take many forms. Usually it is physical violence. Sometimes the violence is purely emotional and not physical—it varies with the abuser. But when the explosion happens, there's no mistaking it. Sometimes it involves weapons; sometimes it involves drugs or alcohol; sometimes it involves the police or SWAT teams; sometimes it involves the hospital, or even the mortuary. Sometimes it involves the children. But every time, it's something really bad.

The abuser/batterer experiences self-directed guilt—not guilt or sorrow for hurting his victim. He may apologize for his behavior, but his apology is designed so that he will not face consequences or be held accountable for his actions. His goal is to reassure himself that he will not be caught or face consequences. He is “in the right and the victim in the wrong.”

The abuser makes excuses and blames the victim for his behavior. Common victim blaming statements usually focus on the victim's behavior. For example, “If you had the house cleaned, I wouldn't have had to hit you,” or, “If you had cooked dinner on time, I wouldn't have had to beat you.” The goal of this stage is to abdicate responsibility for his behavior.

The transition from explosion to the honeymoon phase is the only transition that isn't subtle. The police have left. The victim has been discharged from the hospital and surveys the physical and emotional damage. Maybe she consults a domestic violence prevention agency to see how they can help her. Maybe she doesn't.

But the batterer contacts her as soon as he can. He feels terrible. He is horribly sorry. He promises that it will never, ever happen again. He calls on God to witness his sincerity. (Batterers use God a lot during the first part of the honeymoon phase.) He brings her presents to show how sorry he is. He brings out their wedding photo album; he makes a photo collage of dozens of pictures taken when they were happy together. He manipulates her emotions. And they have moved into the honeymoon phase once again. The cycle continues!

Everybody is Different

This cycle has no set time span to it. Some couples go through the complete cycle in a month; some go through it in a week, some go through it in a day. Some take an entire year to go through a complete revolution of the cycle. Every couple, every circumstance is different. But now that you know how the cycle works, maybe you can look back on incidents and understand how they fit into the cycle in your relationship or other relationship of which you are aware. The batterer's moods and methods and tactics may make more sense than they used to.

More Bad News

Many victim/survivors of battering keep remembering the false honeymoon phase and the normal phase. They keep saying, "If only it could stay like that!" That's very understandable, and it makes a lot of sense. If you could only freeze the cycle there at the six, things would be great.

We are sorry to have to say this, but you know it by now. You can't freeze the cycle. The batterer will keep moving through the cycle unless he receives some major, intensive intervention. "Anger Management" doesn't work. Marriage counseling doesn't work. Most programs for batterers have only about a 5% success rate. The newest programs seem to be more successful, but they are rare in most areas of the world. If you find a program that the batterer is willing to attend, call your local domestic violence prevention agency and get their opinion of the program. It may be one of the few effective ones, or it may simply be a waste of everyone's time. These are especially dangerous, because the batterer can then claim, "Your Honor, she's crazy! She's making it all up! I even graduated from a batterer's program!" And unless the judge is specifically educated about domestic violence, he may be fooled.

There's another problem. As time goes on, the cycle gets shorter. You used to have an explosion once a month; now it's every three weeks. In a while, it will be every two weeks. Batterers tend to go through the cycle faster and faster, and their level of violence will either stay the same, or grow worse with time.

No. The cycle will not slow down. It will either stay the same, or speed up. No. The violence will not diminish; it may get worse.

As the batterer goes through the cycle of violence again and again, you will notice a change in the cycle. The honeymoon phase will get shorter and shorter. Eventually, it may disappear. And then the normal phase will get shorter and shorter, until the victim is only left with the rising tension phase and the explosion phase.

A Complication

Imagine you're the victim/survivor. You have felt the tension grow and grow. You know what's going to happen, you know he's going to explode, you just don't know exactly when. The wait, the tension, is excruciating. He is filled with rage, and can explode at any time. You know that when he does, he grabs whatever is handy to attack you with. And right now, you're in the living room. When he attacks you in the living room, he hits you with pillows or fists. When he attacks you in the kitchen, he grabs the butcher knife.

So you make a quick decision, and you do something to trigger his rage. For some survivors, this is a good strategy. The tension of waiting is ended. The explosion occurs in a room without dangerous weapons, so your injuries are not as severe.

The only problem is, your batterer blames you for causing the violence. (He'd blame you no matter what, but now he points to your triggering incident.) A marriage counselor or member of the clergy could note the triggering incident, and agree that you are at fault.

This confuses many professionals, and many survivor/victims. But make no mistake. You are merely trying to exert a tiny bit of control over a horrible situation. Imagine a person on the top of a mountain, pounding a tent stake into the ground and suddenly there's a volcano. The problem is not the tent stake! The problem is the buildup of millions of tons of pressure and gas and molten rock that is just waiting to go off.

Domestic violence prevention agencies know about this phenomenon, and can help you deal with the doubt and the accusations. Don't be confused; don't accept any of the blame. The problem is not your triggering incident. The problem is the huge buildup of anger and violence in your batterer that is ready to go off at any moment.

So What Can You Do?

None of this is exactly happy news, but it's the truth. Whether you are the victim, a friend, or a church leader/helper, the best course of action is to contact the local domestic violence prevention agency. Call their emergency hotline and get some advice. You don't have to tell them the victim's name; the victim doesn't have to make decisions yet. Just start finding out what the options are. They might be able to help break this cycle of violence.

Here are some steps to take if you or someone you know is the victim of spousal abuse or domestic violence.

1. Call the police.

If you are in immediate physical danger, call the police (911 in the United States) and/or get to safety. Many police agencies are now trained to deal with domestic violence situations. Many cities even have volunteer liaisons for victims of domestic violence and rape. Inquire about getting a restraining order.

2. Talk to someone you trust.

If you are the victim, tell a close friend or family member what is going on in your relationship. You can ask this person to help you make a safety plan or help you find services. If you are the friend get as much information as you can regarding resources, and help the victim make a solid plan. Help her to know what money and papers she must collect if she has to make an escape.

3. Talk to a counselor.

Try to find a counselor who has experience with domestic violence.

4. Make a Safety Plan.

- Find a place you can go to if you need to leave quickly—a friend's house, family member, hotel, or domestic violence shelter.
- Have an idea of how you will get out of the home (a window, fire escape, etc.)
- Try to stash some money away that your partner cannot have access to.
- Open your own bank account or have a trusted friend hold some of your money.
- Plan how you will get away. Drive? Bus? Taxi?
- Have a bag ready with important documents, like your I.D., credit cards, insurance cards, medicine, bank information, passport, any legal documents, like restraining order and medical records. Have a bag packed for your children as well. You may want to stash these with a trusted friend.
- Arrange with a friend to have an "emergency phrase" that your partner will not recognize. For example, set it up in advance that if you ask, "How's your dog," that your friend will

- know to call the police.
- Sometimes domestic violence shelters are full, so have a safe back-up plan.

QUESTION FOR YOU

If you know of someone who is being abused by their spouse, what practical help can you provide them with? Spend a few minutes (5-10) making a list of what you can tell them and what you can offer to them.

Allow time for anyone who may be willing to share what they wrote.

More Advice to a Victim (Or the One Helping an Abuse Victim)

Leaving an abuser can be dangerous. You're the only one who knows the safest time to leave. You may know you are in an abusive relationship and realize you need to leave as soon as you safely can. Or, you may be concerned about your partner's behavior and think you may need to get out at some point in the future. Either way, being prepared can help you leave quickly if you need to. Consider taking these precautions:

- Call a local women's shelter; in the United States you can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-7233 to find out about legal options and resources available to you, before you need them.
- If you have school-age children, notify the school authorities or school counselor about custody arrangements and warn them about possible threats.
- Keep your communication private.

It isn't uncommon for an abuser to monitor mail, telephone, and Internet communication. Take precautions to help maintain your privacy and safety by following these steps.

Telephone conversations regarding your situation:

- Avoid making long-distance phone calls from home. Your abuser could trace the calls to find out where you're going.
- Be cautious when using a cell phone. Your abuser may be able to intercept conversations using a scanner. Switch to a corded phone if you're relaying sensitive information.
- Be aware of controlling use of your cell phone. Your abuser may use frequent cell phone conversations or text messages as a way to monitor and control your activities. An abuser may also check your cell phone to see who has called, or attempt to check your messages.

Computer use:

- If you think your abuser is monitoring your computer use, the safest bet is to access a computer at a friend's house or at the library. If you do use a shared home computer, there are several steps you can take to help maintain your privacy:
- Use a Web-based program for e-mail. Some programs such as Outlook Express, Netscape Mail, Eudora, and others store sent and received e-mails on your computer. A Web-based e-mail service is safer. Most of these services (such as Gmail, Hotmail and Yahoo mail) offer free e-mail accounts.
- Store files on the Internet. You can store files online and access them from any computer. You can also store documents as attachments in e-mail programs.
- Change your password often. Choose passwords that would be impossible to guess. The safest passwords contain at least six characters, both numbers and letters. Avoid easily guessed numbers and sequences.
- Clear your Web-browser history. Browsers such as Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator keep a record of the Web pages and documents you have accessed. They also store graphics of images you look at. There are several programs you can use for this.
- Clear your document history. Applications such as Word or Excel keep a record of edited documents. Don't store or edit any documents you don't want your abuser to see on a shared computer.

Where Else Can You Get Help?

- Your doctor or hospital emergency room treats any injuries and may refer you to safe housing and other local resources.
- Depending on your country, local women's shelters or crisis centers can typically provide 24-hour emergency shelter for you and your children, advice on legal matters, advocacy and support services, and evaluation and monitoring of abusers. Some shelters have staff members who speak multiple languages.
- Counseling or mental health centers: Most communities have agencies that provide individual counseling and support groups to women in abusive relationships. Be wary of advice to seek couples or marriage counseling. This isn't appropriate for resolving problems of violence in intimate relationships.
- Local court. Your district court can help you obtain a court order which legally mandates the abuser stay away from you or face arrest. These are typically called orders for protection or restraining orders. Advocates are available in many communities to help you complete the paperwork and guide you through the court process.
- Your church: Talk privately with your pastor or other professions counselors or social workers in your church, and be very clear, honest, and open about your situation.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Get together in small groups (3-5), and come up with practical ideas of what your church can do to help the victims of domestic abuse. Be as specific as possible because these ideas could become part of a working plan which would need to be voted on and implemented by the church board.

After a few minutes (15-20), come back together and write the lists of ideas on a marker/black board. Put the ideas in order of priority. Present this list to your church board as a proposed plan of action.

(Presenter: If time is an issue, suggest that they set themselves up as an *ad hoc* committee to work on this and present it to their church board.)

STEREOTYPICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Because abuse toward women has taken place for so long—too long—many assume that domestic abuse only takes place by men toward women. More recent studies have shown a growing trend in abuse and that is of women abusing men. Domestic violence does not discriminate by age, race, color, creed, gender, or sexual orientation. Women may hesitate to call for help; men are even less likely to seek assistance. Society has been taught to think of domestic violence victims as women. It is time for society to open their eyes!

It is helpful, at this point, to study the characteristics of an abusive woman. These characteristics of women (or men) who are abusive fall into three categories.¹³

Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol abuse is a major cause and trigger in domestic violence. People who are intoxicated have less impulse control, are easily frustrated, have greater misunderstandings, and are generally prone to resort to violence as a solution to problems. Women who abuse men are frequently alcoholics. Drugs, prescription or illegal drugs, can also be a problem.

Psychological Disorders

There are certain psychological problems, primarily personality disorders, in which women are characteristically abusive and violent toward men. A high percentage of domestic abuse by women is caused by psychological disorders. These need to be diagnosed and treated by professionals.

Unrealistic expectations, assumptions, and conclusions

Women who are abusive toward men usually have unrealistic expectations and make unrealistic

demands of men. These women will typically experience repeated episodes of depression, anxiety, frustration, and irritability which they attribute to the man's behavior. In fact, their mental and emotional state is the result of their own insecurities, emotional problems, trauma during childhood, or even withdrawal from alcohol. They blame men rather than admit their problems, take responsibility for how they live their lives, or do something about how they make themselves miserable. They refuse to enter treatment and may even insist that the man needs treatment. Instead of helping themselves, they blame a man for how they feel and believe that a man should do something to make them feel better. They will often medicate their emotions with alcohol or other drugs. When men can't make them feel better, these women become frustrated and assume that men are doing this on purpose.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH?

It is important for us to recognize when abuse is taking place in our church or community. At the same time, as a church, and as disciples of Jesus Christ, we have the responsibility to do more than simply educate the members—the church needs to be active and intentional in helping the victims of domestic abuse.

According to the General Conference Family Ministries web site, among Seventh-day Adventists, in a study conducted in one union in North America, with over 500 randomly selected Adventist church members responding, 56% said that physical abuse had been directed toward them or their siblings in the homes in which they grew up. Significant levels of physical, emotional and sexual abuse were reported by the nearly 8,000 randomly selected respondents to the Adventist Family Study initiated by the General Conference Department of Family Ministries in 1994. A range of 8-18% of female respondents reported being sexually abused. (The range indicates the lowest and highest percentages reported in the world divisions for which data is currently available.) The percentages of women reporting physical (15-43%) and emotional abuse (27-69%) were considerably higher than those reporting sexual abuse. On average, women reported greater levels of abuse than men. A range of 4-12% of males reported sexual abuse, 15-55 % physical abuse, and 6-37% emotional abuse. As with women, reports of sexual abuse among men were lower than other forms of abuse.¹⁴

An indication that the church does not approve of abuse is indicated by the *Church Manual*. The section, “Reasons for Discipline” reads as follows:

“The reasons for which members shall be subject to discipline are:...

4. Sexual abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults....
6. Physical violence, including violence within the family.”¹⁵

The church at its different levels (local, conference, union, or division) needs to do at least three things: educate the membership, intervene to rescue the abused, and help the victims have a new

beginning.

We need to **educate** our members to the reality all around us. At the same time, the church must be careful in this process; we must be careful that we don't see "abuse" in every imperfect, fallen action.

We need to **intervene** to rescue the abused. It is not appropriate to ask the victim why they stay with the abuser. Nor is it enough to tell them to leave their abuser. If the church is aware that abuse is taking place, the church must intervene to protect, rescue, and become the advocate for the victim. The most important thing the church needs to do is to take the most immediate steps—taking the victims out of the abusive home and provide them with the shelter and protection they need and to accompany them, if necessary, as they go to the legal authorities—police, court house, etc.

We need to **help** the victim with their long-range plans. We need to keep in mind that simply suggesting the victim leave their abuser is not always that simple, practical, or possible. When the abuser has not allowed the victim to work, and when he has alienated the victim from her family and from friends, she may find herself with literally no place to go and nothing with which to make a new start. Among the things the church could do to help is to provide a home/apartment, a job for the victim, and to help furnish their new living quarters, at least until their legal status is settled by the local authorities.

CONCLUSION

Will people know we are Christ's disciples by our love for one another?

- If we are His disciples, we should never allow any kind of abuse in our home or in our church.
- If we are His disciples, we should educate everyone so they can learn to recognize the signs of abuse.
- If we are His disciples, we should intervene on behalf of the victims of abuse by helping break the cycle that keeps them experiencing it.
- If we are His disciples, we should help the victims of abuse by making provision for their support once they are finally able to leave such harmful environment.

Let us show the world, and those in our family and church, that we are indeed Christ's disciples, by our love. Ellen White wrote, "The Lord desires His people to give in their homes a representation of the order and harmony that pervade the heavenly courts."¹⁶

Further Resources for Study and Sharing:

The General Conference Women's Ministries. They provide yearly sermons and seminars on abuse. They also have an excellent set of pamphlets "Breaking the Silence" that can be shared with your congregation. They can be contacted at: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD, 20904, USA or at <http://adventistwomensministries.org>.

There is also a complete list of Adventist Church statements regarding abuse at <http://adventistwomensministries.org/index.php?id=125>.

These Church statements on abuse can be accessed at: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/index.html>.

Another excellent source for educational material on abuse can be ordered from AdventSource: <http://www.adventsource.org/as30/search.results.aspx?search=Abuse§ion=home>. Mail address: 5120 Prescott Avenue, Lincoln, NE 68506, USA. Phone: 402.486.8800.

If a person has been abused by a church leader, help can be found at: <http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com>.

Enditnow is a global campaign to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence against women and girls around the world. It aims to mobilize Adventists around the world and invites other community groups to join in to resolve this worldwide issue.

This campaign, which extends to more than 200 countries and territories, was launched in October 2009 in partnership between the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)-a prominent humanitarian organization-and the Department of Women's Ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, two entities that are representative of the Adventist Church.

<http://www.enditnow.org/> or <http://adventistwomensministries.org>.

Peace and Healing; A Quick Reference Guide for Making Homes Abuse-Free. Available from the General Conference Family Ministries Department or AdventSource. Family Ministries address: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA.

Binding up Bruised Reeds: A Quick Reference Guide for Pastors on Ministry to Families Experiencing Abuse and Family Violence. Also available from the General Conference Family Ministries Department or AdventSource.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233; 1-800-799-SAFE

National Organization for Victim Assistance: 800-879-6682 (800-TRY-NOVA)
9am-5pm Eastern Time, Monday-Friday. Office: 703-535-6682, 9am-5pm Eastern Time,

Monday-Friday. Mail: National Organization for Victim Assistance, 510 King Street, Suite 424, Alexandria, VA 22314, USA.

No More Excuses: Domestic Violence: How Will Your Church Respond. Mable Dunbar and Colin Dunbar. 2010. Available through the Adventist Book Center or AdeventSource.

Helping Victims of Sexual Abuse: A Sensitive, Biblical Guide for Counselors, Victims and Families. Lynn Heitretter and Jeanette Vought. Bethany House. Available through AdventSource.

Battered Into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home. James Alsdurf, Phyllis Alsdurf, InterVarsity Press. 1989.

For a wider view of the various type of abuse and oppression of women around the world: *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide.* Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. Available at http://www.amazon.com/gp/customer-media/product-gallery/0307387097/ref=cm_ciu_pdp_images_dav .

¹ 1 Samuel 22:1-5

² 1 Samuel 24:1-7

³ 1 Samuel 16:13

⁴ 1 Samuel 18:12

⁵ Psalm 22:1-2, NKJV

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 343

⁷ Psalm 57:1, NKJV

⁸ Psalm 46:1, KJV

⁹ Psalm 62:7-8, NKJV

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home*, p. 436, 437.

¹¹ http://www.stopvaw.org/prevalence_of_domestic_violence

¹² <http://www.loveisrespect.org/is-this-abuse/types-of-abuse>

¹³ <http://wadv.org/maleabuse.htm>

¹⁴ <http://family.adventist.org/mtlogin/mt-search.cgi?search=abuse+statistics&IncludeBlogs=28&limit=20>

¹⁵ Church Manual, 2010 edition, page 61, 62

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 101.