

Domestic Violence

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

An Excerpt from the *BIBLICAL COUNSELING KEYS*

What Is Abuse?

God designed the marriage relationship to balance, to benefit, and to better one another. With the first marriage on earth, He created Eve to be the perfect companion for Adam. He intended the pair to love, honor, and cherish each other all the days of their lives ... just as He intends for every married couple today.

But in too many homes around the world, the marriage bond has become bondage—shared lives have become shattered by abuse.

Any form of abuse is a flagrant violation of the marriage vows, “To have and to hold from this day forward ... to love and to cherish, ‘til death do us part.” And although such abuse is too frequently “behind closed doors,” it is blatantly in open view before the eyes of the Lord. ...

*“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight.
Everything is uncovered and laid bare
before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*
(Hebrews 4:13)

- **Abuse** means “to mistreat, hurt, or injure.”
- **Abuse** and **violence** are often used interchangeably, although the word violence implies an escalation of abuse and introduces the element of fear of harm as a means of control.
- **Domestic violence** and **family violence** are the legal terms for physical spousal abuse or any other physically abusive relationship within the home or family.
- **Domestic violence** refers to a pattern of coercive and violent behaviors exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship with another.

God feels the strongest opposition against anyone who is abusive or violent toward another.

*“The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked,
those who love violence, he hates with a passion.”*
(Psalm 11:5)

Domestic Violence Is Abuse

Affects everyone in the family

Bridges all levels in society: racial, religious, geographic, and economic

Undermines the value of others

Seeks to dominate others

Escalates in intensity and frequency

God’s Heart on Violence

- God hates violence. (Psalm 11:5)
- God judges those who are violent. (Genesis 6:13)
- God is angry with violent behavior. (Ezekiel 8:17)
- God prohibits violent people from positions of church leadership. (Titus 1:7)
- God commands those who are violent to change. (Ezekiel 45:9)

*“God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.”*
(Psalm 46:1)

God’s Heart for the Victim

- God hears the cry of the battered and abused. (Psalm 10:17)
- God holds the victim of abuse in the palm of His hand. (Isaiah 41:13)
- God sees your pain and hears your cry. (Genesis 16:13)
- God confirms the victim’s value and worth. (Luke 12:6–7)
- God brings good out of the evil deeds of others. (Proverbs 16:4)

Questions and Answers

“Would God condone my husband’s abusing me in order to punish me for my sins?”

No. Many instances in Scripture show where God used one nation to bring judgment on another nation. However, there is no instance where God used the violence of one mate to punish the other mate. God hates sin, and abuse is sin. The truth is:

- An abusive mate is abusive simply as a result of choosing wrong over right.
- While you may be the recipient of your husband’s abuse, you are not the reason for that abuse.
- The violence of your husband exposes his sinfulness, not your sinfulness.

“Do what is just and right. ... Do no wrong or violence.”
(Jeremiah 22:3)

“Since the Bible teaches ‘submit to one another,’ isn’t leaving an abusive relationship against the teaching of the Bible?”

The Bible teaches mutual submission in a loving relationship, not one-way submission in an abusive relationship. The specific biblical instruction to anyone around a hot-tempered person is separation—get out of harm’s way. Even a temporary separation could help bring about a permanent resolution and hopefully eventual reconciliation. A person with out-of-control anger must be willing to stop the abuse and get help. Many times, temporarily removing yourself from a volatile situation will prompt your abuser to seek help for fear of losing you. The Bible gives this instruction ...

*“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person,
do not associate with one easily angered.”*
(Proverbs 22:24)

And the very next verse continues with this warning of staying in a volatile situation ...

“Or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.”
(Proverbs 22:25)

Wrong Beliefs vs. Right Beliefs

The Abuser

Abuses in order to Feel Significant

- **Wrong Belief:** “My wife is to blame for what’s happening. I have the right to expect certain things from my marriage partner who, after all, belongs to me. If I do not control my wife, I could lose her, so I’ll do whatever it takes to remain in control.”

Right Belief: “I am the only one responsible for my abusive behavior and the way I respond to people and circumstances. My wife is not to blame because, no matter what someone else does, I have a choice in how I treat others. Even if I lose my wife, I’ll never lose God. He is my true source of significance, and He promises to meet my needs.”

*“My God will meet all your needs according
to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*
(Philippians 4:19)

The Abused

Accepts Abuse in order to Feel Secure

- **Wrong Belief:** “I’m to blame for what my husband does to me. I must be doing something wrong. If I just try harder to do what he expects of me, things will get better. If I don’t do better, I could lose my husband along with my security. Or even worse, I could be killed. Pleasing my husband is my only hope for survival and security.”

Right Belief: “I’m not to blame for my husband’s abuse, and I have been wrong in thinking my happiness will come from a human relationship. I can choose whether or not I am willing to be around anyone who mistreats me, including my husband. Even if I lose him, I will never lose Jesus, who lives in me. I will depend on Him to meet all of my needs. The Lord is my source of security.”

*“Your Maker is your husband—
the LORD Almighty is his name.”*
(Isaiah 54:5)

Key Verse to Memorize

*“This is how we know what love is:
Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.”*
(1 John 3:16)

Key Passage to Read

For the Abused: Psalm 91

For the Abuser: Psalm 94

How to Know Whether Your Husband Has Really Changed

If your mate promises that change has occurred, you need wisdom to discern whether the change is only temporary and manipulative ... or whether your husband is truly taking personal responsibility for his abusive behavior.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I no longer have a sense of fear when I am with my husband?
- Has my husband learned to control his anger without being verbally or emotionally abusive?
- Does my husband respect my right to disagree?
- Is my husband able to express feelings of anger in a calm, nonthreatening way?
- Does my husband take personal responsibility for inappropriate behavior and no longer blame me or others?
- Do I feel I am being treated with respect?
- Does my husband show consistent love and refuse to harbor bitterness toward me?
- Does my husband ask for my opinions and listen attentively?
- Does my husband have an accountability group I can contact?
- Does my husband respect my need for other relationships?

Biblical Bill of Rights

The United States Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution, stands as a fundamental symbol for individual freedoms. And so it goes within the marriage relationship. Know the rights you have that are firmly embedded in an even more trustworthy document—*the Bible, the Word of God*.

Within the marriage relationship, God's will is that you ...

- I. Treat one another with respect. (Ephesians 5:33; 1 Peter 3:7)
- II. Experience mutual submission. (Ephesians 5:21)
- III. Speak truth and have truth spoken to you in a loving manner. (Ephesians 4:15)
- IV. Express anger and have anger expressed toward you in appropriate ways. (Ephesians 4:26)
- V. Both spend personal time alone. (Mark 1:35)
- VI. Use your unique talents and gifts to serve others. (1 Peter 4:10)
- VII. Enjoy freedom from fear. (Romans 8:15)
- VIII. Both seek emotional and spiritual support from others. (Hebrews 10:25)
- IX. Report abuse to governmental authorities. (1 Peter 2:13–14; Romans 13:1–2)
- X. Leave an abusive relationship, when necessary. (Proverbs 27:12)

*"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone,
LORD, make me dwell in safety."
(Psalm 4:8)*

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