

Responding Well to Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance

Appendix 3: Theology

The table below lists some scriptures that have been used unhelpfully with regard to victims of domestic abuse together with how the same scriptures could be applied helpfully.

SCRIPTURE	UNHELPFUL APPLICATION	HELPFUL APPLICATION
<p>Submission</p> <p>“Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord” <i>Ephesians 5.22</i></p>	<p>Obedience The woman must obey her partner</p> <p>Not submitting causes abuse If a man abuses his partner it is because she is not being submissive enough.</p>	<p>Mutual submission The previous verse 5.21 says “submit to one another” and 5.22 must be read in light of the mutual submission we should be giving to one another. To submit does not mean to obey, it means to choose to place oneself under another.</p> <p>Submission is a choice Submission cannot be forced, it must be chosen. Not submitting can never justify abuse.</p>
<p>Headship</p> <p>“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the Saviour” <i>Ephesians 5.23</i></p>	<p>The asserting of power The man is the head; therefore he has all the power and the right to assert it.</p> <p>Superiority Headship means being superior and having the right to take more than give.</p>	<p>The laying down of power The example given of headship is of Christ’s headship of the Church. When Christ came to earth, he gave up all his heavenly power for his bride, the Church. The original Greek word used for head in this passage is Kephale. This word means the head of a river or the source of the river. It does not imply superiority.</p>
<p>Rulership</p> <p>To the woman he said, “... Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.” <i>Genesis 3.16</i></p>	<p>Rulership: a Right God determined men should rule their wives, therefore that is how it should be,</p>	<p>Rulership: a Result A consequence of sin is that a man will rule over his wife, it is not God’s best plan for humanity, before the fall men and women were equal.</p>
<p>Creation of Woman</p> <p>“The Lord God said, “it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” <i>Genesis 2.18</i></p>	<p>Inferior To help means to serve, this verse shows that God created women to serve men and suggests they are inferior to them.</p>	<p>Equal The word “helper” here referring to women, most often refers to God in the Old Testament usage (e.g. 1 Samuel 7.12; Ps 121.1-2). Therefore there is no suggestion of female inferiority.</p>

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<p>Forgiveness</p> <p>“And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors.” <i>Matthew 6.12</i></p>	<p>Disregard Forgiving someone should mean disregarding what they have done and maintaining the same relationship with them regardless of whether they change.</p>	<p>Consequences Sin has consequences and forgiving does not remove those consequences. Forgiveness is a process and must not nullify the consequences of abuse or mean that the situation must continue as it always has. Women should not have to stay in an abusive situation in order to forgive their partner.</p>
<p>Original Sin</p> <p>“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” <i>Genesis 3.6</i></p>	<p>Sin: Women and weaker Eve took the fruit, and gave some to her husband; this shows women are weaker and more likely to be sinful.</p>	<p>Sin: Equal responsibility Man and woman were both participants in the Fall: Adam was no less to blame than Eve. Romans 5.12-21 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”</p>
<p>Divorce</p> <p>“But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, causes her to become an adulteress ...” <i>Matthew 5.32</i></p>	<p>Contract Marriage is a contract and the person who cancels the contract, i.e. files for divorce is the one who is responsible. Therefore if a woman divorces a man for abusing her, she is at fault, not him.</p>	<p>Covenant Marriage is a covenant; divorce is the breaking of that covenant. When a man chooses to be abusive, he breaks the covenant. If his wife chooses to divorce him, she is making public his breaking of the covenant, not going against what the Bible says about divorce.</p>
<p>Suffering</p> <p>“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” <i>1 Peter 1.6</i></p>	<p>Accept Women should accept abuse and use the suffering as an opportunity to grow their faith.</p>	<p>Refute By staying in a relationship where she is subject to abuse a woman is risking being murdered. When Jesus was tempted to risk his life, he said “it is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Matthew 4.7). God wanted abused women to be safe and protected.</p>

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