

Domestic Violence in the Christian Church

Why should I care?

If...

a woman from your Bible study called you and said she was being abused,

...would you know who to call?

If...

a child in your Sunday School
class told you that
she was afraid to go home
because her daddy
kept hurting her mommy,

...what would you do?

If...

a man in your cell group
told you that he had
slapped his wife,

...how would you respond?

If...

a teenager in your youth group asked you how to stop his girlfriend's controlling behavior,

...what would you say?

If you concerned with *Marketplace ministry*

**you should know that domestic violence
is a major cost to employers.**

- In the workplace, over 13.5 million days are lost each year as a result of intimate partner violence.
- 15% to 50% of abused women report interference from their abusers with their efforts to obtain employment, education, or training.
- Lost productivity and the loss of lifetime earnings for nonfatal incidents of domestic violence account for nearly \$1.8 billion annually.

If you concerned with
Celebrate Recovery ministry
for substance abusers

**you should know that many of those
in your recovery groups may have
developed their addiction as
a method to cope with the abuse.**

- Substance abuse is strongly associated with domestic violence.
- Approximately 69% of women and 80% of men in programs for chemical dependency report having been victims of physical abuse in childhood.

If you concerned with
reaching the
Homosexual Community

you should you should know that domestic violence is not purely a heterosexual phenomenon.

- Over 47% of lesbians and more than 29% of gays reported being abused by a same-sex partner.
- Over 800,000 men raped or seriously assaulted an intimate same-sex partner during an average year.

If you concerned with *Protecting the Unborn*

you should you should know that physical abuse often begins during pregnancy.

- A recent study of women seeking prenatal care found that up to 20% were physically abused while pregnant.
- The leading cause of death during pregnancy is homicide.
- Abuse during pregnancy has resulted in miscarriages, separation of the placenta, hemorrhage following birth, and fetal fractures.
- Pregnant women who had been abused have 3 times more birth complications during delivery than women who were not assaulted.

If you are serving in *Women's Ministry*

you should know that a majority of the women you are ministering to (and with) have experienced abuse.

- Worldwide, between 10% and 50% of women report having been physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives.
- Physical violence was often combined with psychological and sexual abuse in 1/3 to over 1/2 of the cases.
- Most women who die due to domestic violence are quite young: 66% of victims in 1995 were under the age of 40.
- Violence is the leading cause of injuries in women of childbearing age.

If you are serving in
Men's Ministry

**you should know that some of the men
you are serving
(or who are serving alongside you) are
abusers.**

- *Over 15% of men between the ages of 25-35 reported committing at least one act of domestic violence within the past year.*
- *The men you are ministering to may also be victims of abuse themselves.*

If you are involved in *Seniors Ministry*

**you should know that many of the older people
in your congregation are not only
at risk for elder abuse, but may also may have been victims of
domestic violence for decades.**

- 2/3 of elder abuse victims are women. Of these victims, 90% are abused by family members.
- Over 20% of elder abuse victims are actually victims of domestic violence, perpetrated by their spouse or intimate partners.
- Older battered women face additional barriers to obtaining domestic violence services, including: disabilities, lack of mobility, lack of transportation, chronic illness, economic constraints, and culturally ascribed beliefs that discourage them from leaving abusive partners or revealing family secrets.

If you are concerned with *Ministry to the Homeless*

you should know that many of those you are serving are, in fact, victims or survivors of abuse.

- Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness.
- The National Research Council estimated that the number of women who had become homeless following abuse ranged from 27%-63%.
- Domestic violence and homeless shelters provide safety for many victims fleeing abuse, but the demand far exceeds the supply.
- In 1987, nationwide, 40% of battered women and their children were turned away from shelters due to lack of space.

If you are concerned with
Ministry to the Poor,

**you should know that many
of those you are serving are
either victims or survivors of abuse.**

- Former abuse victims often are plunged into poverty after fleeing abuse.
- A recent report investigating the relationship between poverty and abuse found that between 34%-65% of female welfare recipients had experienced domestic violence.
- Abuse increases women's risk of unemployment.

If you involved in *Children's Ministry*

you should know that many of the children in your Sunday School are victims of abuse themselves, or have witnessed domestic violence in their own homes.

- The *Report of the Surgeon General* proclaimed domestic violence to be a “serious and startlingly common public health problem with mental health consequences for victims, who are overwhelmingly female, and for children who witness the violence” (p. 231).
- Children subjected to domestic violence in the home suffer as much as if they themselves were physically abused.
- Boys growing up in homes where abuse is present are at particular risk to become abusive later in adulthood.

If you involved in *Youth Ministry*

**you should know that many of the
teens in your youth group are
victims of abuse themselves,
or they may have victimized others.**

- The vast majority of victims experience domestic violence in young adulthood.
- Perpetrators of domestic violence are disproportionately young also: Roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ of men aged 18-25 reported committing at least one act of domestic violence within the previous year.
- Domestic violence perpetration rates peak in late adolescence and decrease significantly with age.

If you are a *Senior Pastor*

you should know that between 1/3 to 1/2 of the adult women in your congregation have experienced abuse at some point in their lives.

- **Nearly 2/3 of all adult women who have been raped, stalked, or physically assaulted were victimized by a current or former intimate partner, and 1 in 3 of these women was injured.**
- **38,614 American women were beaten and sexually assaulted by family members in 2001 alone.**

Regardless of
your level of leadership
or area of ministry,
you need to be informed about
domestic violence.

Domestic violence is not
limited to the world,
but is present in your
congregation.

Are You
Equipped?

By learning more
about domestic violence,
you will be better
prepared to protect
and feed your flock.