

A MOOREWOMEN PUBLICATION

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# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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A STARTING POINT IN SUPPORTING VICTIMS



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# INTRODUCTION

"EVEN IF SHE HAD DONE NOTHING ELSE, ROSIE BATTY'S TENURE AS AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR IN 2015 DID US ALL A GREAT SERVICE BY BRINGING THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM THE SHADOWS AND INTO THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF DAY. OUR MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES, OUR HOMES, SHOULD BE THE CONTEXT IN WHICH LOVE AND CARE AND GENEROSITY FLOURISH; SAFE-HAVENS WHERE THERE IS NO NEED TO BE AFRAID OR TO PROVE YOURSELF OR HIDE. HUMAN SINFULNESS WORKS OUT ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THESE CONTEXTS TOO, OF COURSE. NONE OF OUR MARRIAGES OR FAMILIES OR HOMES ARE PERFECT OR IDEAL. THAT'S BECAUSE NONE OF US ARE PERFECT OR IDEAL. BUT THERE IS NEVER, EVER, ANY EXCUSE FOR OPPRESSION, ABUSE OR VIOLENCE. THERE IS NEVER, EVER, ANY EXCUSE FOR DOMINATION, FOR BULLYING, FOR MENTAL, EMOTIONAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE."

MARK THOMPSON

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In 2015, the Moorewomen Talks Committee invited Ruth Holt to come and speak on the topic of Domestic Violence. Around the same time I kept hearing stories of victims whose pain went unnoticed by anyone in their churches and of ministry wives confronted with this issue in their congregations and feeling ill equipped to deal with the complexities of it. Amongst those stories were even some sad tales of attempts to help that unfortunately only made things worse. As with any people in pain, it is difficult to always hit the right note in our dealings. All of us can say and do things that will upset those who are already hurting. This might be because of a raw spot that we couldn't possibly have foreseen. But in many cases, it can be because we simply don't understand what we are dealing with and in our ignorance we make mistakes that could have been avoided.

It is likely that most ministry wives will come into contact with someone affected by domestic violence at some point in their lives. If we really want to minister to these people and care for them in a way that doesn't make their situation worse, we need to understand what God's word has to say on this subject and also how to practically apply it. We need to understand what domestic violence is (and is not) and how complex an issue it is. We need to understand, at least in some small measure, some of the issues people in an abusive situation might be facing. We need to recognise warning signs, understand the need to get professional help and have some idea of where to find it.

**With these things in mind, this booklet attempts to gather in one place a number of articles and other resources to give ministry wives an overview of the issue of domestic violence, with a view to helping them as they seek to minister to people affected by it.**

It should be noted that most of the material in this booklet has been gathered from various existing sources rather than specially commissioned for this volume. This means that in many cases, the material will not have been written with victims of abuse in mind as the primary audience. We believe that the material will be useful for you as you minister to victims of domestic violence, but we do not expect it to be appropriate in most circumstances to share the material directly with those to whom you are ministering.

## **The scope of this project**

Anyone who has looked into this area at all will know that as the community's awareness of domestic violence and its many different faces has grown, so too has the proliferation of material on this subject. Obviously there are many resources that are not included here, some of them no doubt very good. Our aim in gathering these resources is to provide ministry wives with a helpful starting point, not to provide the definitive collection of articles and resources.

Similarly, it is beyond the scope of this booklet to deal with every aspect of domestic violence. While perpetrators of abuse need help if they are to change their unhelpful patterns of behaviour, and can even feel trapped themselves, we have limited the scope of this booklet to considering the support needs of victims of domestic violence. These are the people more often in desperate and immediate need of help and support and the ones most likely to speak out to a ministry wife. Also, while we recognise that there are a significant number of male victims of domestic violence, statistically speaking ministry wives are most likely to come across female victims. For this reason, we have not included first hand accounts of the abuse of male victims.

So whilst this booklet will be particularly useful in seeking to care for female victims of domestic violence, it is our expectation that much of this material will be useful no matter what your involvement with domestic violence might be.

### The contents of this booklet

**Section 1** of the booklet sets the scene for our discussion of domestic violence by looking at biblical considerations relating to submission and headship, setting out God's good plan for our relationships with him and with each other. It also contains a detailed consideration of what the Bible has to say on the subject of domestic violence.

**Section 2** attempts to develop an understanding of what domestic violence looks like and scratches the surface of some of the complexities involved. The different types of abuse are explored and the cycle of domestic violence is explained. Within this section there are personal examples from victims demonstrating that there is often a lot more going on than meets the eye of the outsider.

**Section 3** aims to help those seeking to care for victims of domestic violence. As well as helpful advice on what to do (and what not to do), this section attempts to gather together some details of the many resources available to assist in beginning the process of getting support for victims of domestic violence. It includes things like a recommended list of counsellors and psychologists, as well as help that is available from various government departments.

**Section 4** has been included primarily for those connected with the Sydney Diocese, recognising the unfortunate reality that ministers can also be perpetrators of domestic violence. It lays out the Diocesan policies and procedures that touch on this subject and includes relevant sections of the Code of Conduct (Faithfulness in Service) for the Anglican Church, the Moore College Domestic Violence Policy and some information on the Professional Standards Unit.

### A definition of Domestic Violence

Before proceeding any further, it will be useful as you read this booklet to understand just what we are talking about when we use the term 'domestic violence'. Whilst there are many varying definitions of domestic violence, the Sydney Diocese's Domestic Violence Task Force in its report to Synod in October 2016 chose to define domestic violence in the following way:

Domestic violence is abusive and/or intimidating behaviour inflicted by an adult against a current or former spouse or partner. It includes (but is not limited to) emotional, verbal, social, economic, psychological, spiritual, physical and sexual abuse. Such behaviour often seeks to control, humiliate, dominate and/or instil fear in the victim.

The Task Force agreed to use the following expansive description of domestic violence from the Parliament of Australia in their document entitled 'Domestic violence in Australia—an overview of the issues' (22 November 2011):

Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship in domestic settings. These acts include physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse. Defining forms of violence, its perpetrators and their victims, is complicated by the many different kinds of intimate and family relationships and living arrangements present in Australian communities. Domestic violence is most commonly perpetrated by males against their female partners, but it also includes violence against men by their female partners and violence within same-sex relationships.

The traditional associations of domestic violence are with acts of physical violence within relationships occurring in the home but this understanding fails to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon. The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and Children (NCRVWC) found that:

...a central element of domestic violence is that of an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling one's partner through fear (for example, by using violent or threatening behaviour)... the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics used by the perpetrator to exercise power and control... and can be both criminal and non-criminal in nature.

Domestic violence includes:

- **emotional abuse**—blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship, undermining the victim's self-esteem and self-worth through comparisons with others, withdrawing interest and engagement and emotional blackmail
- **verbal abuse**—swearing and humiliation in private and public, focusing on intelligence, sexuality, body image or the victim's capacity as a parent or spouse

- **social abuse**—systematic isolation from family and friends, instigating and controlling relocations to a place where the victim has no social circle or employment opportunities and preventing the victim from going out to meet people
- **economic abuse**—controlling all money, forbidding access to bank accounts, providing an inadequate 'allowance', preventing the victim seeking or holding employment and taking wages earned by the victim
- **psychological abuse**—making threats regarding custody of children, asserting the justice system will not believe or support the victim, destroying property, abusing pets and driving dangerously
- **spiritual abuse**—denial and/or misuse of religious beliefs or practices to force victims into subordinate roles and misusing religious or spiritual traditions to justify physical violence or other abuse
- **physical abuse**—direct assaults on the body, use of weapons (including objects), assault of children, locking the victim out of the house, sleep and food deprivation, and
- **sexual abuse**—any form of pressured/unwanted sex or sexual degradation, causing pain during sex, coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly and criticising or using degrading insults.

'Family violence' is a broader term referring to violence between family members as well as violence between intimate partners. This term also covers a complexity of behaviours beyond that of direct physical violence. The Australian and New South Wales Law Reform Commission's review of family violence law in Australia recommended that state and territory legislation "should provide that family violence is violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour, that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful".



## Acknowledgments

We are acutely aware that even in our attempt to educate and help, we may have unknowingly caused additional pain for some people. That has certainly not been our intention and we apologise unreservedly if that is the case. We have consulted widely in an effort to minimise any such hurt, and would like to acknowledge the helpful advice and assistance we have received from many who have consulted on this project at various points, including Ruth Holt, Keith and Sarah Condie, Kate Bradford, Claire Smith, The Sydney Diocese Domestic Violence Task Force, Catherine Wynn Jones of the Sydney Diocese Professional Standards Unit (PSU), Jenny Nixon and others.

I would particularly like to thank Kirsten McKinlay for the endless hours of time and energy she has poured into bringing this project to completion. As we met and talked over Thai lunches about the various resources and how best to present them, her cheerful servant - heartedness and incredible skill have kept us on track and made this booklet a reality.

Great thanks is also due to our talented designers, Carina Ward and Mercie Chin, for bringing this issue together so well and for their commitment to making this happen.

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I commend the following pages to your careful study and pray that they will help you better understand the difficulties involved in dealing with domestic violence so that you will be better equipped to show God's love to some of the most vulnerable people in your community.

Kathryn Thompson  
On behalf of the Magnolia Team



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# SOME BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

## SECTION I

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# SUBMISSION

## I. JESUS AND SUBMISSION

MARK D THOMPSON

MARK THOMPSON IS THE PRINCIPAL OF MOORE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE. HE IS THE HEAD OF THE COLLEGE'S THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS DEPARTMENT AND HAS BEEN TEACHING CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE THERE SINCE 1991. MARK IS MARRIED TO KATHRYN AND THEY HAVE FOUR DAUGHTERS.

THESE ARTICLES ARE EDITED FROM TALKS GIVEN AT THE PRISCILLA AND AQUILA CONFERENCE, MOORE COLLEGE, 1ST FEBRUARY 2016.

It will be news to no one here this morning that the topic I am taking on in these two sessions is a controversial one. And it is controversial, not just as an academic debate, but because there has been real and substantial harm caused by some who have used the doctrines of headship and submission to justify oppression, abuse and even violence. Of course there have been others who have acted in exactly the same ways without any knowledge at all of these biblical doctrines, but that does not excuse and must not be used to cover the fact that some people—and in this instance it is by definition always men—have appealed to the biblical doctrine of submission as a license for behaviour that every one of us would want to condemn. And some women have been told, or have convinced themselves, that this doctrine requires them simply to endure it.

Even if she had done nothing else, Rosie Batty's tenure as Australian of the Year in 2015 did us all a great service by bringing the issue of domestic violence from the shadows and into the bright light of day. Our marriages and families, our homes, should be the context in which love and care and generosity flourish; safe-havens where there is no need to be afraid or to prove yourself or hide. Human sinfulness works out its consequences in these contexts too, of course. None of our marriages or families or homes are perfect or ideal. That's because none of us are perfect or ideal. But there is never, ever, any excuse for oppression,

abuse or violence. There is never, ever, any excuse for domination, for bullying, for mental, emotional or physical abuse. And whenever people have tried to provide one by appealing to the word of God, they not only misuse the word of God, but they dishonour the God whose word it is.

However, the reality of such an appeal has led some to draw a causal connection between the biblical doctrines of headship and submission and the practice of domestic violence. A series of columns in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in February and March last year attempted to do just that. In them can be found the quote, 'If submission is the theory, then battering is the practice'.<sup>1</sup> It would be very easy to dismiss this as caricature in the service of a wider agenda. But what about when it is presented in a more thoughtful, nuanced form? The editorial summary of an article posted on ABC's *The Drum* webpage by Johanna Harris Tyler in March last year suggested 'the distorted biblical doctrine of female submission in marriage won't always lead to domestic abuse, but it does provide the breeding ground'.<sup>2</sup> The abuse of a doctrine or principle does not negate the truthfulness of that doctrine or principle, of course; but should we be concerned that human sinfulness is more likely than not to abuse this principle in this way? Do we need to be more active in seeking to protect people from such abuse, not least by taking the time to explain carefully what headship and submission do and do not mean?

<sup>1</sup> J. Baird, 'Submission is a fraught mixed message for the church', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2015 online at <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/submission-is-a-fraught-mixed-message-for-the-church-20150212-13d9nw.html> (accessed 24/12/15); and 'Doctrine of headship a distortion of the gospel message of mutual love and respect', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 2015 online at <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/doctrine-of-headship-a-distortion-of-the-gospel-message-of-mutual-love-and-respect-20150226-13q2xc.html> (accessed 24/12/15). The quote from Rev Dr Margaret Mayman of Pitt Street Uniting Church found in 'Submission is a fraught mixed message'.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Tyler, 'Submission to your husband is a dangerous doctrine', online at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-09/harris-submission-to-your-husband-is-a-dangerousdoctrine/6290304> (accessed 23/12/15).

That is, I take it, at least part of the reason why we are addressing this issue this morning. What I consider the very best of the articles published in the *Herald* last year on this topic insisted 'We must counter every attempt to twist the Bible's teaching on marriage to condone physical, spiritual and emotional abuse, and ensure women know there is no biblical injunction to stay with an abusive husband'.<sup>3</sup> I'm sure that's right, and part of doing that is to explore the Bible's teaching in a sustained way together. But I want to begin by laying bare my assumptions (assumptions I share with most of you I'm sure).

That's because the assumptions we bring to a discussion like this are very significant. None of us comes with a blank slate, with no thoughts or preconceptions about the Bible, or human relationships, or terms such as 'headship', 'submission', 'equality', 'order' and the rest. And what we bring to this discussion inevitably shapes what we see in the Bible and how we respond to it. So let me just outline briefly three methodological assumptions.

### 1. Three Methodological Assumptions

#### 1. The Bible—the whole Bible—is the word of the living God.

While the human authors of each biblical book were consciously, actively and creatively involved in their production, while they brought their own personalities and backgrounds and contexts to bear on the things they were writing, the work of God's Spirit in and through them ensured that the words they wrote were in the end the words God wanted written for us. It is not just the words of Jesus in the Gospels that are God-breathed, but the words of Paul and Peter and John and the writers of the Old Testament as well.

This has a number of consequences, two of which are most important for our discussion. The first is that we come to the Bible with a fundamental confidence in its coherence. The one living God stands behind it all and he is not self-contradictory. Despite the period of time over which it was written, and the variety of authors and circumstances in which each part was written, the Bible is not self-contradictory or incoherent when read attentively. This is, of course, a long-standing Christian conviction. Article 20 of the 39 Articles of Religion, the confessional statement of Elizabethan Anglicanism, declares '...it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another'.

The second consequence is that, precisely because the Bible is the word of the living God, it carries the *authority* of God. The teaching of the Bible has final authority in all matters of faith and life. That doesn't mean there are no other authorities or voices worth listening to. But the *final* authority in discussions such as this, the authority that cannot be trumped by experience or reason or tradition, belongs to the teaching of the Bible precisely because it is the word of the living God. That's my first methodological assumption: the Bible—the whole Bible—is the word of the living God. And it is one, as I've said, I am sure I share with most people in this room.

The second methodological assumption is this:

#### 2. The God who has given us this word is good and seeks our welfare.

The goodness or benevolence of God is the consistent testimony of Scripture. David wrote in Psalm 34, 'Oh taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him' (Ps 34.8). This testimony finds its focus, of course, in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in particular his atoning death. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3.16).

The cross, together with the resurrection and ascension which follow it, shows us the goodness of God and his benevolence towards us. His love for the world is not overturned by human sinfulness and all it has brought into the world. His goodness is not somehow derailed by our sin or by the convulsions of life and the world as we have made it to be. His goodness will prevail. His right and good and life-enhancing purpose will triumph. It is in this context that his wrath and promise of judgment are properly placed and seen as facets of his goodness. He will bring about 'a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells' (2 Pet 3.13), where every tear will be wiped away (Rev 21.4) and where all things are properly ordered to his Christ (Eph 1.10; Phil 2.10-11). And on that day his people will praise not only his glory and power, but also his wisdom and goodness.

The obvious corollary of all this is that the word which God gives us is itself part of his goodness towards us. This too is the consistent testimony of Scripture. Moses reminded the children of Israel that the words he had given them were 'no empty word for you, but your very life' (Deut 32.47). The Psalms are also full of testimony to the goodness of God's word because it comes from

<sup>3</sup> S. Colyer, "Submission" to my husband allows us both to flourish in our marriage', *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 March 2015 online at <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/submission-to-my-husband-allows-us-both-to-flourish-in-our-marriage-20150308-13y83i.html> (accessed 23/12/15).

God (cf. Pss 19.7-8; 119.93, 105). And the apostle Paul wrote most famously of all: 'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...' (2 Tim 3.16). God is good and he is committed to our good, and so we should expect his word to be good and life-giving and nourishing, however much it might clash with the values of any particular time and culture. Confidence in God and confidence in the goodness of what God has to say in the Bible are inextricably linked. I don't come to the Bible suspicious that God wants to make my life miserable but instead I come expecting to hear of Christ and how life is best and most fruitfully lived now in response to his mercy.

My third methodological assumption is perhaps a little more controversial, at least in some quarters:

**3. Differences in understanding what the Bible is teaching are not the result of a defect in the Bible (a lack of clarity, the cultural imprisonment of the Bible writers, etc.) nor the secondary character of the topic under consideration, but stem from issues to do with us as readers.**

It is sometimes suggested that the very existence of contrasting and competing interpretations is evidence that the Bible is not clear or that it is ambiguous or that the issue we are discussing is not a 'first order issue'. Since this is the case, we can make up our own mind and all views are valid. But that is not how the later Bible writers treated the earlier Bible writers. It is not how the Lord Jesus treated the Old Testament. He treated the Old Testament as saying something definite, having a meaning that was accessible and that ought to settle the debates in a single direction. His appeal to Scripture against the Satan in the wilderness or the Pharisees and scribes in Jerusalem, his insistent question 'Have you not read?', make no sense otherwise.

But why then is there disagreement? There are a variety of reasons. Sometimes we are unwittingly forcing another agenda upon the Bible, and asking questions it was never designed to answer. Sometimes we fill biblical silences with our own ideas or historical reconstructions which demand a particular understanding of the text. Sometimes our prior convictions predispose us to overlook some of what is said or reimagine what is said. Sometimes the pressure of the context in which we read is so strong it blinds us to important aspects of what is being read.

In a sense, differences of opinion are what we ought to expect, even differences in what we are convinced the Bible is saying. We ought not to see this as failure. It is rather a stimulus to think hard and not just to accept what everyone around us thinks, an opportunity to look again and to read more attentively. And I want

to ask, if this really is the word of God and not just the words of men, and if the God who has given it to us wants us to flourish even in the midst of a fallen and broken world, *what is the good word that he is saying to us?* Just how is this word 'a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' without which I might stumble in the darkness? How does this teaching equip me for 'every good work' (2 Tim 3.17)?

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Now we've set our methodological assumptions straight, I want to turn to the subject of submission. And I want to do it, not through a step by step biblical theology of the concept—though that would be a perfectly appropriate way to do this—but by turning our attention to the centre of the Bible, to Jesus Christ, to what submission means in his case, and then, in the second session, to look at the Christian and submission. If the Christian life is really all about being conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom 8.29), if God's will for the Christian congregation is that we together should 'reach the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to become mature, attaining to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph 4.13), then this is not a bad place to start: Jesus and submission.

## 2. The earthly submission of Jesus

Throughout the Gospels two parallel truths about Jesus are emphasised: his unique Lordship and his faithfulness to the commission he received from God. His Lordship is exercised over nature, over disease, over the demonic world and over death itself. He calms the storm; he heals the lepers, the blind and the lame, and the woman with the flow of blood; he frees those possessed by demons, silencing the demons and consigning them to oblivion; and he raises the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, and, of course, Lazarus. Nothing is able to stand against him. His sovereign control is even a feature of the accounts of his arrest, interrogation, trial and crucifixion. He is not defeated or overcome. He gives himself over and stands with a commanding silence before the Chief Priest, Herod and Pilate. As he himself put it, 'I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord' (John 10.17-18). When his disciples put up a token resistance in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus rebuked them: 'Put your sword back in its place... Do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?' (Matt 26.52-54).

The Lordship of Jesus testifies to many things—his identity as God's Christ, his oneness with the Father, and much more—and in each instance it demonstrates

## I. JESUS AND SUBMISSION

his uniqueness. He is the Messiah, the anointed One, whose role in God's great eternal purpose is unique to him. He is the one in whom all the promises of God are 'yes' (2 Cor 1.20). His relationship with the Father is something he invites us all to share, to be able to call on God as 'Abba, Father' just as he did (Rom 8.15), but this relationship is ours by adoption and grace, not by nature and right as it is in his case. He is unique. Now that might give us a reason to be a little wary about too direct a line between the behaviour and actions of Jesus and our own. For all the genuine intimacy with Jesus and his Father made possible by the ministry of the Spirit, he remains Lord in a way that we do not. On the last day all will fall before *Jesus Christ* and acknowledge *him* to be Lord, not you or me. When we point to Jesus as our example, as we surely can, we need to keep that in mind.

The other parallel strand is Jesus' consistent faithfulness to the commission he has received from his Father. He stands in stark contrast to Adam (Rom 5.12-21), who was created for fellowship with his Maker but failed dismally when faced with the enticing lie of the evil one in the Garden. He stands in stark contrast to the nation of Israel, who were redeemed by God from Egypt and given a mission in the world (Exodus 19.4-6) but displayed throughout their history a propensity towards rebellion and defection and idolatry. Jesus, when faced with the lies of the Satan in the wilderness, quoted Deuteronomy 6—'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matt 4.3-4).

It is shown in the way Jesus himself made use of the little word 'must' or 'it is necessary' (*deiv*) in connection with his ministry. As early as Luke 2, when still only 12 years old, Jesus told his mother 'I *must* be in my Father's house', referring to the Temple (Luke 2.49). He would later speak about his priority of preaching the gospel in the same terms: 'I *must* proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent' (Luke 4.43). His ministry involved reaching the lost sheep of the house of Israel—he told Zaccheus 'I *must* stay at your house today' (Luke 19.5)—as well as a wider ministry to gather sheep 'who are not of this sheepfold' (John 10.16). But the language of necessity in Jesus' ministry had a particular focus on his journey to Jerusalem (Luke 13.22) and all that would happen there. Jesus spoke in these terms from the time of Peter's confession of him as the Christ: 'From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he *must* go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the Law, and that he *must* be killed and on the third day be raised to life' (Matt 16.21).

There is a certain necessity to these things. He is constrained by them. But why 'must' these things be

so if he is Lord? At one level the answer is given by Jesus himself in the passages I've already quoted. This necessity had to do with the fulfilment of what had been prophesied about him in the Old Testament. The testimony of the Old Testament to Jesus is clear in the way he fulfilled the prophetic words about the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, and the new covenant with its central blessing as the forgiveness of sins. Precisely because he was the one they spoke about, he had to be about these things and he had to die—in Jerusalem, in this way—in order to effect the salvation of his people. But the prophets themselves were servants and not masters. They spoke the words they were given—'Thus says the Lord'—and made clear God's agenda and his perspective. So the explanation for the necessity of these things lies even deeper in the eternal purpose of God and the relation of the Father and the Son.

A unique window into the deeper necessity to which Jesus submits himself is given by his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to his arrest. After encouraging his disciples to 'pray that you will not fall into temptation' (Luke 22.40), Jesus withdrew from them and prayed himself. 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done' (Luke 22.42). You may be aware that this prayer raised very significant questions for Christians in the early centuries after the resurrection. How does Jesus' will relate to the will of God, especially since he is God incarnate? The answer they came up with, thanks to men like Maximus the Confessor in the early seventh century, was that in the very person of Jesus we find the perfect relation of the divine will and a human will. He is fully God and fully man and so in the personal union of the divine and human natures we find a human will perfectly submitted to his divine will. There is no conflict, no deliberation. His human will is never pitted against his divine will or vice versa. He feels the genuine horror of his approaching death and all associated with it—that is part of his genuine humanity—but it is always a matter of 'not my will but yours be done'.

What happens in the Garden of Gethsemane proves to be a particularly focussed example of what had been going on throughout Jesus' life. In John's eyewitness account of Jesus' ministry we hear Jesus repeatedly insist, 'I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me' (John 6.58). 'My teaching is not mine but his who sent me' (John 7.16). The consistent pattern of Jesus' life was one of obedience and the alignment of his will with the will and eternal purpose of God. He did not overturn the Law of God but fulfilled it. He did not take the easy way out when tempted in the wilderness and he did not acquiesce to the distorted theology and practice of the Pharisees and others in order to avoid conflict and the suffering of the cross. His perfect obedience

and the conditions in which it was exercised are critical to his ministry now as our great High Priest (Heb 2.14-18; 4.14-16). He knows what it is to obey under pressure. He knows what it is to live in perfect submission to the will of God when that puts you on a collision course with those who exercise power in this world. His perfect obedience is also the critical context of his perfect sacrifice as the blameless and righteous one who gives himself in the place of those who are blameworthy and unrighteousness (1 Pet 3.18). What theologians have traditionally spoken of as Christ's active obedience—his perfect fulfilment of the will of God throughout his life—and his passive obedience—his perfect sacrifice of himself for the sins of the whole world in accordance with that same will—are both grounded in the identity of Jesus as the incarnate Son and ultimately in the eternal relationship of the Son and the Father. This is indicated by Jesus' repeated reference to being 'sent' (Matt 15.24; 21.36; Luke 4.18, 43; John 3.16, 34) and to 'the one who sent me' (Matt 10.40; John 4.34; 5.23, 24, 30, 37; 6.38, 44, 57; 7:16 etc.).

This takes us to one of the most controversial aspects of the academic debate about Jesus and submission: to what extent is the undeniable and even necessary submission of Jesus to the will of his heavenly Father during his earthly life and ministry merely a feature of his incarnate life, part of his condescension for our benefit? Or are we to understand that this is part of the eternal relationship of the Father and the Son? Is the submission of the Son purely economic—a feature of the economy of creation and redemption, and so only for a time—or is it eternal?

### 3. The eternal submission of the Son

The chief problem with any suggestion of an eternal relation of obedience or submission of the Son to the Father is that it seems to come dangerously close to the archetypal Christian heresy, the heresy of Arianism. In the early fourth century, Arius, a clergyman in Alexandria, suggested that Jesus is not God in the same way the Father is: the first and preeminent creature accorded a divine status perhaps, given the honorific title 'Son of God' perhaps, but not of the same substance of the Father, not eternal and not equal. In his very being he is subordinated to the Father. It was one of the most significant theological controversies of the early church and it was settled by the creed of Nicaea and the long advocacy of its key term 'of one substance' by the great theologian Athanasius of Alexandria. It was Athanasius who insisted that 'the same things are said of the Son, which are said of the Father, except His being said to be Father'.<sup>4</sup> Any suggestion that there is even the slightest inequality between the Father and the Son

THE CONSISTENT PATTERN OF JESUS' LIFE WAS ONE OF OBEDIENCE AND THE ALIGNMENT OF HIS WILL WITH THE WILL AND ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD.

falls foul of the Creed of Nicaea and so is heretical. After all, did not Paul write that 'because he was in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage' (Phil 2.6)? The affirmation at the very heart of this statement is that the Son has from all eternity been equal with the Father. Did not Jesus himself repeatedly teach 'I and the Father are one' (John 10.30) and 'I am in the Father and the Father in me' (John 10.38; 14:10)? To separate out some kind of hierarchy of being, to hold an ontological subordination of the Son to the Father, is excluded by Jesus' own words. In his High Priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus spoke of a glory he shared with his Father 'before the world began' (John 17.5).

We do not have the time here to go back over that debate and its resolution in any detail, nor to spend any time on the modern version of it (in which the Doctrine Commission of the Diocese of Sydney has played a significant role). The obvious implications of the view that perfect equality can co-exist with permanently different roles—implications for other debates over the ministry of women, for instance—have ensured continued passionate interest in the subject. However, it is important to consider very briefly three aspects of the eternal relation between the Father and the Son, three aspects which arise from the Bible's own witness to the eternal life of God. And that's because they help us as we seek to understand where the earthly obedience of Jesus is ultimately anchored.

1. We've already hinted at the first of these. The relation of the Father and the Son is one of *complete unity and absolute equality of being*. Athanasius was right. We can say everything of the Son that we say of the Father except call him Father. He is not inferior to the Father. The Father is not superior to him. The early church recognised it was not enough to say the Son was like the Father; or that he was of a similar substance to the Father; or that he was in the closest possible relationship to the Father, if that is all you say. He is of the *same substance* as the Father. He is completely and absolutely equal to the Father. Any talk of the obedience of the Son to the Father must be placed firmly in that context. It cannot be about value or a

<sup>4</sup> Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos*, III.xxiii(4) [NPNF2, IV.395]

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superior and inferior position. That cannot be because there is not the slightest difference between the Father and the Son at this level of being. The triune God is not made up of parts, some more truly God than others. He is God all the way through and he exists eternally as Father, Son and Spirit.

This is clear at a number of points in the New Testament. We've already touched upon Philippians 2, which is one of the most direct affirmations of this truth. Paul wrote to the Colossians with a similar confession: 'The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him...' (Col 1.15-16, 19). John's Gospel begins with the bold declaration 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God' (John 1.1). And it is this Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, showing us the glory of the only Son from the Father (v. 14) and precisely because he has been from all eternity 'at the Father's side', he perfectly exegetes God to us (John 1.18). This testimony can be multiplied in the Gospels, Acts, the letters and the Book of Revelation. The fact that the Holy Spirit can be described in a single verse in Romans 8 as both 'the Spirit of God' and 'the Spirit of Christ' further points in this same direction.

2. Yet this is not all that the New Testament teaches about the eternal relation of the Father and the Son. This relationship of unequivocally equal persons is also *asymmetrical*. It has a defined pattern or direction that is not reversible. The Father and the Son are not two Fathers or even two brothers who might be interchanged. The Father is always the Father and the Son is always the Son. They are involved together in all God's work of creation and redemption. We are bound to talk both of the simplicity of God *and* the *perichoresis* of the persons: Jesus said both 'I and the Father are one' (John 10.30) and 'I am in the Father and the Father in me' (John 10.38). But, to take the most obvious example, the Father *sends* the Son, the Son never sends the Father. *The relation is not reversible*. Another way of saying this is to say that this relation of equals is an ordered relation of equals. But this order is not imposed. It is not coerced. Rather, the asymmetric relation of Father and Son flows directly out of the identity of the Father as Father and the Son as Son and out of their unity in the Spirit. Once again it is critical to notice that this is not about value, as if the Father as sender is more valuable than the Son as the one who is sent. There is not the slightest hint of a distinction of value in the New Testament or of one being superior and one being inferior to the other. This notion of value is something imported into this discussion from elsewhere.

3. The third thing to say about the relation of the Son and the Father in eternity, which shapes the relation of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, and his Father during his earthly ministry, is that it is *a relationship characterised very deeply by other-centred love*. There is no domination or demand that the Son submit. The Father's love of the Son and concern for his honour and glory is a feature of the New Testament witness. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Matt 3.17). 'This is my beloved Son, listen to him' (Mark 9.7). It is the Father's eternal plan to put all things under the feet of the Son (Eph 1.22) and it is the Son's final desire to hand all things to the Father so that God might be all in all (1 Cor 15.28). It is this other-centredness, the Father's love of the Son and the Son's love of the Father that keeps God's passion for his own glory from being a kind of cosmic narcissism. Far from seeking to dominate or manipulate the Son for his own purposes, the Father's unerring desire is that all might recognise the Son as Lord (Phil 2.9-11). Jesus told his disciples just prior to his ascension that 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Matt 28.18). The relation of the Father and Son is not characterised by the exercise of power or coerced submission but from all eternity it has been characterised by the free giving of one to the other. And that is the context in which the headship of the Father and the submission of the Son is to be found. The love does not negate the order and the order does not negate the love. Indeed, the other-centred love gives the expression of order a particular shape—it is not about value and it is not about power. Conversely, the order is itself an expression of love—the loving headship of the Father who subjects all things to the Son and the loving, humble obedience of the Son who always does the Father's will.

With these three features of the eternal relation of the Father and the Son in mind—complete unity and absolute equality of being, an asymmetry which means the relations are not reversible, and the love which characterises this relation from all eternity—the difference should be obvious between the submission we have been talking about and the ancient heresy of Arianism. When the New Testament speaks of the Son's decision in eternity to empty himself by taking the form of a servant and 'being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross' (Phil 2.5-8), and when Jesus speaks of being 'sent' and of speaking the words given to him by his Father (John 17.8) and doing the works directed by his Father (John 14.31), all of this is an expression of the loving common mind of the Father and the Son. It is an expression of the relation that exists from eternity and which is on display at the end as well. But it does not suggest superiority and inferiority. It does not suggest a hierarchy of being in the triune life of God.

#### 4. Two critical conclusions

The submission of the Lord Jesus to the will of his Father during his earthly life is anchored in the eternal relation of ordered other-centred love between the entirely and unequivocally equal members of the Trinity. That eternal order, involving both headship and submission, is critical to what it means for him to be the Son and for the Father to be the Father. If it were not, then we would need to raise questions about whether God as he really is has been revealed to us in the person and work of Jesus. Would he really have executed God for us, as the opening chapter of John's Gospel teaches? Is Jesus' obedience and his willingness to submit himself to the will of his Father simply an act for our benefit or does it present the life of God to us in such a way that challenges our preconceptions and has massive consequences for how we live as those who are being conformed to his image? What we see in Jesus' life is the Lord as a servant, the one by whom and for whom all things were made laying down his life for creatures out of love.

It is important then to see the two critical and powerfully counter-cultural conclusions that arise from all of this, conclusions that we'll need to take into our discussion of the Christian and submission in the next session. Given all that we have seen the Bible testifies about the relation of Jesus and his Father, we must insist, firstly, that the relationship of headship and submission as Jesus exemplifies it is not at all about value. It does not imply that Jesus is somehow inferior because he submits to the will of the Father. That would be the ancient Arian heresy. The testimony of Scripture is clear that from eternity the Son shares a complete equality of being with the Father. His submission is *the appropriate filial expression of other-centred love*. He is not demeaned by this submission. And what we'd see if we had time to explore it, is that the Father's 'headship' is *the appropriate paternal expression of other-centred love*, not detracting from the integrity or value of the Son's life and love but honouring it and protecting it and rejoicing in it: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'.

The other conclusion is quite simply that it's not about power either. It is not about domination or the tyranny of the Father or coercion or abuse. *The Son is not forced against his will to submit, nor is he manipulated in some way or other to bring about this submission*. At every point in his life, even as he takes upon himself the sin of the world and bears the curse and exhausts the punishment we all deserve, he remains 'the beloved Son'. The submission of the Son provides the opportunity for him to be honoured and for his glory, the genuine glory of the God who loves to such an extent, to be seen by those who look with the eyes of faith. And one day, even those who refuse to look will not be able to avoid seeing it.

A submission of one entirely equal to the one to whom he submits; a submission that is not at all about value, superiority or inferiority, and not all about power or domination or control—that's what we see in Jesus. And what he has to show us in this is so subversive of the way we operate in our sinfulness that we need to think again about submission in the life of the Christian.

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# SUBMISSION

## 2. THE CHRISTIAN AND SUBMISSION

MARK D THOMPSON

Of course not all our experience of submission in the world is negative. Some degree of submission to others is in fact necessary for society in general to work. It is not a uniquely Christian concept, despite the suggestions of Friedrich Nietzsche in the late nineteenth century. We recognise an authority arising out of responsibility in a variety of contexts and we submit to it for the good ordering of the group or the wider community in which we operate. In fact, we generally agree that is appropriate and even necessary to apply sanctions when people refuse to submit in those situations. Our police officers have authority to instruct us at various levels as they seek to protect us all and maintain peace and order in the community. When the blue flashing lights are turned on and the siren sounds you are required to pull over. If instead you plant your foot on the accelerator you can be sure it will not end well. The police officer has the authority and power to direct you to comply. And if you don't, you can expect a ticket or worse. In parliament the members are expected to submit to the authority of the Speaker. When a member refuses to abide by the Speaker's direction they are named and repeated infringements can see them removed from the chamber. In a myriad of ways—some quite trivial but others very significant indeed—submission is a reality in our everyday lives. Think of the way we operate in times of a medical crisis, on a building site, when visiting a school playground. We recognise, obey and submit to our doctors, the foreman, the head teacher; and if we don't, there are consequences.

But the reality is that, for many of us, the moment we start to speak about one human being's submission to another, our minds move quite rapidly to the examples of gross abuse with which we are all familiar. After a century of totalitarian regimes—Nazism in Germany in the 1930s and 40s, Fascism in Italy in the same period, Stalinism or the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe right up to the 1980s and many others—we recoil from anything that even vaguely resembles the coerced subjugation of one person or group of people by another. Men, women and children have been subjected to the most horrible, inhumane treatment, sometimes with the explicit justification that those so subjugated were somehow less valuable, even less human, than those who subjugated them. In its worst expressions this was the case with apartheid in South Africa, where black South Africans did not have

the same rights and were considered by extremists as sub-human. To our shame, some spoke this way about indigenous Australians in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Their land could be taken, their interests ignored, because they did not matter as much as the white settlers who had lately come to the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. It is worth remembering that men like Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden fought against this way of thinking and instead were determined to see aboriginal men and women saved and become members of the kingdom of Christ—their lives were no less valuable than those of the convicts and free settlers; some of them too will be gathered around the throne of God and of the Lamb on the last day (although this does not mean they consistently avoided the harsh language of their contemporaries). And of course we must face the reality of the abuse of women by men, the way women have had to fight for the right to own property, to participate in the electoral process, to receive the same wages for the same work, and much, much more. There is an ugly chauvinism that refuses to die in the West and it surfaces on the lips and in the actions of some very high profile people.

And so here is the first thing we need to say about the Christian and submission. Christian submission and its converse, Christian headship or leadership, always exists in the arena of a fallen world full of fallen human beings.

### **1. Christian submission takes place in a fallen world**

In this area, as in so many others, even our best attempts are marred by our self-centredness. The very first casualty of the Fall was the relationship between the man and the woman in the Garden. Where before they could be entirely open with one another, as soon as they do what God had commanded them not to do they hide from one another (Gen 3.7). Adam does not suddenly become abusive or tyrannical and neither does Eve. But the harmony and peace of their ordered relationship before the Fall is fractured and the fracture only becomes worse as the years and generations roll on.

Perhaps it is worth taking a moment at this point to consider just what changed at the Fall. Some have

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suggested that prior to the Fall there was no order in the relationship of the man and the woman. They propose that order, headship and submission, or however else you may wish to describe it, is itself a consequence of the Fall. Patriarchy, to use the loaded term, is the primal form of human sinfulness. It had no place in God's original intention. There are, however, a number of hints in Genesis 1 and 2 that this is not so, hints which are taken up by Paul, among others, in the New Testament.

Among those hints is the order of creation. Genesis 2 presents us with God's creation of the man and then of the woman from the man. That doesn't make her in any way less than the man. In fact, the burden of that part of the narrative is that she is of the same stuff as the man: 'bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' (Gen 2.23). As Genesis 1 had made clear 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them' (Gen 1.27). However, the order of creation, the man created first and then the woman from the man, is not simply an incidental piece of chronology. It carries significance at the level of responsibility and leadership, and Paul picks that up when he writes to his young colleague Timothy in our New Testament (1 Tim 2.13).

Furthermore, the woman is created as 'a helper suitable for [the man]' (Gen 2.18). It is not good for him to be alone. Not, I suspect, because he was pining away out of loneliness, or at least not only that. I think the context suggests that the issue is that he cannot fulfil the mandate that has been given to him on his own. In order to 'fill the earth and subdue it' (Gen 1.28), in order to rule the world as God's image in the world, to care for it as God's representative in the created order, he needs a helper, rather, he needs this helper. Although we might quickly want to suggest that he is her helper as well, this is something the text does not say. She is his equal in being and value and honour. But the relationship between them, at this point of interacting with the wider created world, has a particular order.

A third hint is found in the easily overlooked fact that God calls out to Adam and initially holds Adam to account for what was done in the Garden at the Serpent's suggestion. God calls out to Adam and asks 'Where are you?' (Gen 3.9) Adam is the one first interrogated. Only then does God turn to the woman

and finally to the Serpent. What is more, the curses of Genesis 3.14–19 find their crescendo in the words directed towards Adam. He had been the passive one following the Serpent's words. 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife' (Gen 3.17). It was not that he was never to listen to her; as if he, and he alone, was to do the talking in the relationship. No doubt it was critically important for Adam to listen to his wife over their very long life together. But at that critical point in the Garden he had abdicated his responsibility to lead his wife in their life before God in the world. And he is held to account with the most far reaching of consequences:

*...cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Gen 3.17–19)*

To these three hints many would add another. It comes in the very next verse of Genesis 3: 'The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living' (Gen 3.20). Under God's direction, Adam had named the creatures God brought to him (Gen 2.19–20). Now, just as he had called her 'woman' in Genesis 2, he gives her the name 'Eve'. Perhaps this too is another sign of the order in their relationship—that is, the loving leadership he was properly to exercise as they live in God's world.

The order in the relationship between the man and the woman was not a product of the Fall. Instead it was disrupted and made difficult by the Fall: 'your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you', God said (Gen 3.16). Just as every other facet of life was subject to distortion and struggle, so this most intimate relationship, while remaining good, will now be subject to strain and stress and struggle. Abuse becomes a reality after the Fall. Pain and distress, even in this most precious area of life, become a reality after the Fall. What God created in the beginning is still good—even the order he created from the beginning—but along with the other things in the Garden of Eden, they spoiled this too. It now needs to be redeemed.

I want to go on in a moment to talk about how that has happened, how the pattern of headship and submission in the relationship of men and women has been redeemed and the difference it makes. But before I do, I want to set that very particular instance of Christian submission in another context. And that is simply to say that the principle of Christian submission operates in a range of situations and is not limited simply to the relationship of a man and a woman or a husband and a wife.

## 2. Christian submission goes beyond male-female relations

So far-reaching is the concept of submission in the New Testament that submission, or '[o]rdering our lives under another' to take the basic meaning of the Greek word *hypotassein*, could be spoken of as one of the characteristics of the Christian life.<sup>1</sup>

### a. Submission to God

The most basic form this takes, is, of course, our submission to God, the One who both made us and redeems us. This is the very opposite of what happened in the Garden of Eden, where the man and the woman were persuaded to turn aside from submission to God and his word and seek to know good and evil independently of him. Despite the goodness of God's provision in the Garden, his ongoing care and fellowship, they chose self-assertion rather than submission or obedience. And in contrast, James says in chapter 4 of his letter, after reminding his readers that 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble' (James 4.6),

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you' (James 4.7–9)*

James understood that this submission may well need to show itself in humble repentance and the bearing of discipline. But the goodness of God means this is not the final word. This submission, this willingness to humble ourselves and recognise the Lordship of God, is not like the Muslim concept of total submission to Allah. For the Christian this service 'is perfect freedom'.<sup>2</sup> It liberates rather than eliminates active, conscious co-creative activity in the world. Christian submission is given this character by God himself. He is the one who gives and nourishes life. That why the writer to the Hebrews could urge us to 'be subject to the Father of Spirits and live' (Heb 12.9). At the heart of this submission, of course, is faith, that life-shaping trust in God and his promise which is the work of his Spirit in us and was exemplified by the long list of men and women in Hebrews 11, not least in the One who is the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12.2).

This is not just an individual thing of course. In the passage that was read for us earlier, Ephesians 5, Paul writes of how 'the church is subject to Christ'.

The character of the Christian life for each of us, and for each of us together as the gathered disciples of Jesus, is found in this willingness to order ourselves under the rule of God through his Christ by his word and in his Spirit. Of course that shows itself not just in confessing he is Lord—though it certainly involves that (Phil 2.11)—but in doing the will of our heavenly Father (Matt 7.21) and *obeying* the words which Jesus has given us (Luke 6.46–49; cf. Rom 8.7). The church submits to Christ when as his gathered people we take his word seriously and live as those who recognise and rejoice in his headship. The great goal of all this is that day when, sanctified and cleansed, Christ presents the church to himself 'in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing' (Eph 5.26–27).

Well, that is basic, and it explains why Christians ought not to be afraid of the idea of submission. It is part of the fabric of the Christian life, for we are those who seek to submit to the word and will of God, to order our lives both individually and corporately under the headship of Christ. We know that to be good and nourishing and life-giving. That is where true fulfilment lies. Jesus came not to subject us to a life of painful servitude but that we might 'have life and have it abundantly' (John 10.10)! So the call to submit to God provides the backdrop to submission in a number of areas where the one who submits and the one to whom they submit are human beings created in God's image.

### b. Submission to secular government

We are, for instance, called to submit to secular government. Paul's words on this subject in Romans 13 include a glimpse of the rationale behind this call:

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. (Rom 13.1–5)*

These words are all the more telling when you consider the world in which Paul lived and the kind of rule

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Woodhouse, *Colossians and Philemon: So Walk in Him* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2011), 220.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Second Collect, For Peace' in *The Order for Morning Prayer, 1662 Book of Common Prayer*.

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exercised by the Romans in Judaea and throughout their empire. It must have been hard to respect Nero as one bearing authority given to him by God. But Paul is not addressing the attack of the authorities upon the faith and the need to bear witness before them. That he would deal with elsewhere. Here he says the general pattern of life for Christians in the world is to recognise the sovereignty of God and his provision of secular government for the good ordering of society, to preserve peace and order, to promote the welfare of its citizens. Paul was no anarchist or revolutionary. The time would come when he would refuse to obey but that would be an extraordinary moment. He would ask Titus to remind those in his care 'to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work' (Titus 3.1). And it wasn't just Paul. Peter, himself most likely to succumb in time to the cruelty of the Roman authorities, wrote

*Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor. (1 Pet 2.13–17)*

Neither Paul nor Peter anchor their call to submit to governing authorities in the superiority of those who govern over those who are governed. Not even in their goodness or fitness for office. Peter, in particular, almost falls over himself in those verses in pointing out this is to be done 'for the Lord's sake', because 'this is the will of God', because you are 'living as servants of God'. It is because we recognise that God has created ordered relationships in his world that we submit to those who govern us. There may be exceptional times when other biblical principles mean we must take a stand that puts us in conflict with them, but the general pattern is one of good citizenship, of being subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution of government.

### **c. Submission to those who lead us in the gospel**

On a number of occasions, we are called on to submit to those who labour over us in the Lord. Paul wrote to the Corinthians of the devoted service of the household of Stephanus and then called on them to 'be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and labourer' (1 Cor 16.16). Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians Paul will talk about weighing the words of those who prophesy (1 Cor 14.29). In his last letter to Timothy he will insist that only the Scriptures are 'breathed out by God' (2 Tim 3.16), and he is more than able to

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HIS WORLD THAT WE SUBMIT  
TO THOSE WHO GOVERN US.

identify those who are false teachers and those who prey on the people of God seeking their own gain (1 Tim 6.3–5). But the general pattern is to be respect and submission to the leadership of those God has gifted and given responsibility in the congregation. They are not perfect and infallible. Their words are to be tested by the word of God and they must not act as tyrants, lording it over those they serve. Their authority is not absolute. They are in no way superior to those they serve. The leadership of God's people is to be strikingly different from the way leaders operate in the world, following the example of the one who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10.45). The model here is very different. The writer to the Hebrews would put it this way:

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Heb 13.17)*

Most of us will be familiar with the way cult-leaders demand the unswerving devotion and obedience of those they have persuaded to join them. Of course there is a lot more wrong with the phenomenon of the cults than just the authority structure with which they operate. What is taught is invariably at odds with what the Bible is teaching at point after point. However, they do provide us with a warning about unaccountable leadership, about submission that is demanded rather than freely given in response to self-sacrificial love, and about an insistence upon authority that goes well beyond the responsibility of the one who claims it. Christian recognition, support and indeed submission to our leaders is markedly different to that. But it is no less real for those differences. God has given us those with a responsibility to 'watch over our souls' in Peter's words. Ordering ourselves under them in this area is part of God's good work for us in the world as disciples of the true shepherd. And it enables those who bear this responsibility to do so with joy and not with groaning.

### **d. Submission in the household**

The passage that was read for us earlier, from Ephesians 5 (Eph 5.15–6.9) contains very important material on the relationship of a husband and a wife,

but it contains words about other relationships within the Christian household as well and it is worth dealing with those for just a moment before we narrow down to that particular. The starting point for the passage, you'll remember is Paul's exhortation 'Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.' (Eph 5.15–17). In an important sense all that follows falls under this rubric: living appropriately in this world, understanding the context in which we live, and understanding the profound goodness of the will of God in that context. The language of submission and obedience that follows is all part of that. It is God's will that in various particulars we should submit to one another and he goes on to fill out what this looks like in the case of husband and wives, children and parents, and masters and those who serve them, slaves. The relationships in each case are not reciprocal or interchangeable: husbands are not interchangeable with wives, children are not interchangeable with parents, and masters are not interchangeable with slaves. There is a pattern or order in the relationship of each pairing that requires particular instructions to each member of the pair: children obey your parents, fathers do not provoke your children; slaves obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling and a sincere heart, masters do not threaten and remember you too have a master.

Once again there is not the slightest indication that these differences in the relationships reflect the superiority of one member of the pair over the other. Masters are to remember there is no partiality with God, to whom they are accountable. God is the master of both the slave and the free. One is not more valuable than the other, rather they have different responsibilities and opportunities that arise from those responsibilities. Children are not less valuable than their parents, even though they are called upon to honour their father and mother. Even Jesus submitted himself to his earthly parents, as Luke records in Luke 2.

It is not hard to see that Paul was challenging what was very clearly standard practice in many households throughout the Mediterranean world. In fact, the Old Testament alone provides plenty of evidence of the harsh treatment of slaves—think of Sarah's treatment of Hagar, for instance—and the provocation of children by their fathers. But the coming of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was meant to make a difference. I take it that we should not miss phrases like 'in the Lord' and 'as bondservants of Christ'. The relationships are not undone or done away with, remarkably not even the relationship of masters and slaves, but in each case it is transformed by the gospel which reminds us of our common accountability before God for how we behave in whatever circumstances we find

ourselves and of the grace and mercy of God which is our common inheritance.

Now I've taken all this time looking at these other expressions of submission, starting with the submission of the Son to the Father and going on to look at the varied contexts in which submission occurs in the Christian life, because against that backdrop, the call for headship and submission in the relationship between a husband and a wife not only looks different, but it is guarded from distortion. It is not simply a reflection of a wider patriarchy in the Graeco-Roman world. It is a particular instance of walking carefully in the world; it is a particular instance of what it means to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5.18). Women are not the only people who are called upon to submit in the pages of the New Testament. But there is an order in the relationship between men and women, most particularly the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage, which is not merely a cultural arrangement. It is reflective instead of something much more significant.

### 3. Submission in marriage

Once again it is the passage from Ephesians 5 which fills this out most helpfully for us. It has been pointed out many times that the bulk of the section from chapter 5 verses 22 to 33 is actually devoted to instructions given to husbands. However, the husband is never told to ensure that his wife is submissive. He is not told to demand or require her submission. He is told instead to love sacrificially, nourishing and cherishing his wife as he would nourish and cherish his own body, but more importantly as Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. The lead sentence of the paragraph devoted to the responsibility of husbands begins 'Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' (Eph 5.25). This is the measure of headship in the New Testament, the headship of Christ in the church. And Christ exercises his headship, not by coercing the obedience or submission of the church, but by lovingly sacrificing himself for her. He bore the cost of redeeming his people. He knew the horror of it—once again, Gethsemane is evidence of that. But he did not hold back. As Paul put it in Philippians, 'he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross' (Phil 2.8). His blood was poured out. His body was broken. He bore in full the consequences of our sin as the definitive demonstration of his love. He became a curse for us (Gal 3.13).

As a husband, this is an immensely challenging word. It cuts across my self-interest, against my inflated estimate of myself, and calls on me to take the initiative in service, to keep on taking the initiative in service, to pursue opportunities to serve, to lay down my life, doing all in my power to nourish and care for Kathryn,

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loving her as myself, so that she might flourish as a woman, as a person, as one made in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ. It is not easy and I cannot even come close except by the work of the Spirit of God. So often I need her forgiveness and that of the Lord whose word this is. But this is what it is to be careful how I walk as a husband. This is what it means to make the best use of the time because the days are evil. This is what it means to stop being foolish and to understand what the will of the Lord is. Christ has redeemed the headship of husbands by providing the example of how to love.

Alongside this is the word to wives and here the language of submission is used in verse 22:

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

And a little further down in verse 33:

*However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

In this pair of husband and wife, the behaviour of one is not made conditional on the behaviour of the other. The self-sacrificial love of the husband is not conditional upon the submission of the wife and the submission of the wife is not conditional upon the self-sacrificial love of the husband. He is not told to love the submission, but to love her. She is not told to submit to his love, but to him. However, in both instances the reference is to Christ—'as to the Lord' in verse 22, 'as Christ loved the church' in verse 25. They arise together as we understand what it means to belong to Christ, the Christ who is our Lord and has given himself in order to save us. This dynamic is a particular instance of what it means to submit to one another 'out of reverence for Christ' (Eph 5.21). Of course the willing, voluntary submission of a wife will be made much easier if it is clear that her husband is consistently seeking her welfare and sacrificing his own interests for the sake of her flourishing in Christ. Just so, the loving sacrifice of a husband is made much easier if his initiatives in service are welcomed and his generous leadership is encouraged by his wife. When that is the case submission, just like the responsibility to lead and nourish and care, can be a good and joyful thing. But here in Ephesians, one is not made dependent or conditional upon the other but upon the example of Christ.

And as in the other cases of submission we have seen,

there is not the slightest hint of inferiority. The wife who submits is of no less value than the husband who sacrifices himself in love. Even though this submission is not to be restricted to one particular area of life—I think that is the burden of the phrase 'in everything' in verse 24—it does not transform the wife into a slave. Her submission is not absolute or ultimate and it does not require her to simply endure abuse. It most certainly does not make her 'her husband's possession'. In fact, the only time something like 'possession' language is used in the New Testament to speak of marriage—actually the word is the normal word for 'authority'—it is entirely reciprocal: in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul writes 'For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does' (1 Cor 7.4). Yet, critically, Paul also speaks of 'agreement' and 'mutual consent'.

When we look a little more closely, we see that in Ephesians 5, the wife's model is actually the church. Husbands have the exacting standard of Christ set before them—love 'as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her'—but wives are told 'submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord... as the church submits to Christ'. But how does the church submit to Christ? It's first and foremost by receiving the salvation he has won for her, by looking to Christ to sustain and direct her life, by rejoicing in his headship and taking seriously his word. At each of these points there are crucial differences between Christ and the husband. The husband is not a Saviour as Christ is, he does not give or sustain life in the way that Christ does, and his word is not authoritative and infallible as Christ's word is. But the dynamic of gratefully receiving the service that is offered, of honouring and respecting—it is interesting how the word 'submit' is replaced by the word 'to honour' or 'respect' or 'fear' in verse 33—the willingness to follow the lead that is given, all of this makes the parallel between the wife's relation to her husband and the church's relation to Christ thoroughly appropriate.

There are other passages in the New Testament where similar ideas are expressed. One that provides a slightly different angle that is helpful is a single verse near the beginning of 1 Corinthians 11. The passage is one that is often near the centre of debates about the relation of men and women, particularly as they serve the Christian congregation. But the ground for the discussion is a single verse, verse 3: 'But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God'.

I was tremendously helped when it was pointed out to me that this verse was not written in the way most of us would have done it. Instead of a ladder

extending upwards or extending downwards, placing an emphasis on a scaled hierarchy, it is written as a loose chiasm. Instead of moving from wife to husband to Christ to God, or from God to Christ to husband to wife, we are told first of the relation man and Christ, then of a wife and her husband, and then of Christ and God. The explanation that appealed to me, and which I think helps us a little as we think about this issue, is that the middle couplet is surrounded on both sides by Christ, Christ the head of man on one side and Christ the one who lives under the headship of God [the Father] on the other. And this enables you to say that whether you are the man exercising headship, or the woman receiving and responding to it, your model is Christ. Christ is the head—follow his lead, husbands. Christ has a head; it's God—follow his lead wives.

#### 4. Equality, order and love

We began, at the beginning of the first session, by recognising that in recent days attempts have been made to draw a causal connection between the biblical teaching about a wife's submission to her husband and the scourge of domestic violence. The charge has been made that this doctrine encourages the subjugation of women and allows a justification for abuse in all its forms. As I said back then, there is nothing in Scripture which justifies the use of violence towards women or the abuse of women in any way whatsoever, and whenever an appeal is made to Scripture in attempt to justify such behaviour it is not only a perversion of Scripture, but a dishonouring of the God whose word it is. There is not and can never be any justification for domination, bullying and mental, emotional or physical abuse of women—least of all by their husbands. The teaching of the New Testament speaks of relationships characterised by profound equality, genuine order and other-centred love. As in the submission of the Son to the Father, the submission of a wife to her husband has nothing to do with value and it has nothing to do with power. It is not something coerced or demanded but something freely, willingly given. It is a relationship of two human beings of equal value, both created in the image of God, both redeemed by the blood of Christ. And in this asymmetrical relation of equals the common element is true other-centred love.

I mentioned one of the articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* last year I found most helpful amidst the attempt to draw a link between the biblical teaching about submission and domestic violence. It was written by a Christian woman, Sarah, and one of the explanations she gave for delighting with her friends in the Bible's teaching on this subject was this:

*[Such women] do not connect submission with personal worth, because they already know that they are infinitely precious to God and, in good marriages, to their believing husbands. Instead, they see submission—where one person trusts another to lead them, and honours them for exercising that responsibility selflessly—helps two people grow closer together and enables them both to flourish as individuals.<sup>3</sup>*

Far from being an embarrassment to Christian men and women at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this biblical teaching is something we should rejoice in, because it is God's word to us and God is good and always provides for the welfare of his people. We need to speak out in the loudest possible voices against domestic violence and do all in our power to protect those who have been subjected to it—women and men—I hope we will all do that and continue to do that. But biblical headship and submission is not the cause, in fact quite the opposite.



<sup>3</sup> S. Colyer, "Submission" to my husband allows us both to flourish in our marriage', *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 March 2015 online at <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/submission-to-my-husband-allows-us-both-to-flourish-in-our-marriage-20150308-13y83i.html> (accessed 23/12/15).



# DOMESTIC ABUSE: A PROBLEM FOR US ALL

CLAIRE SMITH

AFTER WORKING FOR SOME YEARS AS A NURSE, CLAIRE SMITH SPENT MANY YEARS AT MOORE COLLEGE CLOSELY STUDYING THE BIBLE, COMPLETING A BTH, AN MA (THEOL), AND A PHD IN NEW TESTAMENT. THESE DAYS SHE SPENDS HER TIME WRITING AND TEACHING WOMEN THE BIBLE AT CONFERENCES. SHE IS MARRIED TO ROB, AND THEY HAVE AN ADULT SON.

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY CLAIRE SMITH AS A TALK FOR THE BRISBANE MINISTRY WIVES NETWORK IN 2016 AND DRAWS HEAVILY FROM MATERIAL IN CHAPTER 8 OF HER BOOK- *GOD'S GOOD DESIGN: WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY SAYS ABOUT MEN AND WOMEN* (MATTHIAS MEDIA, SYDNEY, 2012), AND IS USED WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The context and the reality

Last year, 2015, Rosie Batty was named Australian of the Year, having come to the nation's attention following the tragic murder of her eleven-year old son Luke at the hands of his father in 2014.

In the same year, in Queensland, there were an average of 180 domestic violence incidents reported to police *per day*, and the former Governor-General Quentin Bryce chaired a domestic violence taskforce that produced a report *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*, which made 140 recommendations.

And yet *this year*, in Queensland, within six weeks from March to early April, seven women were killed in domestic violence incidents in Cairns, Brisbane, Redcliffe, Ipswich, Winton and Cape York.

And these are only the events that reached the front pages. They say nothing of the episodes of domestic and family violence that don't make it outside the front door.

My guess is that domestic violence or abuse has never been so much in the public consciousness. The same is probably true for us as Christians. The spotlight has been turned on instances of domestic abuse in our church communities—perhaps even in our own homes—and some, particularly in the secular media, have tried to find fault with the biblical model of marriage as the cause of abuse.

How do we answer this terrible social evil?

We need answers. They won't be simple answers because life and sin and suffering are never simple. But as children of the true and living God, we know he has not left us alone, and that his word is a light to our feet and lamp to our path.

## 2. What is domestic abuse?

### a. Definition

The first question to answer is 'What is domestic abuse or violence?' It is a simple question with a complex answer.

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<sup>1</sup> Although there is some overlap with other material in this booklet, we have decided to include Claire's material in full since we believe it complements the other material in a helpful way. The article concludes with some practical advice, both for churches as a whole and for those caring for individuals affected by domestic violence. There is more detailed information on caring for victims in Section 4 of this volume. However, before thinking about practical responses, we would strongly encourage you to consider the material in this chapter and Section 3 first, as this will give you a deeper understanding of just what domestic violence looks like in practice, and therefore will have a significant impact on how you might approach caring for someone in this situation.

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The NSW Domestic Violence website states that:

Domestic and family violence is violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour in a relationship. This relationship can be a partner, carer or family member.

Abusive behaviour isn't just physical violence. It can be any behaviour meant to control, dominate, humiliate and scare the other person.

Domestic and family violence can include lots of different types of abuse. A person does not need to experience all of these types of abuse for it to be domestic or family violence.<sup>2</sup>

This definition comes at the issue in terms of what domestic abuse is. The other way of defining domestic abuse is by what it *does*, by its *effect*. Both perspectives are important. The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan, for example, says:

Domestic violence causes fear, physical and/or psychological harm.<sup>3</sup>

These are deliberately broad definitions because behaviour that causes fear and intimidation and psychological harm includes physical violence but also emotional abuse, threats and coercion, acts of omission as well as *commission*, mind-games, insults, deprivation, and so on.

Also as these definitions make clear, abuse can occur within a number of different relationships in the home: between partners, parents and children, siblings, across generations and so on, but our focus will be on intimate partner abuse or violence.

Also, as seen above, there is a spectrum of behaviour that should be regarded as 'abuse', just as there is a spectrum of behaviour we would regard as 'acceptable'. And as we move down the spectrum there's an increasing element of subjectivity. Physical violence, the high end, has no element of subjectivity—it either happened or didn't—and we easily see it as abuse.

But as we move down the spectrum to emotional abuse, coercion, and threats, the abusive element is often more contextual: it gains its potency within the dynamics of the relationship over time, and because of this it can be hard for outsiders to see its destructive power.

That's because domestic abuse is about *power and control*, and the various means a person uses to

establish and use that power and control over another person or other people.

In other words, we're not talking about one-off events, but a *pattern* that shapes a relationship. Also we're not talking about something that can be fixed with better anger management or communication skills or through marriage counselling.

It is about *power and control*, and the means of establishing and using that power and control. Intimate partner abuse therefore includes:

*Physical assault*: kicking, slapping, choking or using weapons against the victim.

*Sexual assault*: any non-consenting sexual act or behaviour (not fully agreed to by both partners), rape, forced viewing of pornography.

*Using coercion and threats*: threatening to hurt them, the children, pets or property if they don't do what person wants, or do something they don't want.

*Using intimidation*: making the partner afraid by using looks, actions, or gestures.

*Using children*: making the partner feel guilty about the children; threatening to take the children away, to report partner to Child Protection authorities.

*Using isolation*: controlling what the partner does, who they talk to, what she or he reads and where they go. Smothering.

*Psychological/emotional/verbal abuse*: using words and other strategies to insult, threaten, degrade, abuse or denigrate a partner.

*Social abuse*: social isolation, such as stopping a partner seeing family and friends.

*Economic abuse*: controlling and withholding access to family resources such as money and property.<sup>4</sup>

*Spiritual abuse*: using Scripture or spiritual beliefs to manipulate a partner. Preventing them from practising or attending religious gatherings.

Needless to say, this list is not exhaustive because the human heart is corrupt and deceitful above all things, and no list can capture all the ways a person might abuse another (Ps 14:1–3; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:13–18).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/what-is-domestic-violence> accessed 5 July, 2016

<sup>3</sup> *The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan*, June 2010

<sup>4</sup> This description of Domestic Abuse is adapted (accessed 8 Oct 2010) from: <http://www.relationships.com.au/advice/relationship-difficulties/relationship-breakdown>

Also typically there is a cycle of abuse: where periods of peace and intimacy are followed by escalating tensions; then threats and intimidation; building to a peak of violence; followed by a period of remorse with guilt, minimizing, excuses, self-justification, then a pursuit stage of buying back or promising it won't happen again, followed by a fragile 'peace' or equilibrium, before the cycle starts again.<sup>5</sup>

## b. Prevalence

So how common is it? If you spend any time researching this issue you'll find the figures bounce around a lot, depending on the measures used, and the point that's trying to be made. Consequently, it seems to me the true incidence is almost impossible to know. Not only are there issues of context and subjectivity at play, but also the dynamics of abuse work against reporting, which means that all statistics need to be revised upwards. In the end only God knows by how much!

Using the 2012 Personal Safety Survey put together by the Australian Bureau of Statistics we can say the following:<sup>6</sup>

Women were more likely than men to experience violence [physical and/or sexual] by a partner [current or previous]. In 2012 an estimated 17% of all women aged 18 years and over (1,479,900 women) and 5.3% of all men aged 18 years and over (448,000 men) had experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15.<sup>7</sup>

Also the survey found:

Women were more likely than men to have experienced violence by a partner [previous or current] in the 12 months prior to the survey. In the 12 months prior to the survey an estimated 132,500 women (1.5% of all women aged 18 years and over) had experienced violence by a partner compared to 51,800 men (0.6% of all men aged 18 years and over).<sup>8</sup>

Between 2005 and 2012 there was no statistically significant change in the proportion of women and men who reported experiencing partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.<sup>9</sup>

Men were less likely than women to have ever told anyone about violence by a current partner. Men were also less likely than women to have ever told anyone about violence by a previous partner. Both men and women were more likely to reveal their experience of violence by a previous partner compared to violence by a current partner.<sup>10</sup>

An estimated 64,700 men (54% of the 119,600 men who had experience current partner violence) had **never told** anyone about the violence by their current partner.<sup>11</sup>

An estimated 60,800 women (26% of the 237,100 women who had experienced current partner violence) had **never told** anyone about the violence by their current partner.<sup>12</sup>

An estimated 113,200 men (95% of the 119,600 men who had experience current partner violence) had **never** contacted the police about the violence by their current partner.<sup>13</sup>

An estimated 190,100 women (80% of the 237,100 women who had experienced current partner violence) had **never** contacted the police about the violence by their current partner.<sup>14</sup>

An estimated 53,100 men (44% of the 119,600 men who had experienced current partner violence) **had** children in their care when the violence occurred. Of the estimated 128,500 women (54% of the 237,100 women who had experienced current partner violence) who had children in their care when the violence occurred, 74,300 (31% of women who experienced current partner violence) stated that children **had** seen or heard the violence.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.dvhelppennrithregion.nsw.gov.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=107](http://www.dvhelppennrithregion.nsw.gov.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=107)  
<http://www.domesticviolenceservice.com.au/resource/CycleofViolence.html> both accessed 8 July 2016

<sup>6</sup> The following paragraphs are from the Survey. Text within brackets is added.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Chapter7002012> accessed 6 July 2016

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Chapter7002012> accessed 6 July 2016

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4923E61E9B7AD9A0CA257C3D000D8520?opendocument> accessed 6 July 2016

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Chapter7002012> accessed 6 July 2016

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/25AF91125718ADF1CA257C3D000D856A?opendocument> accessed 6 July 2016.

Emphasis original.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/25AF91125718ADF1CA257C3D000D856A?opendocument> accessed 6 July 2016.

Emphasis original.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/25AF91125718ADF1CA257C3D000D856A?opendocument> accessed 6 July 2016.

Emphasis original.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/25AF91125718ADF1CA257C3D000D856A?opendocument> accessed 6 July 2016.

Emphasis original.

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The 2012 PSS found that overall, women were more likely to have experienced emotional abuse by a [current or previous] partner than men, with one in four (25%) women and one in seven (14%) men having experienced emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15 (2.1 million women and 1.2 million men).<sup>16</sup>

In the 2012 PSS, 2.7% of women and 1.4% of men had experienced violence (physical and/or sexual) by their current partner since age 15. Over half (55%) of women, and over a third (37%) of men who had experienced violence by their current partner since age 15 had also experienced emotional abuse by their partner. In contrast, 3.1% of women and 2.4% of men who had not experienced violence by their current partner had experienced emotional abuse by them.<sup>17</sup>

These results represent a great deal of suffering in a great many lives, but they also alert us to something that is often overlooked, namely, that partner abuse is not exclusively perpetrated *by* men *against* women—as the results show: around one in three victims<sup>18</sup> of intimate partner abuse are male.<sup>19</sup>

This is not to deny that women are far more often victims, or that where actual violence is involved the injuries inflicted on women are more serious. But it does tell us this is *not* primarily a gender issue: in the sense that *only* men are abusers and *only* women are victims, and the issue itself is emblematic of male power and misogyny.

Furthermore, the prevalence of domestic abuse in same-sex relationships also suggests it is not solely a gender issue, as rates are similar<sup>20</sup> or possibly higher than those of heterosexual couples.<sup>21</sup>

What makes intimate partner abuse against women wrong is not that it is *done by a man* against a woman, but that it is *done at all*.

What the survey also makes clear is that intimate partner violence is not restricted to any one demographic. It occurs across all socioeconomic groups, cultures, races, and geographic regions (with some variations in occurrence).

And twenty-five years in pastoral ministry has convinced me that the Christian community is no exception: I know Christian women who have been abused by their Christian husbands, and Christian men who have been abused by their Christian wives. And I've seen it in the richest and poorest suburbs of Sydney—the only difference being that people are less likely to talk about it when they have the (false) security and pride of wealth.

Now some readers may be aware that the Bible's teaching about marriage has been blamed for domestic abuse in recent media discussions about domestic abuse.

For example, the Anglican dean of Brisbane, Peter Catt reportedly said last year "I have heard pastors and others tell people in domestic violence situations that they have to stay in situations of abuse because they are under the headship of the male. And that if they leave they are committing a sin"; and along the same lines, Sydney Uniting Church minister Dr Margaret Mayman claimed "If submission is the theory, then battering is the practice".<sup>22</sup>

So do evangelical Bible-believing Christians have a problem? Is domestic abuse the end-point of accepting the Bible's teaching about marriage—especially its teaching about headship and submission?

I hope it will not surprise you to hear me say that it isn't. In fact, research coming out of the States shows that the more sincere, regular church-attending and Bible-believing a man is, the less *likely* he is to abuse his wife.<sup>23</sup> Of course, that doesn't change the fact that domestic abuse exists in our conservative, evangelical, complementarian churches (and egalitarian ones too), and even exists within ministry marriages. So there are no grounds for complacency. But it does confirm that it's not the Bible's teaching itself that is the problem. Indeed, rightly understood, the Bible's teaching provides the solution!

So if God's word is sufficient for salvation and the godly life, what does it say to us on this matter?

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2A75B2D3461A186CCA257C3D000D8653?opendocument> accessed 6 July 2016. Emphasis original.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+features602014> accessed 6 July 2016.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+features602014#currentpartnerviolence> accessed 7 October, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.oneinthree.com.au/overview/> accessed 6 July 2016.

<sup>19</sup> These statistics do not include the male prison population.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/domestic-violence-a-silent-epidemic-in-gay-relationships-20150415-1mm4hg> accessed 6 July 2016.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.murdoch.edu.au/elaw/issues/v3n4/vickers.html#t25> accessed 6 July 2016.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/submission-is-a-fraught-mixed-message-for-the-church-20150212-13d9nw.html> accessed 6 July 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Steven R. Tracy, 'Patriarchy and Domestic Violence: Challenging Misconceptions', *JETS* 50/3 (September 2007), 573-94, here 581, 584. The observation pertains to "conservative Protestant men who attend church regularly".

### 3. God's condemnation of violence and abuse

#### a) God condemns violence and abuse

The first thing to notice is that God condemns all interpersonal violence and abuse. Indeed, physical violence is sin that earns his wrath (Pss 11:5–6; 73:6, 27; Prov 3:31–32), as does all mistreatment of the vulnerable (Ps 10:2, 8–11; Jer 22:3).

Psalm 11:5–6

The LORD examines the righteous,  
but the wicked, those who love violence,  
he hates with a passion.

On the wicked he will rain  
fiery coals and burning sulfur;  
a scorching wind will be their lot.

Psalm 10:2, 8–11

In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak,  
who are caught in the schemes he devises. [...]

His victims are crushed, they collapse;  
they fall under his strength.

He says to himself, "God will never notice;  
he covers his face and never sees."

Jeremiah 22:3

This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right.  
Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who  
has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the  
foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed  
innocent blood in this place.

In fact, God's judgement against Israel's leaders for  
their misuse of authority is a sobering reminder to  
anyone tempted to use their position of authority for  
their own benefit (Jer 23:1–4; Ezek 34:2–4). So, too, is  
God's judgement against those who fail to care for the  
vulnerable and those without power (Isa 10:1–2; Pss  
7:9; 41:1; Matt 23:23).

Psalm 7:9

Bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make  
the righteous secure—you, the righteous God who  
probes minds and hearts.

Psalm 41:1

Blessed are those who have regard for the weak;  
the LORD delivers them in times of trouble.

Matthew 23:23

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you  
hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill  
and cumin. But you have neglected the more important  
matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You  
should have practiced the latter, without neglecting  
the former".

It could not be clearer that God's word offers no  
comfort, justification or cover for anyone to get their  
way through violence or threats. Instead, violence and  
threats, especially against those without authority  
or with less power (physical, social, institutional,  
economic), are expressly and repeatedly condemned.

But it is not just conduct at the high end of the abuse  
spectrum that is condemned. The destructive words  
of someone who should be a friend also earn God's  
wrath (Ps 55:12–14, 20–21; Prov 12:6, 18; Matt 5:22), as  
do fits of rage, filthy speech, jealousy, bitterness, wrath,  
and malice (Gal 5:20; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8). Deprivation  
and neglect of family members' needs is also strongly  
condemned (1 Tim 5:4, 8).

Moreover, God explicitly forbids abuse within marriage,  
in particular, the misuse and distortion of his pattern  
for marriage as an excuse for abuse (Col 3:19; Mal  
2:14–16 NIV; Prov 11:29 ESV).

Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with  
them.

Proverbs 11:29 (ESV)

Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the  
wind [...]

Indeed, in the same two passages where Paul instructs  
wives to submit themselves voluntarily to their  
husbands, Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5, he speaks  
forcefully to husbands about their responsibilities to  
serve and honour their wives—not about their rights  
or privileges. He expressly forbids husbands from  
being harsh and commands them to love their wives as  
they love their own bodies, nourishing and cherishing  
them, not hating them (Col 3:19; Eph 5:28–29).

The apostle Peter likewise instructs husbands to be  
considerate of their wives, and to treat them with  
respect as equal co-heirs of the gift of life, otherwise  
their prayers will be hindered (1 Pet 3:7). That is, a  
husband's failure to do so will have immediate and  
devastating effects on his relationship with God and  
his spiritual wellbeing.

Scripture could not be clearer: biblical headship is not  
dominating or exploitative or self-serving. It is the  
exact opposite, because it is explicitly to be modeled  
on the loving, self-sacrificial leadership of Christ.

In short, God's authoritative and life-giving word  
unambiguously condemns domestic abuse in all its  
forms, and condemns using God's pattern for marriage  
as an excuse or cover for abuse.

## b) God's condemnation of inaction for the oppressed

But Scripture also gives no comfort or cover to those who knowingly ignore or condone violence, exploitation or abuse.

Consider the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon in 2 Samuel 13. Both her father King David and full-brother Absalom failed her terribly. Their commitment to justice and righteousness should have given her protection before the event and brought her comfort and justice after it, but it gave her neither. Like all those in Scripture who knowingly let the little ones suffer, their failure condemns them.

For the Scripture makes clear that we are to do good to all people, especially the household of faith (Matt 18:10; Gal 6:10), and especially the weak and needy (Ps 82:3–4; Acts 20:35; 1 Thess 5:14)—all the more so if we are responsible for teaching and caring for God's flock.

We are to be like God of whom the psalmist says:

Psalms 72:12–14

For he will deliver the needy who cry out,  
the afflicted who have no one to help.

He will take pity on the weak and the needy  
and save the needy from death.

He will rescue them from oppression and violence,  
for precious is their blood in his sight.

IN SHORT, GOD'S  
AUTHORITATIVE AND  
LIFE-GIVING WORD  
UNAMBIGUOUSLY  
CONDEMNS DOMESTIC  
ABUSE IN ALL ITS FORMS,  
AND CONDEMNS USING  
GOD'S PATTERN FOR  
MARRIAGE AS AN EXCUSE  
OR COVER FOR ABUSE.

## 4. Some Christian misunderstandings

Shortly we'll look at some guidelines for how we might care for Christ's sheep, but first we need to look at some of the mistaken ways of doing that.

### a) What about 'turning the other cheek'?

The first concerns Jesus' instruction to 'turn the other cheek' (Matt 5:39; Luke 6:29). These words are often invoked by both victims and abusers, and by those

trying to help. So how do they apply in situations of abuse? Well, the short answer is that they don't.

It's true that Jesus issues a radical call for us to love our enemies (Matt 5:44; 1 Pet 3:9), and instead of paying back evil with evil and only loving those who love us, we are to meet evil with good (Luke 6:27). We are to do to others as we would have them do to us (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31). But Scripture also gives us plenty of examples where the right response to injustice and violence is to flee from it or to oppose it.

The apostle Paul may have "boasted" in his sufferings, but in the same text he tells how he was lowered in a basket from a window in the city wall, so he could escape a city-wide attempt by the governor to seize him (2 Cor 11:23–33). He rejoiced in his sufferings and desired to suffer for the sake of Christ (Phil 3:10) and yet having been illegally imprisoned and beaten in Philippi, he and Silas refused to go away quietly and demanded reparation from the authorities (Acts 16:35–40). And in Ephesus, his companions prevented him from entering the anti-Christian riot for fear of what might happen to him (Acts 19:30–31).

Then there is Jesus. The Lord of Glory humbled himself to death on a cross out of love for his enemies, but he also fled violence and threats of violence, and opposed injustice directed against him (e.g., Matt 12:14–15; John 8:59; 10:31, 39; 11:53–54). He appealed for justice for himself from the Jewish authorities (John 18:23). Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, he asked his Father if it was possible the cup might pass from him (Matt 26:39).

These episodes show, that despite their willingness to suffer, both Jesus and Paul also took steps to avoid suffering. In fact, while Scripture encourages us to endure unjust suffering and be ready to suffer for the gospel (Phil 1:29), and recognises that suffering is an unavoidable part of this post-fall world (Rom 8:18–25), it does not encourage us to endure avoidable suffering (cf. Matt 10:21–23; 1 Cor 7:21; 1 Pet 2:12, 14–15, 20).

This warns us against a simplistic one-size-fits-all application of 'turn the other cheek'. At times, turning the other cheek is not the right way to love in the face of evil and I believe domestic abuse is one such situation.

### b) What about the command to forgive?

But what about the biblical command to forgive (Mark 11:25; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13) and the serious consequences of not forgiving (cf. Matt 18:21–35)?

Perhaps there can be no better expression of doing unto others as we would have them do to us than to forgive someone who has hurt us. Such forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel, for, by his willingness to suffer in our place, Christ purchased forgiveness for those

who were his enemies. The sign of a heart changed by the forgiving power of the cross is that we're able to forgive as we ourselves have been forgiven (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12–13).

But (and it's a very important but) forgiveness doesn't mean abuse must be condoned, excused or tolerated. Forgiveness is about cancelling a debt and about grace being extended from one sinner to another. It is not about ignoring a debt or the grace of forgiveness being trampled underfoot. The abuse needs to stop but unfortunately, more often than not it is the victim who needs to take action to make it stop.

All this being said, we can't ignore the fact that asking victims and survivors to forgive their abusers is a huge ask.

If it is easier to say 'I forgive you' than it is to forgive, it is easier still for one sinner to tell another they must forgive (cf. Mark 2:9–12)! Forgiveness—heartfelt, costly forgiveness—is never easy. But by power of the Spirit of God it is possible.

At the same time, however, we must not confuse forgiving with forgetting.

### c) Confusing forgiveness and forgetting

Many of us were brought up with the dictum 'forgive and forget'. It's often how parents keep peace between warring siblings! And so we come to believe that to forgive is to forget or to forget is to forgive. But the two are quite different.

Forgiveness—as with our forgiveness in Christ—means cancelling the debt owed to us. And part of that means ensuring that a root of bitterness doesn't grow up against the person who hurt us (Eph 4:26–27, 31), and it also means not keeping a record of their wrongs to drag out every time we want to win an argument (1 Cor 13:5). It means loving the person—despite what they did to us.

But that's not the same as forgetting. Sometimes loving a person means we need to remember their sins.

To give an extreme example: that's why we don't put paedophiles on the crèche roster—even if the person is sincerely repentant Christian believer. Why? Because (quite apart from child protection laws) our love for that brother or sister means we do what we can to prevent them sinning again, and so we remember their sin.

So forgiveness doesn't mean erasing the past. The sad truth about intimate partner abuse is that the recidivism rate is very high: most abusers continue to

abuse, and so loving both victims and perpetrators means remembering the past, and taking appropriate measures to ensure the abuse does not continue.

### d) What about Jesus' example in 1 Peter 2?

But what about Jesus' example of silent suffering in 1 Peter 2: are victims of abuse meant to suffer in silence? Is that what Peter has in mind in 1 Peter 3:1 when he says "wives likewise be subject to your own husbands"?

The answer is 'no' on both counts, and the reasons have to do with the structure of the passage and the time in which it was written.

The "likewise"<sup>24</sup> at the beginning of chapter 3 goes right back to 2:13 which is the first mention of 'submission' and functions as a heading for believers to be subject to all human authorities, just and unjust, because God is in authority over all and so there's no inherent contradiction between obeying human authorities and obeying God. That was most likely the background question for the original readers.

But how were believers to react if they were treated poorly by those in authority? Where would justice be done?

This is where Jesus is presented as an example. He endured violence and injustice and entrusted himself to him who judges justly—and he did so in order to save us from our sins. His suffering was unavoidable if he was to do that because it is "by his wounds" that we have been healed (1 Pet 2:24). He could not but suffer if he was to save us.

In all likelihood, to the original readers, the suffering of slaves on view here (2:18–20) was also unavoidable. Christ provided them with a model of trusting in the sovereignty and justice of God, and faithfully enduring unavoidable suffering. As such, he does not function as a picture of submission in all circumstances, so much as a model of perseverance in the face of unjust and unavoidable suffering.

Thankfully, we live in a different time and society and much suffering is avoidable. There are laws against abuse, and instruments of the state that enforce those laws and protect the vulnerable. Peter himself tells us that God wants us to obey our governing authorities (1 Pet 2:13; Rom 13:1). So, not only does Scripture not attach merit to avoidable suffering, it also instructs us to obey the law, which means doing what we can to prevent and report abuse!

We also shouldn't miss the fact that Peter's instruction to both slaves and wives is sandwiched between

<sup>24</sup> 'Likewise/in the same way' in 3:1, 7 better translated 'Also'.

## DOMESTIC ABUSE: A PROBLEM FOR US ALL

instructions addressed to all believers about the right response to unjust suffering: namely, to do good to your persecutors (1 Pet 2:12; 3:9). This 'do unto others' response takes us back to the question we began to answer above about what love looks like in the face of abuse. We will return to it more directly below.

### e) What about Ephesians 5:26–27?

And that brings us to a text that's sometimes misused as an excuse for abuse: when Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25–27:

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

Problems arise here where a husband mistakenly thinks it is his responsibility to make his wife holy, and that he can use all means of power and control to do so.

I say mistakenly, because it is clear from the flow of the passage that not everything said of Christ is true of husbands, and not everything said of the church is true of wives. In fact, we run into all sorts of trouble if we confuse the two. Only Christ gave himself for his bride, and only Christ can make us holy, and cleanse us, and present us to himself as a radiant church. Only Christ is our saviour.

Any husband who thinks he's responsible for his wife's salvation or sanctification is utterly mistaken (and needlessly burdened).

Moreover, any husband who thinks he is to discipline and correct his wife in order to progress her sanctification, and that headship gives him the right to do so, has not only put himself where only Christ should be, he has badly misunderstood the nature of true biblical headship.

### f) What does love look like in situations of domestic abuse?

Which brings us to the question of what love looks like in situations of abuse?

Let's be clear about one thing: there is nothing loving in allowing abuse to continue.

Sadly, victims can have trouble accepting this, but it's important to realize that it's not selfish to seek freedom from abuse. It is loving, responsible, and it is God's will.

We love the abuser by doing all we can to stop their abuse. Sin is toxic to the sinner as well as its victims, and unrepentant sin is a death sentence (Ps 7:16; Prov 1:11 with 18; Matt 18:15–17; 2 Cor 7:9–10; Gal 6:7–8). Allowing sin free rein is not loving for anyone.

We love other victims by seeking to stop abuse. The statistics show that children are often present when abuse occurs and even if they are not at physical risk, they are indirect victims, through emotional damage and what they learn, hear and see.

We love God's provision of law and order by stopping abuse (Rom 13:1–4; 1 Pet 2:13–14). The fact is some domestic abuse is illegal: rape in marriage is a crime, and other forms of abuse—physical assault, threats, property damage, stalking—are also criminal offences. God has graciously given us a society where these legislative and protective provisions exist and we should be grateful for them, and we express our gratitude, in part, by obeying our governing authorities and not allowing abusive conduct to go on unchecked.

We love what God loves and are agents of God's justice when we care for the weak and oppressed. We are not to create our own little domestic haven where we can hide from the evils of the world and leave others to fight their own battles. We are to seek the good of all people, especially our brothers and sisters in the household of faith—whether perpetrators or victims.

And in God's strength, victims and survivors are also called to love. They are to love and honour God by recognising their own dignity and worth as those made in his image. They are to love God's justice and his provision of justice. They are to seek the good of any other victims in abusive situations, including their own. And, by the power of God's Spirit, they are to love and serve their abuser: to expose the deeds of darkness and seek their abuser's godliness and repentance by calling out their sin to secular and/or church authorities (Eph 5:11; Luke 17:3; 1 Cor 5:1–13; 1 Tim 5:19–20; Acts 23:12–22; Rom 13:1–4); to pray for their persecutor (Matt 5:44); and not to seek revenge (1 Pet 3:9; Rom 12:14, 17–21).<sup>25</sup>

We need to know there's nothing loving in allowing abuse to continue—for anyone.

### g) The question of divorce

Which brings us to one final question: that of divorce.

Abusive relationships are volatile and fragile and any intervention is likely to make things more unstable and dangerous in the first instance, so the safety of all

<sup>25</sup> Adapted from Steven R Tracy, "Domestic Violence in the Church and Redemptive Suffering in 1 Peter", *Calvin Theological Review*, 41(2006): 279-296, here 294.

those involved is the first consideration in any attempt to respond to domestic abuse. Most obviously this involves the safety of the victim and any children in their care, but it also includes the safety of the abuser (e.g. from self-harm), those trying to help (police, social workers, friends, family, pastors, and so on), and even pets.

In many instances, this will mean putting physical distance between the abuser and any victims (or potential victims). This means that often the course of wisdom will be for physical separation and the need for separate living arrangements, while the abuser gets professional and spiritual help to repent of, unlearn and change their damaging and destructive ways of relating and behaving.

The desired goal of living separately is the healing and restoration of the individual and the marriage. However, statistics caution against an optimistic view. As we've already noted, the recidivism rate is very high, and unless and until everyone's safety can reasonably be assured then it is best for a couple to live separately—with firm and clear boundaries concerning contact and access, and close supervision of any time the abuser spends with children.

Some Christians recommend the permanent solution of divorce on the grounds that marriage is a covenant, and the abuser has broken the covenant—in a similar way that adultery and desertion break the marriage covenant—and so allow a person to divorce and remarry (cf. Matt 19:3–12; 1 Cor 7:10–16).

There is some merit to these arguments and certainly if a person's safety can only be assured with the permanence of divorce, then God's provision of divorce is for just such hardness of heart (i.e. the abuser's heart).

That said, divorce was common and easy in the first century and yet neither Jesus nor Paul commend it. Rather, they regulate and restrict it. The Bible's consistent teaching about the "one-flesh" union of marriage (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5–6; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31) underscores the intended life-long nature of the bond, as well as the destructiveness of adultery, and the exceptional circumstances that allow for divorce and remarriage.

My own view is that the gospel is about reconciliation and restoration, and about leaving room for God's discipline and transformative work in sinful hearts (Rom 12:18–21; 13:4; 1 Cor 11:32), and so, as much as is possible, leaving the door open for such a powerful work of God seems in keeping with the hope of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 7:10–16).

It may be that true repentance and reconciliation, and a healthy relationship free from threats and control may

never be attained. If not, the couple will, of necessity, continue to live separately. But this is not an argument for divorce in and of itself—just because it does not happen every time, doesn't mean that God can't make it happen.

## 5. Practical Advice

There are two parts to a practical response to abuse, the first is about dealing with an existing problem; the second seeks to prevent abuse in the first place.

### a) Responding to the problem

When it comes to dealing with abuse situations, there are two things to consider: encouraging people to report abuse, and responding rightly once they do.

#### i. How to encourage people to report

The first thing that's necessary—and not just for reasons of domestic abuse—is to create a church culture where people are encouraged to be open and honest, to share their lives together, which fosters genuine relationships where the façades of having it all together and living perfect lives aren't needed.

Ideally, part of that culture will be a publicly stated and readily available written policy statement outlining acceptable domestic behaviour, and how situations of domestic abuse will be managed pastorally. Such a document might also include information about how to spot the signs of abuse. All those in leadership (even of children) would be trained in the contents and implementation of this policy.

In the formal up-front teaching and in our own self-presentation, we also need to communicate a clear doctrine of sin and comprehensive understanding of human fallenness, including our own. We need to be willing to share ourselves, and show a commitment to real justice, not just the appearance of it.

We need to be aware of possible warning signs of abuse, and if we have concerns about a person, we are to make cautious and sensitive enquiries, without putting anyone at risk—that is, by asking the suspected victim privately, and not revealing our concerns to other family members or other people (who themselves might tell family members).

We must not assume we don't know anyone in an abusive situation. Statistically, the chances are that we do. So we need to think carefully about what we can do to make it easier for people to share their hidden lives with us.

In all but one of the situations my husband and I have been involved with, there were warning signs, and

alarm bells ringing long before we were told, and it is possible that if we had asked the right questions earlier the abuse might have ended sooner. In the one situation where we didn't suspect abuse was going on, with the wisdom of hindsight, we realised that we should have seen it. The signs were there, but the genders threw us off. That is, our own preconceived stereotypes of men and women stopped us seeing what was right in front of us.

## ii. What to do when they do

It is vital for churches and pastors to think these issues through before they arise, so that they're not starting from scratch each time or sorting out what to think in the middle of a crisis. There are questions that need to be answered ahead of time: Who to tell? What about divorce? What about church discipline? These are complex theological questions that require prayer and study.

As I've said already, it's important to realise that marriage counselling is not the first line of response, and that domestic abuse is not about anger management or communication skills. It's a deep-seated desire for control and power, and my observation is that these same dynamics are often evident in other relationships as well.

We must not underestimate the instability of the situation or risk to all involved and not overestimate our ability to handle it. Usually the abuser has a lot invested in people's good opinion of them (particularly, those in authority or with high social influence). Abusers are also strongly driven to be in control, and being found out takes these things away, and makes an unstable situation into a volatile one. Much wisdom then is needed in managing such situations.

If someone comes to us to report abuse we need to listen, not ask for proof, not excuse, not doubt. We need to sensitively establish the contours of the conversation: things like confidentiality, mandatory reporting obligations, boundaries, our own limitations, their expectations, and so on.

We should make information and contact details available about where to get help, realizing that the person may not be able to take the material with them because of the risk of it being discovered. We might also need to help the person access that help because they are too afraid or unable to do so themselves.

While it's important that we don't doubt or blame the victim, Scripture tells us that the heart is deceitful and that human beings often lie. This means that we

shouldn't believe everything just because we're told it. Just as we need to take all accusations seriously, we also must not jump to conclusions about guilt. We need to realize that ultimately God is the judge and he alone judges justly.

Finally, while the full truth of a situation of abuse can be slow to emerge, we must not be slow to get advice from agencies dealing with abuse (e.g. the police or domestic violence hotlines). If we do, we should protect the confidentiality of the abused person if that is their wish, unless children are at risk, in which case we should contact authorities even against the wishes of the abused person. Also, if we believe the abused person has suffered or is at risk of serious harm, but is not able or willing to contact the authorities, we might decide to put their safety above such confidentiality. In all situations, it is best to be guided by those with expertise in these matters. Importantly, if we believe anyone is at imminent risk of physical harm we must contact the police immediately (dial 000).

Ideally, the abused person should decide on the best course of action. They may choose to do nothing, and if so, we need to respect their decision, and make sure they know we're there should they want to talk again or need further help—and that there is no limit on how many times.

All the same, it's important to record observations, incidents and conversations in a secure/confidential place, in case they are needed for prosecution or AVOs. We should tell the person who has confided in us that we are doing this.

The overall approach here can be summed up as four Rs: recognize, respond, refer and record.<sup>26</sup>

### b) Preventing abuse

But surely the better course is to prevent abuse in the first place. So how can we do that?

One of the least helpful approaches is to avoid the Bible's teaching about headship and submission, or say that it no longer applies, or reinterpret it in such a way that it is effectively meaningless.

If Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, Titus 2, and 1 Peter 3 are God's enduring word for marriage then the way to prevent problems in marriage is not by silencing or neutralising God's word but by ensuring that God's people know, delight, and obey it.

As we've seen above, the Bible passages about husbands and wives can be misused and misunderstood, and so

<sup>26</sup> [http://restored.contentfiles.net/media/resources/files/Pack\\_for\\_Churches\\_2016reduce.pdf](http://restored.contentfiles.net/media/resources/files/Pack_for_Churches_2016reduce.pdf) accessed 15 August 2016

we need to take care not to perpetuate these errors. But we won't be able to do that if we avoid or dilute the Bible's teaching about men and women – their equality and their different roles and responsibilities.

We not only need to show negatively how misusing these texts is against the word of God. We also need to show positively, both in our teaching and in our lives, the goodness of God's pattern for marriage, and what it means for wives to submit themselves to their husbands as the church submits to Christ, and for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

More than that, what is needed is strong, clear and regular Bible teaching on power and authority, especially Jesus' use of power and authority, and on sin, judgement and repentance; on marriage, men and women, parenting, authentic godliness, on bearing one another's burdens, and so on.

Those who may be tempted to abuse need to hear the word of God: that men and women are equally made in God's image, with equal dignity and purpose, moral choice and responsibility, and that each of us (male and female, husband and wife) is accountable to God for our own lives (Gen 1:26–28; 2:24; 3:16–19; cf. 1 Cor 7:3), and will answer to him for everything we have done (2 Cor 5:10)—both what we have done in public, as well as what we have done in secret (Matt 6:4, 6, 18; 10:26–31).

#### Resources used in preparation:

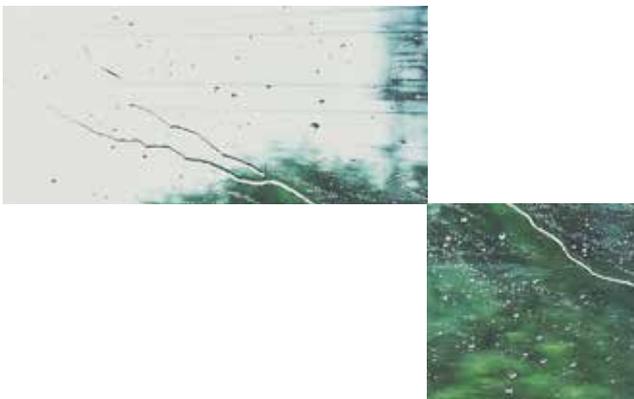
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Steven R Tracy, 'Headship with Heart: How Biblical Patriarchy Actually Prevents Abuse', *Christianity Today*, 1 February 2003: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/february/5.50.html>

Steven R Tracy, 'Patriarchy and Domestic Violence: Challenging Common Misconceptions', *JETS* 50/3 (September 2007) 573–94.



# HELPFUL READING AND LISTENING RESOURCES

RESOURCES RECOMMENDED BY CLAIRE SMITH

## Christian resources:

My book *God's Good Design*, (Matthias Media, Sydney, 2012), has a chapter on domestic abuse.

Jason Meyer's sermon 'Fooled by False Leadership' on 2 Corinthians 11:16–21 and hyper-headship is worth listing to:

<http://www.hopeingod.org/sermon/fooled-false-leadership>

Justin Holcomb and Lindsey Holcomb, *Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence*, (Moody, Chicago, 2014). I've interacted with this book here:

<http://equalbutdifferent.org/articles/speaking-of-domestic-abuse>

Justin Holcomb has also written for *Christianity Today*:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2015/spring/violence-in-home.html?paging=off>

*Ending Domestic Abuse: A Pack for Churches*

<http://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/51/>

It is from the UK so contact numbers and organisations do not apply in Australia. It approaches the matter exclusively as abuse of women by men, but briefly acknowledges that men can be victims.

## More academic Christian resources:

Steven R Tracy, 'Headship with Heart: How Biblical Patriarchy Actually Prevents Abuse', *Christianity Today* (1 February 2003): <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/february/5.50.html>

Steven R Tracy, 'Patriarchy and Domestic Violence: Challenging Common Misconceptions', *JETS* 50/3 (September 2007) 573–94.

Steven R Tracy, *Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse* (Zondervan, 2008). This is about abuse generally, not just domestic abuse.

## Some helpful links at *The Gospel Coalition*:

Jason Meyer, 'Hyper Headship and the Scandal of Domestic Abuse in the Church', 28 April 2015: <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2015/04/28/hyper-headship-and-the-scandal-of-domestic-abuse-in-the-church/> (This article has a list of other resources at the end).

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# THE NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## SECTION 2

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In this section we look more closely at the nature of domestic violence with all its complexities. It is helpful to keep remembering that this is not just an issue for the wider community or the fringes of your church community. It may be affecting people on your parish council, your friends in ministry or even your own marriage. Wherever you encounter it, we hope this section will help you better understand it.



# TYPES OF ABUSE

RUTH HOLT

RUTH HOLT IS A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND PRINCIPAL OF CANBERRA CLINICAL AND FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY. SHE HAS EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH, HOSPITAL AND PRIVATE PRACTICE SETTINGS, WORKING WITH CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS. SHE HAS A SPECIAL INTEREST IN COMPLEX PERSONALITY ISSUES, COUPLES WORK AND CLERGY RESILIENCE. RUTH IS ALSO A SUPERVISOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC AND PROVIDES SUPERVISION IN THE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY REGISTRAR PROGRAM. RUTH HAS EXPERIENCE IN MINISTRY WORK HAVING SERVED ON STAFF IN PARISH MINISTRY AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT MINISTRY AS WELL AS HER CURRENT ROLE AS A CLERGY WIFE.

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence is often thought of as physical. But physical violence is not the whole story. Often there is a complex power and control dynamic in relationships that encompasses physical, emotional, sexual, economic and spiritual abuse.

The wheel over the page covers the range of ways in which power and control have been used against women and spouses.

## Emotional abuse

In Australia emotional abuse occurs to 25 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men. It's a harder form of violence to define, but is probably the most common in our churches. Colossians 3 gives us a starting place for thinking about emotional abuse:

*But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Col 3: 8-10)*

Paul then goes on to command that we clothe ourselves "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (v. 12).

In an emotionally abusive relationship there will be unpredictable outbursts of rage that are ongoing, women's experiences are denied, lies are told, anger is justified as because "I was provoked". There is a pattern of control and behaviour completely in contradiction of the new clothing that Paul instructs in Colossians 3.

## Spiritual abuse

Abuse in Christian marriage often also includes spiritual abuse. One victim speaks of her Bible study-leading husband as someone who "liked psychologically torturing me. And dragging me by the hair around our

apartment. And punching me—hard, whilst telling me how pathetic I was. He gave me lists with highlighted sections of Bible passages about nagging wives and how I should submit to him".<sup>1</sup> This story is mirrored by many other women in Christian marriages. Yet our leaders have stated very clearly that this is a terrible manipulation of a biblical principle: "There is no biblical justification, in any circumstance, for domestic violence. The classic Christian understanding of a husband's loving, sacrificial, servant-like leadership leaves absolutely no room for violence or fear".<sup>2</sup>

What a sad situation. We have strong statements from leadership repudiating abuse and yet we have men dragging their wives around by their hair quoting the Bible. This booklet aims to help you to address that discrepancy—we need to teach that abuse in all its forms is wrong and we also need to become much more effective in working pastorally with people so that people in churches are being challenged to live up to the Bible's high calling on marriage.

This is complex, because there are issues on both sides. Husbands are not only acting in violent and abusive ways, justifying their sin with biblical principles. We also have the situation where wives are not able to imagine being a Christian and being allowed to be safe or being a Christian and being separated. There is a high view of marriage in churches so women often feel that the godly response to abuse is to stay and try harder. "In our research, women report that they sometimes feel a tug of war between what they perceive as the teachings of their congregation on the importance of marriage, the undesirability of divorce, and the celebration of family unity and their own personal safety and mental health".<sup>3</sup> This is a struggle I encounter when working with these women. They will talk to me because I am a Christian but they feel like they are disappointing God by speaking out about abuse. They feel that the only option for Christians is to stay and if the marriage is hard it's their fault. I don't want you to add to that burden. If we are trying to encourage godliness and challenge sinful behaviour we need to provide more than just "try

<sup>1</sup> "Abuse inside Christian marriages—a personal story", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 2015: <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/smh-editorial/abuse-inside-christian-marriages--a-personal-story-20150301-13rrvr.html>

<sup>2</sup> Mark Thompson, Synod, 2013, also issued as a Media Statement by Glenn Davies.

<sup>3</sup> McMullin et al., 2015.

# POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the most apparent forms of domestic violence and are usually the actions that allow others to become aware of the problem. However, regular use of other abusive behaviors by the batterer, when reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, make up a larger system of abuse. Although physical assaults may occur only once or occasionally, they instill threat of future violent attacks and allow the abuser to take control of the woman's life and circumstances.

The Power & Control diagram is a particularly helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors, which are used by a batterer to establish and maintain control over his partner. Very often, one or more violent incidents are accompanied by an array of these other types of abuse. They are less easily identified, yet firmly establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship.



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# REAL REPENTANCE VERSUS ABUSIVE PATTERNS

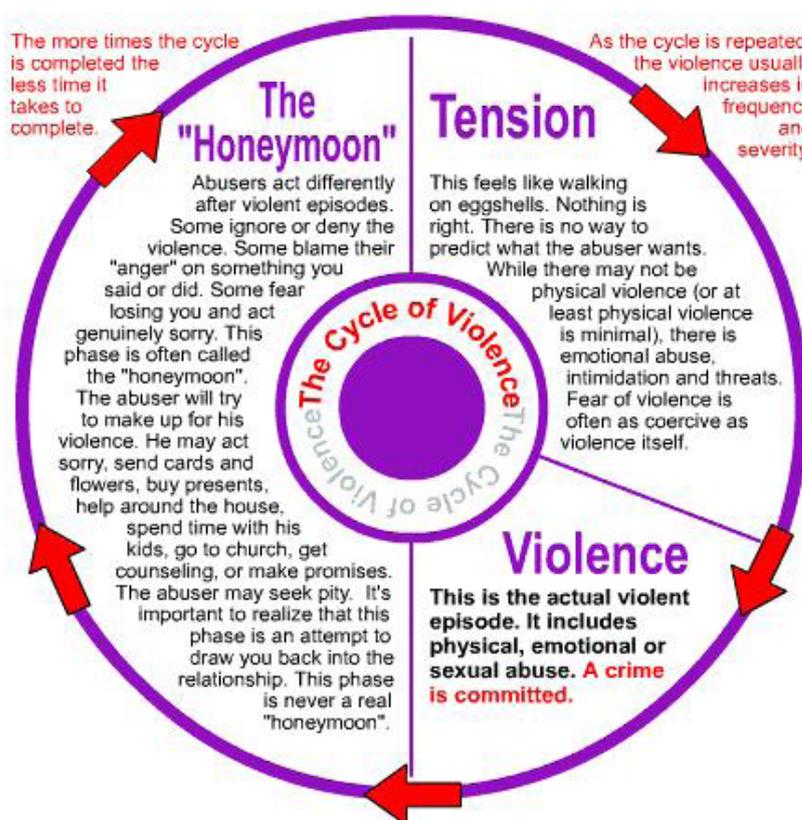
RUTH HOLT

Now of course, we all stuff up—we are all sinners who are struggling to be godly. In our marriages we see those struggles with sin and often in our marriages we struggle more with being godly in our responses than in any other relationship. So how do I know if it's a hard and difficult marriage with two sinful people or if I am in an abusive marriage? How do I help others to make that distinction? We need to make a clear distinction between ongoing struggles with sin that happen in any healthy marriage, and abuse.

The key difference is real repentance. Real repentance is about owning up to your sin, taking responsibility for the choices you have made, seeking forgiveness and making changes—the U-turn model of repentance. The result of real repentance is turning away from sin and walking in the other direction towards godliness. Early in my marriage I found it very difficult to not become angry and critical when I was disagreeing with my husband. I am a good debater and I unfairly used those skills on my husband at his weakest point. I was not demonstrating Colossians 3 clothing in this area of our marriage. I thank God that, growing up, my family had modelled a more godly pattern of “no swearing” and “no ultimatums” if I didn't get my own way. These ground rules helped me to not become abusive. But we also worked on our marriage and talked about what went wrong in our fights. We talked about our patterns and read books and made plans that we mostly stuck to. Over time change happened. There was evidence of me owning up to my sin, taking responsibility for what I said, asking forgiveness and making changes.

Jesus says “if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out” (Matt 5:29). You can see in his words the pattern of owning up; it's **my** right eye (so I'm not blaming the other person, I'm not saying it's their fault, but owning up) and action is taken: pluck it out. Jesus is not suggesting we merely feel bad about our right eye, but he is commanding **action** to stop the sin. In marriages that have become abusive this is not what happens.

Often abusers will promise change and can appear very repentant and in fact they are very persuasive when talking about how bad they feel. But what are they *doing* to change? Have they talked to the pastor or a mentor? Are they seeing a counsellor? Abuse is very hard to change just by wanting to change, and part of changing long term patterns is owning up to others and having accountability. If there is no outside person involved and no accountability, change is very unlikely. You can see in the cycle of abuse *to the right* that there are very common patterns of behaviour that contradict a biblical pattern of repentance.



Abusers will blame others for their own emotions; “you make me angry—if you just cleaned the house/ made better food/ kept the kids quiet/didn't make life hard for me etc. I wouldn't get like this.” There often also is a pattern of lots of apologies after outbursts. Often abusers feel very remorseful—make a lot of promises and in fact can be very romantic. Women tell me in those moments they are very tender and often there is a calm before the next storm that is wonderful. However, as women start to see the pattern, that starts to give them some confidence. This is crucial because often when there is abuse the victim starts to not trust their own perspective. They lose the ability to see the abuse for what it is, so it's really helpful for women to see patterns and have language for what is happening to them.

# WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

RUTH HOLT

How likely are people to tell us? Not likely. Research says that one of the good news stories of faith communities is that women are often very good supports for each other and whilst clergy are often the first person a woman will tell of abuse if she is 'religious' she will receive the most support from women in the congregation. Since people are not likely to identify that they are being abused or approach us with that information it's important that we are aware of signs. Be ready to pick up on clues.

- When women mention 'relationship problems'
- Vague comments about a partner's anger
- Women asking questions around 'forgiveness' or divorce
- Isolated women. One key strategy that abusers use is isolation. It allows them to control what their wife hears and reduces her supports which then gives him more power. There can be reasons given for why women are not often at church, "sickness", "too tired" etc. but we need to check that that's what is really going on. Are you allowed in her house?

These clues can be indicators that there is abuse. Be ready to ask:

- "Do you feel safe?"
- "How does he behave when he's angry?"
- "Do you become frightened?"
- "Are you worried about your safety or that of your children?"
- "How often does this happen?"

Here are some ways that you can make it more likely that women will reach out and get help.

**1. Talk about domestic violence and abuse from the front.** If you are doing a marriage enrichment course acknowledge that there will be couples in the room who are in abusive situations and encourage them to let you know and you will support them to get help. When talking about headship and submission, go into detail about what abuse is and how the biblical passages are not justification for abuse.

I think as a church community we have spoken strongly about the role of women in the church but have completely let down women who are being victimised by not talking enough about abuse and misuse of the

Bible by abusers. So talk about it from the front.

Be careful when talking about serving others and sacrificial love not to unintentionally reinforce an abuser's self-serving approaches. The Bible often assumes that we love ourselves but women in DV relationships have a distorted sense of self, and that makes it very hard to look after themselves. Removing one's self from an emotionally or physically abusive situation must be understood as a form of godly self-care, not an abandonment of marriage. "God cares about your safety and your sanity" is a really helpful phrase to let victims of abuse know they are precious and loved by God and therefore worthy of respect, no matter what others have told them.

**2. Don't pretend perfection.** I think in ministry we are too quick to create a view of ourselves that is not true. We don't share challenges and difficulties in our lives and marriages and this creates a 'don't air your dirty laundry' approach in church. It's good to model appropriate sharing of difficulties, because that points people to Jesus and not us as the answer. How real is your Bible study group? Do people share things that God is teaching them, struggles with sin etc.? Or are we worrying about maintaining our image? If so, we are practising a false gospel. In a Moore College Bible study I was in, very early in the year one member of the group said "I think our marriage is falling apart". The group was really supportive and prayerful. From that moment I think we all thought "it's fine to share how things really are". You can make it easier for someone to open up about their marriage if you are modelling openness. Of course we don't need to have a constant litany of complaints about our husband, or discuss all our issues with everyone, but asking for prayer for being gracious with your husband, or for wisdom in knowing how to love him when he is stressed, or for the ability to be kind when you are standing up for yourself, models that you are trusting in God and willing to talk about things in a real way.

**3. Ask people about their marriages.** As part of caring for women in your churches we need to be asking about their struggles with their kids, their workplace and their marriages. If we have already modelled a healthy level of openness these questions will become easier to ask.

[MORE INFORMATION FROM 1800 RESPECT >](#)

# WHAT DO I LOOK OUT FOR?

INFORMATION FROM 1800 RESPECT-  
A NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND  
FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE  
(1800RESPECT.ORG.AU)

There are behaviours and signs that are common to people who are experiencing domestic and family violence.

People experiencing domestic or family violence may:

- Stop going out, with no obvious reason or, when asked, say they are not allowed to.
- Appear anxious, depressed, tired or teary for no obvious reason.
- Appear timid, wary, self-critical or self-conscious around their partner, or their partner seems rude or nasty to them.
- Have injuries or time in hospital that raises your suspicion.
- Keep justifying their movements or expenses.
- State that they are being followed, monitored, stalked or controlled.

In the end the only way to be certain that there is a problem is to ask the person about what is going on.

Of course, this can be difficult.

Family members or friends can try direct, gentle questioning such as:

- Is everything ok at home?
- I noticed those bruises, did someone do that to you?
- Your partner seems to be making you frightened, is everything ok?
- Are you ok?

Open up the space for listening, and give your friend or loved one opportunities to speak in private, but don't pressure, don't confront. Pressure and confrontation risk isolating your friend or loved one further.



# WHAT ABOUT ME?

RUTH HOLT

Given that abuse can occur in any family, I need to ask:

## HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR MARRIAGE?

- Does your husband ask your opinion and encourage your input?
- Is he your biggest fan? Or do you find yourself carefully managing things so he doesn't get stressed, because it's not really safe for him to be stressed?
- Does he call you names when he is angry?
- Does he control your spending, your body or your friendship circle?
- Does he point out your flaws and criticize you in anything other than a humble and gentle manner?
- Do you see a lot of hypocrisy in the way he presents at church and the way he presents at home?

One of my clients talks about that discrepancy and tells me that 'shiny Paul'—the one that church people see—is very different to the real Paul, the one who has a drinking problem, who is angry most of the time and tells her to get over herself when she asks for change. If you are being hit, slapped, sworn at, have no say in how money is spent, are not allowed to disagree, are blamed and criticized, then you are suffering abuse. This may be news for you and it might feel very disloyal to call it abuse, but I want to encourage you to seek the truth about your relationship and get support in your situation.



# A LETTER MADE ME THINK

KATE BRADFORD

KATE IS A HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN, AND SHE IS ALSO PART OF ANGLICARE'S CHAPLAINCY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT. KATE IS MARRIED TO STEVE, AND TOGETHER THEY WERE CMS MISSIONARIES AT A REMOTE RURAL HOSPITAL IN TANZANIA. KATE IS A CHAPLAIN AT MOORE COLLEGE, FROM WHERE SHE ALSO HAS A BTH AND MA.

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I minister and write as a chaplain. Last night I had an interesting experience that highlighted for me an important difference between chaplaincy and parish ministry: chaplains know that a person is in some sort of crisis – whereas ministers may have no reason to suspect a problem.

Chaplains like social workers, GPs, psychologists, counsellors, and psychiatrists initially meet people at times of crisis, illness or trauma. We usually have no prior relationship or social connection with the people to whom we minister and people disclose things that they have not told their family or minister. This allows for greater objectivity for chaplains as we listen to their story, while hearing their emotion and pain, the way in which they construct their meaning. With these fragmentary clues to meaning, we hear of people's faith and beliefs, but we also catch glimpses of their default 'faith' settings exposing the things that they *really* depend upon when everything else is in flux. We also hear where they belong in their web of relationships – family, church, community, culture and society and whether they experience healthy relationships or alienation and isolation. We see hints that point to loving relationships and clues to destructive relationships. We also look for clues as they express their desires and dreams, or fears and dreads, to see the role hope has in their thinking, with the aim of knowing how best to share Christ's love and message of hope with them.

I am very conscious chaplaincy ministry is different from parish ministry in many ways, most particularly because it is a ministry offered in the public space to people of

many different religious and faith positions.

I was contacted by someone last night who has been abused by their spouse. They are a couple that I have known for a number of years and at one stage we were part of the same church community. The abusive spouse has been involved in ministry in a number of congregations and is considered a leader in the ministries in which they are involved. I was shocked as I read the email, not comprehending what the letter was saying, until the abuser's name was spelt out in print in the sentence. This was a most massive '*aha*' experience for me. As I read the letter again, I remembered particular incidents and instances that jarred but I had never put these things together. I always thought their family just did things differently from us, but as soon as I read the letter I knew that it was true.

I suddenly realised what it must be like for clergy who know people in their congregation, who are on ministry teams and seem to have happy stable families and on the surface appear to be the 'model' Christian couple or family.

My reflection on this is: as people ministering among our congregations, we sincerely think that we know people, who are the model of a lively Christian faith in the parts of their life that we see. We forgive their idiosyncrasies, because we know their good works and believe that they mean well. The victim may act to keep the peace and might smooth things over for lots of reasons, including fear of shame or blame.



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# SUPPORTING VICTIMS

## SECTION 3

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This section addresses the practicalities involved in supporting victims of domestic violence and some of the many resources available to assist them. It should be kept in mind, however, that if the victim is a ministry wife, this section should also be read in conjunction with Section 4 on Diocesan standards.



# WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU THERE IS ABUSE IN THEIR MARRIAGE

RUTH HOLT

**1 Believe her.** Do not ask questions that blame her, for example: "What did you do?" or "If this has been going on so long, why haven't you done anything?" or "I find this very hard to believe". Women who have been abused are actively looking for you to deny their reality as that is how they are usually treated by the abuser. Work hard to not do that.

**2 Listen with empathy** and if appropriate use words and phrases like "abuse", "that's a crime" or "that's not OK" to assist her to see that the situation is serious.

**3 Introduce the cycle of violence** (see Section 2). Information helps empower women to see their situation differently and make different choices.

**4 Don't make decisions or plans for her.** Help her see what strengths she does have and encourage her to think and act in a way that makes sense to her. Ask her if it's OK to tell your husband and what she would like from you. As Leslie Vernick comments in her book, *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage*, "Our role is not to fix or rescue her... if she's been married to a controlling man, she has been robbed of her decision-making freedom, and she will naturally defer to us to make decisions for her. Our role is to empower her to reclaim her ability to make choices."

**5 Be aware of your own bias.** Churches traditionally have been naïve in their response. Studies have shown that women who turned to their clergy for guidance stayed longer with their abusers, and that the abuse did not subside but often grew worse (Popescu & Drumm, 2009).

**6 Don't rush.** Unless her life is in imminent danger do not act hastily. If she wants to leave, make sure there is a safety plan that she has talked through with someone with experience in this area. Leaving a violent relationship is the most dangerous time for women and children so should not be encouraged until a safety plan is in place. Help gather evidence and plan for safety: before she leaves she will need formal documents like birth certificates, passports, financial information, medication and significant photos stored safely. Assist her to contact a domestic violence service to help her become financially independent, explore housing options and/or deal with Family Court or

property-related matters, or access the criminal justice system so she can decide whether to proceed with charges, or seek a restraining order. Domestic violence agencies can also assist with arranging counselling, and accessing women's support groups and services for children.

**7 Be aware of your limitations.** It's fine to say "I am not sure what to do but I will try my best to support you. How about we pray now for God's wisdom?" Don't try to do couples counseling when there is ongoing abuse. Provide support individually and be very careful of being used to manipulate the victim when 'supporting' the abuser.

**8 Think about helping set up accountability/recovery groups for abusers in the church.** "For men of faith, the availability of an intervention program where they can share experiences with men who have a common worldview, where their faith will not be attacked, and where, importantly, they cannot justify their actions using the language of their faith tradition, is essential". (Nason-Clark, 2009).

IT'S FINE TO SAY "I AM NOT SURE WHAT TO DO BUT I WILL TRY MY BEST TO SUPPORT YOU. HOW ABOUT WE PRAY NOW FOR GOD'S WISDOM?"

[MORE INFORMATION FROM 1800 RESPECT >](#)

# HELPING A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

SOME MORE INFORMATION FROM 1800 RESPECT

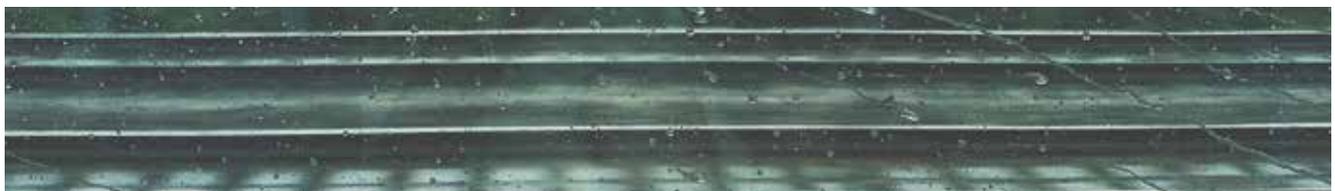
([1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au))

Talking about abuse requires courage. Many victims/survivors fear that they will not be believed. It is very important when someone tells you they are being abused to take their fear seriously, even if you think their partner or ex seems charming, kind or nice. People who perpetrate domestic and family violence can be very good at presenting themselves in a positive way in public. This can be part of the pattern of abusive behaviour.

Here are some ways you can help your family member or friend:

- Take their fears seriously.
- Violence is never OK. Don't blame the person or minimise the abuser's responsibility for the abuse.
- There are many barriers, difficult choices and often well-founded fears and concerns involved in leaving a violent partner—including an escalation in violence, homelessness and poverty. The victim/survivor may not be ready or it may not be safe to leave.
- Remember that domestic and family violence involves more than the physical acts of abuse. Perpetrators target self-confidence through derogatory words and emotional abuse and try to 'grind down' the people they abuse. Recognise the strengths and resilience that have kept them and their children safe.
- Help sort through options to get safe, whether leaving or staying with the abuser.
- Help in practical ways—with transport, appointments, child minding, or a place to escape to. Find out about domestic and family violence services and offer to help with making an appointment.
- Witnessing violence impacts on the whole family. If there are children involved, give them a sense of your care and support and seek appropriate help for them through a child or family service. Visit the services & support map for information on services in your area at [www.1800respect.org.au/service-support/](http://www.1800respect.org.au/service-support/)
- Talk about protection orders in your state/territory.

Remember, domestic and family violence can be dangerous. Ring 000 if your family member, friend or their children are being harmed, or you are frightened they are about to be attacked.



# ADVICE FROM A VICTIM

## A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHARES HER STORY AND GIVES ADVICE ON HOW BEST TO SUPPORT SOMEONE IN HER SITUATION

[THIS VICTIM HAS CHOSEN TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS]

If you told any one of the thousands of incidents of my abuse you probably wouldn't think of it as abuse. I didn't for a long time. But it builds and builds until I don't have a voice, or safety or sanity. Let me share with you three of those incidents.

Jeremy (pseudonym) has indulged himself at our family's expense and criticised me while I was trying to make it work. When the kids were little, and I'd been up since 5 or 6 am, Jeremy would come home and watch TV. I'd still be working, hanging out washing, bathing a baby, or washing up. And I would say, "Can you please help me by hanging out the washing or folding the washing or feeding the baby?" Jeremy would respond that he'd been at work all day, so his work was done. I expressed that our work as a couple wasn't done, and that maybe he worked full-time, but that caring for the children and doing the cooking, cleaning and washing wasn't an eight hour a day job, that it took much longer than that. Jeremy responded that if I couldn't get organised enough or be efficient enough to get my work done during the day, that wasn't his problem, and why should he have to do my jobs for me after he got home from work. I reassured him and pleaded that the only time I'd sat down during the day was to breast feed the baby. Jeremy replied with either, "Well, clearly not" or "Too bad" or "Well, you're clearly not working hard enough" or something like that. And then he would complain that I was prioritising the children over him because I didn't sit down on the couch and watch TV with him as soon as he got home from work. ("It's not right that you are prioritising the children over spending time with me.")

Jeremy was very good at looking after himself and demanding others meet his needs, but there was no expectation that I should be looked after. When the kids were little we lived in a small 3 bedroom house. Jeremy said he needed a sleep in till 12pm each Saturday and he insisted that the children make no noise until then. Thinking that this would make him less grumpy, I agreed to it. I felt like I couldn't go and do activities with the children, as they were a handful, and if I did something that cost money, I would get grief about unnecessary spending. So I stayed home, venturing only to the park, and to buy fresh bread for Jeremy's lunch that he said I may as well buy because I

was up anyway. So I did that. Then after several weeks, I tried to negotiate with Jeremy that I have a sleep in too. Say we could take it in turns on Saturdays. He said I could have Sundays. Church was at 10, so that meant a sleep in till 9am, or 8am if I was on music. I said I didn't think that was fair. He said, "Why are you always on about fairness? Not everything has to be exactly, perfectly fair all the time. Do you want the sleep in or not?" After long negotiations we found a compromise, but when I said that I'd rather go out for a walk or something else he said that we had negotiated this as a sleep in, so that's what I had to do. So for the next several weeks I lay in bed all Saturday morning, bored and frustrated, until 12pm. Every step of the way I was dismissed and controlled.

BY THE TIME I LEFT, I WAS SO CONFUSED, SCARED AND TIRED THAT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, BUT I KNOW I NEEDED TO BE SAFE.

Jeremy also enjoyed putting me down in subtle ways to others. He bought a T-shirt that said, "Santa, all I want for Christmas is: A fridge full of beer and a mute button for my wife". I told him that I found the T-shirt disrespectful and would prefer that he didn't wear it. He said it was no big deal and that I was over-reacting, and went about wearing it many places, including to church and to functions with my family.

By the time I left, I was so confused, scared and tired I didn't know what to do, but I know I needed to be safe. The day after I left, a minister's wife said to me "can I encourage you to think about how you are going to live out your marriage vows that you made to your husband 20 years ago while you live apart for your own safety?" Another felt upset by my situation and said "I am having trouble with the term domestic violence being used in a church context". Six months later I've stopped vomiting, I'm actually getting sleep now, and I can get the kids anywhere I need them to be.

So how can you support people like me?

Don't say, "I'm sorry to hear you and Jeremy are having a hard time". Jeremy and I weren't having a hard time. Jeremy was having a great time. I was living in torture, veiled as submission and being told I was over-reacting. I had spent six years reading books and going to marriage counselling, while my husband spent that time telling me I was over-reacting and that we didn't have any problems in our marriage.

Don't say, "I will pray for reconciliation". I don't need reconciliation. I have been over-functioning for 20 years, veiled as, "Why do you always keep score? Don't you want to be a serving wife? Don't you want to be a better person?" I need safety. Right now, I need safety. And for someone to believe me. Because after this long, and being told by your intimate partner so many times that you're over-reacting, you start to believe it. Reconciliation may come, but it's not what I need right now. What is probably coming my way is not reconciliation but escalating abuse, a different kind of abuse, and an AVO. Possibly murder, because most women who die at the hands of their intimate partner already have an AVO in place.

Don't not talk to me.

Don't not have the kids' worker call my kids to see how they are going.

Don't not ask if I need help getting the kids to youth group. Nothing says, "I don't support you" quite like over-looking pragmatics.

Don't then come out of the woodwork being all helpful about pragmatics only once the AVO arrives. Because that happened three months after I left.

Don't then tell me that I'm over-reacting or being melodramatic, because it took me six years to decide to leave this relationship, and all the DV people told me that leaving is the easy bit and it's about to get a truck load harder, but I didn't believe them, because I didn't imagine anything in life worse than what I'd just been through for 20 years.

Don't offer to have a meeting with me and Jeremy so you can broker a peace deal. There are no peace deals to be brokered. That is what I've been doing for the past six years.

Don't accept an offer to act as a mediator. Leave it to the professionals.

Don't ask 20 questions to test if it's really emotional abuse. It's not your role, and you probably have no idea. Just believe me. Statistically, DV is falsely reported so rarely that it's basically never falsely reported.

Don't tell me how many people you've helped through this and then say to me, "So what's emotional abuse?"

When the AVO is issued by the police, please do apologise for not being supportive earlier. If you need to, please do acknowledge that you didn't know whether or not to believe me earlier. Or at least please ask how my injuries are healing. Please say something. Anything.

Don't tell me that 1 Corinthians 7:10 only covers sexual sin.<sup>1</sup> A husband leaves a marriage the day he starts abusing his wife. I didn't leave my marriage; I escaped an abusive relationship and emotionally dangerous living situation.

Don't tell me that the Bible commands me not to get a divorce. Not ever, but especially when I only left two weeks ago. Seriously, I haven't even stopped vomiting yet, and I've had two hours sleep a night for about 8 weeks now. Now is not the time to debate the theology of divorce.

Don't use the word "if" in those sentences, like, "If it is like you say it is..." That's fence-sitting, not support. Don't say, "But he seems like such a nice bloke". Abusers are *charmed* and dangerous.

Don't say, "But I've never seen any signs of abuse." It's domestic violence, not public violence. Abusers are clever. They bruise under the shirt line, and (generally) keep all their manipulation for the privacy of their own home.

Do tell me that 1 Corinthians 7:10 means unfaithful, not just sexually unfaithful.

Do tell me that I am brave and courageous, and that I have done the right thing, and that you are in full support of me being safe.

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"DO TELL ME THAT I AM BRAVE AND COURAGEOUS."

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the issue of divorce, see Claire Smith's discussion of it on pp. 30-31 of this booklet.

# HEARING FIRSTHAND FROM A MINISTRY WIFE

A MEMBER OF THE MOOREWOMEN COMMUNITY INTERVIEWED A MINISTER'S WIFE ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES ASSISTING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN HER MINISTRY. THE VICTIM OF ABUSE GAVE HER PERMISSION FOR THIS ARTICLE, WANTING TO HELP US LEARN, BUT WE'VE KEPT IT COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY AND PRIVACY.

## **What kinds of abuse have you encountered in ministry?**

I have encountered victims of emotional, sexual, physical, financial, psychological and verbal abuse. Some of these were people who have come to the rectory door requesting help, some were people that I know in the community and some were couples we have worked with in ministry. The male perpetrators who I have met are all intelligent and outwardly appear to be unlikely to be involved in domestic violence.

## **What's the first thing you should do or say to/for someone who tells you about abuse?**

Believe them. It is the hardest thing to come out and say that your husband is an abuser and to admit that to someone. The FIRST thing you say is "I believe you" and then you make sure that they are safe. The women I have spoken to say that someone believing that their 'crazy' story is true is the most important thing in keeping them going to escape the abuse.

## **What next, after you've first learned about the abuse?**

You need to keep them safe. Accommodation is one of the main reasons that women go back to their abuser. The other reason is that the men are often incredibly manipulative. If there are children involved they must be kept safe. You may need to call FACS (NSW Department of Family and Community Services) or the Child Protection Helpline.

Then you need to care for the family. If this lady is now a single mum, she is going to need *lots* of help. Depending on the age of the kids there will be financial issues, housing issues, clothing issues, etc. It is ongoing. If the victim is happy for you to do so, get a team of people and do rosters and things so that people know how and when they can help and so that the woman knows what is going on. She has had very little control over her life for ages and may now want to be in control. I was really offended initially when one lady paid me back the money I had given her, but I eventually realised that she just wanted to be

in control and look after her kids herself. Sometimes, even though I thought this woman involved was making wrong decisions, it was important to let her make them—this was part of letting her take control of her life again.

There are lots of stages if you are going to be involved in the long term. Court takes forever for custody to be sorted out.

## **Who should you report it to and when?**

It depends on the circumstances. If there are children in the house, even if they have not been abused themselves but have been witnesses of abuse, call FACS. They may do nothing on one report but each report, each piece of information that they receive from different sources, helps to build up a picture and means that they can act when it is necessary.

If the perpetrator is in a position of ministry, including any type of lay ministry within the church, the PSU (Professional Standards Unit) are very, very helpful. Generally it is the minister of the church who calls the PSU.

## **Looking back, were there any warning signs?**

There aren't always warning signs. Even if there are warning signs, there's not necessarily much you can do until the victim is ready. In the end, the best thing is to establish good, open relationships with people so that people feel comfortable coming forward to you.

I've seen warning signs in the ministry families (as these are the situations where I knew both parties well). There were some underlying mental health issues with both partners, issues of anger, issues with the children, unkempt house.

But the problem with 'warning signs' is that you can't jump to conclusions. Sometimes what seems like a warning sign could be something else much less serious, so it's very hard to jump to the conclusion that domestic violence is going on. You can't jump from one to the other but keep it in the back of your mind. If

something comes out, don't feel bad that you missed the warning signs, it's very hard to know anything for sure until a victim is comfortable telling you.

**What resources or networks are helpful?**

The PSU - I can't stress how great they have been for us when we needed them.

FACS are really helpful too. They are not scary and if you are not sure, call them. Social workers at a local hospital or community health centre can help. GPs, hospitals and local police are all good resources. One friend had lots of help from the Benevolent Society and one had help from Weave (City of Sydney and South Sydney).

Perpetrators are very, very manipulative and so you may need to do lots of the looking yourself as the woman may be terrified that he will find out that she has been looking for help. The Department of Health NSW has a good website and they have a great app called Aurora (it's got this subtle name so it's not obvious what it is if an abuser is checking someone's phone). It has lots of resources and runs through definitions of abuse as well. It has housing hotlines and a DV Hotline. It's a great resource to have on your phone; I encourage you to download it today so you've got the information if you ever need it. It has very practical resources.

**What if the woman stays with her abuser? Is there anything you can do?**

You can support her and love her and keep her and her kids as safe as you can. But you can't force her to leave. If you love her, respect her and believe her and pray for and with her, she will hopefully have the strength to leave. One lady and I were reflecting on her experience recently and I apologised for not knowing or acting sooner, and she said, "But I knew I could come to you when I was ready." That's really important. Also it's her secret to keep if she chooses not to tell others. You can't tell anyone without her permission. She will struggle to trust.

**What about longer term? How do you assist while establishing healthy boundaries (so you don't burn out)?**

I saw a psychologist myself. Go see your GP and get a Mental Health Care Plan and go and see a psychologist, that's what I did! Everybody's different, so your capacity (and boundaries) depends on your (and your family's and church's) situation. Sometimes it's best to encourage them to talk to someone else.

**How could you have been more prepared? What do you wish you had or knew beforehand?**

I am not sure that you can ever be prepared. Don't feel guilty if you didn't see it coming. If you believe in the sinfulness of mankind you have to expect to see sinful behaviour, but it's always shocking.

Make sure you get a team together to help (both inside and outside the church), don't think you have to do everything yourself. I wish that, in the cases that I have been closely involved in, that I had communicated better with the other services involved. I think that as a church, we felt like we were doubling up on some things and leaving gaping holes in others.

**Some people say confusion about complementarian teaching can mean some women don't recognize abuse and that some men think they have a right to behave in an abusive way. Have you seen this? How do we make sure this confusion never arises?**

I think that we need to teach equally that men and women have responsibilities within the marriage relationship. The men are to "love your wives, just as Christ loved the church" and women are to "submit to your husbands as to the Lord" (Eph 5:25 and 22).

I think those outside the abusive marriage are more likely to be confused about what that means. We need to teach and rebuke from the word. It is only God who can change the heart and only his word and Spirit who can convict people that they are being sinful. Have men's groups, and women's groups, preach on it as you teach all of God's word. Have loving, truthful, open and vulnerable relationships with people so that you can discuss things that are hard.

I've heard a victim receive an unhelpful comment from Christians that she was not leaving enough room for her abuser to repent. That may be appropriate in some situations. But it's important to remember that abusers tend to continue abusing and, if repentance is going to happen, it will be over the very long term. Promises of repentance can be part of manipulative behaviour. We need to remember that there are consequences for sinful behaviour.

**Anything else?**

Let's not forget that men can be victims too. Women can be just as manipulative and abusive as men, so don't be naive.

**Thank you for sharing your experiences.**

# ***THE EMOTIONALLY DESTRUCTIVE MARRIAGE***

**BY LESLIE VERNICK**

As we have researched this booklet and spoken to people who work professionally in this area, one book has been repeatedly recommended as a good book to read and share with women who are victims of domestic abuse. That book is *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* by Leslie Vernick.

Leslie has a Masters degree in Clinical Social Work from the University of Illinois and has undertaken post-graduate training in Biblical Counselling and Cognitive Therapy. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Pennsylvania.

In this book, Leslie seeks to provide strategies and tools to help women “find [their] own voice again and be able to develop the strength and courage to stand up against the destruction”.

The book is divided into three sections:

## Part 1 - Seeing Your Marriage Clearly

This section focuses on helping women distinguish between a disappointing marriage and a destructive marriage, with a 61-question test that can be self-administered to help women work out if they are in an emotionally destructive marriage.

## Part 2 – Change Begins with You

This section is aimed at helping women build “internal core strength” so that they are able to take firm yet godly action to protect themselves and their children.

## Part 3 – Initiating Changes in Your Marriage

This final section provides specific strategies to help women speak up in love and “invite” their husbands to “godly change”. It also helps women to work out if they really are making progress in their relationship as well as looking at strategies to help women stay strong and be godly whether they choose to stay or leave.

Vernick gives a thoughtful and serious interaction with Scripture. There is extensive use of Scripture throughout although it is lacking a decent biblical theology (most obvious in the use of the Old Testament). In the section assuring women that God understands how they feel, Leslie’s argument rests on a simplistic view of God and emotion (i.e. “God’s heart is broken by sin, therefore God understands when your heart is broken”).

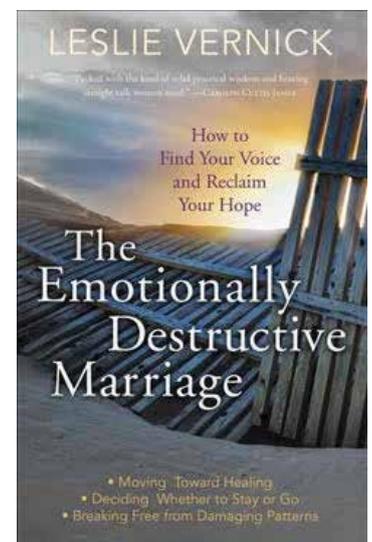
Submission is handled well; affirmed as biblical but not to be used as an excuse for abuse. Vernick uses Jesus’ teaching and example to give biblical insight into both godly leadership and godly submission. She mentions Ephesians 5 but doesn’t exegete it.

*The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* is a rare book in that it both deals well with domestic violence in a professional sense and also contains biblical input to encourage Christian women to pursue godliness in the midst of their difficult circumstances.

Please remember though, that if you do want to give this book to a woman you know, or suspect, is in an abusive relationship, it is not the sort of book she will be able to leave lying around. Some women choose to cover the book with a different cover or purchase an e-book (as long as they are careful with their browsing history). Alternatively, you might like to invite your friend to read the book at your place, if that is possible.

Leslie Vernick’s website contains numerous articles that will give you a taste of the nature of Leslie’s writing:

**[www.leslievernick.com](http://www.leslievernick.com)**



# A STARTING POINT IN HELPING VICTIMS

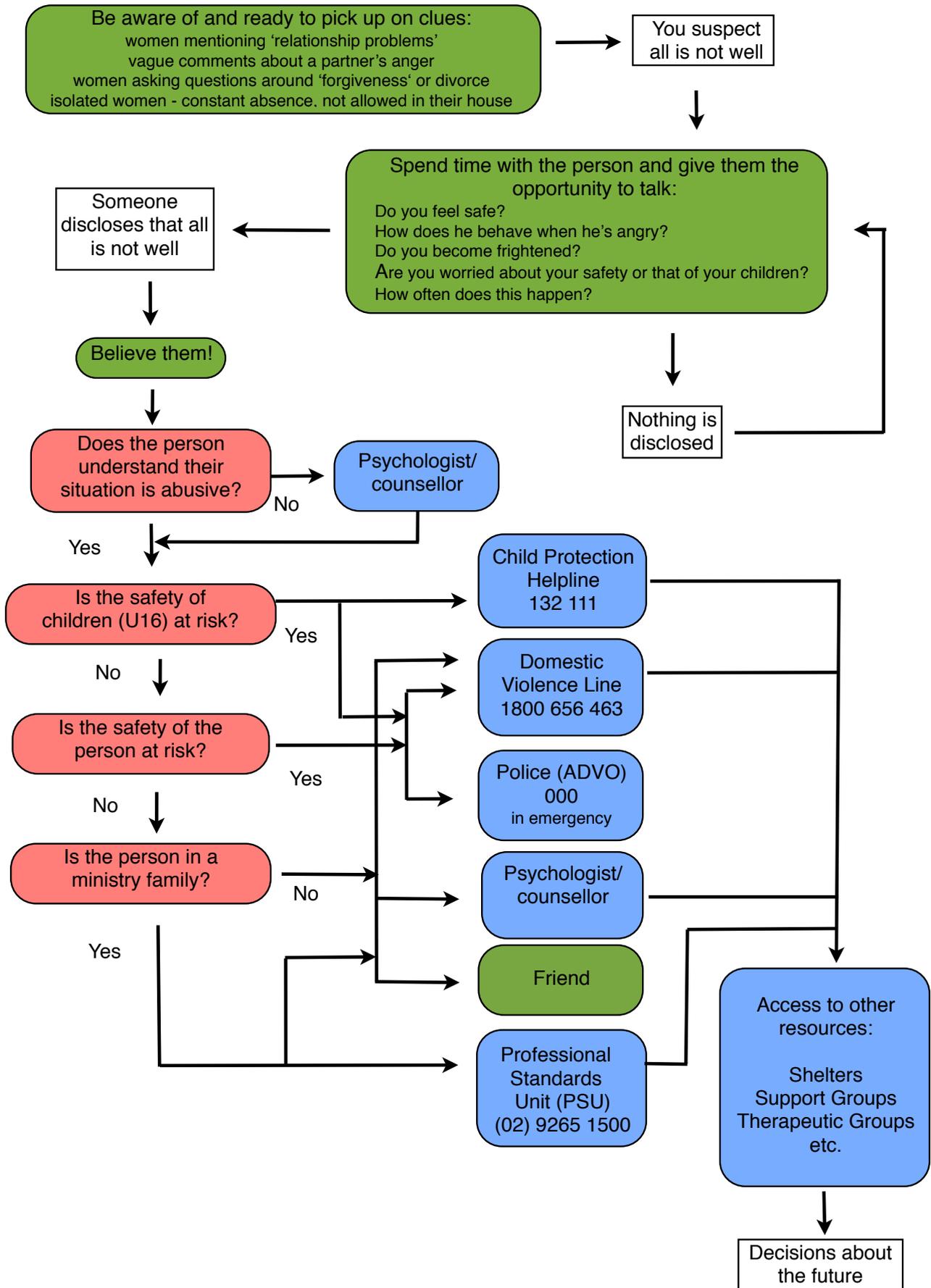
In the flowchart on the next page, we have attempted to set out a very basic analysis of what might happen when you are confronted with the issue of Domestic Violence. It is important to understand that all domestic violence cases have two things in common—they are complex and they are individual. No two cases will be identical. Having said that, it is helpful to have a broad overview of the role you might play in a particular situation and the other roles that will need to be played from time to time by others.

Please keep in mind that the resources listed in this flowchart are not exhaustive. There is a more detailed list of resources in the pages that follow, but that too is not exhaustive. There will be others, many of them good and helpful, some of them not so. Remember, your main role will be to begin the process of getting support for the victim so they can start to make decisions for themselves about the future. Hopefully this flowchart will help you in this.

There are a number of things to consider when making some of the decisions envisaged in the flowchart. These are some of the more important ones:

- Some people that you speak to will be mandatory reporters when it comes to issues affecting the safety of children. For example, psychologists and ministers. This may be an issue for some people in choosing who to talk to.
- Making contact with the Child Protection Line will have very big implications for the woman involved. She needs to be prepared for these consequences before taking this step. A psychologist may be a good starting point.
- If the victim is a ministry wife, she is likely to be understandably concerned about the consequences of talking to the PSU about her husband. She may therefore find it helpful to talk through these consequences with a psychologist or a ministry friend. She can also contact the PSU on an anonymous basis to discuss her situation. The PSU can provide counselling and assistance to help someone reach the point where they are prepared to make a complaint. (A formal complaint with the PSU would usually only proceed with permission of the wife.)
- If a victim chooses to leave an abusive relationship, this is the time when they will be most vulnerable. Safety of the victim and any children involved must come first.
- Resources like women's shelters need to be accessed via domestic violence crisis services/help lines. There is no list of these shelters and even psychologists don't know where they are located. This is crucial in order to maintain secrecy in relation to their location so that abusive partners cannot continue their abuse.
- Medicare will fund visits to a psychologist (with a Mental Health Care Plan from your GP) but not to a counsellor.
- Decisions about the future of the relationship are rarely, if ever, straightforward. Separation may be necessary, particularly to ensure safety, and can provide the space for reconciliation. Potentially divorce may be a sad, last resort that is still a preferable and more godly option than staying with an unrepentant abuser.

# A STARTING POINT IN HELPING VICTIMS: YOUR ROLE, QUESTIONS TO ASK AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP.



# RECOMMENDED COUNSELLORS/ COUNSELLING SERVICES

This list was compiled for us by an independent expert. It is not an exhaustive list of all good Christian counsellors. There are no doubt others who would be very capable of assisting. We are confident, though, that this list will be a helpful starting point for those who are seeking help.

## In Sydney: Individuals

Name	Location	Contact info
Bailey, Joanna - Psychologist	Castle Hill	0459 068 002 email@joannabaileypsychology.com
Bartho, Sue - Psychologist	Hornsby	0419 980 246 wellontheway.com.au
Bird, Deswyn Ann - Counsellor	Sydney CBD, Menai, Alfords Pt	0408 876 282
Holwerda, Ralph - Counsellor	North Parramatta	0422 012 219 talkitover.com.au
Liem, Magdalena - Counsellor	Epping, North Parramatta	0433 446 901 magdalena.liem@gmail.com
Speziale, Ruth - Counsellor	Pymble, Concord	0422 602 253 (02) 9488 7377 counselling@swiz.org.au St Swithum's church office

## In Sydney: Organizations or large practices

(Clinicians in these practices have not been screened. If you refer to these agencies it is helpful to ring ahead and flag that the person is seeking someone who can work with Christians in the context of abusive relationships.)

Name	Location	Contact info
Anglicare Counselling - Counsellors	Campbelltown, Parramatta, Penrith, Summer Hill	anglicare.org.au/directory- category/families-relationships- counselling
Baptist Care Relationship Services - Counsellors	Bankstown, Campbelltown Central Coast, Newcastle	(02) 8713 4333
Bridges Counselling – Counsellors and psychologists	North Parramatta	(02) 9683 1444 bridgescounselling.com.au
Centre for Effective Living – Psychologists	Westleigh, Bella Vista	1800 832 588 admin@effectiveliving.com.au
Family Systems Institute - Psychologists, social workers and counsellors	Neutral Bay	(02) 9904 5600 thefsp.com.au
Merrylands Counselling - Psychologists and counsellors	Merrylands	(02) 9760 1110 merrylandscounselling.com.au
Motivating Minds Psychology Practice – Psychologists	Engadine	(02) 9520 8606

**Outside of Sydney: Individuals**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Contact info</b>
Bowen, Daniel - Psychologist	Dubbo	0432 717 459
Cappelen, Rowena - Psychologist	Canberra city	0415 569 046
Holt, Ruth - Psychologist	Canberra city	0425 275 665
Lynch, Tracy - Social Worker	Broadmeadow, Newcastle	0401 168 335 tracylynch.com.au
Milne, Sue - Psychologist	Wollongong	(02) 4210 7222
Morrison, Richard - Counsellor	Lambton, Newcastle	0407 579 192 relationalcoaching@gmail.com
Nicholls-Zancolich, Sharon - Psychologist	Albion Park, Illawarra	(02) 4257 9703
Shephard, Janelle - Psychologist (also ordained clergy)	Milton (Ulladulla)	0408 697 214
Stevens, Bruce - Psychologist	Canberra city	0403 529 773
Van Barneveldt, Kate - Counsellor	Central Coast	0412 403 002
Walls, Bevan	Gosford	0417 237 123

**Outside of Sydney: Organisations or large practices**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Contact info</b>
Anglicare Counselling - Counsellors	Bega, Moruya, Moss Vale, Nowra, Ulladulla, Wollongong	anglicare.org.au/directory- category/families-relationships- counselling
Anglicare Northern Inland - Counsellors	Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell and Moree (with outreach services to Narrabri and Glen Innes)	1300 549 577
Baptist Care Relationship Services - Counsellors	Central Coast	(02) 8713 4333
Health in Mind Psychology - all Christian psychologists	Orange	(02) 6362 3989

**Beyond Abuse: an 8-week course run by Anglicare**

These sessions aim to:

- provide support and a safe place where women can share their experience with domestic violence
- talk about the cycle of violence and challenge the effects of abuse
- discuss strategies for rebuilding self-esteem and a new awareness for future relationships.

The running of this course is based on needs and availability of counsellors.

# USEFUL NSW GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

## Family and Community Services (FACS)

General Enquiries: 02 9377 6000

Please note that the phone number above is for general enquiries only. You cannot report suspected child abuse or neglect via this number. To report suspected child abuse or neglect please call the **Child Protection Helpline**.

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## Child Protection Helpline

If you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse or neglect, contact the **Child Protection Helpline on 132 111**.

The Child Protection Helpline is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, statewide call centre staffed by professionally qualified caseworkers to receive and screen all reports.

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## Domestic Violence Line

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, you can ring the Domestic Violence Line for help on **1800 656 463**.

The Domestic Violence Line is a statewide free-call number and is available 24 hours, seven days a week.

### Trained caseworkers

The Domestic Violence Line provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for women and same-sex partners who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence.

Trained female caseworkers are sensitive to the needs of people who have experienced domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Line staff are aware of the special needs of Aboriginal women and women from other cultures, as well as those living in rural and remote areas.

Interpreters and TTY can be arranged where necessary to ensure that all people, regardless of their language or disability can use the service.

The service has an extensive list of contacts, people and services across NSW who can help.

### Refuge referrals

The Domestic Violence Line makes referrals to women's refuges and explains what they are and what they do.

**\*\*NB:** The locations of women's refuges are deliberately kept secret, in order to protect victims and those who support them.

It also makes referrals to family support services, counselling, the police and courts, lawyers and hospitals. It helps with transport, emergency accommodation and other relevant support.

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## AVOs

Caseworkers can explain what an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) is and how to obtain one. Police intervention can be arranged where appropriate and assistance can be provided to transport women and children to a safe place.

### Other support, information and counselling on domestic violence

If you are experiencing domestic violence, or know someone who is, there are many organisations who can help. Here are some useful links and helplines:

- Rape Crisis Centre/Sexual Assault Hotline – 02 9819 6565 or 1800 424 017
- 1800RESPECT – 1800 737 732. A national line which can support victims of trauma.
- Women’s Legal Services NSW – Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS) – 1800 810 784 or 02 8745 6999
- Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program – 1300 888 529. The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) provide court support, advocacy, referrals and information. Some WDVCAS have specialist workers to help Aboriginal women, or women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Immigrant Women’s Speakout Association of NSW – 02 9635 8022
- Domestic violence at work – Provides information and support to working women experiencing domestic violence on how to stay safe at work : <https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/research/gendered-violence-research-network/gendered-violence-work/>
- Victims Access Line – 1800 633 063. Provides confidential support, referral and information for victims of crime.
- Another Closet – services and information on violence in gay and lesbian relationships: [www.anothercloset.com.au](http://www.anothercloset.com.au)
- Mensline – 1800 600 636. A 24 hour service for men which has counsellors who are trained in dealing with male victims of domestic violence.
- RSPCA Safe Pets Program – 02 9770 7555. The RSPCA Safe Beds for Pets program provides temporary housing for pets of people who are seeking refuge from domestic violence.

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## NSW Police Services

Information taken from [http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/file/0008/135917/dfv\\_factsheet\\_english.pdf](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0008/135917/dfv_factsheet_english.pdf)

### What can be done?

New South Wales law gives police and the courts the power to provide you with immediate protection, at any time, day or night. If you feel threatened or are worried about your family’s safety **call Triple Zero (000)**.

Police can arrest and charge the person who is violent or threatening towards you, or damages your property. They can make an application on your behalf for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) to protect you from future threats and/or violence. Children and victims of Domestic & Family Violence have the right to live safely in their homes.

### What is an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO)?

**An AVO is an order to protect you from violence, threats and harassment. There are two sorts of AVOs, Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs) and Apprehended Personal Violence Orders (APVOs).**

An ADVO is an order made by the court to protect you from violence, threats and harassment from a spouse, de facto partner, ex partner, family member, carer or person living in the same household. APVOs are orders made by the court to protect you from violence, threats and harassment from anyone you are not in a domestic or family relationship with.

### **This fact sheet explains ADVOs only.**

If you fear for your safety you can report your fears and experience of domestic violence to the police and police officers can apply for an ADVO on your behalf. Police Officers **MUST** apply for an ADVO if they suspect or believe that a domestic violence offence, child abuse offence or stalking/intimidation offence has been committed or is likely to be committed against you.

## USEFUL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES (NSW)

The ADVO restricts the behaviour of the person you fear (called the defendant) by placing conditions on the ADVO. These conditions can be:

- Not to assault, harass, threaten, stalk or intimidate you,
- Not to enter, remain on or access any premises you occupy or work in,
- Not to contact you directly or through a third party.

Other conditions can be included if necessary. The Court and NSW Police Force keep a record of the ADVO made by the Court and the conditions imposed.

It is important to keep a copy of your ADVO with you at all times. If the defendant does not obey the conditions in the ADVO, it is called a breach. Call the police if the defendant breaches any of the conditions of the ADVO. The police will investigate the breach and charge the defendant with a breach of the ADVO if there is enough evidence.

Only the court can change ADVOs. Make sure the conditions of the ADVO suit your particular circumstances. You or the police can apply to the court to change or delete the conditions or extend the ADVO before its expiry date, if you still fear the defendant.

### **Urgent Protection**

A provisional order (or temporary) ADVO can be applied for if you need urgent protection. Police can apply for a provisional order for your immediate protection through an authorised Justice 24 hrs a day. It restricts a person's behaviour in order to protect you for a short time, until the matter can be heard in court.

### Do ADVOs give defendants a criminal record?

No. The ADVO does not give the defendant a criminal record. The ADVO is recorded on the police computer system with an expiry date. A defendant who breaches the ADVO and is found guilty of that offence at court can be given a criminal record.

### Do you need to go to court?

Yes. You need to go to court so that a Magistrate can decide whether to make the ADVO.

### Will the defendant be told that an ADVO has been applied for?

Yes. In some circumstances police may be required to contact the defendant to make further inquiries. After police make the application, a summons will be issued from the court directing the defendant to go to court on a particular day to answer the complaint. Police will give the summons together with a copy of the complaint to the defendant.

### Will the ADVO protect my children?

Children are affected by Domestic & Family Violence and should be protected. Your children can be included on your ADVO or a separate application can be made for your children. A police officer is the only person who can apply for an Apprehended Violence Order for a child under 16 years. Anyone over 16 years of age can apply for an Apprehended Violence Order on his or her own behalf.

An ADVO can state that the defendant should not approach the children. However if a Family Law Parenting Order or Injunction is in place which allows the defendant contact with the children, this can override the conditions on an ADVO.

If there is a Family Law Order giving the defendant access to the children and you believe they are not safe, you need to see a Solicitor or contact the Family Law Court for advice.

### Your day at court

The date you have to attend court is on the ADVO application. You may have questions about what happens at court and what you have to do. For assistance, contact the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer at your nearest police station who will be able to assist and direct you to other services.

For information you can also contact the Local Court that you will be attending. Most local courts also have a Domestic Violence Court Assistance service that will provide you with information.

## Domestic Violence Liaison Officers—NSW Police

Information taken from NSW Police (viewed 1 August 2016): [http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/file/0008/135917/dfv\\_factsheet\\_english.pdf](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0008/135917/dfv_factsheet_english.pdf)

NSW Police Force has over 100 dedicated Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLO), who are specialists in dealing with Domestic and Family Violence issues.

Domestic Violence Liaison Officers can:

- Make sure you get the right information about the legal process relating to ADVOs
- Explain your rights and answer your questions
- Attend court with you
- Put you in touch with specialised local services as you require

\*\* The Diocese recommends that it's worth ministers getting to know their local DV liaison officer, regardless of whether they need to deal with them at that time.

## Moving Forward: DFV case management services

Moving Forward s a specialist case management service for women and children who are experiencing, escaping or have left domestic and family violence. They provide comprehensive practical support through trauma informed, strengths based, client centred case planning. They also offer therapeutic/educational workshops which are run as six-week courses every school term.

Moving Forward operates from a secure premises which is close to transport. Case management appointments are available day or evening as arranged with case workers.

Contact Moving Forward via their website: [www.movingforward.org.au](http://www.movingforward.org.au)

## 1800 RESPECT

A national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service for people living in Australia: 1800 737 732

The service aims:

- To provide a best practice, professional telephone and online, crisis and trauma counselling service 24 hours a day, 7 days per week
- To assist people experiencing the effects of sexual assault, domestic or family violence.

The 1800 RESPECT website is also full of helpful resources on how to respond to instances of domestic violence.

You may also be interested in downloading the free 1800RESPECT Frontline Workers Toolkit: <https://goshare.realtimehealth.com/1800respect/home>

## The Aurora app

The Aurora domestic and family violence app is for people experiencing domestic and family violence or for those worried about their relationship. It is also a valuable resource for those worried that a friend or family member is experiencing domestic and family violence.

## USEFUL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES (NSW)

The app contains useful and potentially life-saving information including:

- emergency contacts, information on the sorts of behaviour considered to be domestic and family violence
- vital information and links to support services available in NSW.

Importantly, the app also allows the user to message their trusted friends and family members or call emergency services immediately.

The Aurora app has been built with numerous safety features that allow women to use it discreetly and seek assistance without risk of “tipping off” a perpetrator and endangering themselves. It was developed in consultation with NSW Police and experts from the domestic violence sector.

**\*\*It's recommended every ministry wife have this app on her phone as a general guide**

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### **The *Daisy* app**

Daisy connects women who are experiencing or have experienced sexual assault, domestic and family violence to services in their state and local area. Daisy provides women with an easy way to find a wide range of services.

Responding to violence requires a whole-of-government approach, so in addition to specialist services Daisy also lists legal services, housing and finance services and children's services. You can create a list of favourite services for easy reference.

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# DIOCESAN STANDARDS

## SECTION 4

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# A BIBLICAL PATTERN OF MARRIAGE

FROM THE SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY  
(SYDNEY DIOCESAN SECRETARIAT)—  
2007 SESSION OF SYNOD RESOLUTIONS

Available to download at <http://www.sds.asn.au/Site/103750.asp?a=a&ph=cp>

## **37/07 Biblical pattern of marriage**

Synod:

- (a) affirms that the relationship of loving, sacrificial leadership of a husband and the intelligent, voluntary submission of a wife is the biblical pattern of marriage, and
- (b) totally rejects the use of this biblical pattern to justify any form of domestic abuse, and
- (c) totally rejects all forms of domestic abuse, and
- (d) expresses its concern for those children, women and men, who are victims of domestic abuse, and
- (e) calls on Christian husbands and wives to use their God-given responsibilities for the good of their families, and
- (f) calls on ministers to teach congregations the biblical model for marriage and also to teach against domestic abuse.

(Mrs Lesley Ramsay 25/09/07)

# FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE

A NATIONAL CODE FOR PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR  
AND THE PRACTICE OF PASTORAL MINISTRY BY  
CLERGY AND CHURCH WORKERS (2012)

## FOREWORD FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

It is a great privilege to be involved in Christian ministry as God's fellow workers, whether as members of the clergy or as laypersons, whether paid or unpaid. However, such a privilege entails significant responsibilities. As servants of Christ we are to be above reproach and live lives worthy of our calling.

God has revealed in the Bible not only his plan of salvation, but also how we should live as disciples of Christ. While we no longer live under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit (Romans 7:6), we must never allow our freedom in Christ to be a cloak for evil. Jesus' parting words to his apostles in Matthew's Gospel was to make disciples... teaching them all that I have commanded you. The law of Christ is summarised as a law of love: to love God with all our being and to love our neighbour as ourself.

This Code of Conduct attempts to apply the biblical principles of love to the specific areas of the personal behaviour and pastoral ministry practice for members of the clergy and other church workers.

It is a sad reality that not all those who have laboured in Christ's name have honoured Christ as they should have in their pastoral relationships with other Christians. Nor have they always protected the vulnerable and defenceless, of whom young children are a prime example. Shepherds who take advantage of their flock come under Ezekiel's strong condemnation in the Old Testament and Peter's censure in the New Testament. For the honour of Christ and the good of his people, I urge you to study this Code of Conduct carefully and to ask for God's grace to put it into practice, not as a legalistic set of rules, but as a pattern of living which springs from an obedient heart (Romans 6:17-18). May God bless you in your ministry and may his Holy Spirit equip you to do his will so that your light might shine before others in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Grace and peace

**Glenn N Davies**  
**Archbishop of Sydney**

# FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE

The following extract has been taken from the Anglican Church of Australia Trust Corporation 2006. The full document is available for download from <http://safeministry.org.au/for-parishes/faithfulness-in-service/> (viewed 1 August 2016)

## Section 4. Pastoral Relationships

### Preamble

4.1 All people are created in the image of God and are of equal value. This is the foundation of all **pastoral relationships**.

4.2 Clergy have authority conferred upon them by their ordination, consecration and licensing. Church workers have authority conferred upon them by their appointment. The authority and training associated with their roles means that they have power in pastoral relationships which is always to be exercised in the service of others.

4.3 Trust is of primary importance in the creation and maintenance of an effective pastoral relationship. Trust grows with the maintenance of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries suitable to pastoral ministry. (The issues of Children and Sexual Conduct are addressed in Sections 5 and 7 respectively.) Clergy and church workers will enhance their ability to maintain these boundaries by attending to their own wellbeing.

4.4 While clergy and church workers often enjoy personal friendships with those to whom they minister, their pastoral ministry responsibilities take precedence.

4.5 Clergy and church workers are colleagues in **pastoral ministry**: the activity of one inevitably impacts upon the ministry of others.

### Standards for clergy and church workers

*These standards state the Church's expectations for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry.*

4.6 If you have overall authority in a **church body**, you are to ensure that clergy and church workers for whom you are responsible are provided with:

- a safe working environment, including safe housing, where housing is provided;
- opportunities to maintain and enhance their ministry skills; and
- personal encouragement, support and regular feedback.

4.7 When exercising pastoral ministry you are to act in the best interests of those to whom you are ministering. You must recognise any potential conflict of interest and take steps to resolve it.

4.8 When exercising pastoral ministry you are not inappropriately to discriminate between people.

4.9 You are not to disclose confidential information received in pastoral ministry to your spouse, family, friends, colleagues or any other person without the consent of the person providing the information, except where:

- the information is known publicly;
- as required or allowed by law; or
- it is in the public interest (such as to avoid the risk of serious injury or harm to any person).

4.10 When you are on leave or unable to fulfil your responsibilities through illness or any other reason, you are to make alternative arrangements for pastoral ministry.

### Guidelines

*These guidelines explain and illustrate best practice and highlight practical ways to achieve it.*

#### Boundaries

4.11 Make sure you are clear about the requirements of your role, including the hours to be worked and the nature of your responsibilities as well as your leave and other entitlements. You need to be sure that your legitimate personal needs can be met.

4.12 Recognise the limits of your skills and experience. Do not undertake any ministry (such as relationship counselling, counselling for abuse or addictions, or an exorcism) that is beyond your competence or the role for which you have been employed or trained. If in doubt seek advice. A person who requires specialised help should be referred to an appropriately qualified person or agency.

4.13 Where ministry responsibilities overlap, be aware of the activities, function and style of other clergy and church workers. Consult with these colleagues and co-operate wherever possible.

## FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE

4.14 Where your ministry responsibility to one person may conflict with your responsibility to another person to whom you are ministering, or with your own needs, you should seek advice from a colleague or supervisor. Consider the possibility of transferring ministry responsibility for one or both of these to another minister.

4.15 If you are unable to act in the best interest of the person to whom you are ministering because of your own interests you should seek advice from a colleague or supervisor and transfer ministry responsibility for the person to another minister.

4.16 Avoid behaviour that could give the impression of favouritism and inappropriate special relationships, particularly with individual children.

4.17 Think carefully before providing pastoral ministry to a person with whom you already have a close personal relationship, such as a friend or member of your family. Care is needed because confusion between close personal relationships and pastoral relationships can lead to a loss of objectivity, failure to act in the other's best interest and harm to both parties.

4.18 Pastoral relationships can legitimately develop into romantic relationships. If this begins to happen:

- acknowledge to yourself that your personal interest and the pastoral relationship are at risk of becoming confused;
- tell the other person that your relationship is changing and becoming romantic;
- disclose the nature of the relationship to a supervisor or colleague to ensure accountability and prevent misunderstanding; and
- where practicable:
  - disclose to a supervisor or colleague any proposed alternative arrangements for ongoing **individual pastoral ministry**;
  - make alternative arrangements for ongoing individual pastoral ministry; and
  - cease providing individual pastoral ministry to the person.

4.19 If you are providing ongoing individual pastoral ministry or counselling, engage someone to provide regular professional supervision. This will help protect you and those to whom you minister.

4.20 When you resign or retire, you should generally terminate existing pastoral relationships. You should do this in a sensitive and timely manner to allow these responsibilities to be undertaken by your successors. Consult with your successor where the other person wishes to maintain an ongoing pastoral relationship with you.

### Personal and professional development

4.21 Maintain a healthy lifestyle and do not overcommit yourself. Make sure you have adequate leisure time, through regularly taking time off, including your full holiday entitlement annually.

4.22 Try to develop interests outside your main area of ministry and continue to care for yourself and your personal and family relationships.

4.23 Look for, and take advantage of, opportunities to maintain and enhance ministry skills appropriate to the responsibilities of your role, through:

- regular ministry development;
- professional supervision / consultation;
- peer support;
- having a mentor; and
- regular feedback including an annual ministry review.

### Confidentiality and confessions

4.24 When you are seeking or providing professional supervision / consultation you should not identify any person and only disclose what is necessary to obtain the supervision or advice.

4.25 In most cases you should tell someone who is to give you confidential information of the limits to confidentiality and the arrangements for supervision or obtaining advice. This should be done before the disclosure of the confidential information, such as at the beginning of an interview.

4.26 The Confessions Canon 1989 or the proviso to Canon 113 of 1603 is in force throughout the Church. These Canons make provision for the confession of sins to clergy and for the confidentiality of this confession. If you are a member of the clergy, you should be aware of the scope of, and your obligations under, the applicable Canon. For example, absolution is not automatic and may be withheld. You may require of the person making the confession of sins some appropriate action of contrition and reparation before you give them absolution.

4.27 There is a distinction between disclosures made in ordinary pastoral situations and disclosures made as a confession as provided in the applicable pastoral service in the Church's authorised liturgies. This service should normally be heard in a public place at advertised times or by arrangement.

4.28 If you are a church worker, remember that only clergy have the authority to receive a special confession of sins as provided in the applicable pastoral service in the **Church's** authorised liturgies.

4.29 You may have a legal obligation to report criminal offences to the applicable civil authorities (the issue of **child abuse** is addressed in Section 5). You may be subpoenaed to produce documents or to attend court to give

evidence, or both. In some States or Territories, clergy may be able to claim privilege from producing documents and/or disclosing information obtained in a confession referred to in paragraphs 4.23 to 4.25.

4.30 You should be aware of and, when appropriate, seek advice in regard to:

- your legal obligations with regard to confidential information received during an interview
- or a confession, particularly in relation to criminal offences and child abuse;
- the pastoral consequences of breaching confidentiality; and
- the risk of physical, financial or emotional harm or hardship to another person by disclosing or not disclosing such information, particularly in writings, sermons or other public media.

4.31 Exercise special care that any illustrative material you use from personal experience does not involve a breach of confidentiality.

#### Communication in a ministry context

4.32 Any communication in a ministry context, whether formal or informal, is a pastoral encounter. Communication may be face-to-face, in writing or involve some form of technology. Consider the appropriateness and impact of your words and actions.

4.33 Innuendoes or compliments of a sexual nature are always inappropriate. When a person asks questions or seeks advice around topics of a sexual nature, be aware that they may have motives or needs that you do not understand. Be realistic about your own ability to assist them.

4.34 To minimise the risk of being accused of or engaging in misconduct, particularly when conducting interviews, think carefully in advance about:

- the place of the meeting, the arrangement of furniture and lighting, and your dress;
- whether the physical location allows for privacy of conversation while maintaining the opportunity for supervision. (For example, doors to interview rooms, if closed, should not be locked.);
- the physical distance between you and the other person to maintain both hospitality and respect;
- whether the circumstances would suggest a social interaction;
- the propriety and circumstances of the interview when you are visiting or being visited alone, especially at night;
- the personal safety and comfort of all participants;
- establishing at the outset the interview's purpose and the boundaries with respect to the subject matter, confidentiality and its duration;
- the appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact, such as gestures of comfort, that may be unwanted or misinterpreted; and
- whether the presence of a child's parent, guardian or another person chosen by the child is appropriate.

4.35 When considering using technology for communication, you should apply the same principles as you would in any other form of communication. Minimise the risk of harming others or yourself by asking:

- is this an appropriate way to communicate about this matter?
- should this communication be confidential? If so, do not use electronic media;
- how will the language and images used impact upon the person receiving the communication and any other person who may access it?
- could the circumstances of the communication, including the language and images used, suggest your relationship with the other person(s) is inappropriate?

#### Risks associated with using technology in communication

Clergy, church workers, and other participants in church activities – including children – often communicate using text and picture messaging, email, instant messenger services and chat rooms, video conferencing, blogs and internet forums, websites, social networking sites, and other forms of electronic interaction.

Remember information posted online is tracked and can be retrieved. Dangers associated with the use of communication technology are not always appreciated by clergy and church workers. These dangers include:

- losing your privacy;
- losing control of information (such as photographs or emails);
- ignoring personal security settings on social networking sites;
- being unable to determine if people are who they say they are;
- being exposed to unwanted information; and
- becoming a victim of cyberbullying when someone sends or spreads threatening or embarrassing information.

#### Record-keeping and privacy

4.36 If you are engaged in individual pastoral ministry, consider keeping a factual record of your daily pastoral

activity. Record details such as the date, time, place, participants, subject, and any proposed action arising from each activity. Record personal remarks accurately.

4.37 You need to know the relevant principles of the applicable privacy legislation in relation to the collection, use, disclosure and management of personal information. These have implications for:

- the publication of personal information in church directories, newsletters, rosters and websites;
- the recording and publication of voices and images of individuals; and
- the use and security of all personal information, and especially sensitive information, held by clergy and church workers or in church offices.

## Section 6. Personal Behaviour

### Preamble

6.1 The personal behaviour and relationships of **clergy** and **church workers** have a significant impact on the **Church** and the community because they are a model to others. In a context where their responsibility is to care for others, people will especially observe the way in which clergy and church workers exercise power.

6.2 Abuse of power is at the heart of many relationship problems in the Church and the community. In essence, abuse is one person's misuse of power *over* another. Sometimes abuse will be a one off event and at other times it will be a pattern of behaviour.

6.3 **Abuse** can take any of several overlapping forms: **bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, sexual abuse** or **spiritual abuse**.

6.4 It is important for clergy and church workers to be good citizens and obey the laws of the community, except where those laws conflict with Christian convictions.

### Standards for clergy and church workers

*These standards state the Church's expectations for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry.*

6.5 You are not to engage in:

- bullying;
- emotional abuse;
- harassment;
- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse; or
- spiritual abuse.

6.6 You are not to **abuse** your spouse, children or other members of your family.

6.7 You are to be responsible in your use of alcohol and other mind altering or addictive substances or services.

6.8 You are not to undertake any pastoral ministry when you are impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substances.

6.9 You are not to use any **prohibited substance**.

6.10 You are not to take property belonging to others, including intellectual property.

6.11 You are not knowingly to make statements that are false, misleading or deceptive.

6.12 You are not knowingly to use **offensive language**.

6.13 Without a legitimate purpose you are not to view, possess, produce or distribute **restricted material**.

6.14 You are to observe the law, other than any law that:

- is contrary to the Holy Scriptures;
- unjustly prohibits the practice of religion; or
- prohibits civil disobedience.

### Guidelines

*These guidelines explain and illustrate best practice and highlight practical ways to achieve it.*

6.15 You need to be aware of the impact that abuse can have on people.

The impact of abuse

A person who is abused may suffer emotionally, psychologically, physically, socially and spiritually. The impact can be life long and affect the person, their relationships and their capacity for ministry.

*How abuse affects the person and their relationships*

The person who is abused may experience:

- feelings of shame, humiliation, rejection, powerlessness, insecurity, anger and resentment;
- sadness, tearfulness, depression, anxiety;
- fatigue, disturbed sleep, changed appetite and ill health;
- substance abuse, gambling and use of pornography;
- becoming more withdrawn or aggressive;
- burn out;
- suicidal thinking and action;
- loss of self-esteem and self-confidence;
- marital and family problems;
- breakdown in community and collegial relationships.

#### *How abuse affects ministry*

Clergy or church workers who are abused may experience:

- loss of coping skills;
- disillusionment;
- inability to concentrate;
- loss of motivation;
- decreased productivity and competence;
- bad decision-making and poor judgement;
- loss of faith or crisis of vocation;
- difficulty trusting others;
- diminished employability;
- premature desire to cease employment.

6.16 You need to be able to identify **bullying** and the cultures and environments which encourage it.

Cultures and environments which encourage bullying

Contexts in which bullying is likely to flourish are characterised by:

- overbearing or inadequate leadership;
- poor management;
- a high level of competition;
- a climate of uncertainty and insecurity;
- lack of support and governance structures;
- poor handling of conflict;
- rigid structures;
- low level of participation or consultation;
- excessive demands on time;
- unclear role description and processes;
- inadequate grievance procedures.

6.17 If another person indicates by their words or actions that they feel bullied or harassed by you, review your conduct. If in doubt, cease the conduct and seek advice. When teaching, admonishing or exercising discipline as part of your pastoral ministry, be sure you do it respectfully.

6.18 Love and care for your family and pay particular attention to the effect of your ministry on your family relationships. Ensure that your behaviour in family relationships is consistent with this Code.

6.19 Take steps to prevent your spouse or children or other members of your family becoming victims of your stress. If you find yourself acting violently or abusively to any member of your family, seek professional help immediately.

6.20 Monitor your consumption or use of alcohol and other mind altering or addictive substances or product (e.g. gambling) to ensure your wellbeing and that of others. Seek professional help if the use of these substances or products adversely affects your ministry, personal wellbeing or relationships.

6.21 You should be sensitive to the effect of your language on others. Avoid using language that may be misunderstood or that bullies, threatens, belittles, humiliates or causes unnecessary offence or embarrassment. Take care when using:

- any swear word;
- language which has sexual connotations; and
- racial, religious or other group descriptions.

6.22 Exercise discretion when viewing or using restricted material. You should:

- consider the legitimate purpose of viewing or using the restricted material;
- consider whether your conduct will damage your reputation and impair your ministry; and

- disclose the purpose and circumstances of your conduct to a supervisor or colleague to avoid any misunderstanding.

6.23 When engaged in civil disobedience, do not act violently or intentionally provoke violence.

6.24 Be sensitive to the effect of your dress on others. Dress appropriately to the context.

6.25 You should comply with copyright legislation. Ensure that any licences for the use of copyright material are current and complied with and that copyright is duly acknowledged.

## Section 7. Sexual Conduct

### Preamble

7.1 The sexual conduct of clergy and church workers has a significant impact on the **Church** and the community.

7.2 Sexuality is a gift from God and is integral to human nature. It is appropriate for **clergy** and **church workers** to value this gift, taking responsibility for their sexual conduct by maintaining chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage.

7.3 It is part of the role of clergy and church workers to care for, protect and respect all with whom they have a **pastoral relationship**. It is never appropriate for clergy and church workers to take advantage of their role to engage in sexual activity with a person with whom they have a pastoral relationship. Consent to such activity will not be regarded by the Church as valid, except within marriage.

### Standards for clergy and church workers

*These standards state the Church's expectations for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry.*

7.4 You are to be chaste and not engage in sex outside of marriage.

7.5 You are not to:

- sexually abuse an adult;
- sexually abuse a child;
- engage in prostitution;
- visit brothels and other places associated with the sex industry without a legitimate purpose;
- view, possess, produce or distribute **restricted material** containing sex or nudity without a legitimate purpose; and
- view, possess, produce or distribute any form of child pornography or **child exploitation material**.

### Guidelines

*These guidelines explain and illustrate best practice and highlight practical ways to achieve it.*

7.6 If you intend to make physical contact with another adult or speak to them about a sexual matter you should:

- take responsibility for your own actions;
- seek permission;
- respect the person's wishes;
- notice and respond to the person's non-verbal communication; and
- refrain from such conduct if in doubt about the person's wishes.

7.7 You should avoid situations where you are vulnerable to temptation or where your conduct may be construed as a breach of the standards of sexual conduct in this Code.

7.8 Any involvement in pastoral ministry to persons in the sex industry requires safeguards and a high level of accountability and collegial support. If in pastoral ministry you intend to visit people or places associated with the sex industry, you should:

- consider the legitimate purpose of visiting the person or place;
- consider whether your conduct will damage your reputation and impair your ministry; and
- to avoid any misunderstanding, disclose the purpose and circumstances of what you are doing to a supervisor or colleague.

# MOORE COLLEGE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

Available to download at: <https://www.moore.edu.au/Media/Default/Policies/Domestic%20Violence%20Policy%20FINAL.pdf>

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Dean of Students			
<b>Superseded Documents</b>	None			
<b>Review Date</b>	Review commencement date 19 May 2018			
<b>Associated Documents</b>	Moore College Vision, Mission & Values; Domestic Violence Procedure; Faculty Handbook; Student Handbook			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Endorsed By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
1.0	Principal	Governing Board	19 May 2015	19 May 2015

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect and promote the safety of all members of the College community. Domestic violence is contrary to the biblical pattern of mutual love and care of each other in marriage, anchored in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also contrary to the College's published values of integrity and community. For this reason a policy that seeks to strengthen healthy marriages and family life, denounces domestic violence, and provides help, support and the possibility of a way out of the situation for victims (while acting with concern for the one who has acted violently as well) is entirely consistent with the College's Vision, Mission and Values.<sup>1</sup>

## Background

The College is a Christian academic community which seeks to promote the welfare, safety and flourishing of each member. As a community made up of many families, one means to this end is to promote and strengthen marriage and family life. It is particularly important that the College seeks to ensure that our homes be places of safety, encouragement and a generous treatment of each other. Domestic violence of any kind is inexcusable. It is a violation of the love that God expects to characterize the relationship of husbands and wives, and is harmful to children. Furthermore, some types of domestic violence, such as stalking and physical and sexual assault, are crimes.

Domestic violence is commonly hidden and it is often a reflection of serious dysfunction in a marriage relationship. Many victims feel intense shame and see no way of escape. In a tight-knit community like that of the College, it is not always easy to identify those who can provide help and assistance, and, if appropriate, the encouragement and support to approach the police or other relevant authorities. A published and easily accessible policy which makes clear the College's absolute refusal to tolerate violence in any form and in any context, particularly in the home, and which provides a means of getting help and support when faced with domestic violence, assists in promoting an atmosphere of safety and encouraging the freedom to speak out.

## Scope

This policy applies to all Faculty (including Emeritus and Visiting Faculty), Chaplains, and students.

<sup>1</sup> The Vision and Mission and Values of the College can be located at <http://www.moore.edu.au/vision-mission-values>

## Policy Statement

1. The College seeks to promote healthy and flourishing marriages and families within its communal life.
2. Every person associated with the College has a right to expect to live in a context of safety and care which is free of domestic violence.
3. No form of domestic violence is ever justified. Such behaviour is contrary to the standards of conduct required of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, the College’s published Values, the Sydney Diocesan code of conduct (*Faithfulness in Service*). It may also be against the law of New South Wales.
4. The College does not tolerate, overlook or conceal any instance of domestic violence within the families which make up the College community.
5. Where the College becomes aware of domestic violence within the College community:
  1. the victim(s) will be encouraged to seek help and support. This assistance will not be limited to pastoral care channels that exist within the College community. Where appropriate the victim will be encouraged and supported to seek professional help. Where the domestic violence constitutes criminal conduct, the victim(s) will also be encouraged to report the matter to the police.
  2. the person who has acted violently will be required to meet with the Dean of Students (if a student) or the Principal (if a member of the faculty or a chaplain) in the first instance to discuss the appropriate course of action and may be required to show cause to the Principal why he or she should be allowed to continue as a member of the College community, complete their studies, or continue in their role as a member of the Faculty or a chaplain. Such a person will also be encouraged to seek professional help and support as necessary.
6. The College will publish this policy, along with contact details for professional assistance regarding domestic violence, on its website and in orientation materials provided to all students at the commencement of their studies and to faculty members and chaplains when they are appointed. This will be done in a way which ensures, as far as possible, that spouses are made aware of the policy and this provision as well. This is intended to provide an avenue for professional help outside the authority structures of the College and the Diocese for those who seek it.
7. Those with pastoral oversight in the College community (Faculty and Chaplains) are to be trained in recognising and responding to domestic violence. This training will be offered to others (e.g. faculty spouses) who may find it useful.
8. Those studying at the College for Diplomas or Bachelor Degrees will be trained in recognising and responding to domestic violence, since the majority of these students will exercise some form of pastoral ministry upon graduating.
9. The Dean of Students is responsible for ensuring that this policy is publicised throughout the College community and that the published contact details provided remain current.
10. The Dean of Students is also responsible for providing pastoral care within the College community, coordinating the training mentioned in (8) above and ensuring professional help is provided where necessary.

### Legal and Policy Framework

*Faithfulness in Service: A national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers*, 2012.

*Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (NSW).

### Definitions

Term	Definition
Domestic Violence	Domestic violence is violence, abuse or intimidating behaviour by an adult against a current or former spouse or partner, to control and dominate them. It can include (but is not limited to) intimidation, harassment, emotional/psychological abuse, financial abuse, stalking, social and geographical isolation, physical assault and sexual assault.
Member of the College	Faculty, chaplains and students comprise the membership of the College.

### Implementation

The Dean of Students is responsible for the development, implementation and review of this policy.

### Acknowledgements

*Hot Topics: Domestic Violence*, Issue 87, 2013, Legal Information Access Centre, State Library of NSW  
 Youthworks SAFE MINISTRY Essentials, Version 3.0, 2015.

Review and History [Domestic Violence Policy] Version: [1.0] Effective [19 May 2015]

# PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT (PSU)

The Diocesan PSU is a great source of advice and assistance in domestic violence matters and can be contacted anonymously.

**General enquiries: 02 92651500**

**Abuse Report Line: 1800 774 945**

**Report via email: [abusereport@sydney.anglican.asn.au](mailto:abusereport@sydney.anglican.asn.au)**

This unit consists of a Director, a Chaplain for Diocesan Complaints, a Manager, Policy and Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme Claims and Safe Ministry Representative Liaison Officer. **The unit administers the complaints and discipline procedure in relation to clergy and church workers.** A database of offenders and alleged offenders is maintained. It also has the overall responsibility throughout the Diocese to ensure that all parishes and other activities of the Diocese are child protection compliant. The unit undertakes screening of all clergy appointments on behalf of the Archbishop. It provides ongoing support and advice to parishes and organisations. The Chaplain ensures contact with and support of those who disclose abuse.

## **Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme (for victims of abuse or sexual misconduct by a church worker) (2015)**

The PSU administers the Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme. A booklet outlining the scheme is available for download from <http://safeministry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Pastoral-Care-Assistance-Scheme-Booklet-FAQ-2015.3Dec15.pdf> (viewed 1 August 2016). We have reproduced below a section of that booklet.

### **Chapter 3: Reporting Abuse**

#### **3.4 Responding to abuse**

##### **Confidentiality**

Any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities, the information must not ordinarily be shared with anyone else.

##### **Investigations by Police or Family and Community Services**

In some cases, a report will lead to an investigation by the Police or Family and Community Services and the matter will be taken out of the hands of the parish. In other cases, there may be no action taken by the civil authorities (for example, because the complainant does not want to go through a criminal trial) and the parish will need to determine its response to the matter. In both cases, the Professional Standards Unit should always be consulted on how to proceed.

##### **Pastoral care**

A victim of abuse may require immediate specialist counselling or other support. When a report is made to the Professional Standards Unit, the Professional Standards Unit Chaplain can provide advice on care for victims and their families. Victims often need ongoing contact and support and the senior minister should ensure that an appropriate person is appointed to follow up with them. Other members of the parish may also need specialist support. Trained Parish Recovery Teams are available to assist through the Professional Standards Unit.

If a leader informs the senior minister that a child has disclosed abuse to them, the senior minister should make sure that the above steps are taken. He should also ensure that the leader is appropriately cared for and supported.

The leader may need to debrief about how the experience has affected them.

**Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme**

A person who has experienced sexual abuse from a leader in the parish context in the Sydney Diocese may be able to access assistance through the Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme.

The Diocese is committed to responding appropriately to allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct by any church worker. Persons making allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct are entitled to a compassionate and timely response. The Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme is designed to enable those who have suffered abuse in the church context to receive appropriate pastoral care and financial assistance.

