



For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7

GUIDELINES FOR PASTORS RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When Responding to an Abusing Person

Goals:

1. SAFETY for the woman and children
 2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the abuser
 3. HEALING of individuals
 4. RECONCILIATION, if possible, of relationships
- OR
- MOURNING the loss of the relationship

What NOT TO DO when helping an abusing person:

DON'T approach him or let him know that you know about his violence unless you have the victim's permission and she has taken steps to be safe. Be sure that she is aware that you plan to talk to him.

DON'T give him any information about his partner or her whereabouts.

DON'T disclose what she has confided in you.

DON'T expect him to confirm the victim's story.

DON'T be taken in by his minimization, denial or lying about his violence. DON'T accept his blaming her or other rationalization for his behavior.

DON'T be taken in by his "conversion" experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as he proceeds with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.

DON'T advocate for the abuser to avoid the legal consequences of his violence.

DON'T provide a character witness for this purpose in any legal proceedings.

DON'T forgive an abuser quickly and easily. DON'T confuse his remorse with true repentance.

DON'T send him home with a prayer. DO work with others in the community to hold him accountable.

DON'T meet with him alone and in private. For your own safety, meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around.

DON'T allow him to misuse Bible verses to justify his behavior. Address any religious rationalizations he may offer or questions he may have.

DON'T pursue or encourage marriage or couples' counseling with him and his partner if you are aware that there is abuse in the relationship. This includes verbal and/or emotional abuse. This could create an unsafe situation for the woman.

What TO DO when helping an abusing person:

DO approach him, if the woman is safe, and express your concern and support for him. Let him know that he has to be accountable and deal with his abuse.

DO address any religious rationalizations or misuse of scripture he may offer or questions he may have.

DO recognize that abusive men are experts at manipulation in many ways.

DO name the violence as his problem, not hers. Tell him that only he can stop it; and you are willing to help.

DO pray with him. Ask God to help him stop his violence, repent and find a new way. DO assure him of your support in this endeavor

DO assist him to understand that he can control and change himself with God's help and he must stop trying to control his wife.

DO refer him to a program which specifically addresses abusers.

DO encourage him to honor his partner's decisions even if she decides to separate.

DO encourage him to support her financially. If financial support is not possible, perhaps the church could help.

DO assess him for suicide or threats of homicide. If he makes specific threats towards her, contact the police and warn the woman.

DO follow up and hold him responsible for ending the abuse.

DO find ways to collaborate with community agencies and law enforcement to hold him accountable.

Adapted from "Responding to Domestic Violence, Guidelines for Pastors" by FaithTrust Institute
www.faithtrustinstitute.org