



Slavic Christian Center Official Position on Domestic Violence and Abuse

Overview

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior that a person uses to control another through fear and intimidation. This kind of behavior can take many forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, and economic abuse. Some examples of domestic abuse include battering, name-calling, and insults, threats to kill or harm one's partner or children, destruction of property, marital rape, and forced sterilization or abortion. Domestic violence thrives when remains hidden, and individuals outside the household are often reluctant to intervene, even if they suspect that abuse is taking place. On numerous occasions, even relatives who are not immediate family members refuse to acknowledge the existence of abuse, in order to safeguard the family's reputation and demonstrate loyalty to the abuser. Some individuals still maintain the erroneous belief that external intervention poses a threat to the inviolability of the household. Nevertheless, abuse and assault are no less grave when they happen within a family. Even when incidents of domestic violence are reported, there are occasions when victims are not adequately protected or offenders are not appropriately punished.

Identifying the Abusive Behavior

Abusive men typically deny or minimize their behavior, blame others, and hold inferior views of women. They believe men should dominate and control women. They work to convince and manipulate their wife into believing that if she acted differently, there would be no abuse.

Alcohol, pornography, gambling, and drugs are often associated and can contribute to domestic violence, but they do not cause it. An abusive man who drinks or uses drugs has two distinct problems: addictions and violence. Both must be treated.

Abusive men may use religion to justify their behavior. the abusive behavior. They will often say: "The Bible says my wife should be submissive to me." They take the biblical text and distort it to support their right to abuse.

Why Women Stay

Fear is the primary reason why women stay with men who abuse them. Some fear that they will lose their children. Many believe that they cannot support themselves, much less their children.

Initially, when the first act of violence occurs, the woman may find it hard to believe. She often trusts her abuser when he apologizes and vows it won't happen again. However, when it becomes a recurring pattern, many women may believe they can stop the abuse by changing their behavior or feel ashamed to acknowledge that their loved one is terrorizing them. Some may not even recognize or acknowledge that they are being abused, while others may be experiencing the effects of trauma or battered women syndrome.

Religion can either help or hinder abused women. As a source of support, it can motivate women to resist mistreatment. However, when misinterpreted, it can contribute to the victim's self-blame and suffering, and the abuser's rationalization. In some cases, abused women may feel unable to leave the relationship, believing that religious teachings prohibit them from doing so.

Scripture and the Church's Teaching

Men who abuse often use 1-Peter 3:1 and Ephesians 5:22, taken out of context, to justify their behavior. However, Ephesians 5:21-33 refers to the mutual submission of husband and wife out of love for Christ. Husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church.

Men who abuse also cite Scripture to insist that their victims forgive them (see, for example, Mt 6:9-15). If a victim is struggling to forgive their abuser, they may experience feelings of guilt. It's important to note that forgiveness does not entail forgetting the abuse or pretending it didn't happen, as neither is feasible. More importantly, forgiveness doesn't give permission for the abuse to continue. Instead, forgiveness is a choice made by the victim to release the experience and move forward with a deeper understanding and a commitment to never tolerate any form of abuse again.

An abused woman may see her suffering as just punishment for a past deed for which she feels guilty. She may attribute her pain to being part of "God's plan" or "God's way of teaching a lesson." However, this view of a harsh and unmerciful God contradicts the biblical portrayal of a kind, merciful, and loving Heavenly Father. Jesus, in particular, consistently demonstrated compassion and aid towards suffering women. Think of the woman with the hemorrhage (Mk 5:25-34) or the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11). God promises to be present to us in our suffering, even when it is unjust.

As ministers, we condemn the use of the Bible to support abusive behavior in any form. A proper interpretation of Scripture promotes the equal dignity of men and women, fostering relationships based on love and mutual respect. The Bible, beginning with Genesis, teaches that both men and women are created in God's image. Finally, we emphasize that **NO WOMAN** is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. Some abused women may believe that church doctrine regarding the sanctity of marriage necessitates remaining in an abusive relationship, causing hesitation towards pursuing a separation or divorce. These women may worry about being unable to remarry within the church. It's important to recognize that the vows of marriage are broken and marriage is dissolved due to violence and abuse. At that point, a victimized woman may be advised to pursue temporary separation for restorative purposes. In some cases where irreversible damage has occurred, in order to protect the woman and her children from psychological, physical and emotional distress, divorce may be the only option.

Conclusion

As ordained ministers of Slavic Christian Center, we want to make it unequivocally clear that our official stance on domestic violence is one of zero-tolerance. We declare that all forms of abuse - whether it be verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual - are not only criminal but also demonic in nature, and as such, will be treated with all seriousness. If you or a family member are experiencing abuse within your household, we ready to listen, investigate, and respond based on the authority derived from Scripture. If necessary, we will not hesitate to involve law enforcement as outlined in Romans 13:1-4. In cases where issues do not rise to the level of involving local law enforcement, we will utilize other resources including some which are referenced below:

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides crisis intervention and referrals to local service providers. Call **800-799-SAFE** (7233) or **800-787-3224** (TTY). For more information, go to www.thehotline.org Hotline Advocates are available to chat online, Monday to Friday, 9 AM - 7 PM CST. In some communities, cell phones programmed to 911 are made available to abused women.
- Focus on the Family Help Center **1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459)** Mon-Fri: 6am-8pm (Mountain Time); email: help@FocusOnTheFamily.com
- Seattle Christian Counseling **206-388-3929** Mon-Fri 8am-5pm (Pacific); email: connect@seattlechristiancounseling.com