



A Quick Reference and Lesson Guide

Domestic Violence & Trauma

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1 Scenarios and Assessment

Scenarios/Case Studies

A. Scenario #1

1. Mandy should feel fortunate to be married to such an important man. He and his family are prominent in the community and are known as generous benefactors to many local charities. On the surface they present a perfect family picture. The few people she has ever tried to talk to about the violence in their home responded with either polite disbelief or seemed to think that she was experiencing mental or emotional problems herself. She feels that she has no way out of the marriage and no one to turn to for help.

B. Scenario #2

1. Jill and Roger's relationship has been volatile from the start. What started out as bickering and semi-degrading comments has rapidly escalated to a constant state of rage. Every comment made by either of them is taken as a challenge by the other and leads to an immediate fight. Recently these fights have become more physically intense and the police have been called to the house several times. In their last visit, the police indicated that the next time they were called to the home would prompt a Child Protective Services investigation and the two children would be removed from their parents' custody.

C. Scenario #3

1. Mark begins to work long hours and take on overtime shifts in order to avoid going home after work. He knows he needs to be there for the kids but just can't seem to face the accusations and arguments he knows will begin as soon as he walks through the door. Things have recently begun to turn violent and he hides several bruises on his arms from blocking items that Sherry has thrown at him in the midst of a fight. He is ashamed to tell anyone what he is experiencing at home and feels that as a man he should be able to handle the situation on his own.

Definition and Key Thoughts

A. Facts and Statistics

1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that every minute, about twenty people are physically abused by an intimate partner in the US.
2. Between 2003 and 2012, domestic violence accounted for over 20 percent of all violence in the US.
3. Women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four are the most likely to experience intimate partner violence.
4. Victims of domestic violence are more likely to suffer from depression and suicidal

behaviors.

5. Only a little over half of the cases of domestic violence are reported to authorities, and only about one third of victims injured receive medical care according to the Department of Justice.
6. The World Health Organization reported that 35 percent of women around the globe have experienced sexual or physical abuse by a partner or non-partner in 2013.
7. One in four men will experience abuse at the hand of an intimate partner.
8. A study by The Christian Post noted that 65 percent of pastors had spoken one or fewer (none) times about domestic violence to their congregation.
9. Twenty-two percent of pastors indicated that they address this topic annually while 33 percent mentioned it “rarely.”

B. Definitions

1. *Abuse* is the act of hurting, mistreating insulting or injuring someone else.
2. *Violence* implies an escalation of abuse and introduces fear of harm as a measure of control.
3. The Old Testament Hebrew word most often translated as “violent” or “violence” is *chamac*, which means “to mistreat.” *Chamac* can also be translated as “malicious, destroy, wrong, crime, ruthless, plunder, and terror.”
4. *Domestic or Family Violence* is the legal term for physical or sexual abuse of a spouse, child, or elder in the home or family.

C. Types of Abuse or Domestic Violence

1. Physical abuse is the act of or threat of harming someone physically in an effort to maintain control or cause harm. It can include:
 - Pushing
 - Choking
 - Shoving
 - Burning
 - Attacking with objects
 - Kicking
 - Binding
 - Slapping
 - Attacking with weapons
 - Confining
2. Verbal abuse is the use of words or tone of voice to control or hurt another person or to destroy self-worth. It can result in destroyed respect, self-esteem, trust, and intimacy. Verbal abuse can include:
 - Threats
 - Intimidating words
 - Intimidating behaviors
 - Demeaning statements
 - Name calling
 - Public humiliation
 - Manipulation
 - Lying
 - Insults with profanity
 - Excessive control/questioning
3. Emotional abuse encapsulates all forms of domestic violence and abuse. However, some actions and behaviors can be clearly labeled as emotionally abusive. They may take the form of passively abusive behaviors or aggressively abusive behaviors. These behaviors may include:

Passive

- Withholding emotional support
- Ignoring
- Refusal to express true feelings
- Withdrawing from physical intimacy

Aggressive

- Withholding money or funds
- Hiding car keys
- Dangerous actions to instill fear
- Isolating spouse from family and friends

4. Sexual abuse may be the most common form of domestic violence. Many believe a wife should be submissive to all of her husband's desires. Therefore, many married women experience sexual abuse without realizing it. These behaviors may include:
- a) Sexually degrading attitudes and treatments
 - b) Discrimination based on gender
 - c) Threats or force to get unwanted sex (mate rape)
 - d) Unjust accusations of extramarital affairs
 - e) Brazen flirtation with members of the opposite sex
 - f) Committing adultery
 - g) Coercing spouse to perform uncomfortable or demeaning sexual acts

D. Biblical View of Domestic Violence

1. Contrary to some popular understandings of a biblical marriage, God does not consider marriage a matter of property or possession. Instead it is an act of honor and respect that reflects God's relationship with His church. *"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral"* (Hebrews 13:4).
2. God does not condone or accept violence within a marriage any more than He does in any form. *"I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty* (Malachi 2:16).
3. God's desire is to strengthen and comfort those who have been harmed or taken advantage of. *"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"* (Psalm 34:18).

Assessment (Interview)**A. For Someone Reporting Domestic Violence**

1. As the pastoral counselor, you may be the first person to hear a report of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse as many victims are often afraid to report abuse to law enforcement for a variety of reasons.
2. Questions to ask to determine if a referral to a professional is needed, or if police should be contacted:
 - a) Are you in any physical danger from your spouse?
 - b) Describe any forms of abuse that has occurred in your home to you and/or your children.

- (1) *Forms of abuse can include verbal, physical, and/or sexual. If physical or sexual abuse has and/or is currently occurring, the first step is to remove the abused spouse and/or children to a safe place.*
- (2) *Help the victim to report the abuse to the police and to take any steps recommended by law enforcement to ensure safety and protection.*
- (3) *If abuse is involved, the individual is a victim. No behavior warrants abuse as a consequence.*

c) Special Note

- (1) *If you are made aware of such abuse, depending on which state you live in and the circumstances in each situation, you may be required to notify the authorities. It is always best to contact your local police station and find out what your obligations are. Once you understand what your specific responsibilities are should you be made aware of abuse, it is a good idea to let the couple know in advance.*

3. General Questions

- a) What has brought you here today?
- b) What is the goal of your coming to counseling?
 - (1) *Is counseling for the individual to address being the victim of domestic violence?*
 - (2) *Is counseling for a couple attempting to reconcile following domestic violence?*
- c) Tell me about your marriage:
 - (1) What kind of violence has been occurring?
 - (2) Are you currently in a safe situation?
 - (3) Have legal charges been filed?
 - (4) What made you decide to stay in the marriage *or* separate from your spouse?
 - (5) Tell me about your children.
- d) What specific problems bring you here today?
 - (1) How have you tried to solve these issues in the past?
 - (2) Are you considering divorce?
 - (3) Is there hope for reconciliation?
 - (4) Tell me about your walk with God.
 - (5) Tell me about your backgrounds (your siblings, your parents, your childhood).
 - (6) What type of family and/or friend support do you have to help you through this situation?

B. For the Victim of Violence

1. It is a positive sign when victims of domestic violence seek counseling because they are demonstrating acknowledgement of the need for help in spite of a diminished self-image brought on by the abusive relationship.
2. Red flags for immediate referral to professional help
 - a) Describe how you feel most of the day – describe your thoughts, actions, conversations, activities (you want to rule out major depression).
 - b) Do you feel that you or a family member are currently in danger?
 - c) Have you had any thoughts of hurting yourself or others? If so, do you have a

plan? What would it consist of? Do you have the means to accomplish this plan? (You want to rule out the likelihood of suicide or threat of harm to others.)

d) ***Special Note***

- (1) If you are made aware of suicidal behavior or plans to commit suicide, you may be required to notify the authorities depending on which state you live in and the circumstances in each situation. It is always best to contact your local police station and find out what your obligations are. Once you understand what your specific responsibilities are should you be made aware of suicidal behavior or planning, it is a good idea to let the individual know in advance.

3. General Questions

- a) How can I be of help to you today?
- b) What are your goals for counseling?
- c) Tell me about your marriage (or relationship):
 - (1) How long have you been together?
 - (2) How did you both first meet?
 - (3) What was the attraction to each other?
 - (4) What made you decide to marry each other?
 - (5) Tell me about your children.
- d) When did the problems start?
- e) How quickly do confrontations become aggressive?
- f) How have you or your spouse hurt each other physically? Emotionally?
- g) Have your children been harmed or threatened physically or emotionally?
- h) How are you and your children doing now? Any other family affected?
- i) Has there been legal intervention?
- j) What have you done to protect yourself for the time being?
- k) What feelings have you gone through? Be honest.
 - (1) Who do you have to talk to?
 - (2) How are you expressing strong feelings?
 - (3) Describe your network of support.
 - (4) What has been the financial impact to your life?
 - (5) Describe your walk with God right now.

2

Critique and Counsel

Biblical Insight

A. Scriptural View of Violence

1. Proverbs 29:22 says that “*An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.*” This proverb is for both men and women and illustrates that

- uncontrolled anger can lead to sinful and harmful actions.
2. The Lord does not condone violence against other human beings. Psalm 11:5 notes that ***“The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence His soul hates.”***
 3. God has given us the free will to choose our actions. His unwillingness to control us like puppets allows some to choose to engage in harmful acts of aggression. However, He does not expect anyone to remain a victim. ***“The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it”*** (Proverbs 27:12). He expects us to seek out help, safety, and security when the situation calls for it.
- B. If the Bible teaches that wives should submit to their husbands, is it wrong to leave an abusive spouse?
1. The Bible is clear that a husband’s job is to protect and love his wife like Christ loved the church.
 2. ***“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself”*** (Ephesian 5: 25-28).
- C. ***“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered”*** (Proverbs 22:24).
1. God is clear that when you are in danger, the appropriate steps to take are to remove yourself from that situation. Whether or not divorce is discussed, a separation to maintain your safety and the safety of any others in the home may be necessary.

Wise Counsel

A. The Victim of Domestic Violence

1. It is ***not*** normal for a husband or wife to inflict physical or emotional hurt upon their spouse. Evaluate the relationship from the aspects of communication, intimacy, and friendship to objectively determine if the interactions are appropriate.
2. While the only biblical reasons for divorce are sexual sin (by one or both of the partners in violation of the marital covenant) and abandonment, it is appropriate for a victim of abuse to leave or separate from an abuser in order to protect themselves or others (i.e., children).
3. Review the stages of abuse with the victim in order to help them gain insight into the recurring patterns of abusive interactions:
 - a) Agitated Stage: characterized by tension, blaming, verbally aggressive interactions, beginning stages of anger.
 - b) Acute Stage: characterized by physical aggression toward inanimate objects or other people.
 - c) Apologetic Stage: characterized by a “honeymoon phase” in which the abuser become very contrite and attentive. This stage is generally very pleasant and provides the victim with hope that the spouse is going to change.

4. Empathize with the pain and confusion of the emotional struggle that the victim is going through. Reinforce the need to provide physical and emotional safety for oneself and any children involved.
- B. For Perpetrators of Domestic Violence
1. Provide biblical education and insight for the perpetrator as to how a relationship should look in the eyes of God and correct any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of scriptures.
 - a) **God made women inferior to men, giving men superiority and authority.** *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).*
 - b) **Ephesians 5:24 says, “Wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”** *“Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’” (Acts 5:29).*
 - c) **The Bible says that the husband is the head of the wife and therefore has the right to control every aspect of her life.** *“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...Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church” (Ephesians 5:23, 28–29).*
 2. Encourage them to acknowledge how their behaviors have hurt and affected others. Talk about the difference between an “apology” for their behavior and true repentance which means they will take steps to keep the behaviors from occurring again.
 3. Give hope that God can help bring positive change to the relationship (Rom. 12:2).
 4. Assist both parties to find a licensed professional who is competent and experienced in working with domestic violence to support them through the process of change.

3

Application and Prayer

Application

A. For Couples Currently Living with Domestic Violence

1. Ensure safety and security both physically and mentally.
2. Attend professional marriage counseling. (It is a good idea to have several recommendations to give to the couple.)
3. Read suggested books/attend suggested groups or supports. (Have a recommended

reading list and, if possible, a recommended list of marriage support groups, anger management groups, victims of domestic violence groups).

B. For Victims of Domestic Violence

1. Attend a recovery group. (Have recommended locations to give the individual.)
2. Attend professional counseling. (It is a good idea to have several recommendations to give to the individual.)
3. Make no major life decisions (including new dating relationships) during a time of emotional vulnerability (ideally for at least one year).
4. Pursue church involvement. (Build a healthy safe network of friends and support.)

Prayer

“Lord, we know that You hate violence. You hate to see Your children harmed or destroyed emotionally or physically. You hate the false teaching that are perpetrated through generational abusive cycles. Help us Lord to understand Your will and to use wisdom in protecting those who cannot protect themselves. I pray today for . . .”



4 Recommended Resources

- A. Clinton, Tim, and Ron Hawkins. *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling*. Baker Books, 2009.
- B. Hunt, June. *Domestic Violence: Assault on a Woman's Worth*. Rose Publishing, 2013.
- C. Kroeger, Catherine C. *No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence*. IVP Books, 2010.
- D. Meyer, Joyce. *Beauty for Ashes: Receiving Emotional Healing*. Faithwords, 2003.

5 Taking it to the Church

“Restoring the Broken: Confronting Domestic Violence”

By Jennifer McCurrach

Focus: *Describe the biblical foundation for marriage and how a biblical marriage is structured. Discuss common misconceptions that can be used to justify domestic violence both physically and emotionally. Provide a path toward recovery either within or without the marriage.*

Lesson Text:

Ephesians 5:21-33 (KJV)

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.
29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Focus Verse:

Ephesians 5:25-27 (KJV)

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Culture Connection: Understanding What Marriage is Supposed to Be

The world around us appears to be changing at the speed of light. Advances in technology and science have created an environment that promotes comfort, convenience, and pleasure over hard work, discipline, and self-sacrifice. People today do what they want, when they want as long as it makes them “happy” without regard to how it may be affecting others. This twenty-first century philosophy has invaded every aspect of our life including our marriages and family life. What the modern world perceives as a functional family unit can, in many cases, differ quite vastly from the biblical understanding of marriage. Domestic violence is one of many consequences of the ego-centric mentality that has invaded our homes.

Today our society is more educated and more globally connected than ever in the history of humanity. We are rapidly reducing the stigmas associated with mental health, we encourage support and empathy for others in our social campaigns against poverty, homelessness, and even abuse. There are shelters, counselors, and support in the form of church programs, books, articles, education, and even radio and television. Yet, in spite of this enlightened approach to social needs and support for others we still face a brutal and harsh reality when it comes to domestic violence. In this country alone, one in three relationships experience violence at some point. In other countries where religious or political support endorses domination of one sex over the other, those rates are even higher. It is a silent epidemic that is shadowed in deception and manipulation. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists reports that 3 to 4 million women are beaten in their homes every year. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, approximately two thousand women are murdered every year by an intimate partner. How can we begin to address this in our churches?

We must begin with instruction. Understanding what God’s view of marriage should be and challenging the distortions of the world is key. Preaching and teaching on what it means to “love” and “respect” your partner is vital to establishing a foundation for successful marriages. Paul instructed husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. This is a powerful statement with implications of self-sacrifice, self-effacement, and complete devotion. The relationship of Christ with the church is not one of domination and control. But rather one of creating an atmosphere of love so strong that it encourages submission and devotion through caring and support. Ephesians 5:27 goes on to say that the love of a husband for a wife should ultimately present a relationship that is “glorious” without spot, wrinkle or blemish. It is easy and right for a wife to submit to a husband that shows her that kind of love and devotion.

God does not call us to either place ourselves in violent situations or to remain in violent situations. Jesus illustrated that it was acceptable and expected that we would avoid situations of persecution throughout His ministry. In John 7 and 10 Jesus purposely avoided going to Judea because He knew the Jews were there waiting to take His life. In Matthew and Luke we see Jesus instructing His disciples to walk away from people who will not listen to them and to “shake off the dust” of their feet (or rather to not look back). Proverbs 19:19 indicates that we must allow people to suffer the consequences of their actions. *“A hot tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.”* If we condone, cover up, or accept violence in the home we are in essence “rescuing” the perpetrator. This will not stop them from acting on their abuse but will only allow them to continue engaging in abusive behaviors and even creating an environment for an escalation of those behaviors. It is vital that we, as the Apostolic church, engage in conversations about domestic violence through preaching, teaching, Bible study, or

training classes. It is our responsibility to challenge misconceptions about relationships and to help our families rise above the world's view of marriage. We must exemplify the relationship between Christ and the church through our example of a biblical marriage.

Searching the Scriptures

1 Peter 3:7 KJV

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Galatians 3:28 KJV

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus

Acts 5:29 KJV

Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'

Proverbs 2:12 KJV

Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse.

Romans 12:2 KJV

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Isaiah 41:10 KJV

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Talking Points

God designed marriage to be an earthly witness of His relationship with His church. Man's idea of what is good (or at least acceptable) is seldom, if ever, God's idea of good and right.

When Jesus said to "turn the other cheek" he was not advocating allowing oneself to be abused, but rather to refrain from taking revenge. (Matthew 5:38-39)