

Understanding and Responding to Domestic Abuse

Definition:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- Psychological

- Physical

- Sexual

- Financial

- Emotional

- (and Spiritual ...)

Statistics:

- 1 in 4 women / 1 in 6 men in England and Wales experience it
- Women experience, on average, 35 episodes before reporting it
- Domestic violence is the crime with the highest risk of repeat
- Domestic abuse is one of the key causes of homelessness
- 2 women are killed each week by their partner / ex-partner
(Statistics from www.cps.gov.uk and www.refuge.org.uk)
The church is not immune ...

Possible Warning Signs:

Physical:

Relational:

Spiritual:

How it begins:

Abuser: Desire – Demand – Control – Coerce

Abused: Please – Acquiesce – Comply – Fearfully obey

Those most at risk:

Those abused as children – those from cultures where acceptance is the norm – those who are less able to seek help – those who think it couldn't possibly happen to them – but no-one is immune.

How it feels:

- Worthless (John 4)
- Helpless (Psalm 88)
- Hopeless



Spiritual questions it raises:

Why People Stay:

Raising Awareness in Church:

In the building:

Notices – Books – Where to get help

In the processes:

Safeguarding – Training – Pastoral care

In the gatherings:

Illustrations – Testimonies - Prayer

Responding to Disclosure from Church members:

Thank – Believe – Affirm – Discern – Plan – Pray

Facilitating Practical Planning:

- Helpline
- Victim Support / Police / Social Services / Court Orders
- Money / ID / Housing / Social Media

Overflowing with Biblical Perspectives:

- God's identity (Ephesians 1 / Amos sets out his hatred of abuse)
- Human identity (Ephesians 1 / Psalm 139 / Genesis 1-2)
- Place of Christian community that promotes change (Ephesians 4)
- Certainty and hope (Philippians 1)

Continuing to Love as the Legacy Lives on:

From captivity to freedom (Joseph)

From distance to intimacy (Woman at the well)

From uncertainty / control to following God (Ruth)

From hypervigilance to trust (David)

From controlled to a life worthy of the calling of Christ ...

National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Walking with Domestic Abuse Sufferers, Helen Thorne (IVP, 2018)