

Repentance for abuse is not just being sorry or apologizing. It means complete confession as to what the sin was, and being deeply offended by the sinful action—seeing it as vile and repudiating it. And although the injured one should be ready to forgive, this does not have to mean trusting the person again. The other person must earn our trust, by demonstrating in his behavior that he is truly reforming. John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees (who were outwardly moral people, but inwardly deceitful): “Bear fruits worthy of repentance”.

If there is no genuine repentance on the abuser’s part, then reconciliation will be a sham.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you are not to blame. You do not have to face it alone. Breaking the silence can be hard, but it is commanded in scripture (Mt. 18:15-17; Eph. 5:13). Often your gut feeling will tell you who is likely to be non-judgemental and compassionate towards you if you break the silence. Keep trying till you find someone who believes and can help you. If you are believed it is easier to take action.

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Also by Barbara Roberts:

Not Under Bondage: Biblical Divorce for Abuse,
Adultery and Desertion

Title in preparation:

Biblical Answers to Domestic Abuse

Churches or agencies may add contact details
suitable to their local area below.

ARE YOU WALKING ON EGGHELLS?



If you feel like you are walking on eggshells you may be suffering from domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is persistent or recurrent behavior by an intimate partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological damage, or causes the victim to live in fear. It is not just marital conflict over particular issues (which can be conflict between equals). Abuse is about power. One party exerting power to control the other.

You do not have to face it alone...

Threatening you, making you think you're crazy, ignoring your 'no', swearing, devaluing or disrespecting you, treating you like a servant, restricting your contact with family and the outside world, blaming you for problems that you did not create, denying that abuse has happened, distorting scripture to justify abuse, threatening suicide, controlling the money, physical violence such as pushing, shoving, hitting, punching, smashing things; sexual abuse including marital rape, and being very possessive. All of these behaviors can be part of abuse. Psalm 55 gives a good description of abuse.

Domestic abuse can be very frightening, confusing and damaging to the victim and to children.

Many victims of domestic abuse are women. Most women victims report higher levels of fear than male victims. Over their lifetime, one in every four women experience unlawful violence (physical or sexual) at the hands of an intimate partner.¹ The rates are similar across the US, Canada, Britain and Australia. This rate is for violence that would constitute a crime; it does not include other kinds of abuse.

The bible says the husband is the head of the wife, but this means he is responsible for protectively leading his wife and family in a God-glorifying direction. Abusive and controlling behavior are the opposite of biblical headship.

¹ United States National Institute of Justice / Centres of Disease Control and Prevention (1998), "Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey".

Statistics Canada (1993), "Violence Against Women Survey".

British Crime Survey (1996), "Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire," Home Office Research Study 191.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996), "Women's Safety Australia".

The bible says the gracious attitude of a wife may turn a husband to Christ. Wives are told to 'do good' to their husbands (1 Pet. 3:6), but enduring persistent abuse does not do any 'good'; it is damaging to everyone. The abuser only becomes further ingrained in sin and is neither rebuked nor made accountable. The victim's life is sorely corroded. Children's development is damaged by the bad modelling they receive and by the fear, secrecy and denial.

Scripture commends unavoidable suffering for the sake of the gospel, but most domestic abuse occurs irrespective of whether the victim witnesses to the gospel, or to any other spiritual beliefs for that matter. No amount of our suffering can redeem the wicked—only Jesus' death does that.

The Bible says what to do when a brother sins (Mat. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim. 5:20; 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). The first 'good' we are told to do for a sinning brother is to rebuke him. We should cultivate a readiness to grant forgiveness to our offender, but we do not have to actually extend that forgiveness until he repents. Even God requires repentance before He forgives!