

Paul describes for us in **Ephesians 5:25-29** the attitude towards and the relationship that a husband should have with his wife. Unfortunately, we live in a world where many husbands do not treat their wives in such a loving way. There are far too many homes in this country where domestic abuse is taking place, and that just shouldn't be the case. Domestic abuse is far too common in our society. Domestic abuse is defined by the government as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic abuse or violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. Let's consider the prevalence of these type of actions, and then let's see what God's Word says on the issue and how the Christian should approach and deal with domestic abuse. This issue can be very emotionally charged, but we must put our emotions aside and simply assessed the issue and proceed according to the Word of God.

I. This is a serious issue.

- A. Domestic abuse is all too common in our world, today. Domestic abuse stories are constantly in the media.
 - 1. Ray Rice arrested in February for punching his then fiancé in the face in an Atlantic City elevator.
 - 2. Hope Solo was arrested in June for striking her sister and her nephew.
 - 3. Adrian Peterson was arrested for child abuse in August.
 - 4. Top Chef Contestant Aaron Grissom was just arrested last week on charges of domestic violence.
 - 5. Kurt Busch just yesterday is facing domestic abuse charge.
- B. The statistics involving domestic abuse are very disturbing.
 - 1. 1 out of 4 women will experience domestic abuse at some time in their life.
 - 2. 3 out of 4 people know someone who has faced domestic abuse.
 - 3. 85-90% of domestic abuse victims are women.
 - 4. Every year, 1 in 3 women murdered are murdered by her current or former partner.
 - 5. Young boys witnessing abuse are twice as likely to abuse others.
- C. I don't think I have ever heard a sermon preached on this specific topic.
 - 1. That shouldn't be the case. We need to be discussing the troubles of our time because we are just as susceptible to the troubles of the world as those outside the Body of Christ.
 - 2. It is very possible that we as churches of the Lord's Body haven't done our due diligence in preaching and teaching on this issue.
 - 3. If we are doing our work of taking the Gospel to the world then we are going to run into these types of issues, and we need to be ready to know how to deal with them.

II. Abuse has no place in God's design of the home.

- A. God desires for the home is for it to be full of love.
 - 1. A husband is to love and cherish his wife. (**Eph. 5:25ff; I Pet. 3:7**)
 - 2. A father is to love his children and raise them in the Lord. (**Eph. 6:4**)
 - 3. All men are to act in a godly way, and that doesn't involve the mistreatment of others. (**Titus 2:1,2, 6-8**)
 - 4. A wife is to love and respect her husband. (**Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:**)
 - 5. All this can be summed up well in **Colossians 3:18-21**.
 - 6. Out of control anger and wrath stands opposed to God and the design of the home. (**James 1:19,20**)
- B. Righteous discipline is not the same as abuse. Parents are authorized to discipline their child (**Prov. 23:13,14**), but that discipline must be done out of love for the child and not out of control anger.
- C. Love can be lost when God is not the focus in the home.
 - 1. When God is missing, the works of the flesh take over. (**Gal. 5:19-21**)
 - 2. That anger can very easily lead to harsh treatment of those around us.
 - 3. Selfish desires cause one to act harshly when they don't get their way.
 - 4. Mind altering substances can cause one to do things they wouldn't normally do.
 - 5. **“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.” (Prov. 20:1)**

III. What can be done in an abusive situation?

- A. Abuse alone is not grounds for a Scriptural divorce.
 - 1. Jesus taught that adultery was the only acceptable reason for the dissolving of a marriage while both mates are living. **(Matt. 19:3-9)**
 - 2. God hates divorce because there is always sin involved in a divorce. Either one mate has cheated on the other and divorce is pursued, or the couple divorce for some other reason than adultery. In either case, sin is involved and God is not pleased or glorified.
- B. Church leadership should take an active role in assisting Christians who are victims of domestic abuse.
 - 1. Shepherds are able to do their work as leaders of the church because they display godly characteristics. They should have the ability to work with couples who are having issues in their home because they are good husbands and fathers, themselves.
 - 2. Shepherds can intervene in the abuse and seek out solutions to the problems. The members of that church can give relief to the abused by providing places to stay and help with needs. Prayers are well needed, but help is just as needed.
 - 3. Christians who are having issues should have the courage to go to leadership if there is an abusive situation.
 - 4. Even in the absence of shepherds, Christians should go to one another to help when they are in troubled situations. **(Gal. 6:1)**
 - 5. If the abuser is a Christian, then he should be admonished **(I Thess. 5:14)**. If he continues in that behavior then he should be marked as unfaithful. **(II Thess. 3:6)**
- C. There are legal steps that can be taken to protect the abused.
 - 1. As citizens of the USA, we have the ability to use the justice system to protect ourselves.
 - 2. Not only is an abusive person violating God's Law, they are also breaking the laws of this country, and a victim can reach out to the authorities for assistance.
 - 3. There are many resources that can be used to escape an abusive situation.
 - 4. While divorce is not an issue, a restraining order might be a good option to put some space between the abuser and the victim while things are being worked out.
 - 5. The justice system has the right and ability to punish those who abuse others and that is a step that might need to be taken to protect victims in an abusive situation.
 - 6. Our emotions tell us that no person should be forced to stay in that type of relationship, but marriage is a binding covenant in God's eyes that can only be broken by death or adultery.

This is a very difficult subject, but we would be unwise to act as if we are immune to this type of problem. The church is made up of people and people make mistakes and do things they ought not. God desires for us to have loving and peaceful homes, but that is not always what we find. May He help us to have loving homes. May he help us to practice self control. May he help us to be ready to assist those who might need our help.