

Confront

- Abusers need to hear, *“Domestic violence is wrong! We care enough about you and your family to hold you accountable for your actions.”*
- Confront abuser and encourage him to join treatment program for abusers.
- Provide an accountability group for him where concerned men will meet with him and ask him about his behavior on a consistent basis, and pray for and encourage him to continue his treatment program.
- If family has been reconciled, provide phone numbers of accountability group members to abuser’s wife so she can call whenever she senses tension building into violence.
- Do not counsel a couple together if there is violence involved.

Share Time & Resources

- Support other ministries and community service organizations by including them in the church's annual budget.
- Help raise funds for ministries, shelters, and other not-for-profit agencies by donating proceeds from bake sales, garage sales, etc.
- Volunteer to work at a local women's shelter or an abuser's treatment program.

The call of each church community

is to minister to those who are hurting,
hold abusers accountable,
and provide safety and support
for women and children.

God indicted the religious leadership
of Ezekiel’s day when He told them,
*“You have not strengthened the weak
or healed the sick or bound up the injured.
You have not brought back the strays
or searched for the lost.
You have ruled them harshly and brutally.”*
(Ezek. 34:4 NIV)

Jesus criticized the religious leaders when He said,
*“And you experts in the law, woe to you
because you load people down
with burdens they can hardly carry,
and you yourselves will not lift one finger
to help them.”* (Luke 11:46 NIV)

Instead of remaining silent
or failing to intervene,
the church needs to take a *bold* stand
against violence in the home,
and provide a safe place to tell the truth,
where truth is heard with compassion,
where abusers are held accountable
for their actions,
where safety for women and children is a priority,
and where God’s grace is found in abundance.



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What Your Church Can Do
About Domestic Violence

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Educate

- Domestic violence should *not* be considered a private matter between family members. Realize that battery is a crime, and abusers must be held accountable for their actions.
- Include a 4-6 week study on family violence and the prevention of violence in Adult Sunday School curriculum.
- Invite guest speakers from FOCUS Ministries, Inc. to educate congregation, women's groups, or pastoral staff about domestic violence through workshops, seminars, or retreats. Learn how to detect cases of abuse, and how to intervene and offer assistance.
- Plan several sermons throughout the year on the subject of violence in the home. (October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.) Explain the various definitions of domestic violence, including verbal and emotional abuse, and take a strong stand against such behavior. Clarify that being head of the home does not grant permission to punish or abuse.
- Display brochures, newsletters, and information about domestic violence where people can easily access them. (FOCUS Ministries can provide free brochures on various topics and offer volume discount for subscription to newsletter.)
- Post phone numbers for shelters, support groups, and national domestic violence hotline on bulletin boards and insert periodically in church bulletins.
- Purchase books and videos on difficult relationships and domestic violence for your church library (The Emotionally Destructive Relationship: Seeing it, Stopping it, Surviving it, To Be An Anchor In The Storm, Foolproofing Your Life, Boundaries) and make sure the congregation is aware of them.

- Educate teenage girls and boys about domestic violence, and help them develop biblical ways to express anger. (FOCUS Ministries can help you plan an overnight retreat for girls or Saturday workshop for girls and boys.)

Provide Safety

- Women need to hear, "*You are not alone—we care about you and your safety.*" Make sure women don't have to choose between their safety (or the safety of their children) and church policy.
- Provide an atmosphere of trust and safety where women can share their concerns and fears without being harshly judged or advised to "*just go home and pray about it*" or "*try to be a more submissive wife.*"
- Adopt a shelter as a mission project or start your own shelter where women and children can have emergency and short-term housing.
- Start a network of safe houses for women and children who need somewhere to stay in a moment's notice.
- Provide wise counsel which will not put her in more danger and know what community services are available to help her.
- Provide a safety escort whenever she needs to meet with abuser (counseling sessions, court hearings, etc.)

Support

- Start a support group for women who are in difficult relationships, or offer a meeting place for other organized support groups. We can help you start a FOCUS group at your church.
- Maintain an emergency fund to help meet the financial needs of women and children who are forced to leave home because of violence. Be prepared to help with rent and rental deposits, utility bills, car repairs, groceries, clothing needs, school supplies, medical bills, etc.
- Continue to be caring and supportive even if a woman refuses to leave an abusive relationship or goes back into an abusive relationship before the abuser has changed. Read the book, "*To Be An Anchor In The Storm*" by Susan Brewster and learn how to effectively help a friend or family member who is being abused.
- Walk through the long process of healing and forgiveness with the victim and abuser as long as it takes. Don't give them "x" number of weeks to get better, and then drop them. Be prepared to offer support and guidance for several years, not days or months.
- Provide prayer partners to be available day or night, who will present prayer requests to a network of prayer chains. Let families know they are being prayed for on a consistent basis.
- Connect women with people in the church who can provide computer training, financial planning, help with car maintenance and household repairs, etc.