

Spousal Abuse

According to the Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments), the order God established for the marriage relationship, patterned after those within the Trinity, is to be complementary, whereby the strengths of the husband and wife would enhance and enrich one another – the seeming weaknesses of one calling forth the strengths of the other, and vice versa. As a designated helper to her husband, the wife is called to surround, to aid, protect, and assist her husband. As the designated leader in the family, the husband is to sacrificially and benevolently care for, nurture, and provide for his wife and family. Lived out within the marriage and family, these relationships not only produce harmony and security, but are satisfying to the heart as well and cause the spouse to flourish.

Scripture makes clear that marriage, the union of a man and woman, is to be reflective of the sacrificial love relationship Jesus has with His Bride – the Church – and the commitment He has made to prepare her as His own unblemished Bride. Though this study encourages women to live out the Creator's original design, we recognize that abusive relationships exist in a fallen world.

When these roles fall into patterns that are self-seeking, demeaning, and destructive physically, psychologically or mentally to the spouse (usually the wife), they are in direct conflict with God's purposes and undermine the dignity God has granted each as His image-bearers. In that case, the abused spouse must understand that God is not requiring submission to destructive treatment, which often escalates.

While restoration and reconciliation should be the ultimate goal, we recommend that the abused spouse seek help, keeping the circle of support relatively small to facilitate repentance on behalf of the abuser. Matthew 18 lays out a good pattern for addressing the sin of abuse. The first step would be to thoughtfully and at an appropriate time address the offense (call it abuse) with the abuser. If that does not prove fruitful, one or two people who are understanding and prudent, and who can verify the pattern of abuse should accompany the abused spouse. If there is no acknowledgment or admission of guilt on behalf of the abuser, and the pattern continues, then the counsel of a trusted pastor, elder, or counselor should be sought. If there is a threat to one's personhood, steps should be taken to secure protection for all in the household who might be endangered.

While no person can change another's heart, God can. In fact, He tells us that He is greater than our hearts. (I John 3:20) For that reason, enlisting the support of a few trusted friends who pray will be very effective as well.

If you suspect that you are living with spousal abuse, we would like to offer help. You may email us at hiddenheartministry@gmail.com.