

# **Domestic or Spousal Abuse Prevention**

## **Unmasking A Hidden Oppression in Churches**

\*\*\*\*\*

Across the world, across the nation, across our communities, we know that violence is being perpetrated. One of its quietest forms, dulled behind closed doors, is domestic and family violence.

This topic will give an introduction on an evil that flourishes in silence while bringing destruction into marriage and family life.

As we all know that that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure, therefore the topic also will give starters on how, with God's blessing, we can prevent such abuse to take place within the lives of our children and their future marriages.

**Text your questions during the topic to  
920 791 1703**

**Pastor. A. T. Vergunst  
Waupun, WI  
USA  
[atvergunst@gmail.com](mailto:atvergunst@gmail.com)**

**The law of the wise is a fountain of life:  
to depart from the snares of death.**

**Prov 13:14**

**Introduction**

A. The *snares of death* has many applications both spiritual and practical

1. One snare often *escaping* attention is **domestic or spousal abuse**

a. ‘*Don’t ask, don’t tell*’ is dangerous as it may protect sinners

b. ‘*Don’t judge by appearances*’ is wisdom as sin is deceitful

**B. Topic’s purposes**

Part 1: To call attention to a hidden reality of abuse

*Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteousness; and plead the cause of the poor and needy.* (Prov. 31:8-9)

Part 2: To prevent domestic abuse through education

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6)*

**PART ONE: Exposing Domestic Abuse**

**I. DEFINITION OF ABUSE**

A. Abuse is the **misuse of power to control** someone for selfish reasons

1. Abuse is a **pattern** of behaviors one person uses to gain and maintain power and control over a minor, adult, either child or spouse.

2. This abuse *can be sexual, emotional, physical, verbal, social, financial*

B. Domestic abuse definitions:

1. *Husband’s deliberate, ongoing, systematic, relentless destruction of his wife, to wither her soul or her body or both to gain total control over her.”* (D. Engelsma)

2. Domestic abuse is oppression where one spouse seeks to control and dominate the other through a pattern of coercive, controlling, and punishing behaviors. (D. Strickland)
- C. Scripture's definition of abuse is called *oppression*
- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1 Sam. 12:3 | <i>Samuel's question about whether he abused his authority to oppress any.</i>   |
| Job 20:19   | <i>Zophar's description of wicked: those who oppress the poor by violently taken away what isn't his</i>   |
| Job 35:9    | <i>Elihu refers to the wicked who by multitude of oppressions make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty</i>   |
| Ps. 103:6   | <i>Extols God for executing righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed</i>  |
| Ps. 146:7   | <i>Exalts the Lord Who looseth the prisoners</i>   |
| Eccl. 4:1   | <i>Solomon's reflection sums up the condition of the abused, So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.</i> |

## II. The Weapons in domestic abuse

- A. Introductory observation
  1. the weapons are multiple and subtle that even victims don't always perceive them (anymore) as weapons (see concluding poem on the back page, *The Tattered Soul*)
- B. The main weapons
  1. treat others as objects they possess (objectification)
  2. treat victim as inferior (servant or child)
  3. blame and accuse others
  4. ridicule, mock, assaulting speech, criticize, belittle

5. silence and isolation treatment
6. violation of personal boundaries
7. porn
8. threats
9. rage and physical violence
10. sexual demands/violence/rape in marriage

C. All these weapons have one purpose: ***selfish control of others***

### **III. The Cycle of Domestic Abusers**

- A. Domestic Abuse is not *occasional outburst* each marriage experiences
1. It is *pattern of life – ongoing – cycling*
  2. It goes through common stages
    - a. honeymoon: *all sweet – treat with love and respect*
    - b. build-up: *tension grows – message of unhappiness*
    - c. set-up: *looks for ways to have an excuse to strike*
    - d. explosion: *verbal – physical – sexual*
    - e. cover-up: *put on display of guilt and remorse (honeymoon)*

### **IV. The Results of domestic abuse are devastating**

- A. Abused are snared in death (Prov. 3:14)
1. the oppressed person's emotional, spiritual, physical, sexual, relational and economic well-being are shredded
    - a. the 'cycles' leaves victim(s) confused and uncertain (crazy-making)

- b. eventually victims will believe the abuser
- 2. Result on children is devastating (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21)
  - a. grow up with terror
  - b. often breeds anger - rebellion – flight
  - c. breeds next generation of abusers

## V. The Portrait of the Domestic Abuser

- A. The roots are in the past which can be hard or impossible to leave
    - The present does not undo the past, but often the past does undo the present.*
  - 1. To leave home and step into adult life is giant undertaking
    - a. Especially if our toolbox is empty or stocked with wrong tools
    - b. Dysfunctional children often fall into hands of abusers
  - 2. Never does my history eliminate my accountability
- 
- B. The three common features of the domestic abuser
    - 1. The master manipulator or deceiver
      - a. pleasant in public while beastly at home (Matt. 23:23-25)  
  
*People who secretly practice evil while playing the game of pretend-as-good-Christians are the hardest and most treacherous of all abusers. Many use the mask of Christianity for an unholy charade. (Jeff Crippen)*
    - 2. The self-centered star of the universe
      - a. sees life only through his/her grid: *all to serve me!*
        - they have no working conscience
        - their only sorrow is about *losing control, comfort or reputation*

- b. has inflated sense of entitlement
  - no shame, no empathy, no repentance
  
- 3. The self-justifying mindset
  - a. expert in blame-shifting and manipulation

## **PART II Prevention of Domestic Abuse**

### **VI. Educate: to depart from snares of death is through instruction**

- A. We need to *define abuse Biblically* (Lord's Day 40)
  - 1. domestic abuse is *slow murder* of spouse/children
  
  - 2. NT defines abusive men/women as **railers** (1 Cor. 5:11)  
*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a (...) railer (...) with such a one no not to eat*
    - a. domestic abusers are subject to *church discipline*
  
    - b. spiritual leadership is to *initiate deliverance* of oppressed
      - *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people their transgression (...). Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seesth the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? (Is. 58:1-7)*
  
- 3. As church leaders we need to be aware *we may enable abuse*
  - a. by not acting on behalf of the oppressed
  
  - b. by not upholding the **sanctity of marriage** as we enable sinful actions to continue within marriage

4. Reasons church leaders send victim back
  - a. because we don't believe her story
  - b. because we think it **always** takes two to tangle

## VII Define and model Biblical Boundaries

- A. God placed a *boundary* around us personally
  1. Boundary is an *invisible line* no one is to cross without permission
  2. Need accurate defining and maintaining to **protect us**
    - a. God's laws are *protective boundaries*
      - to protect us from harm
      - to teach us how to love others
  3. Example of Galatians 6:2, 5  
*Vs. 2 Bear ye another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ*  
  
*Vs. 5 For every man shall bear his own burden*
- B. Boundaries help us to guard ourselves against those who want to trespass into our personal property or treasures!
  1. they are meant to **keep the bad out and let the good in**
  2. abused children often *reverse function of boundaries*
- C. Abusers don't respect boundaries (Boundary violations)
- D. Holding to personal boundaries isn't controlling others but controlling how you allow others to be in your life or space
  1. each person is responsible to defend their own boundaries around their life and heart
  2. all violations of our boundaries violate God's image (James 3:9; Gen. 9:5)

- E. Boundaries are not inherited but laid and built in our growing years
- F. Boundary development main stages of a person
  - 1. The bonding stage (0-12 mo.)
  - 2. The separation and individuation stage (6 mo. – 3 yrs.)
    - a. the **hatching** (What is out there?)
    - b. the **practicing** (I can do everything; I am omnipotent!)
    - c. the **re-approachment** (Uhm, I can't do everything!)
      - these years lay *first boundary awareness*
        - need to stand up for themselves (defend)
        - need to take initiative and encounter boundaries
        - need when to use critical verbal 'No' boundary
        - learn about ownership and stewardship
        - learn about use and limits of freedom
        - learn about responsibility for actions
        - learn about the choices bring consequences
  - 3. adolescent years (13-18)
    - a. desire for independence – exploration – freedom surges
    - b. areas of conflict are more serious: *sexuality – gender identity – authority – alcohol/drugs – porn – relationships – social life – media – freedom (wheels and wealth!)*
  - 4. young adult years (*leave home*)

G. **“The child is the father of the adult!”**

1. learning to know and embrace boundaries while young, will make the transition to and journey into adulthood easier when freedom and responsibility increase

**VIII Teaching Boundaries in Children**

A. Children raised in families without clear Biblical boundary development are *at high risk for sexual and domestic abuse*

B. What is parenting: *to help your child leave you well!*

1. Along the way we are to *train them* (Prov. 22:6)
2. Along the way we are to be *visionary and proactive*

C. What are the **main** boundaries to prepare them to be *safe and sound*?

1. Law of sowing and reaping: ***Something will happen if I do/don't!***
  - a. every choice has a consequence
  - b. they need practice with making choices to learn how to do
    - not necessary to protect them from hurt but from harm
2. Law of responsibility for yourself: ***I need to pull my own wagon***
  - a. Maturity is to take personal responsibility in all aspects of life
  - b. Require following through on completed tasks
  - c. Do not allow excuses or blame shifting
3. Law of Respect: ***I am not the only one that matters!***
  - a. abusers or controllers lack respect of someone else
  - b. respect doesn't come naturally

4. Law of Freedom: *I have a choice yet within God's limits!*
  - a. good parenting is to give child many experiences with use of freedom of choices within Biblical boundaries
  - b. teach 'freedom' to disobey when a command is contrary to God's revealed will
5. Law of Proactivity to protect yourself: *Tantrums won't work!*
  - a. need to learn to protect when in danger – when hurt – threatened – boundaries are violated

## VIII Teaching on the boundaries of the husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33)

The sobering fact: *the church is no safer place than the secular world!*

- A. Husband's boundary on being husband is *Jesus Christ* (25-27)
  1. How does Jesus as Head love His Bride?
  2. What does His loving ministry do to His Bride?
- B. Husband *headship is not dictatorship and submission are not slavery*
  1. The husband's love is *first and fundamental*
  2. The wife's submission is *secondary and derivative*
    - a. no wife is asked to submit to domestic abuse
    - b. every wife must insist her husband to respect Biblical boundaries
- C. Teaching and modeling Biblical headship/submission is key to prevention

Conclusion: The cry of the oppressed (abused) in Ps. 120!

## **Recommended Books and Helpful Websites**

**Disclaimer:** Recommended resources doesn't mean unqualified approval for all the Biblical or counseling views.

1. *Spouse Abuse in the Reformed Community* by David J. Engelsma
2. *Unholy Charade* by Jeff Crippen
3. *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* by Leslie Vernick
4. *Why Does He do that?* By Lundy Bancroft
5. *Healing the Hurting* by Catharine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck
6. *Domestic Abuse: Help for the Sufferer* by Darby A. Strickland
7. *Domestic Abuse: Recognize, Respond, Rescue* by Darby A. Strickland
8. [www.nrcwaupun.org](http://www.nrcwaupun.org) Under the tab of "Topics" are lectures on marriage in which the subject of headship and submission are presented along with some homework assignments for each couple.

### **Tattering of the Soul**

The days are dark; the nights even darker.

The things he says, are they true? Oh, how I wish I knew!

Nothing I do is right. He controls everything in sight.

Money – it is all his. Groceries – “Why did you buy this?”

Don't question anything he does. He says I'm unfit to raise my kids.

He says my children's lives I've ruined. It is true? How could I do that?

Perhaps he's right. What does he see? Is there really all that bad in me?

He must be right; he knows me best.

What did I do, what did I say? Why does he tear me down this way?

Why don't I leave? The things he does no one would believe.

My mother's chair he chopped and burned.

My neighbor's cat he stalked and killed.

What's wrong with me? It must be me! To others he's so great!

He's kind and giving and make a clean living.

He is generous beyond belief. His friends all bow at his feet.

In front of others he is so kind.

It must be me. I'm out of my mind. It has to be me!  
When did it start? I gave him my heart.  
Our love seemed so great from the very first date!

But it happened so slowly; he took control of me  
Just little things at first, step by step  
until he had complete control of everything that was me  
My heart, my very soul, came under his control.

Where do I turn, which way can I go?  
I hurt so deeply but no one knows.  
His words cut deep to my core.  
Away from him I'd like to soar.  
No, I must keep going.  
Without him I can't survive.  
On my own I'd surely die.

But how can I stay? It gets worse every day!  
I have no bruises anyone can see.  
Oh, how I wish he would slap me.  
Then I'd leave, I know I would,  
but where would I go?  
I do not know.  
Oh, help my tattered soul!

Written by an abuse victim.

Quoted in *Unholy Charade*, by Jeff Crippen