



KNOW DOMESTIC ABUSE

USE AND MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE
REGARDING DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse is not just about a bad relationship, or getting angry.

It's a pattern of behaviour, based on exerting power and control over another, causing fear and intimidation.

Any family relationship can be impacted by abuse.

Women, children and men can all be victims of abuse.

It can happen to anyone, regardless of education, culture, religion or where you live.

The Bible rejects all abuse, whether physical, verbal, or otherwise expressed from one person towards another and always condemns the misuse of power to control or exploit others. Therefore, domestic abuse is evil. Such sin is deceptive in its power and damaging in its effects (Psalm 7; Galatians 5:19-26; 2 Timothy 3:2-3).

When domestic abuse in marriage is reported, then separation of the spouses for the sake of the safety of a victim and any children is an appropriate step to be taken and should never be discouraged (Proverbs 27:12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Some people use Bible verses as an excuse to abuse their wife, husband, or children. Others think that the Bible tells them to put up with abuse. This is wrong.

To understand the bible verses more fully, we must do three things:

- a. Read the whole chapter or section in which the verse or verses are found.
- b. Understand how the verse or verses fits into the chapter or section.
- c. Think about how the Bible's teaching applies to your situation.

Church leaders should welcome and offer ongoing support to those who have separated for such reasons (Psalm 82:3-4).



Reference: Diocesan Domestic Abuse Policy, 1.9.6

Some important Bible verses; key words and their meanings with regard to Domestic Abuse.

Helper

Genesis 2:18, 21



¹⁸ The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ... ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man was sleeping, the LORD God took out one of the man’s ribs. He closed up the opening that was in his side.

Wrong meaning 	Correct meaning 
The woman is below the man.	The woman and the man are equal.
A “helper” is a servant. God made the woman to be the servant of the man. The woman is less important than the man.	<p>The word “helper” does not mean below or less. This word is mostly used in the Bible to describe God. God is Israel’s “helper” when he comes to rescue them (e.g. Deuteronomy 33:26; Psalm 22:19; Psalm 121:1-2). The words “just right for him” mean that the woman and the man are a perfect match. Each one needs the other.</p> <p>In Genesis 2:21 God made the woman out of the man’s rib. She was not taken from his head, to be over him, or from his foot, to be under him. She came from his side to be his equal partner.</p>

Submit

Ephesians 5:22-23



²² Wives, submit to your own husbands as you submit to the Lord. ²³ The husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church. The church is Christ’s body. He is its Saviour.

Wrong meaning 	Correct meaning 
(verse 22): The wife must always submit to her husband no matter what.	A wife chooses to submit. Her husband must not force, pressure or punish her.
A wife must not ask questions or think for herself. She must always do what her husband tells her to do, even if he asks her to sin or submit to abuse. If she does not submit to him, then he is allowed to punish her.	The Bible teaches that a wife should freely choose to submit to her husband. It is a gift she gives. A husband must never force or pressure his wife to submit. He must never punish her if she does not submit. If a wife cannot say no, then her submission cannot be free. Sometimes a wife should not submit. She must be free to say no to sin. She should not submit to abuse.
(verse 23): The husband may do anything he likes.	The husband’s responsibility is to serve his wife.
The husband has all the power, because he is the head. He can do what he wants. He can make all the decisions. He can tell his wife what to do, but she can never tell him what to do. For example, he may demand sex whenever he wants, and she has no right to refuse.	“Christ is the head of the Church.” This means that he loved us and sacrificed himself for us. A husband must be the head of his wife in the same way. He must do all he can to love and protect her. He must encourage and care for his wife like his own body (Ephesians 5:28-29). Loving and caring means putting his wife’s needs first.

1 in 6 women, 1 in 16 men over age 15 have experienced physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner.

1 Peter 3:1, 5-6



¹ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands in the same way. Suppose some of them don't believe God's word. Then let them be won to Christ without words by seeing how their wives behave... ⁵ This is how the holy women of the past used to make themselves beautiful. They put their hope in God. And they submitted themselves to their own husbands. ⁶ Sarah was like that. She obeyed Abraham. She called him her master. Do you want to be like her? Then do what is right. And don't give in to fear.

Wrong meaning 	Correct meaning 
Endure abuse to show your husband what Jesus is like.	Respect your husband, even if he is hostile to your faith.
In the same way that Christ endured suffering (1 Peter 2:21-23), and slaves are to endure mistreatment from unjust masters (2:20), a wife should also endure abuse at the hands of her husband. A wife should be like Jesus. If her husband beats her, she should suffer the beating quietly. She should not be afraid. This will show her husband what Jesus is like.	<p>1 Peter 3 continues the argument of 1 Peter 2. "In the same way" (3:1) means that Peter is continuing his discussion of respect. Out of respect, slaves should submit to their masters (2:18). Out of respect, wives should submit to their husbands (3:1). Out of respect, husbands should be considerate of their wives (3:7).</p> <p>However, it is important to understand the difference between the examples given in 1 Peter 2 and 1 Peter 3. Peter told slaves to suffer beatings patiently, like Jesus did. But he does not tell wives to suffer beatings. Wives are not slaves. Even the laws of the Romans did not permit wives to be beaten. The hardship the wife must endure in 1 Peter 3 is the hardship of being married to an unbelieving husband, not to an abusive husband. The passage does not teach wives to submit to domestic abuse.</p>

Sex

1 Corinthians 7:3-5



³ A husband should satisfy his wife's sexual needs. And a wife should satisfy her husband's sexual needs. ⁴ The wife's body does not belong only to her. It also belongs to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong only to him. It also belongs to his wife. ⁵ You shouldn't stop giving yourselves to each other except when you both agree to do so. And that should be only to give yourselves time to pray for a while. Then you should come together again. In that way, Satan will not tempt you when you can't control yourselves.

Wrong meaning 	Correct meaning 
You must always have sex when your spouse wants to.	Sex is a gift which a husband and a wife freely give to each other.
It is always wrong to say no to your spouse. If you say no to your spouse, they will fall into sexual temptation. This will be your fault.	<p>Sex is a gift your spouse gives to you. You do not take it from them. It is their free gift. It is a normal part of married life. It helps to avoid temptation. When you are free to give sex, then you should give sex, unless you both agree to stop for some time, so you can pray (verse 5).</p> <p>But your spouse is not always free to give and receive sex. They may be sick, or in pain, or tired, or sad, or bearing a child, or having sexual problems. The bodies of husbands and wives belong to each other (verse 4). This means you must care for each other's bodies. You should wait until they are ready to give and receive sex. You must not pressure them. A gift that you demand is not a true gift, and a gift you force upon someone is not a true gift. You must be patient and kind with each other.</p>

Forgive

Matthew 6:15



But if you do not forgive the sins of other people, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Wrong meaning 	Correct meaning 
Forget the sin and start again.	Forgive others as God has forgiven you.
If you forgive someone, then you must forget what they did. Everything can be the same as it was before. The other person does not need to change their behaviour.	<p>This passage does not say everything that the Bible teaches about forgiveness. The basic point of Matthew 6:15 is that we should forgive as we have been forgiven. If we genuinely repent and turn from our sin, then God forgives us. In the same way, when an abuser genuinely repents and tries to change, we also should forgive them. This may be a difficult and long process. Sometimes we will come back together with a person we have forgiven. Sometimes this will not be possible. Separation may be necessary and may even become permanent.</p> <p>Forgiveness does not mean that we take sin lightly. If an abuser continues to abuse, they must be stopped. You do not need to endure abuse in the name of forgiveness.</p>

Trust

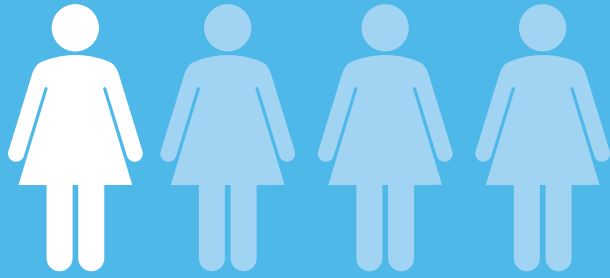
Deuteronomy 19:15

Every matter must be proved by the words of two or three witnesses.

Wrong meaning 	Correct meaning 
Doubt the victim's testimony.	Trust the victim's testimony.
When someone says, "I was abused!", you should not believe them. You should only believe them if other people saw the abuse and agree to be witnesses.	Moses gave this law for crimes that other people witnessed. When nobody saw a crime, Moses did not expect witnesses. Deuteronomy 22:25-27 shows that we may believe the word of an abused person when there are no witnesses.

The Bible is the good Word of a good God. Sadly, we can twist and misuse this good gift. So, it is very important that the Bible is rightly understood and rightly applied to our lives. When it is wrongly understood and wrongly applied, it can damage people, destroy relationships and dishonour God. Rightly understood, the Bible condemns all forms of domestic abuse.

Source: Doctrine Commission "Use and Misuse of Scripture" Appendix 14, Sydney Diocese Domestic Abuse Policy.



1:4 women in their lifetime will experience domestic abuse

Men are most likely to experience general violence

Women are most likely to experience intimate partner violence



Estimated 1 million children impacted by DV in their family



The Anglican Diocese of Sydney is committed to promoting and supporting safer environments that recognise equality between all people, including husbands and wives and promote a culture of healthy relationships of mutual responsibility and respect in marriages, families and congregations

Contact us

Are you or someone you know living with domestic abuse?

Talk to someone at your church you trust

Call 000 in case of emergency

Domestic violence Hotline 1800 656 463

Sydney Anglican Report Line 1800 774 945

Anglicare Counselling 1300 651 728

1800RESPECT 1800 737 732

knowdomesticabuse.church
safeministry.org.au

anglicare.org.au