



TIP SHEET 1

What does the Bible say about Domestic and Family Violence?

All Humans deserve to be treated with dignity, respect and love.

The Bible is very clear about how we should treat one another. In the book of Genesis, God says we are created in His image, with inherent worth and dignity. Therefore, all people should be treated in a way consistent with this dignity (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 27:37-40).

The Bible never condones domestic or family violence.

Violence by one image bearer against another is condemned in the Bible. As such, domestic violence is sinful. Any attempt to use the Bible to condone abuse of any kind is a distortion of Scripture (e.g. Galatians 5:19-26, 2 Timothy 3:2-3). On the contrary, the Bible encourages us to serve one another in love.

What does the Bible say about submission?

People who use violence may misuse the Bible, especially Ephesians 5:22-23 out of context to condone controlling behaviour. These verses read: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church.”

(NIV)

“Submission is to be voluntary, not forced. Never. It is not the husband’s job to make his wife submit. The Bible opposes all coercion or manipulation and any attempts to restrict a woman’s freedom to move or speak.” – Sandy Grant

The word submission here does not mean that a wife need be a “door mat” and do whatever her husband says. Her submission is a voluntary choice, it is not for husbands to force onto their wives. The passage uses a bodily image to reflect an order in relationships which is neither inferior nor superior.

Marital submission – when biblically understood as a choice a wife makes – is not oppressive, but part of God’s good order for marriage. Conversely, husbands should treat their wives with a sacrificial love that rejects control and violence.

God is opposed to violence in marriage and in the family.

The Bible warns husbands to be considerate of their wives, and to treat them lovingly. Healthy relationships are characterised by sacrificial love, as shown to us by Jesus Christ. This includes respect, consideration and mutual love (e.g. Mark 10:42-45, Ephesians 5:21-33, Hebrews 13:4).



“Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:43-45 (NIV)

If you are concerned that you or someone you know is experiencing or at risk of Domestic and Family Violence, please contact the **Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU)** and inform the *Breaking the Silence* Representative or leadership of your church.

Conduct Protocol Unit, Presbyterian Church of Australia (NSW, ACT, WA, TAS)

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SUPPORT SERVICES

1800 RESPECT - National Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Counselling Service

24/7 support and advice for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence or abuse.

Ph: [1800 737 732](tel:1800737732) Web: 1800respect.org.au

NSW Domestic Violence Line

24/7 information, support and referrals for women experiencing violence.

Ph: [1800 656 463](tel:1800656463)

Web: domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help

NSW Child Protection Helpline

24/7 helpline for reporting concerns for the safety of children and young people.

Ph: [132 111](tel:132111) Web: reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s

No to Violence: Men's Referral Service

National service providing advice and support for men using violence.

Ph: [1300 766 491](tel:1300766491) Web: ntv.org.au

MensLine

National service supporting men experiencing violence in a relationship.

Ph: [1300 789 978](tel:1300789978) Web: mensline.org.au

FURTHER RESOURCES

Conduct Protocol Unit. ***Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training Workbook***. Presbyterian Church NSW, 2023. Online: breakingthesilence.org.au/resources.

Holcomb, J.S. and Holcomb, L.A. ***Is it my fault? Hope and healing for those suffering domestic violence***. Moody Publishers, 2014.

Professional Standards Unit, ***Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse***. Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney, 2018, Online: safeministry.org.au/domestic-family-abuse.

Smith, C. ***God's Good Design: What the Bible really says about Men and Women***. Matthias Media, 2012.

Women's Legal Services NSW. ***Hot Topics: Domestic Violence***. Legal Information Access Centre, 2019. Online: legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/hot-topics-domestic-violence.