

Domestic violence and the church

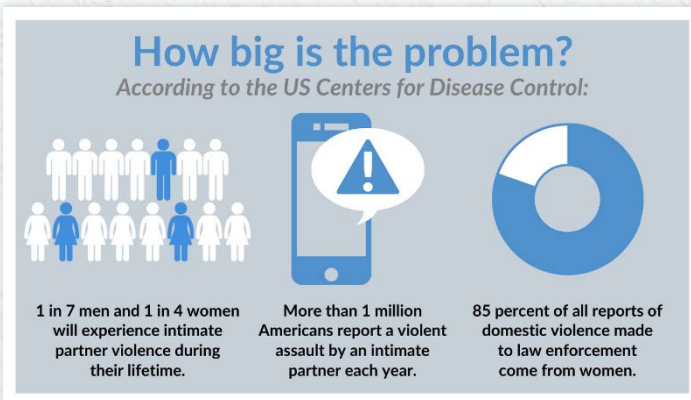
64% of pastors agree that domestic violence occurs in the lives of people in their congregations.

What is domestic violence?

Also known as intimate partner violence, domestic abuse or relationship abuse, domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. Abuse takes on many forms and may include any combination of physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and financial, spiritual abuse and/or control. In some cases, the abuse never includes physical violence, but the effect on victims can be every bit as severe.

Who is affected?

Domestic violence is a problem in every community and social group. It does not discriminate by geography, ethnicity, income level, religion, gender or educational attainment.



How does it impact the church?

Domestic violence should be a concern for every religious leader. Domestic violence victims are more likely to disclose the abuse to someone in their faith community than they are to seek help from law enforcement.

- 84% of pastors have counseled 6 or more victims of domestic abuse
- 30% of domestic violence victims are affiliated with a church
- 81% of pastors say they would take action to reduce domestic violence if they had more training

Why should churches take action?

Pastors have a spiritual mandate to ensure the safety of their congregation. By acknowledging the reality of domestic violence, they are communicating that victims are seen and that their church is a safe place.

Churches can lead the way through prevention of abuse by sharing what healthy relationships are in marriage preparation courses and youth groups.

A healthy, God-centered family is the foundational building block and the most important institution in society. The church works to shepherd family units to better reflect the love and compassion of Christ. It also plays a vital role in providing a safe home and a loving family for men, women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

What can churches do?

Pastors and church leaders are positioned to provide real help to victims and to prevent abuse from happening in the first place. There are numerous tools and resources you can use to equip yourself, your staff, your volunteers and your congregation. You can take a stand and make a difference by:

- Becoming educated about the realities of all forms of domestic violence
- Providing ongoing training for staff and volunteers
- Believing and supporting church members who say they are victims
- Creating a culture where victims feel safe disclosing
- Don't offer couple's counseling when abuse is suspected or confirmed; counsel individually
- Empowering your small group leaders, youth leaders and children's ministry teammates to respond
- Making resources available to your congregation
- Publically supporting efforts to bring an end to domestic violence
- Partnering with your local domestic violence agency

To learn more about preventing domestic violence in your church, or if someone needs assistance, call the Sheltering Wings 24/7 helpline at (317) 745-1496.



Healthy Me. Stronger Us.
shelteringwings.org