

**THE ROLE OF A LOCAL CHURCH IN ENDING
MARITAL ABUSE INVOLVING CHRISTIANS**

By

Peter Francis Rutledge

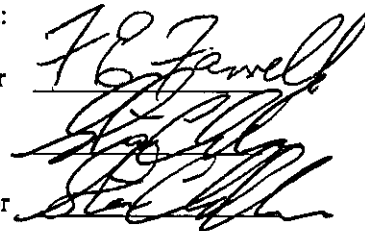
A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of
REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

Approved:

Advisor

Second Reader

Director

The image shows three handwritten signatures in black ink. The top signature is for the Advisor, the middle one for the Second Reader, and the bottom one for the Director. Each signature is written over a horizontal line.

May 2002

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this dissertation are from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1977 by the Lockman Foundation. Used with permission. Those identified NIV are from the New International Version of the Bible, copyright © 1983 by the New York International Bible Society. Used with permission.

Copyright © 2002 by Peter Rutledge

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Rutledge, Peter Francis.

2002 The Role of Restorative Church Discipline in Ending Marital Abuse Involving Christians, Doctor of Ministry, Reformed Theological Seminary. 236 pp.

This dissertation provides a biblical, historical and theological framework for a local church to confront and deal with the sin of marital abuse among its members. It develops a methodology of restorative church discipline for church leaders to use within the setting of a local church. In so doing, it provides a process for a church to follow to deal with other forms of sinful behavior and other situations of pastoral care.

Marital abuse involving professing Christians as victims or perpetrators is a particularly appropriate focus for restorative church discipline for four reasons:

1. It is a form of sin that is virtually unacknowledged within Church communities, though it clearly exists and cripples the lives of a significant number of professing believers (Chapter One).
2. It is a form of sin that the Word of God specifically identifies, condemns, and cleans by the restoring grace of the gospel (Chapter Two).
3. It is a form of sin that the Church throughout its long history has failed to appropriately or faithfully apply restorative church discipline to (Chapter Three).
4. It is a form of sin that local churches are discouraged from confronting in a biblical manner, preferring instead to pass on their wounded people to pseudo-Christian

or secular counselors, who are little more than wolves in shepherd's clothing (Chapter Four).

This dissertation sets forth a detailed model for the implementation of restorative church discipline, with step by step directions for church leaders and lay persons, to lovingly and wisely confront perpetrators and care for victims within the context of a church (Chapter Five). The study concludes by providing useful resources for local churches to activate this new paradigm of ministry (Chapter Six).

To my wife

Janine

And our family

E iti noa ana, na te aroha.

Although the present is small,

It is given out of love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful for many companions in the journey of writing this dissertation. I thank Dr. Frank Farrell, my supervisor, Prof. Steven Childers, the director of D.Min Studies at Reformed Theological Seminary, and Joyce Sisler for their generous supervision and assistance. I also thank Jacquie Sebbage, Tiani Rutledge-Wilkes, and Elizabeth Kendal, my outside reader, for helping me hone and improve the writing. I am indebted to the support and encouragement of Bentleigh Baptist Church, VIC, and Melville Baptist Church, WA, for releasing me to counsel, write and research on this topic. It is inappropriate of me to identify the victims or perpetrators of marital abuse who were willing to share with me their sorrow and struggle, but I must acknowledge their contribution to this work. I thank them for their pain and patience.

If I had known at the outset that it would take me nine years and four trips across the Pacific Ocean to complete this task, I might not have attempted it. I thank my wife, Janine, and our children, Tiani, Caleb, and Tobias, for their sacrifice, kindness, generosity and encouragement that made it possible. Above all else, I thank the God of all grace for opening my eyes to the plight of my brethren in marital abuse, and for permitting me to see how His unfailing love and astonishing grace can transform and restore their lives. To God be the glory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Thesis Question.....	6
Definitions.....	7
Significance.....	8
Goals.....	8
Delimitations.....	9
Assumption.....	10
Research methodologies.....	11
CHAPTER 2 BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ISSUES INVOLVED.....	13
What is the Biblical Warrant for Church Discipline?.....	15
Matthew 18:15-20.....	16
First Corinthians 5.....	21
Second Corinthians 2:5-11.....	26
Second Thessalonians 3:6-15.....	27
First Timothy 1:20.....	29
First Timothy 5:19-20.....	29
Titus 3:10-11.....	31
What are the Active Ingredients in Church Discipline?.....	31
Who Should Undertake the Church Discipline?.....	32
What Offences Necessitate Church Discipline?.....	34
Does Marital Abuse Justify Church Discipline?.....	36
Genesis 3:16.....	36
Genesis 4:23.....	38
Deuteronomy 24:1-4.....	38

Malachi 2:14-16	41
Other Assorted Texts from the Old Testament	42
Jesus and Matthew 5:31-32.....	46
Ephesians 5	50
First Corinthians 7:15	52
Other Assorted Texts From the New Testament.....	55
Chapter Summary	57

CHAPTER 3 THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE--HOW HAS THE CHURCH IN THE PAST USED CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN DEALING WITH MARITAL ABUSE?..... 59

The Ancient Roman, Greek and Jewish Worlds.....	60
The Early Years of the Church	62
Tertullian (c.160-c.230)	63
John Chrysostom (c.347-40).....	64
Augustine of Hippo (354-430).....	65
The Medieval Church	67
Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)	68
The Reformation	69
Martin Luther (1483-1546).....	70
John Calvin (1509-1564)	71
The Anabaptists (16th Century).....	72
The Puritans (16th and 17th Centuries)	73
Richard Baxter (1615-1691)	75
William Perkins (1558-1602)	77
William Ames (1576-1633)	79
Theodore Beza (1519-1605).....	79
Chapter Summary	80

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF THE PROBLEM.....82

Why Has Church Discipline Ceased in the Local Church?	83
Reason 1. An Ignorance of What It Involves.....	83
Reason 2. An Unwillingness to Be Disciplined.....	84
Reason 3. The Fear of a Censorious Spirit	85
Reason 4. The Fear of Being Condemned for Judging Others	86
Reason 5. The Fear of Negative Outcomes	87
Reason 6. The Market-Driven Individualism of the Age	88
Reason 7. Spiritual Immaturity and Shallow Piety.....	89
Reason 8. The Transitory Mobility and Lack of Connectedness of Congregations.....	90
Reason 9. The Sinful Neglect of Pastors and Elders	91
Reason 10. The Ministry of Counseling	93

Reason 11. A Lack of Love for One Another	95
What Has Made Church Discipline for Marital Abuse So Difficult in the Local Church?	96
Expose the Common Myths	96
Myth 1: Marital Abuse Is Not That Bad, and Its Victims Do Not Suffer Much	97
Myth 2: Marital Abuse Is Caused by Stress.....	101
Myth 3: Marital Abuse Happens to Poor People.....	102
Myth 4: Only Those Affected by Alcohol or Drugs Engage in Marital Abuse	103
Myth 5: If Victims of Marital Abuse Do Not Like It, They Can Leave	103
Myth 6: Marital Abuse is Something Men Do, Not Women.....	105
Myth 7: The Victim is Never Responsible for His or Her Abuse, Even in Part.....	107
Confront the Distorted Beliefs	109
The Subordination Distortion: Wives Submit, Husbands Dominate	110
The Order of Creation.....	112
Headship and the Trinity.....	115
First Timothy 2:11-12	118
The Suffering Servant Argument: Marital Suffering is Christ-like Martyrdom.....	121
The Forgiveness Argument: Forgiveness is Unconditional.....	124
The No Divorce Argument: Abuse is No Ground for Divorce.....	130
Adultery (<i>Porneia</i>)	133
Desertion	136
Chapter Summary	139
 CHAPTER 5 SYNTHESIS: TOWARD A SOLUTION.....	140
Getting the Attitude Right.....	140
With Love	141
With Humility	143
With Gentleness	144
With Impartiality and Fairness.....	145
With Godly Sorrow	146
With Joy	146
Getting the Actions Right	148
Demonstrate a Commitment to Confront the Secret.....	149
Preaching and Teaching.....	149

Pastoral Prayer	150
Establish Specific Pastoral Training Programs.....	150
Identify the Characteristics of Perpetrators of Marital Abuse	151
Identify the Victims of Marital Abuse	155
Provide Safety for Victims.....	157
A Safe Haven if they Separate	157
A Safe Haven if they Remain Together	159
Provide Immediate Support for Victims	160
Restore Self-Esteem.....	161
Establish Reality--Remove Unrealistic Hope	162
Restore Fellowship and Remove Isolation	163
Redirect Emotional Dependency	165
Stop the Perpetrator Committing the Abuse	167
Confront the Denial.....	169
Confront the Anger and Abuse	171
Reconstruct the Marriage Bond	177
Build an Intimate Relationship with God	178
Chapter Summary	179
 CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION.....	 181
Research Summary	182
Conclusions and Findings	184
Recommendations and Resources.....	187
Recommendations for Local Churches	187
Recommendations for Educators and Counselors	189
Resources	190
Final Summary.....	192
 APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A -- CYCLE OF VIOLENCE	194
APPENDIX B -- SAFETY PLAN	195
APPENDIX C -- RESOURCES	197
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 202
 SCRIPTURE INDEX.....	 217
 INDEX	 221
 VITA.....	 226

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1 -- BIDERMAN'S CHART OF COERCION.....100
TABLE 2 -- QUESTIONS FOR THOSE INTENDING MARRIAGE.....154

ABBREVIATIONS

FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
NCLS	National Church Life Survey
n.d.	no date
NIV	New International Version
n.p.	no page
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
RTS	Reformed Theological Seminary
v.	verse (plural, vv.)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mary and Joe came as refugees to Australia with their two children. They had little family support in this new country and very limited financial resources, but Joe got a job straight away. Both were professing believers and had become members of a large inner city church. Joe was invited to join a ministry team working with troubled youth. By outward appearances, they were a happy couple. It was a sham. Joe was a hardened abuser.

Mary and Joe were raised in conservative, evangelical homes where they had been taught that a Christian wife must never leave her husband, no matter what. In the cultural community in which Mary and Joe grew up, husbands were to be respected and obeyed without question, divorce was virtually unheard of, and wives were certainly not permitted to bring legal actions against their husbands for any reason.

Joe began to abuse Mary soon after they were married in their country of origin. When they migrated to Australia, Mary had hoped that the move might help Joe change. It did not. If anything he got worse. She sought and received some counseling help for herself from a secular agency. But she could not accept the counselor's advice to leave Joe or to regard Christianity and her church as part of the abuse problem.

On one occasion when she had been beaten severely Mary went to her pastor. She felt that he was reluctant to do anything for her. She was told that her domestic

situation was a private matter between her husband and herself. Further marital counseling was suggested but not taken up because Joe refused to admit it was necessary. He verbally and physically abused Mary for suggesting it and for bringing shame on him by going to their pastor.

It distressed Mary that her pastor seemed unwilling to take the abuse seriously. Joe's involvement in the church's youth ministry and his participation at worship were never challenged. Nor was his abusive behavior.

When an episode of abuse reached a point that Mary received physical wounds, she was advised by the pastor to separate from Joe for a time. However, no practical support was offered to make this possible.

Today Mary remains in the marital home and the occasional battering continues. She lives in a constant state of fear. Mary only attends church spasmodically now because they have moved to a different house. Joe continues to worship regularly in the same church where he now holds a position on the church's executive council. The pastor whom Mary spoke to has moved on to another charge. She has not shared her grief with the new pastor. She says, "What's the point?"

The issues raised by Mary and Joe's story are real, complex and considerable. Mary's plight is not unusual or rare. While domestic abuse is now recognized as a widespread and serious problem among the community at large¹, there is a perception

¹According to Carlos Carcach and Marianne James in their paper, "Homicide between intimate partners in Australia," about three people in Australia are killed each fortnight by a lover, spouse or former partner (1998:2). More Australian women are likely to be victims of serious physical and sexual assault by their own partner than any other assailant. In excess of a quarter of the 2,226 homicides in Australia between 1989 and 1996 were "intimate homicides" between close partners. Many more are bruised, maimed and scarred (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996).

that this abuse does not extend into the community of professing Christians. Nothing could be further from the truth. According to a recent study conducted by Glenys Conrade in Anglican and Uniting Churches throughout Australia, one in every ten of their families will harbor a situation of marital abuse (1993:2). It is appalling that this evil behavior should exist among members of our churches, but it does.

In 1993 a study of more than 2,000 men and women who regularly attended the Roman Catholic parishes of Brisbane Archdiocese revealed that almost one quarter of men and more than one third of women were involved in domestic abuse, either as victims or perpetrators (Conrade 1993:2). A 1994 study of domestic abuse within Anglican communities revealed that 36% of victims regularly attended church with the partner who had or was abusing them. Even more incredibly, this study showed that almost half of those who admitted being abusers held leadership positions or offices in the churches they attended (Conrade 1993:2).

Anne Amos states the challenge facing the local church today:

In Victoria, Australia, during 1995-96, Victorian Police received 15,613 reports of incidents of family violence according to information provided by the Victoria Police Family Violence Project Office. During the same period there were 17,055 applications for Intervention Orders in Victorian Magistrates Courts. According to the Department of Justice Victoria, there were 13,394 applications (or 79%) involving women as the victims of domestic violence (1996:3). In a study conducted in Melbourne in November 1993 and February 1994, questionnaire responses from women attending general practitioners revealed that 28% of the women surveyed had experienced either physical or emotional abuse within their current relationship in the previous year (Department of Justice Victoria 1996:5).

The situation in the USA is just as desperate. Marital abuse is the leading cause of injury for women aged 15 to 44. Jane O' Reilly described the magnitude of this largely unacknowledged problem: "Nearly 6 million wives will be abused by their husbands in any one year. Some 2,000 to 4,000 women are beaten to death annually. The nation's police spend one-third of their time responding to domestic violence calls. Battery is the single major cause of injury to women, more significant than accidents, rapes or muggings" (1983:23). During 1992-1993, a partner or ex-partner committed 28 percent of all aggravated assaults and 29 percent of all simple assaults against women. According to US police reports, a woman is beaten every 15 seconds. Despite this appalling number, the FBI estimates that only 1 out of 10 spouse-beatings are reported to the authorities (O' Reilly 1983:23).

The alarmingly high incidence of domestic violence, even within the church community, demands that the church answer again the call to be prophet, priest and servant to those who are outside the bounds of honourable marriage. This is a call to walk a barely chartered route where brigands lurk, but on that road are the women [and men] who have come asking the church to be their carer/advocates and to empower them to be visitors (1991:61).

That a problem of such proportions could exist, largely unabated, looms as one of the greatest challenges facing the church today. Our reluctance to admit there is a problem in many of our own members' homes has meant that the cry of the wounded has gone largely unnoticed and unheeded. The sin of the abuser has been tolerated and the plight of the victim has not been relieved.

Valerie Cox, coordinator of Domestic Violence Intervention and Protective Services for the New South Wales Baptist Community Services, writes:

Until recently, the Church has been slow to denounce violence carried out behind closed doors in church families. Reasons put forward for this include: a strongly-held opinion that violence does not occur in Christian families; . . . the sense of helplessness cause by a lack of the knowledge and skills needed to deal with the situation's complexities; confusing interpretations often given to biblical passages on forgiveness, marriage and the purpose of suffering--interpretations that seem to justify a continued acceptance of the abuser; [and] a desire to protect the good name of the Church and the Christian faith. Whatever the reason for its slowness to address the issue, the Church's silence implies complicity with the abuser. It denies the victim the safety and compassion they have a right to expect from the Church as an instrument of Christ's love and peace in the world. It deprives the abuser of the necessary challenge to accept responsibility for his behavior, to repent sincerely, and to provide genuine restitution and compensation (1994:3).

When I uncovered a "Mary and Joe" in my own congregation I was shocked, but determined to try and help. I searched for materials and advice from my reformed

evangelical colleagues and my most trusted contemporary writers, only to discover that very few had anything at all to say about this pastoral concern.

I have come to understand why victims have likened church leaders to the religious leaders Jesus describes in the parable of the Good Samaritan. We pass them by when they are bruised and broken, offering little comfort or help, and leaving them for others to do the bandaging and provide for their needs. The "Samaritans" who come to their aid are often enamored by secular feminism and leave the victim with seeds of resentment and antagonism for the church. Thus, the victim is cursed three-fold: first, by her abuser, then by her church leaders, and finally by those who come to her aid.

William Stacey and Anson Shupe in their book, The Family Secret, are particularly harsh in their criticism of the approaches of more conservative denominations to the victims of abuse, a judgment that may be overstated but is nevertheless to be taken seriously.

Women in Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and conservative Protestant churches (such as the Church of Christ, the Southern Baptist Church, and various fundamentalist denominations) are most likely to find their priests or ministers of little help. The kinds of family conflict that might lead to divorce or separation threaten these groups. Their clergy are likely to recall the admonitions of Saint Paul on controlling women and use them to justify telling women she must stay in the abusive home. Here women will probably be counseled by a minister to "try to be a better wife" or to "be more considerate of him" and "obey him." Leaving the abusive marriage, divorcing him, will be branded desertion or a sin, shifting the blame to her. In short, if she is a churchgoing battered woman her chances of getting meaningful ministerial help are better in churches of a more moderate-to-liberal persuasion such as Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Unitarian (1983:105-106).

Research of past teachers of renown revealed what I believe to be a tragic tale of pastoral irresponsibility in their discussions on marital abuse. Few offered any

consolation or sympathy to the abused. Fewer still censured the perpetrators. Biblical passages that could offer guidance on this matter to the church were largely ignored or distorted.

This study is a call to do something positive for both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse. It is therefore a summons to a discipleship that is costly to those in the local church, but it is the way of grace. This is the costly grace of the gospel rather than the cheap grace of this world. Pastor and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, made this distinction in his classic, *The Cost of Discipleship*: "Costly grace is the only pure grace, which really forgives sins and gives freedom to the sinner....Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance" (1963:57,47).

It is a recognition that the members of local churches have a responsibility before God to rediscover the grace of church discipline--caring enough to confront and intervene. It is a call to apply biblical principles of church discipline involved in restoring abusers with grace and to grace, while also bringing grace to the victims of abuse so they can live without fear, without bitterness and without bondage.

Thesis Question

How should a local church use church discipline biblically and effectively to end marital abuse involving their members?

Definitions

The following terms will be used in this study:

- *Marriage*: "Marriage is a formal (covenantal) arrangement between two persons to become each other's loving companions for life" (Adams 1980:13).
- *The local church*: A local church is an organized local gathering of professing Christians who voluntarily commit themselves to live out their Christian faith together, under the Lordship of Christ, caring for and nurturing one another.
- *Domestic abuse, marital abuse*: "Domestic abuse" and "marital abuse" are the physical, sexual, psychological, and verbal abuse "perpetrated against a person by that person's spouse, former spouse, partner, former partner or by the other parent of a minor child" (McCue 1995:87).
- *Perpetrator and victim*: The perpetrator is the person who does the abusing. The victim is the person who is the object of the perpetrator's abuse. Either the husband or the wife can be the perpetrator just as either can be the victim.
- *Church discipline*: John White and Ken Blue define church discipline as "the training in godliness of the church by the church...Church discipline is anything the body of Christ does to train Christians in holiness, calling them to follow their Lord more closely" (1985:19).

Significance

This study is significant in that it will strengthen the local church's ability to care for a largely unacknowledged group in their midst--those who live under the tyranny and bondage of marital abuse. A caring response that does justice to sound biblical and theological principles will fill a void in pastoral literature.

This study will also expand the practical resources available to that large company of pastors in small local churches, including myself, who do not have the access to the help of trained counselors or specialists in abuse counseling. It may also be of value as a resource I can use in the preparation and training of theological students in theological institutions here in Western Australia.

From a personal perspective, this study will deepen my own understanding of how God uses His church to bring personal, family and church transformation. In so doing, it will help me be a more effective shepherd in the church I pastor.

Goals

In this study I will seek to develop a set of biblically-based principles for a local church to use restorative church discipline to put an end to marital abuse among its members. This will involve the fulfillment of four related goals:

1. **Biblical/Theological Goal (Chapter 2 Goal)**

A description of the process and practices of church discipline applied to marital abuse in a local church from a biblical and theological perspective.

2. **Historical/Literature Review Goal (Chapter 3 Goal)**

A description of the teachings and practice of church discipline applied to marital abuse from Tertullian to the Puritan era.

3. Analysis Goal (Chapter 4 Goal)

An evaluation of the problem in light of 1) The biblical/theological findings (Chapter two) and 2) the historical/literature review (Chapter 3) findings.

4. Synthesis Goal (Chapter 5 Goal)

A suggestion for how these descriptions and evaluations can be used to develop a model for equipping church leaders and congregations to end marital abuse in their local churches.

Delimitations

Because of the complexity of this topic, the scope of this research must be multi-disciplinary in nature, drawing from several diverse sources. But because of the vast nature of this topic, the primary focus of my research must be limited to pastoral, theological and historical studies specifically addressing the relationship between church discipline and marital abuse. The Christian Church may be slow to address these matters, but the secular world has been doing so for more than a generation. As such a great many studies have been, and are being, conducted and published addressing concerns that are closely related to this project, but are not addressed in this discussion. This is not to imply that these untouched areas of concern are not important or valuable. Research time and space did not permit everything to be included in this study.

This study is not designed to create a new ministry model for the purpose of simple imitation. Instead, this research is designed to develop a set of pastoral principles and practices that will aid church members and their leaders in addressing a variety of pastoral concerns that face Christians. This study is written primarily for those who will be teaching and equipping church members, pastors and church leaders for the next generation.

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made prior to beginning the research:

1. The supreme authority and sufficiency of the Bible. This study assumes that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience. While the believer has a responsibility to apply the principles and precepts of God's Word to every sphere of life, including the most difficult and complex moral and ethical issues, he is dependent on the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Bible's meaning and application.
2. The corruption and tragedy of sin. This study presumes that sin is a continuing reality in the life of believers that needs to be dealt with. A believer's sin must be continuously exposed, confronted, and repented of. This study does not assume that Christians must accept a bondage to particular sinful habits and practices. Rather, it seeks to highlight the grace of God in breaking these chains of habitual sin.

3. The transforming power of the grace of God working through His people, the church. This study assumes that the key to personal, church and cultural transformation is to be found in recovering the power of God's grace. The study presumes that God is pleased to use the local church to bring this transformation about. When the church is living in the power of the Spirit it is active in seeking and pursuing holiness among its members. It is the intention and work of the Holy Spirit to work through the means of church discipline to make Christians holy. The pastor and church leaders in a local church need not fear that they have insufficient wisdom or skill to deal with complex and difficult problems among their members. The Holy Spirit is pleased to graciously and miraculously use His humble people to accomplish His work of grace. The research conducted for this dissertation will determine the validity of these assumptions.

Research Methodology

The methodology for this study will be a combination of exegetical, theological, historical, and pastoral research. Data will be collected from a variety of primary documents. The resources for review will be written materials. The literature encompasses two basic areas: 1) the Bible, 2) selected authors and studies, past and present, who have done research or made comments on the subjects of marital abuse, marriage and divorce, and church discipline. Special attention will be given to collecting pertinent material from Christian practitioners who are involved in counseling or caring for both victims and perpetrators of marital abuse.

Primary literary resources for understanding the biblical, theological, historical, and pastoral perspectives of this subject will be acquired from the university libraries and theological college libraries available in Melbourne and Perth, Australia. Attempts will be made to use the three libraries of campuses of Reformed Theological Seminary located in Orlando, Florida; Jackson, Mississippi; and Charlotte, North Carolina.

I anticipate collecting significant data from the Internet. The interlibrary loan system will also be used to supplement any data necessary for this study. A critical review and analysis of the material will follow after gathering all the relevant data.

Exegetical research methodologies will be utilized for the study of the biblical texts relevant to this study. Special care will be given to studying those portions of Scripture that relate to this subject of marital abuse in their original languages, where possible. Pastoral, theological and historical research methodologies will be utilized for the study of the writings of past and present writers who will be consulted.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ISSUES INVOLVED

It may seem strange to some that a study of the local church's response to marital abuse should begin with a consideration of church discipline. Some might legitimately ask why the first response is not directed to the victim rather than the perpetrator. It is vital that the victim be rendered relief and a place of safety. However, if the church wants to put an end to marital abuse, and not merely assist those who are in danger, it must focus concern on the abuser in their midst. The perpetrator is also a victim--a victim of his or her sinful behavior. In this regard, I concur with Steven R. Fleming, who wrote,

Victims of violence should always be of primary concern. However, the violent abuser may be dealt an injustice as well, characteristically very different from the injustice experienced by victims. Ironically, as the church fails to meet the needs of the abused wife, it also fails the abuser by reinforcing his grip of power in an abusive situation. The church is meant to be a bastion for hurting people, not only the victim, but for the abuser as well (1996:175).

It is important to remember that the church has a responsibility to all its members, including the abusers. Vilifying or banishing them to the "outer darkness" are not what the Lord has prescribed we do, even if we find their sin particularly heinous. These are professing brothers and sisters we are dealing with. We must discover how we can

lovingly confront the perpetrators--bring them under church discipline and lead them to repentance and restoration.

Research has shown that disciplining the abuser is one of the most comforting things we can do for those who are the victims of abuse. A study conducted in Melbourne, Australia, asked victims of domestic abuse what caused them the most grief and anguish. Prominent among their replies were:

1. Disbelief that the perpetrators could be widely respected members (and sometimes leaders) of those [faith] communities ...
2. Anger at the church, because it does not openly condemn violence, it affords sanctuary for violators and does not minister to the violated (Last 1990:30).

It seems to me that the most significant reason for the failure of local churches to confront their members, who are perpetrators of marital abuse, is the demise of church discipline. It is here, in the reviving of church discipline, that we find the greatest chance to bring repentance and rehabilitation to the abuser. Without a recovery of the dynamic biblical principles and practice of church discipline in the local church, the marital abuser can continue to remain in the church unchallenged and unrepentant.

For a number of years now there has been a growing concern that the local church must rediscover its responsibility to engage in restorative church discipline. What was once considered to be a vital mark of the true church is now rarely practiced in the local church. Harold O.J. Brown wrote, "If discipline is a mark of the true Church, as several Reformers insisted, then hardly any modern congregations possess that mark" (1983:52). For a generation several writers have lamented the decline of church discipline within the

church. Robert McQuilkin expressed this concern in an article he wrote in *Christianity Today*, "Whatever Happened To Church Discipline?" (1974:8-12). Daniel Wray also wrote, "It would be difficult to show another area of Christian life that is more commonly ignored by the modern evangelical church than church discipline" (1978:1). White and Blue express a similar concern:

It is no longer possible to deny the need for the healing power of church discipline. An appalling picture is slowly emerging of a church crippled and compromised by every form of sin. Many remedies have been tried and failed. The time has come for all Christians to exercise the costly love of corrective church discipline, restoring it to a place Christ gave it (1985:12).

John McNeill has expressed this same opinion from his perspective as a church historian: "Any Christian communion that would neglect this [church discipline] would abandon an essential of Christianity itself, and any communion in which it is cultivated gives proof of its truly Christian existence" (1951:284).

What is the Biblical Warrant for Church Discipline?

The Bible contains several sections that deal specifically with the principles and practice of church discipline in the local church. It is crucial that we understand these portions of Scripture if we are going to administer restorative church discipline to those Christians who are perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Matthew 18:15-20

There is no more important passage in the New Testament dealing with church discipline than Matthew 18:15-20. These verses are part of Jesus' explanation of who is greatest and least in the kingdom of heaven--a question asked of Him in v.1--"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'" (Mt. 18:1).

Jesus answers by calling a child to Himself and teaching His disciples about humility and pride. The one who is greatest in the kingdom is the one who is humble like a child (vv. 3-4). Put negatively, he who is great in the kingdom of heaven is the one who is not proud. The one who is cursed in the kingdom, for whom the "woe" applies, is the one who causes God's people to stumble or does not help them when they do stumble (vv. 6-9). Again, the inverse is correct: those who are great in the kingdom are those who help the ones who stumble.

The same truth is reinforced in the verses that follow. Jesus tells a story of a shepherd who loses one of his sheep and goes out seeking it until he finds it (vv. 11-14).

The restoration of those who "stumble" continues in the verses following Jesus' teaching on church discipline. Now the focus is on the need for citizens of the kingdom to be people who know and practice forgiveness. Forgiveness and restoration are at the heart of the kingdom ethic (vv. 21-35).

This is the context for the Lord's instruction to the church for dealing with someone who stumbles (vv. 15-20). It is important to notice that it is a "brother" who has

stumbled. Jesus uses the word "brother" here to describe a fellow believer in the same way He uses it in vv. 21 and 35.

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? . . . So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart" (Mt. 18:21, 35).

He uses "brother" in the same way in the Sermon on the Mount.

If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (Mt. 5:23,24).

Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye, 'and behold, the log is in your own eye?" (Mt. 7:4).

It is equally important to note that concern is for the brother because he (or she) has sinned--"And if your brother sins" (Mt. 18:15). The gender is clearly not an issue here. Both male and female believers can fall into sin.

The word "sins" (*harmartano*) is a general word for sin, referring to behavior that falls short of the law of God, from a root idea of "missing the mark." The word itself does not necessarily imply sins against a neighbor. It can and does mean both private and public offenses in other parts of the New Testament.

However, there is some textual support, though not attested by the older manuscripts, for the words "against you" (*eis se*) to qualify the word "sin." This would mean that Jesus is giving instruction specifically concerning "private" offenses only. This would mean that if my brother sins against me then I have a responsibility to

confront him and seek his repentance and restoration. But if the sin does not specifically involve me then this instruction does not apply. Therefore, public sin would be excluded from view here. John Calvin, among others, held to this restriction upon the text (1972:226-227).

Several problems face a privatization of the words "against you." First, the textual evidence for these words is not overwhelming and many modern versions omit them altogether. Secondly, the context and the use of the general word for sin does not lead naturally to the limited "private" application of this text. It is more logical to apply the procedure given by Jesus to both private and public offenses.

What is beyond dispute is Jesus' concern for the restoration of the brother. "And if your brother sins, go . . . you have won your brother" (Mt. 18:15). He is to be "won" over. The word "won" (*kerdaino*), meaning to win or to have success, may relate to the elation a shepherd feels who has found and restored his lost sheep, as in v. 13.

Before the fallen brother is restored, Jesus says he is to be confronted with his sin ("go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother" Mt. 18:15). Restoration is not unconditional. It requires the sinning brother to "listen to you," a phrase which points to the listening of repentance. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" is a common refrain in Jesus' teaching, both in the gospels and the letters to the churches in Revelation, when He was challenging His disciples to repentance (Mk. 4:9; 23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7; 2:11, 17, 2:29; 3:6, 13, 22). In the case of Matthew 18:15, the sinning brother must give evidence of this repentance to the brother who confronts him if he is to be restored.

In the event the sinning brother will not "listen," the loving brother is not excused of his responsibility to his stumbling brother. Verse 16 introduces the second step of the procedure in church discipline he must follow if this happens. "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed" (Mt. 18:16). The purpose for these witnesses is stated in Deuteronomy 19:15: "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed." This does not mean they are to be merely eyewitnesses of the offense, nor are they to be accusers like the ones Jesus condemned in John chapter 8, who had taken a woman they had caught in adultery to Him for His condemnation of her.

These witnesses serve several important purposes such as reinforcing the seriousness of the situation confronting the sinning brother, or such as providing some clarification or objectivity if it is needed to confirm the facts of the matter. Their most important role is to urge the sinning brother to repent in order to be restored.

If the sinning brother continues in his refusal to repent, the loving brother must bring the matter to the church. "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church" (Mt. 18:17). It may well be that Jesus has in mind the whole congregation of the local church, of which this erring brother is a member. Some would limit this to just the members, or, perhaps, just the elders. It would make sense that the elders have a special role in this process as they are the ones charged with the oversight of the flock. The reference in v. 20 to "two or three gathered in His name" may well point to a body like the elders in a local church. In the reformed Baptist tradition, of which I am a part, this

last step is usually undertaken in the presence of the elders. If no repentance follows, then a closed meeting of members should be called to discuss the problem and to seek to have the erring brother restored.

The consequences for refusing to heed the call to repentance and restoration of fellowship are dire indeed. Jesus says "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer" (Mt. 18:17).

In Jewish society few words are more excluding than the designations "gentile" and "tax-gatherer." They identified persons who have no part in the community of the faithful. Unless a Gentile converted, he could not be a part of the worshiping community because he was considered a pagan. Nor could a tax gatherer participate, as his trade was considered unclean. The general attitude of the Jew to a tax gatherer is well-represented by the Pharisee's prayer in Luke 18:11, "God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer."

The sinning brother who does not repent is to be excluded from the benefits and blessings of the local church. The binding and loosing that Jesus describes in v.18 seems to point to the prerogative of the church to cancel a brother's membership, if he continues in sin without repentance. "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 18:18).

It should be noted that despite the prerogative of exclusion being imposed, there is no need to see this as a complete cessation of contact with the erring brother. In fact, there are very good reasons to see such an absolute exclusion as a grave error. It is not

incidental that tax-gatherers and Gentiles were welcomed by Jesus, who showed them grace and kindness. Matthew, a former tax-gatherer, was a recipient of this grace and love. His fellow tax-gatherers were numbered among those to whom Jesus showed extraordinary grace. So too was the Gentile Samaritan woman, as indeed others like her were.

The juxtapositioning of the teaching on forgiveness that follows these directions provides another reason for reaching out in loving grace to those who have drifted away, rather than shunning them completely. Grace is to operate throughout the process of church discipline because Jesus is involved in every part of it. His encouragement to pray and come together in His name in vv. 19 and 20 reinforce the need for divine grace to undertake so great and important a task as church discipline. Wisdom and grace from God are desperately needed for all those who are participants in the process (Hendriksen 1974:702).

First Corinthians 5

Another important passage in any discussion of church discipline is in First Corinthians, chapter 5. This letter gives us an insight into one of the early churches. It is not always a pretty sight. The letter reveals a local church marked by division, carnality, false doctrine, pride and immorality.

Chapter 5 continues Paul's concern for these Christians. Its focus is on the "immorality" (*porneia*--the broad word for sins of the flesh) that exists within the church. Yet Paul does not merely give a general warning against the evils of immorality. He

deals with a specific case--a man who has committed incest. "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife" (1 Cor. 5:1).

In Paul's judgment, incest is a sin that brings the church into greater disrepute than other sins generally do. It is something that even the pagan unbeliever ("the Gentiles") is unwilling to do. The verb "has" (*ekein*) may well indicate that this person has been involved in this sinful relationship over a long period of time.

Paul's concern is not just for those members involved in this sin. He is also concerned about the attitude the other members have demonstrated in dealing with this situation in their midst. The church's members seem to have derived pride and not shame from this sorry state. They are unmoved by the breach of integrity this erring member has brought to their collective profession as God's people. "And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst" (1 Cor. 5:2). Paul will not stand by indifferently and let this situation continue. He has already made his own judgment. "For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present" (1 Cor. 5:3).

The church members must act just as urgently. They must meet to discuss the matter in much the same way as Jesus prescribed in Matthew 18--in His name and His power--and then act. "In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:4). The appropriate action is to deliver the sinning brother over to Satan. "I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan

for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

There is a good deal of debate as to what this action involves. There are three common interpretations. Some suggest that v. 5 points to a deliverance of the sinning individual to physical death. Emphasis is placed upon the phrase "the destruction of his flesh." Those who favor this view, point to the case of those who died ("slept") because they defiled the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:30), and the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, who died when they were revealed to be frauds.

Others suggest v. 5 points to the delivering of the sinful person over to hardship and strife--just as God did with Adam and Eve when they sinned and were turned out of the Garden of Eden. Likewise, the man who is delivered to Satan for the destruction of his flesh is likened to Israel being delivered over to the tragedy of exile and sorrow for its sin.

The most commonly held view is that v. 5 points to the church delivering a sinning brother to the domain of Satan by excommunication. Some prefer to call this process "disfellowshipping" or "expulsion." It recognizes that when a person is put out of the church he or she has been put outside the collective realm of Christ's grace and has been returned to the realm of Satan. Calvin wrote, "He therefore calls it 'delivered to Satan,' because the devil is without the church, as Christ is in the church" (1949:508).

Paul's instructions in vv. 9 to 13 harmonize with this interpretation. The call to "not associate with immoral people" (v. 9), to not associate or even socialize with a so-called brother who is immoral (v. 11), the references to those "within the church" (v. 12)

and "those who are outside" (v. 12), and the command to "remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (v. 13) is compelling evidence that excommunication is in Paul's mind. This view also accords well with his use of the words "flesh" (*sarx*) and "Spirit" (*pneuma*) to describe the two conflicting forces in the lives of believers.

The goal of the church's discipline, when it is faced with a matter of the seriousness of First Corinthians 5, is to bring about the "destruction" of the carnality and evil that has taken this brother captive. By this action of the church, his prideful arrogance will be destroyed so that, in humility, he will seek the grace and forgiveness of Christ. Rather than severing the brother from the church irreversibly, excommunication can be a means of grace leading to repentance and restoration.

What specifically did excommunication involve? First Corinthians 5 provides five features:

1. The church has no responsibility or prerogative to impose the church discipline of excommunication on the nonchurched. It makes no sense to do so. The church is not called to judge the "outsiders" (v. 12). God will judge them in His own time (v. 13).
2. The church has a responsibility to judge those who are its members which includes the possibility of imposing this discipline of excommunication (v. 12). I doubt that "those who are within the church" can be limited to those who have made a formal link with a local church through the process and ritual of becoming an "official" church member. It is the normal pattern in today's local churches of all mainstream denominations to have a percentage of regular attenders or adherents who are professing

believers and committed to their local church, but who are not formal members. Such people who, for whatever reason, are unwilling or unable to become formal members, but who are by every practical criteria committed members of the local church, must be included as those for whom this injunction applies.

Some form of public declaration had to be made to identify the person or persons who came under this censure. Paul's language in these verses points to the kind of public disclosure that enables the local church to take the appropriate actions toward the erring brother.

3. There were specific breaches of conduct that demanded excommunication. Paul gives a list of offenses in v. 11. "If he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler" (1 Cor. 5:11). There is no reason to believe this is the complete list of offenses that might bring about this kind of church discipline. What is significant about the type of behaviors mentioned here is that they are all sins which, when known, can bring terrible public ridicule and shame upon the reputation and integrity of the church as well as the individual involved.

4. Excommunication in practical terms apparently meant a cessation of association (v. 11), of sharing meals (v. 11) and of fellowship (v. 13). Leon Morris says that this involved a severing of all "familiar intercourse" (1958:94).

The reference to the cessation of shared meals in v. 11 is accepted by most to include the exclusion of the person from sharing in the Lord's Supper. But it means much more than this. Paul Engle would suggest it embraces even the most informal of associations between church people: "No more spontaneous invitations for strawberry

shortcake after the service. No more pizza parties with Christian friends at a local restaurant. No more sharing mutual joys and concerns over coffee" (1981:39).

It seems reasonable to assume that this restriction on "familiar intercourse" is maintained only until the brother under condemnation is prepared to confess his sin and by the grace of God, bring forth the fruits of repentance. This means that there must be opportunities given for the excommunicated person to interact with the members of the church so he can be encouraged to communicate a change in his state of mind and heart.

5. Excommunication is a drastic and dramatic action undertaken by the local church and operates in the same way as shock therapy helps a person who is psychologically catatonic. It awakens the brother who is living in the alienating slumber of sin to the peril of his actions.

Second Corinthians 2:5-11

Second Corinthians 2:5-11 is Paul's instruction to the church of Corinth for dealing with someone who has been under church discipline--"punishment which was inflicted by the majority" (v. 6). Whether or not Paul is referring to the same person he wrote about in I Corinthians 5--the person who was to be excommunicated for his sinful behavior--is not important for this discussion. What is important is that the church's discipline of an erring brother had delivered a positive outcome. The disciplined person had brought forth the fruit of repentance and should have been received back, forgiven and restored.

However, the church at Corinth seems to have been reluctant to see him restored. His sin had hurt them all, including Paul. Perhaps this is why there was some reticence to receive him back into the fold. Paul's instruction is full of pastoral concern. It might be paraphrased as, "Don't let him suffer any longer. Welcome him back, not with reservations but with love" (2 Cor. 2:7-8).

The granting of forgiveness and restoration for the repentant sinner are responses that lie at the heart of the gospel. To be found doing these things is to pass the "test" of Christian life (2 Cor. 2:9-10). It seems reasonable to suggest that this test, which Paul refers to in v. 9, should include in the operation of church discipline the restoration and forgiveness that is its true purpose. To fail to fulfil the church's responsibility in either matter is to open the door to Satan's schemes and attacks.

Second Thessalonians 3:6-15

The problem Paul confronts in Second Thessalonians 3:6-15 is that of Christian brothers (and sisters) who are leading "unruly" and "undisciplined" lives (vv. 6, 11). Paul again gives counsel to the church as to how they should deal with these people.

What constitutes this "unruly" (*ataktos*) behavior is not immediately clear. Paul only uses this word twice--here and in First Thessalonians 5:14 where he writes "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men."

If, as it seems reasonable to assume, the unruliness is elaborated upon in the verses that follow, Paul is describing professing Christians who are unwilling to conform

to the standards of their fellow believers (v. 6), who are presumptuous of the generosity of others (v. 8), who are lazy, will not work, or who neglect their work (v. 9) and who are busybodies (v. 11). It does not appear these people were inactive. In fact, they may well have been very active in church activities--but to the neglect of their family's welfare. If these people refused Paul's counsel in this letter, they were to be identified for church discipline.

The kind of discipline Paul outlines closely parallels his directions in First and Second Corinthians. He commanded the church at Thessalonica to "keep aloof" from such people--even though they were their brothers in the faith. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life" (2 Thess. 3:6). Just as the church in Corinth was to cease any association with the person in First Corinthians 5, so too the believers in Thessalonica were to not associate with these erring brethren. The church was not to make welcome these people at their tables for hospitality until they were prepared to repent--"if anyone will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess. 3:10).

As harsh as this may seem, this extreme form of church discipline is essentially restorative rather than punitive. When a church is forced to take such action, and it rarely will have to, it is only intended to be a temporary but necessary measure to bring about real repentance (2 Thess. 3:14). There is to be no bitterness in the implementation of it and those who are disciplined must be regarded as brethren, not as enemies (2 Thess. 3:15).

First Timothy 1:20

Paul's pastoral letters contain several references to his commitment to and practice of church discipline. As he writes to Timothy and Titus, it is not difficult to see that one of his underlying themes is the purity and proper organization of the local church.

In First Timothy 1:20 Paul refers to a case of discipline that he had previously dealt with. Two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander, had been "delivered over to Satan"--an action very reminiscent of First Corinthians 5--for their sinful actions. Paul's intention in this action was not to bring about their utter destruction but their renewal and cleansing. In their case the purpose had been "so that they may be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20). An implication is not difficult to draw from this: if they could be stopped in their blasphemy they could be welcomed again into the fullness of Christian fellowship.

First Timothy 5:19-20

If local churches are to grow strong and prosper they must have, among other things, godly leaders and servants to ensure that a godly discipline is maintained. Paul goes to some lengths to give both Timothy and Titus guidelines for the appointment of such men and women. They are to be respected and accorded the honor due to their positions.

Notwithstanding this high view of the ministry, Paul is not under any illusion that servants of the Lord and the local church are somehow above the same temptations and spiritual struggles as any other believer. Elders can and do fall. In First Timothy 5:19-20

Paul gives directions to the local church for dealing with such an unfortunate circumstance:

1. Care must be taken to ensure that any charge brought against an elder is substantiated by sufficient evidence supplied by reliable witnesses.
2. When a charge can be sustained by sufficient witnesses against an elder, and he is unwilling to turn from his sin in godly sorrow and repentance, then the elder is to be publicly rebuked.
3. The intention of this rebuke is to discourage others from sinning in like manner, especially those who hold a similar office, rather than to merely humiliate the offender. As we have already seen, shame is a powerful instrument in bringing sinners to repentance.
4. When a charge can be sustained with sufficient witnesses against an elder, and he is willing to turn from his sin in godly sorrow and repentance, then it would seem less appropriate for a public rebuke. However, Paul does not give directions here to the local church as to what should be done about the elder's continuing ministry. It seems reasonable to assume that in some cases the breach of trust involved in the elder's failure may be dire enough to disqualify him from holding office. Church's seem to have a degree of freedom here to decide this difficult question based on the circumstances involved.

Titus 3:10-11

In Titus 3:10 -11 the disciplinary issue is dealing with a "factious" person. Since the word "factious" (*hairetikos* v. 10) is from the root word for a heretic, it is reasonable to link it with those who engage in "foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law" (v. 9). The factious person destabilizes the unity of the local church by sowing falsehood and encouraging disputation.

Paul's instruction to Titus is to warn such a person twice--following the three-fold pattern given by Jesus in Matthew 18--and then, if there is no repentance, to "reject" the person from the church (v. 20). Given that Paul describes the factious person as "perverted," "sinning" and "self-condemned"--words which in the original point to established and continuing patterns of evil (v. 11), it makes sense to infer that the word "reject" (*paraiteomai*) means excommunicate.

What are the Active Ingredients in Church Discipline?

It is not enough to be committed to practicing church discipline. Several significant questions need to be addressed if it is to function in a way that is consistent with what the Scriptures outline. First, who should undertake the church discipline? It is crucial that Christians rediscover their role and responsibility in this difficult but blessed task. Secondly, what offenses necessitate church discipline? How can a church maintain a godly balance of love and truth?

Who Should Undertake the Church Discipline?

Carl Laney correctly defined Church discipline as "the confrontive and corrective measures taken by an individual, church leaders, or the congregation regarding a matter of sin in the life of a believer" (1985:14). The task of church discipline falls to Christians generally, and leaders in particular.

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mt. 16:18-19).

When Jesus commissioned Peter with these words recorded in Matthew 16:18-19, He provided him with more than a promise of success. Peter was also given authority to act as a "gate keeper" to those in the church. James Bannerman makes it clear that this is not an authority Peter or anyone else, apart from Christ, exercises over the universal Church, but an authority that operates within the local and visible Church.

In the case of the key of discipline, the office and duty of the Church are simply ministerial--having power to admit to or exclude from the outward privileges of the Christian society, according as it believes that Christ in His word has admitted or excluded; but having no power itself to open or shut the door of the invisible Church, or to give or withhold admission to the favor of God (1960:195).

Later Jesus would redefine this duty in terms of shepherding sheep and caring for lambs (Jn. 21:15-17). The task given to Peter was to be shared with those whom the risen Lord would give to the local church as pastors and elders (Eph. 4:11-12). Paul makes this clear, in his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus, when he gave them this exhortation. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy

Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Shepherding God's people means being responsible to oversee the well being of every member, caring for their needs, and protecting them from those things that might destroy them (Acts 20:29). It is not merely the healthy and the spiritually strong who are their responsibility. It is also the weak, the stumbling, the fallen and the broken, the "parasite riddled," the rebellious, the wavering, the wandering and the lost. These people are the primary focus of the Chief Shepherd's ministry. As Mark records, "Jesus said to them, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Mk. 2:17).

While this duty falls particularly to the elders and pastors, it would be an error to think that all members of a local church are not involved except as the recipients of discipline. On the contrary, the whole congregation is very active in this corrective ministry. The members have, in reality, the primary role in church discipline. It is they who have the most contact with their brethren. So often it is the "rank-and-file" member who is first made aware of the problems that are developing in their brother or sister's lives.

In traditions where elders play a significant role it is possible for the church to lose sight of this vital role. R.B. Kuiper points out this mistake:

In Reformed and Presbyterian Churches it is often supposed that discipline is a task of the elders only and that the other members have no responsibility in this matter. That is a serious error. The members of the church are primarily responsible for disciplining those who err. If my brother insults me, I have no right to report his sin to the session until I have done my utmost to get him to apologize (1967:312).

Even when matters need to advance to the most serious stage of the involvement of the elders--stage three in the process of Matthew 18--a censure against a member would mean nothing if the members were not willing to apply it.

What Offenses Necessitate Church Discipline?

The local church that wants to be faithful to its responsibility to use church discipline in a loving and restorative way will inevitably be faced with the issue of what offenses necessitate church discipline. We have already noted that one of the significant reasons why some Christians resist the practice of church discipline is that they see in those who practice it the tendency toward imposing endless lists of prohibitions on the way believers should live. In so doing, the Christian is robbed of his liberty in those matters where conscience dictates. Critics of church discipline also point to the historical record to show that "sins" considered as disciplinary offenses in one generation, may not be considered as such in a subsequent generation.

Is it therefore wise to create guidelines at all? Daniel Wray believes it is. He has provided four general principles to follow rather than a set of specific offenses. He says church discipline is called for when:

1. Christian love is violated by serious private offenses.
2. Christian unity is violated by divisive factions.
3. Christian law is violated by scandalous living.

4. Christian truth is violated by the rejection of essential doctrines of the faith (1978:8,9).

However helpful this or other lists or guidelines may be, it is vital to see that the operation of church discipline is less to do with the seriousness of the offense and much more to do with the willingness to repent from the sinful behavior. Any church member who continues in a sinful habit or action without any real evidence of godly sorrow or true repentance is in need of church discipline. The seriousness of the offense is less important than the attitude of the heart.

Kuiper put this well when he wrote, "If the murderer gives evidence of heartfelt repentance, he can be dealt with gently. If the slanderer gives no evidence of sorrow but hardens his heart, excommunication may be in order" (1967:61).

The great Welsh preacher and hymn writer of the 18th century, William Williams, wrote:

I am never anxious to put anyone out of the communion of the church of God except for serious and unavoidable reasons, such as seeing a man going on in his sin, loving it, delighting in it, and falling frequently into it without repenting, but rather hardening his heart and despising all convicting feelings aroused by God and by man. But when a believer falls suddenly, with no thought of his sin previously in his mind, but falling into it from the force of the fiery temptation, that came like a hurricane from the frontiers of hell, or of a flood without warning from the mountains of flesh and blood, such should not be cast out in the heat of the moment; but they should be reproved with gentleness, and while showing them the disgrace and the guilt of their wrongdoing, sympathizing with them and pitying them, and earnestly beseeching them never again to go near to such slippery rocks (1973:44,45).

Does Marital Abuse Justify Church Discipline?

A further question now arises. Does God regard marital abuse as sinful? When someone comes to you bruised and battered, looking for comfort and protection, the answer seems blatantly and tragically simple. Yes, marital abuse is a sinful practice that brings both pain and shame to everyone involved in it. Marital abuse threatens the most foundational institutions of human society, the bond of holy matrimony and the family.

It is in God's Word that we find His attitude to domestic violence. To determine the relative offensiveness of marital abuse to God involves more than counting the number of times He condemns it as sinful. When He reveals an action to be sinful, it assuredly is sinful regardless of how often He identifies it as such. However, when the Bible describes a sinful practice from its earliest pages, it is not difficult to conclude it is a particularly virulent one.

Genesis 3:16

It is in the Garden of Eden that we are first introduced to marital abuse. When God addressed Eve after the fall He predicted the pain she would now suffer at the hands of her husband. "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'" (Gen. 3:16). In his commentary on Genesis, John Calvin notes, "She had indeed previously been subject to her husband, but that was a liberal and gentle submission; now she is cast into servitude" (1981:172).

As a consequence of sin, Eve would experience pain that would go far beyond anything she would know in giving birth. Childbirth is a natural type of pain that has the hope of a child after it is endured. God predicted another type of sorrow for Eve from an unexpected source. It is pain inflicted from her husband, flesh of her flesh. Instead of the mutual state of equality and love that marked their innocence, the new realm of sin into which they have entered would bring about an ongoing struggle for power. And with the power will come abuse. The bitter fruit of sin for Eve, and for wives after her, would be domination and tyranny.

One writer, Craig Keener, explains the phrase "Yet your desire shall be for your husband" in Genesis 3:16.

When we compare Genesis 4:7, which uses the same figure of speech, it becomes clear that Eve's punishment in Genesis 3 was not a divine decree subordinating women, as some people think. Rather, the punishment was conflict with her husband, with the husband enforcing his rule over his wife because he was stronger (1991:121).

The juxtaposing of intensified birth pangs with that of a power wielding abusive husband serves to highlight the contrast between the married bliss God had intended Adam and Eve and their progeny to share, and the life of conflict that the fall had brought upon their relationship.² Domestic abuse came into married life from the moment of the fall into sin. As Susan Foe puts it, "The rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny, domination, and manipulation" (1980:69).

² For a contrary view to the reading of this passage see the arguments of Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and Jewish scholar B. Jacob, in Neuer (1991:80).

Genesis 4:23

Violence did not take long to assert itself in a fallen world. Hatred and murder reach into the lives of the children of Adam and Eve. Abel is taken from them. The seed of the murderous Cain brings forth Lamech, the first recorded abusive husband. Who can doubt the intent of Lamech when he addresses his wives, Adah and Zillah, with these words? " Listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech, for I have killed a man for wounding me; and a boy for striking me" (Gen. 4:23). There is nothing veiled about this threat. But why direct it to his wives? It seems reasonable to assume that Lamech wants everyone to know that no relationship is safe from his fury. His words to his wives can only be interpreted to mean, "If you wives cross or displease me, you will perish like others who have done the same!"

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Later on in Deuteronomy Moses again picks up this theme. Deuteronomy 23:19 begins a section of statutes regulating the protection of the weak which extends to chapter 25:19. Here Moses lays down laws to ensure the protection of:

1. The poor needing financial assistance (23:19-23; 24:10-13).
2. A hungry traveler (23:24-25).
3. A newly married husband from forced enlistment by a king requiring soldiers (24:5).

4. A farmer who could be rendered desperate by the removal of his machinery to provide daily food (24:6).
5. The poor hired servant (24:14,15).
6. The sons of convicted criminals (24:16).
7. The alien, orphan, and widow (24:17-22).
8. The convicted felon (from excessive punishment) (25:1-3)
9. The beasts of burden--specifically the rights of the ox threshing (25:4).
10. The deceased son (25:5-10).
11. A man's reproductive ability (25:11-12).
12. The customer (from unfair treatment) (25:13-16).

In the midst of these statutes Moses lays down an ordinance to protect the victims of divorces of convenience and to condemn those who mistreat them in this way.

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance (Deut. 24:1-4).

The meaning of "she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her" is vital to understanding Moses' words. The Hebrew words translated

"indecenty" (*erwath dabar*) are deliberately vague and unspecified. Peter Bloomfield makes these observations on the phrase:

It certainly does not imply some sexual indecenty: observe ...It cannot be adultery for the Law required death for that (Leviticus 20:10; Deut 22:22). Whatever Deut 24 refers to, it leads to divorce, not death . . . It cannot refer to suspected or unproven adultery either: the law also provided specifically for that (Num. 5:11-31)...Nor can it refer to sexual impurity. E.g. a man discovering after marriage that his wife was not a virgin. Deuteronomy 22:13-21 deals with that. If he is right she is executed. If he cannot prove his case " she shall remain his wife" (22:19). Nor can it refer to cases of rape: Deut 22:25-27 deals with that...The proper conclusion is that this husband's complaint is indefinite, vague, unspecified, impossible to define or pin down, and that is exactly the point (n.d.:3).

Moses is not commanding people to divorce for whatever unspecified grounds suits them. Nor is he saying such divorces are permissible. This is a view that became popular and was taught through the centuries, even until the teaching ministry of Hillel and Rabi Akiba in the days of Jesus.

Moses' concern is for the wife who "has been defiled." She has not defiled herself, nor is she defiled. She has been made defiled. The words here are passive.³ This woman has been badly treated by her husband in this divorce process. It has left her defiled and stigmatized by the ungodly treatment of this succession of husbands. John Murray rightly considers this form of serial monogamy a type of sanctioned adultery (1972:24,25). Bloomfield seems to paraphrase Moses well:

God is saying in Deut 24 "I am well aware of the cynical and evil way you Jewish men are playing with marriage. You do not want to be seen as breakers of the seventh commandment (adulterers) and yet you want to satisfy your lust for any woman you see. You want the fruit of adultery without the penalty. So you use a legal loophole: you use the law to evade

³ This is expressed powerfully by the passive form of the verb in the Hothpa' al form. It is so rare as to indicate special consideration when translating its meaning (Bloomfield n.d:5).

the law. You flippantly send her away with a certificate of divorce saying she is no longer legally yours! You fulfill the lusts of your flesh, and yet you may find a renewed desire for her and want her back. This is now forbidden as an abomination (after she is remarried)" (n.d.:6).

What significance does this passage in Deuteronomy 24 have to the discussion of marital abuse? I believe it indicates that the Lord is concerned about those who are terribly mistreated by their husbands. The rest of Scripture testifies to the loving care of God for the downtrodden, the poor, the widows, the outcast and the oppressed (for example Isa. 3:14-15). Women in distress formed a particular part of the Lord's ministry (Lk. 4:38-39; 7:1-17, 36-50; 8:43-48; 13:10-17). This concern extends to protecting them from spouses who feel it their right to treat them with utter contempt. I believe this passage also provides additional protection from the stigma associated with the breakdown of a marriage destroyed by abuse, but only for those who are not the guilty parties in that breakdown.

Malachi 2:14-16

At the end of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi brings another powerful condemnation of marital abuse. The prophet speaking for God declared, "The Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Mal. 2:14; Prov. 2:17). It is not difficult to presume that the treachery referred to five times in this passage involves marital violence as well as adultery. The Hebrew word for treachery "*bagad*" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe acts of violence and betrayal

as well as adultery, as in the violent act of treachery performed by the men of Shechem on the family of Abimelech (Judg. 9:23).

Malachi continues in v.16 with a powerful rebuke to any who might doubt the Lord's attitude toward the perpetrators of such violence leading to divorce: "For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel" (2:16). The PCA's General Assembly Report on "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage" has followed "a more straightforward translation of the Hebrew, confirmed by the Septuagint [which] reads: 'If (anyone) hating (his wife) divorces (her), Says the LORD God of Israel, Then violence covers his garment, Says the LORD of hosts'" (1990:631).

A husband driven by hatred, who divorces his wife, has made a cloak of violence for himself and his wife, when his covenant vows called for a cloak of love. He has denied his covenant obligations and duties to her and therefore stands condemned before God. David Jones offers this explanation:

Finally, so far from weakening the Lord's protest against marital infidelity, the prophetic word against divorce is rendered more forceful by being more definite. Divorce for hatred is a radical breach of fidelity; it is "violence" against the companion to whom one has been joined in marriage. It therefore stands condemned by the God of justice, mercy, and truth (1989:n.p.).

Other Assorted Texts from the Old Testament

Before we leave the Old Testament, we should note several texts where sinful actions are condemned which, by inference, also condemn marital abuse. Moses' instruction for dealing with a man who has abused and brought injury to a slave is such a case. "And if a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall

let him go free on account of his eye. And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth" (Ex. 21:26,27).

If the Lord condemned a man for the maiming of a slave--who was considered by many to be little more than property--how much more would the Lord condemn a similar man who maims his covenant partner, his wife. No slave was obliged to remain under the savagery of a brutal master. He or she was free to go. Why, we might ask, should we expect a wife to remain under similar circumstances in an abusive marriage?

God declared his condemnation on those who were violent abusers in word and deed toward their neighbors, their fellow Israelites, and even the Gentiles who came into their midst.

Thus says the Lord God, Enough, you princes of Israel; put away violence and destruction, and practice justice and righteousness Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high. Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? (Ezek. 45:9-11).

It is not only the blatant physical violence that the Lord condemns. He also abhors the use of intimidation. Several of the Psalms capture this

They have closed their unfeeling heart; with their mouth they speak proudly. They have now surrounded us in our steps; they set their eyes to cast us down to the ground. He is like a lion that is eager to tear, and as a young lion lurking in hiding places (Ps. 17:10).

He sits in the lurking places of the villages; in the hiding places he kills the innocent; his eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate. He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair; he lurks to catch the afflicted; he catches

the afflicted when he draws him into his net. He crouches, he bows down,
And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones (Ps. 10:8-10).⁴

Those who engage in violence are warned of the dire consequences of their actions. "If a man does not repent, he will sharpen His sword; he has bent his bow and made it ready...His mischief will return upon his own head, and his violence will descend upon his own pate" (Ps. 7:12, 16). "The violence of the wicked will drag them away" (Prov. 21:7).

Are we to suppose that God has condemned the violence of His people toward everyone but those who reside inside their own homes? Surely not! Such a conclusion brings dishonor to God and to the institution of marriage that He sanctioned and blessed.

Despite these condemnations of abuse in the Old Testament, it remains a matter of historical fact that by the coming of the New Testament era Judaism had come to regard wives as little more than chattels. Sheila Collins believes the situation was one of misogyny.

Women were regarded as an inferior species to be owned like cattle, an unclean creature incapable of participating in the mysteries of the worship of Jahweh. For whatever historical reason . . . ancient Hebrew society was blatantly misogynist and male dominated (1972:796).

For example, the first century Jewish historian, Josephus (AD 37-100) described women as "in all things inferior to the man" (Josephus as quoted by Neuer 1991:92). A rabbi is reported to have said, "Happy is the man who has male children, woe to him who has female children" (Josephus as quoted by Neuer 1991:92).

⁴ See also James 3:2-10 and Ephesians 4:29 for New Testament examples of God's condemnation of verbal abuse.

Rabbis taught that wives were to be considered on the same social standing as slaves and not worthy to be engaged in conversation. They were severely restricted in their participation in worship not being permitted to enter the temple beyond the Court of Women, nor being able to offer sacrifices, or considered in the count to determine the number of worshipers needed for a synagogue service. Neuer has captured the general attitude of men toward women in the directions given by Rabbi Jose be Yohanan of Jerusalem (c. AD 150) to his flock:

Talk not much with womankind. Later wisdom added: "They said this of a man's own wife, how much more of his fellow's wife! Hence the sages have said: 'He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and the last will inherit Gehenna'" (1991:93).

When wives are regarded as little more than chattels they are ripe for abuse. In practical and legal terms, Hebrew wives had virtually no standing independent of their husbands. Their testimony in court was thought unreliable so they were not permitted to give evidence there. Neuer sums up the position of women in Judaism at the time of Jesus with these words: "In the Judaism of Jesus' time the woman was valued less highly than the man in religion, law and in morality. This devaluation led to her religious and social oppression, indeed often to her being despised by men" (1991:93,94). We could add that this despising would have been a rich soil for marital abuse to grow. The sinful nature of human beings and the propensity toward violence on those who are despised virtually guarantees this.

Jesus and Matthew 5:31-32

Into this situation Jesus came bringing the good news of His kingdom. His behavior showed a complete freedom from disdain for women. His disciples marveled at the way He was willing to speak to women (Jn. 4:27). His ministry featured women at the most important events including his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. They were there when the male disciples forsook him at the cross. He had women followers who were able to share in his teaching and preaching. They figured in His parables and His other teaching, often playing the leading parts (Mt. 13:33; Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 15:8-10; 18:1-8). They witnessed and were recipients of His miraculous works. His gracious invitations included them--"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28).

With such a high view of women, it is little surprise to find that when Jesus discussed the topic of marriage it was often to rebuke husbands who had taken lightly their marriage vows. In the Sermon on the Mount we see an example of this concern:

And it was said, "whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of dismissal"; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Mt. 5:31-32).

After expounding the beatitudes and the true righteousness of His kingdom, Jesus goes on to illustrate what this righteousness in living means by employing six antitheses (Hendriksen 1974:295). Each antithesis highlights a sinful behavior by stating first the biblical command that applies to it and then by expounding the true demand of this command.

It should be noted that, as far as Jesus was concerned, the hidden and denied aspects of these sins were more heinous than their more external expressions. The divine judgments they attracted were also to be feared more than those metered out by human courts for the external expressions.

He began with murder (vv. 21-26). Murder is more than the act of physical abuse that leads to death. It is also verbal abuse. This form of murder attracts the judgment of fiery hell (v. 22). Next came adultery (vv. 27-28). Adultery is more than the physical act of fornication. It is also the act of lust. This form of adultery also attracts the judgment of hell (v. 29). The most dramatic of means should be undertaken to avoid it - pictured in terms of the cutting off of a limb or the gouging out of an eye (vv. 29-30).

The next offense is that of divorce (vv. 31-32). Jesus is doing more than establishing the sanctity and permanency of marriage by challenging the mentality of "easy divorce." In Matthew 5:31 Jesus quotes directly from Deuteronomy 24:1, 3 to establish the first part of the antithesis. As we have already seen, Moses' instruction is a regulation protecting wives who have been summarily divorced for little reason. The sin that Jesus is addressing is the kind of easy divorce that leaves a wife without a husband, cast aside for any reason. Such a thing should not happen, even though it evidently did happen. The issue is the sinful abuse done by a husband who divorces his wife without a legitimate cause.

While an abused wife may have been glad to see herself put out of her abuser's house, she would be forced to leave without any compensation or support from her

divorcing husband. She would not be entitled to custodianship over her children, or a share of common property. These were grievous blows for her to bear.

In keeping with the pattern Jesus follows in Matthew 5:25ff., this question should be asked: what is the hidden, secret, more terrible sin that Jesus is exposing about divorce? We discover it in v. 32 introduced by the tell tale formula, "but I say to you"-- "But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Mt. 5:32).

The use of the three passive verbs in v. 32 is crucial to understanding Jesus' point.⁵ Bloomfield explains their significance in this translation of Matthew 5:32. "But I say to you that every man releasing his wife without cause of fornication brings about that she is stigmatized as adulterous: and he who shall marry her that has been released is stigmatized as adulterous" (n.d.:6).

The wife, so sorely dealt with by her husband as to be divorced for any trumped up reason, is dealt a further blow by being stigmatized as adulterous. She loses more than her family, her security and her future. She also loses her standing, her reputation, and her honor. From now on she is an adulteress.

But that is not all. The evil of easy divorce also brings the stigmatization of adultery on anyone who might marry her later. The "easy divorce" husband succeeds in turning other innocent people into victims too, while at the same time making it difficult for the discarded wife to be remarried so she can rebuild her shattered life. That's what

Jesus says is the hidden and more grievous sin of these easy divorces. Rowland S. Ward states what is the logical implication of Jesus' teaching:

A necessary implication of the passage is that a husband who divorces his wife for marital unfaithfulness is free from the sin of adultery should he remarry. Are we to suppose that a faithful woman cast out of her marriage by an unjust husband is in a no less favourable position? Certainly not!
(1992:142)

Jesus does not deny the possibility of divorce. His teaching in Matthew 5 is that divorce is permissible for "unchastity" (*porneia*).⁶ The debate over the meaning of the word "unchastity" and the discussion over what this exception clause might mean to the possibility of divorce, ought not to mask what was Jesus' chief concern--namely, the abusive treatment of a divorced wife.

When it came to divorce in first century AD Judaism, a wife was in an entirely unequal position. She had no right to divorce her husband unless he "became a leper, an apostate, or engaged in a 'disgusting trade'" (Martin 1987a:22). According to the most liberal school of Judaisers--the Hillelites, a husband could divorce his wife for virtually any cause, simply by handing her a certificate of divorcement in the presence of two witnesses. Wives were discarded for such trivial things as burning a meal, not being as

⁵ The words rendered literally are *moiceuqhnai*--"is stigmatized," *apolelumenhn*--"so divorced," and *moicatai*--"suffers adultery."

⁶ Four major views exist for the meaning of *porneia*. They are summarized in an article by Gary Liaboe (1985:130): 1. *Porneia* should be understood in the technical and specialised sense of marriages within degrees of kinship prohibited by Leviticus (Fitzmeyer 1976; Stock 1978; Ryrie 1982). 2. *Porneia* refers to pre-marital unchastity (fornication) as opposed to *moichatai* which refers to post-marital unchastity (Mueller 1980). 3. *Porneia* involves only post marital adultery (Broadus 1886). 4. *Porneia* is a general concept involving anything that can be considered to be immorality, especially sexual immorality (Molina 1972).

attractive as someone else their husband now desired, or for the most petty of perceived failures.

A typical story of a discarded wife is given to us in the Gospel of John. The Samaritan woman that Jesus met at the well, in chapter 4, had been married five times and was now living in a de facto relationship. The logical deduction from what we know of the general situation at the time is that she had been used and then discarded through divorce by five different men. When Jesus found her, her circumstance had become even worse. The only person who would take her in would not even marry her. Her considerable stigma as a divorced woman would have been intensified now that she was forced to live as an unmarried woman.

Her story would not have been unique. Others, no doubt, shared a similar fate. What amazing grace she experienced when Christ came into her life. She received love from Him and understanding, despite being a woman and a Samaritan. He gave her back the dignity that five husbands and a de facto had conspired to steal from her. More than that, He gave her Himself, the water of life (Jn. 4:14).

Ephesians 5

Through the Spirit of Christ, the New Testament writers revealed a view of marriage that is staggering in its dignity and glory. Wives, who were pitied and scorned in both Judaism and the Gentile world, were declared to be worthy of honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). They were accorded the same rights, privileges, and

inheritance as any other member of Christ's kingdom--all the riches of spiritual blessing in Christ (see Eph. 1:3ff).

More than any other New Testament writer, Paul managed to capture both the sublime mystery of marriage and the chief practical aspects of marriage. In his masterful treatment on the subject in Ephesians 5 we see the exalted mystery of marriage. Marriage is a profound reflection of the union between Christ and the church. The roles of husband and wife are expounded in terms of Christ's love and ministry to the church.

Issues of submission, headship, and love are addressed without any hint of contradiction or concern. Sadly, a number of Christians have since placed an undue emphasis on some of the things Paul has said, twisting his meaning, to justify their own thinking and behavior about the role and prerogatives of a husband and a wife, leaving Paul looking like a misogynist. Such criticism, like the flawed exegesis it is based upon, is unfounded.

It is worthy of note that in this classic passage on marriage Paul gives the following direction to husbands concerning their wives which touches upon the issue of marital abuse "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church" (Eph. 5:28-29).

The phrase "as their own bodies" reflects the Bible's first comments on marriage, first from Adam: "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh," and then from Moses (or God--1 Cor. 6:16): "they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24; Mt 19:5-6).

Paul's comments are unambiguous. A husband is to love his wife because they are united as one. To lovingly care for her is as natural as caring for himself--"for no one ever hated his own flesh." Paul doesn't mean that it is impossible or unknown for a person to inflict pain and misery upon his own body, but that such a case is unnatural and incomprehensible. It denies the natural order and logic of things. Yet, that is what marital abuse is, a self-mutilation of one's own flesh, metaphorically speaking. The root cause of marital abuse is a hatred of one's self. Instead of nourishing and cherishing one's partner, the perpetrator demonstrates hatred.

Ephesians 5 directs Christians to see marriage in a new light--in terms of the mystery of Christ. Abuse, in whatever form it takes, has no place in this relationship.

First Corinthians 7:15

Paul dedicated a significant portion of First Corinthians (Chapter 7) to deal with a range of practical issues concerning marriage. He wrote about the married couple's sex life; who should get married and why; when someone should leave and for how long; when it's advantageous to remain single; when parents should let their children marry; and who Christians are permitted to marry and who they should not. There is no disparaging of marriage in what he says, just a pastoral concern for those facing a range of difficult marital issues.

In this same chapter Paul gives a veiled reference to marital abuse. The Apostle has just given a strong anti-divorce position for those in marriages containing at least one professing Christian. If a believer, either a husband or a wife, has an unbelieving spouse

who is content to remain with them they must not seek to be separated or divorced (vv. 10-14). But what happens if the unbeliever is not content to remain? What if he/she leaves? Verse 15 is Paul's answer. "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace."

The verb "leave" (*corizo*) is a technical word used for divorce. It indicates that Paul viewed desertion as a *de facto divorce* (a divorce in practice, though not in law). The deserted spouse is commanded by the Apostle to accept the situation and ratify the divorce. She is no longer bound to her deserting husband. To attempt to deny the reality of her spouse's departure is to prolong the agony from his sin and to rob her of the "peace" God desires her to experience.

We must see that Paul is concerned for the welfare of the believer in this mixed marriage more than he is in the marriage itself. If one partner is so antagonized by the Christian faith of the other it is possible, perhaps even likely, that abuse will follow - particularly if the unbelieving partner is the husband. The believing wife in such a situation might be subject to severe brutality. Jesus foreshadowed this possibility when he said:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household (Mt. 10:34-36).

How often this might have happened is a matter of conjecture. The Book of Acts records significant numbers of women who responded to the gospel and were baptized (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4). They participated fully in the life of the church including some

meetings when they met on their own, as in assembling for prayer (Acts 16:13). They also suffered for the gospel being dragged off to prison alongside their Christian brothers (Acts 1:14; 5:14; 8:12; 17:4). Many women became Christians while their husbands remained in unbelief. In cultures where marital abuse was accepted practice such conversions may well have provoked terrible retribution. Paul's pastoral advice is simple but not easy. It can be paraphrased like this: "If he wants to go, let him go!"

The word "bondage" (*douloo*) in v. 15 is used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe those who are enslaved--as in Acts 7:6 (the people of Israel in Egypt); Galatians 4:3 (those under the Law); Titus 2:3 (someone enslaved by alcohol); or 2 Peter 2:19 (a person deceived and controlled by evil). Even when the word is used to describe the Christian's commitment to God (Rom. 6:18, 22) or the gospel (1 Cor. 9:19), it involves an act of willing enslavement. While Christ-like marriage also involves servanthood and a willingness to submit to one another, it is never described in terms of slavery or bondage, except in First Corinthians 7:15. While this may indicate the level of commitment necessary to survive an unbelieving spouse, it may also, just as reasonably, be describing a situation of marital abuse.

The phrase, "God has called us to peace," raises an important question for those who have to live in a situation where their husband (or wife) is abusive. Does God's calling "to peace" mean that in such extreme situations the victim is free to leave?

The PCA's statement on "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage" came to this conclusion:

What is more, a husband's violence, particularly to the degree that it endangers his wife's safety, if unremedied, seems to us, by the application

of Biblical norms, to be as much a ruination of the marriage in fact as adultery or actual departure. Further, insofar as the passivity of the blameless spouse is an important prerequisite in Paul's permission of the dissolution of marriage on account of desertion, it seems right to note that in the case of physical abuse, for example, the blameless spouse is similarly victimized (1990:652).

Other Assorted Texts from the New Testament

This survey of the biblical references to marital abuse is not complete until one examines the Bible's teaching on related sinful behaviors such as battering, punching, choking, hitting, pushing, shoving, throwing objects at others, forcing sexual intercourse, threatening physical violence, verbal harassment, putdowns, insults, name calling, swearing, humiliating others, threatening, harassing, continually criticizing, and intimidating. These sinful behaviors are condemned in every major list of godless behavior given by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice (Eph. 4:31).

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth (Col. 3:8).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9,10).

It is simply untrue to say that what constitutes marital abuse is not frequently recognized and condemned in the New Testament. Marital abuse is a cluster of many shameful behaviors. If a reviler will not inherit the kingdom of God, how can we offer hope to one who is a reviler in his own home?

"And such were some of you," said Paul. It was behavior they had known about, seen, perhaps even experienced, or worse, engaged in. "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1Cor. 6:11). The transforming grace of God had been given to them to set them free from everything that would separate them from God.

A person who is still engaging in frequent abuse is a person who is still being controlled by the habits of his fallen fleshly nature, by the world's violent ways, and by the devil's murderous malevolence (Jn. 8:44). Believers are not to live like this. Nor are their churches to be places where such behavior is tolerated.

It is little wonder that Paul gave instructions to the churches he founded that precluded and disqualified from positions of responsibility and leadership those who could not control their anger, particularly in their homes.

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, .. not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious... He must be one who manages his own household well (1 Tim. 3:2-5).

For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, . . . not pugnacious (Titus 1:7).

And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged (2 Tim. 2:24).

It is this very pugnaciousness, absence of gentleness, spirit of contentiousness, self-willed quick-temperedness, and quarrelsomeness that marks out an abusive person. Not only should such a person be excluded from leadership positions, but he should also be brought into the "tough love" and grace of church discipline for repentance and rehabilitative restoration.

Chapter Summary

This survey of the biblical and theological issues attached to this topic reveal two unavoidable and unsettling truths for pastors and church leaders.

First, God has called them to lead their congregations into the challenging and difficult task of church discipline. This means acting directly opposite to the way the world operates around us. It involves members caring enough to lovingly confront one another. The incentives given in the Bible to do this surely outweigh the struggles attached to the process. What needs to be done now is for pastors to teach their congregations from the Word of Life, how and why it should be done.

Second, God has spoken about marital abuse. Not just by inference, nor in fleeting references, but over and over again. It is time now for churches to be informed about what the Bible says concerning these things. Then they will be willing to look for this behavior among their members. Perhaps then, the call of God and the cry of the oppressed will be heard and the prisoners set free.

Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them (Eccl. 4:1).

O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure (Ps. 7:9 NIV).

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE--HOW HAS THE CHURCH IN THE PAST USED CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN DEALING WITH MARITAL ABUSE?

The need for church discipline, set forth by Jesus, the Apostles, and the writers of the New Testament, was a recurring theme throughout Church history. By the time of the 16th century Reformation church discipline was considered to be one of the marks of the true church.⁷

However, Church history also tells a tragic tale of sinful failure in church discipline with respect to marital abuse. First, there was the sin of omission--the failure of church leaders/teachers to apply church discipline to members who were perpetrators of marital abuse. Second, there was the sin of commission--the overt complicity of Christian leaders to maintain the belief structure that would adversely effect the victims of abuse within marriage. The first part of this historical survey focuses on this tragic heritage.

Puritan pastors of the 16th and 17th centuries saw the dilemma of marital abuse in their congregations and sought to do something about it. They went back to the

⁷The identification of church discipline as the third mark of the true church can be traced at least as far back as the Belgic Confession [1561]: "The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself" (Schaff 1931:419-420).

Scriptures and formulated the first steps in the disciplining of perpetrators of domestic violence. The second part of this survey seeks to show how assorted Puritan pastors laid a foundation for dealing with marital abuse in local congregations.

The Ancient Roman, Greek, and Jewish Worlds

In the ancient Western civilizations of Greece and Rome the maintenance of moral standards by the practice of communal discipline was very common. The Greek Stoics and the Roman military developed codes of honor into highly regulated systems of discipline. However, marital abuse was not considered to be a disciplinary offence because women generally, and wives in particular, were held in a very subordinate place. A man's cattle were considered more important than his wife (Martin 1987a:22). In Roman society a husband and father had an absolute authority over his wife and children including the prerogative of life and death. Grant L. Martin observed how this right was codified in law:

In Roman legal precedent, the Law of the Twelve Tables granted the father the absolute right to sell his children, as well as the power of life and death over the child. From this ultimate position of power came lifelong authority over members of the father's household. That authority, known in Roman jurisprudence as *patria potestas*, is one of the most far-reaching legacies of the private law of Rome (1987a:22).

Jewish society in the ancient world was even more regulated than other ancient cultures around them. The Torah provided a basis for both the standards they were meant to live their lives by and the regulations to follow if that standard was violated (Garret 1962:3).

The Old Testament records instances of divinely ordained and enacted cases of discipline within the community of Israel, such as in the Korah-Dathan-Abiram rebellion (Num. 16, especially vv. 31-35) and in the Nadab-Abihu incident (Lev. 10). They also record divinely directed communal discipline using human instrumentality, as in the punishment of those involved in the idolatry of the golden calf or bull (Ex. 32, especially vv. 25-29, 35).

By the dawn of Christianity, the Talmud, the oral exposition of the Old Testament law for the Jews, contained many references to the practice of disciplining errant members of the synagogue. Violations of the Jewish law brought various forms of correction. The "*Shammetha*" was the name given for a ban imposed on guilty parties. It recognized three degrees of correction: 1. Reprimand (*nezipah*), a seven day ban, 2. Separation (*niddui*), up to a month ban, and 3. Full excommunication (*cherem*) (Garrett 1962:3).

However, first century AD Judaism evidenced little regard for the plight of those in their communities who were the victims of abuse. In practical terms, wives had become chattels of relatively limited value who could be discarded with little effort simply by presenting them with a certificate of divorcement before a couple of witnesses (Wright 1974:37).

The teaching of Christ and the apostolic writers laid a new foundation for the behavior and attitudes of husbands and wives. In Christian marriage, the relationship between husband and wife was not to be defined by the cultural norms of the unbelieving world around them, but by the mysterious and loving relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 4:23-33).

This teaching was such a radical departure from the cultural norms of the ancient world that it is not surprising that Christians struggled to grasp and apply it. As we have seen, the New Testament addresses some of these struggles. The gospel went forth and penetrated most of Europe. It came into cultures who held the prevailing belief that physical punishment of one's wife was a husband's right, "even an obligation" (Martin 1987a:23).

Long held attitudes and practices are not easily changed. The dynamic transforming potency of the gospel may not succeed in breaking the fetters of generations of long held behaviors. It took many centuries before the institution of slavery was condemned and the slaves set free. Christians who grasped the gospel led the way in that struggle. But it took many centuries before the change came. It has taken an even longer time for marital abuse to be recognized as sin and for the church to condemn it and go about setting the victims and perpetrators free.

The Early Years of the Church

During the Ante-Nicene period members of churches who were adjudged to be engaged in heresy, apostasy, inciting division, and acts of gross immorality could find themselves under temporary censure for up to 3 years or even permanent excommunication. Typically, those under discipline were divided into four classes depending on the seriousness of the offence: weepers, kneelers, hearers, and standers. Marital abuse did not incur even the least serious of these censures.

Tertullian (c.160-c.230)

One of the most influential Ante-Nicene Fathers, Tertullian (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus) was concerned to see church discipline used in the life of the church to maintain godliness. He published several tracts on the subject including "De Poenitentia" and "The Philosophumena of Hippolytus." Other important teachers in the Church also published tracts calling for the maintenance of the practice, including Cyprian, Dionysius of Alexandria, Gregory, and Peter of Alexandria. Their zeal for discipline did not extend to dealing with the perpetrators of marital abuse. There is no record of any specific instruction given on this matter.

However, we do have references that point to their complicity in the practice of marital abuse. Tertullian taught that since the fall of Eve, women were the "gateway" by which sin entered homes. In a treatise he wrote with the title "*De cultu feminarum*--On the Apparel of Women" he addresses wives with these words:

In pains and in anxieties dost thou bear (children), woman; and toward thine husband (is) thy inclination, and he lords it over thee. And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert--that is, death--even the Son of God had to die (Tertullianus n.d.:IV. 1.1.1-1.1.2).

Although Tertullian would not have intended his teaching to be used as a justification for sin, it is hard to avoid the possibility that a husband who embraced Tertullian's teaching might feel justified in abusing his wife. If he believed, as Tertullian

taught, that a wife is "the devil's gateway" and, by extension, the cause of Christ's death, then he might feel little remorse or restraint in abusing her.

John Chrysostom (c.347-407)

John Chrysostom, the revered 4th century preacher may have been called "golden mouthed," but some of his writings concerning women brought little comfort or support for wives who were living under marital abuse.

Chrysostom composed more treatises on marriage than any other Church father who wrote in Greek. He stressed the authority of a husband over his wife. He denied that the woman was the bearer of the image of God in her own right. She was subject to her husband in all things and her husband was to rule her. In a comment on First Corinthians 11:7 he writes, "Therefore the man is the 'image of God' since he had no one above him, just as God has no superior but rules over everything. The woman, however, is the 'glory of the man,' since she is subjected to him" (as quoted by Scholer 1993:35).

For Chrysostom, wives did not have the capacity to rule their own lives. They needed their husbands to do this.

If the more important, most beneficial concerns were turned over to the woman, she would go quite mad. Therefore God did not apportion both duties to one sex ... Nor did God assign both to be equal in every way ... But taking precautions at one and the same time for peace and for decency, God maintained the order of each sex by dividing the business of human life into two parts and assigned the more necessary and beneficial aspects to the man and the less important, inferior matters to the woman. God's plan was extremely desirable for us ... so that a woman would not rebel against her husband due to the inferiority of her service (Chrysostom as quoted by Scholer 1993:35).

He taught that wives must put up with mistreatment from abusive husbands, even when it seems unprovoked. His views are well-represented in the following section of the treatise, "On Virginity, Against Remarriage," where he writes:

What if she is discreet and gentle, on the other hand, but he is rash, contemptuous, irascible, putting on airs either because of his wealth or power? What if he treats her as a slave, though she is free, and considers her no better than the maids-in-waiting? How will she endure such duress and violence? What if he continually neglects her and persists in doing so? Paul says to bear this bondage patiently, for you will be free only when he dies; while he lives there are necessarily two choices: either take great pains and train him or, if this is impossible, endure nobly this unproclaimed war, this battle without a trace (Chrysostom 1983:59-60).

He has two solutions to wives facing domestic violence:

She must either master the violence of her passion [sorrow] or, unwilling to do this, flatter her overbearing lord, and submit herself to whatever he wishes, whether he strikes her or bathes her in abuse or exposes her to the contempt of the household or the like... You have a second solution and way out. What is it? Wait for him to die (Chrysostom 1983:60).

What sinful pastoral advice this sounds to our modern ears! "Either put up with the abuse, and learn to turn away his wrath through flattery and submission, or wait for him to die!" We will never know how many women suffered under this advice, or how many abusers sheltered untroubled under its protection.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

The greatest theologian of the ancient Church, Augustine Bishop of Hippo, grew up witnessing marital abuse. His classic work, *Confessions*, recounts his own spiritual pilgrimage including the story of abuse suffered by his mother, Monica, at the hands of

her violent husband, Patricius. In the following section of *Confessions* he addresses other wives facing similar treatment:

Besides this, he [Patricius, Augustine's father] was hot-blooded, not only in his affections but also [violent] in anger. However, she [Monica, his mother] had learned not to resist an angry husband, not only in deed but even in word. Only when he was calm and quiet and in a frame of mind to receive it, would she explain her actions, if by chance he had too quickly taken offense.

When many wives, who had milder husbands but who showed evidence of beatings on their faces, would in casual conversation blame their husbands' lives, she would blame their tongues, giving them serious advice in a joking way. She told them that from the time they heard the marriage writings read to them, they should regard them as contracts, by which they were made servants, and that they, remembering their condition, ought not to set themselves up against their lords. And when they, knowing what a quick-tempered [lit. furious] husband she endured, marveled that it had never been heard nor was there any evidence that Patricius had beaten his wife or that there had been any domestic difference between them, even for one day, and confidentially asked the reason, she taught them her above-mentioned practice. Those wives who followed it, found good results and returned thanks, those who did not follow it, found no relief and suffered (1996:231-232).

Augustine's advice to wives in abusive situations was threefold: 1. Do not resist your abuser, 2. Wait until he calms down and then tell him why you made him so angry, [Presumption: you are always at fault!], 3. Accept that your beating is going to make you a better servant of your "lord." This seems utterly inadequate advice to victims of marital abuse who "showed evidence of beatings on their faces."

What counsel does he give to the abusive husband? There is none--not even a note of condemnation--despite his mother being one of the victims of marital abuse. Once again the perpetrator's sinful behavior is blamed on the victim's provocation.

In works published in 413 and 419 Augustine dealt with the issue of marriage and divorce (Augustine as quoted in PCA 1990: 610). He did not include marital abuse as a

legitimate ground for divorce, although, according to Theodore Mackin, he did seem to permit divorce and remarriage in these circumstances: (1) A husband who has an adulterous wife. (2) A husband who is abandoned by his wife (Augustine as quoted in PCA 1990:610).

The Medieval Church

Previous to the Emperor Constantine, church discipline focused on purely moral sanctions, without the force of civil constraints and punishments. With the patronage of the converted Emperor, the Christian Church was given the opportunity to enforce church discipline with civil penalties for the most serious breaches of conduct. Through the years of the Middle Ages the church was able to exercise a form of church discipline that had little relationship to the process described in the Bible. In the place of pastors and church members undertaking this duty with compassion and with a desire for restoration, priests and religious officials used bans, anathemas, and excommunications to control the members by fear. Church discipline became ruthless, political and mercenary resulting in very harsh punitive measures, and long bitter lists of denunciations and curses.

At a time of spiritual declension it is little wonder that church discipline was not extended to encompass victims of marital abuse (Tucker and Liefeld 1987:164-165). Wives remained vulnerable without the cloak of church discipline to protect them. The teaching of the church maintained the belief that the rightful place for a wife was to be inferior and subordinate to her husband.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

The most influential theologian of this period, Thomas Aquinas, taught in his magnum opus, *Summa Theologica*, that women were inferior, dependent, dominated by sexual appetites, and unfit for any important role in society or in the church. In Section 9, he addresses this question: "What would have happened if the woman had been created first, rather than the man?" Aquinas replies:

The woman should not have been made in the first production of things [because] ... nothing misbegotten or defective should have been in the first production of things. Therefore woman should not have been made at that first production... [Of] the woman was it said after sin (Gen. 3:16) "Thou shalt be under the man's power"; and Gregory says that, "Where there is no sin, there is no inequality." But woman is naturally of less strength and dignity than man; "for the agent is always more honorable than the patient," as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xii, 16)...As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind (Aquinas nd).

These beliefs carried over into the rules of marriage and translated into abuse.

One such example is found in a statute for marriage given in the teaching of Friar Cherubino. "If a husband's verbal correction of his wife was not effective, then he was to take up a stick and beat her, not in rage, but out of charity and concern for her soul, so that the beating will rebound to your merit and her good" (Martin 1987a:23).

In a number of cases, men were excused for the injuries they inflicted on their wives. The law did not intervene. Provided a husband neither killed nor maimed his wife, it was legal for him to beat his wife if he believed she had wronged him (Martin

1987a:23). The perpetrator of abuse was virtually beyond the reach of civil and ecclesiastical authority.

In some communities within the Byzantine Church of the Eastern Empire, a victim of marital abuse was given the opportunity to divorce her abuser (Mackin 1984:373). Here the Church taught that adultery was not the only legitimate ground for divorce. Mackin describes how adultery had a wider understanding:

But the adultery warranting dismissal and dissolution was understood to be not the only cause, but to be only a sample and a point of departure for other and equivalent causes. It was taken as self-evident that other crimes are possible to spouses that injure their marriages with equal or greater severity. Abortion and attempted murder of the spouse were only two of these (1984:373).

An abused spouse would at least have an opportunity to flee her abuser under this provision. How many of them did so is a matter of some speculation.

The Reformation

The Reformation was a time of spiritual renewal. The gospel and the Scriptures were rediscovered and the Church renewed. Principles of biblical church discipline were applied in the new Protestant churches. Martin Luther and the other reformers called on the newly awakened Church to return to the conduct and beliefs of apostolic times, including the practice of church discipline. However, they were adamant that this be a form of discipline that was derived from biblical principles rather than the practices of Rome.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Luther saw the ministry of church discipline as the ministry of the keys –from Matthew 16. He wrote, "These keys are extremely necessary in Christendom, so that we can never thank God enough for them" (1958:373). He explains why the key of discipline is so necessary:

For the dear Man, the faithful Bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ, is well aware that His beloved Christians are frail, that the devil, the flesh, and the world would tempt them unceasingly and in many ways, and that at times they would fall into sin. Therefore, He has given us this remedy, the key which binds, so that we might not remain too confident in our sins, arrogant, barbarous, and without God, and the key which looses, that we should not despair in our sins (1958:373).

In the Smalcald Articles, Luther distinguishes excommunication, which "excludes those who are manifest and impenitent sinners from the sacrament and other fellowship of the church until they mend their ways and avoid sin," from that "greater excommunications of the pope which imposed civil penalties in addition to the spiritual." The former Luther calls "truly Christian" (Luther n.d.)

For such a prolific writer on most themes in the Bible and the Christian life, Martin Luther is strangely silent on the subject of marital abuse. Perhaps his reluctance is due in part to his own personal habits. Mackin insists Luther would "box his wife on the ear" despite the great affection he had for her (Mackin 1984:24).

John Calvin (1509-1564)

John Calvin, the great Genevan reformer, also appealed for a recovery of biblical church discipline. In his classic work on the Christian life, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, he devoted an entire chapter to this vital ministry of the church--Chapter XII, "Of the discipline of the church, and its principal use in censures and excommunication." For Calvin, the local church must recognize that this discipline is bound up with the gospel and the Word of God. He explained the relationship between the two:

That promise made to Peter concerning binding and loosing, ought to be referred to nothing but the ministry of the word. When the Lord committed it to the apostles, he, at the same time, provided them with the power of binding and loosing. For what is the sum of the gospel, but just that all being the slaves of sin and death, are loosed and set free by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, while those who do not receive and acknowledge Christ as a deliverer and redeemer are condemned and doomed to eternal chains? (1949:440).

In the course of his pastoral work, John Calvin was forced to consider the plight of those caught up in marital abuse. Livezey quotes from a letter Calvin wrote to a battered wife who sought his counsel:

We have a special sympathy for poor women who are evilly and roughly treated by their husbands, because of the tyranny and captivity which is their lot. We do not find ourselves permitted by the Word of God, however, to advise a woman to leave her husband, except by force of necessity: and we do not understand the force to be operative when a husband behaves roughly and uses threats to his wife, nor even when he beats her, but when there is imminent peril of her life... [W]e ...exhort her to bear with patience the cross which God has seen fit to place upon her; and meanwhile not to deviate from the duty which she has before her husband, but to be faithful whatever happens (1987:938).

According to the reformer she must not leave her husband and tormentor, even if she was roughly treated, threatened, or beaten. Only imminent peril of death was a sufficient cause for her to separate from her abuser.

Perhaps Calvin also wrote to the perpetrator and the perpetrator's local church. However, it is highly unlikely that he did so. Instead of telling the victim she must bear her injuries with the patience of the cross, Calvin would have helped her situation more by insisting that her husband be disciplined.

The Anabaptists (16th Century)

The most radical group of reformers, the Anabaptists, were particularly concerned for the right use of church discipline. W.L. Lumpkin writes, "The discipline was accepted voluntarily by the individual, as it concerned how he should live in the brotherhood; and by the church, as it concerned how the fellowship should be maintained if the principles of the Sermon on the Mount were to be applied" (1969:31). Their communities in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and Moravia all practiced rigorous forms of church discipline (Davis 1982:43-57).

In 1528 Hans Schaller, shortly before his martyrdom, drew up one of the earliest Anabaptist statements on church discipline. Bearing the title, "Discipline of the Believers: How a Christian is to Live" (*Ordnung der Gemein, ein Christ leben soll*), it contains 12 articles to guide the local church as to how they should preserve godliness and restore brethren from sinful behavior (Lumpkin 1969:31). Sadly, no mention is made of marital abuse.

The Puritans (16th and 17th Centuries)

The Reformers' concern for church discipline both continued and intensified during the Puritan era. One of the most significant gatherings of Puritans was the assembly summoned by the English Parliament that met for the first time at Westminster in 1643. After several years of deliberations the Westminster Confession of Faith was completed and produced on November 26, 1646. Chapter 30 of the Confession, "Of Church Censures," affirms the rule of Christ over His people and the role of "church-officers" to exercise the "keys of the kingdom" (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1976:120). The exercise of church discipline is to be by "the Word and censures" (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1976:120). The role of the censures are defined in the following paragraph:

Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for the deterring of others from the like offences; for the purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1976:121).

There can be little doubt that the Puritan divines, who were involved in drafting the Confession of Faith, were deeply committed to maintain holiness among the people of God by confronting the sin in their congregations. The literature of individual Puritan pastors bears out this universal concern.

No one wrote more on this subject of church discipline than the highly influential Puritan pastor and writer, John Owen (1616-1683). He produced a number of works on church discipline including: The Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament, Rules

of Walking in Fellowship, with Reference to the Pastor or Minister That Watcheth for our Souls, An Inquiry into the Origin Nature, Power, Order, and Communion of Evangelical Churches and The True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government (Owen 1826:XIX, 69-108, 463-568, XX, 65-250, 337-601).

Another Puritan, Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) also wrote several significant works including The Government of the Churches of Christ and The Government and Discipline of the Churches of Christ (Goodwin 1965:484, 485-525).

The concern of the Puritan pastor for godliness to be maintained in every area of his congregation's life led several to address the issue of marital abuse. However, there was no single consensus among the Puritans over what was permissible and pastorally responsible. A minority held to the view that it was the husband's right, perhaps even his obligation at times, to use force on his wife in governing her relationship. David M. Scholer illustrates this by quoting from the exegetical notes of Edmund Beck inside the 1549 edition of the 1537 Matthew's Bible. Beck gives this advice to husbands:

And yf she be not obedient and healfull unto hym, endeavoureth to beate the feare of God into her heade, that thereby she maye be compelled to learne her dutie, and to do it (Beck as quoted by Scholer 1993:28).

According to James Packer, the majority of Puritan pastors had a more sympathetic and enlightened approach to the victims of abusive marriages (1990:269). They were men of piety who sought to pastor their churches with a strict observance of the Word of God.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

One of the most outstanding pastors of this period, Richard Baxter, wrote a number of significant works on the Christian ministry including The Reformed Pastor and A Christian Directory, both of which emphasized the need for diligence in church discipline.

In chapter IX of the "Christian Economics" section of A Christian Directory, Baxter addresses a number of concerns that relate to godly conduct in marriage. Several of these concerns relate to abuse in one form or another. For instance, Baxter counsels a wife who discovers her husband is living by unlawful gain, to admonish him for his sin. In the catechizing style of the Puritan writers, Baxter asks in Question IV, "If a woman have a husband so incorrigible in vice, as that by long trial she findeth that speaking against him maketh him worse, and causeth him to abuse her, is she bound to continue her disuasion or forbear?" (1990:442).

Baxter's question acknowledges the possibility of a wife suffering abuse as a direct consequence of her godly concern for her errant husband. She was counseled to avoid the anger of her husband by ensuring that her rebuke was given at a time when he would be most receptive and when her attitude was submissive, humble and gentle. She was also exhorted to "continue all conjugal affection and duty, and a convincing, winning course of life; which may prove to be the most effectual reproof" (Baxter 1990:443).

From our vantage point Baxter's advice may seem inadequate and ill-directed. He does not assure the wife that he, and pastors like him, will intervene to help if her husband abuses her for her godly concern. Nor does Baxter commit pastors, elders or church members to exercising church discipline to the errant husband, if he does abuse

his wife. But the very acknowledgement of this hidden sin of marital abuse is a significant advance for the local church. To acknowledge its existence is the first step in dealing with it.

In another question Baxter asks: "May husband and wife part by mutual consent, if they find it be for the good of both?" (1990:444). His answer is both prudent and surprising. He writes: "If really such incurable unsuitableness be between them, as that their lives must needs be miserable by their cohabitation, I know not but they may live asunder; so be it" (1990:444). Although Baxter does not elaborate on what he means by the "incurable unsuitableness," it seems likely to include marital abuse. He seems to presume that both parties are engaged in the sinful behavior and that both are therefore guilty. It should be noted that Baxter did not permit this separation to be made permanent by divorce. The sinful actions that caused their "unsuitableness" must be repented of and their marriage union restored.

When Baxter asks, "If there be but a fixed hatred of each other, is it inconsistent with the ends of marriage? And is parting lawful in such a case?" we have his clearest answer concerning the issue of marital abuse. He urges the abused to exercise love toward the abuser who is his or her spouse and remain together. He writes:

The injured party is bound to love and not to separate; and can have no liberty by his or her sin. And to say, I cannot love, or my wife or husband is not amiable, is not sufficient excuse because every person hath somewhat that is amiable But if hatred proceed not to adultery, or murder, or intolerable injuries, you must remember that marriage is not a contract for years, but for life, and that it is possible that hatred may be cured (how unlikely soever it may be). And therefore you must do your duty, and wait, and pray, and strive by love and goodness to recover love, and then stay and to see what God will do, for mistakes in your choice will not warrant a separation (1990:446).

Under Baxter's counsel a wife who is in an abusive situation must hope that her abuser will also commit adultery, or kill her, or inflict intolerable injuries to her if she is to be set free from the abuse.

Before we leave Baxter we should note his comments to husbands concerning abuse of a wife. He gives this direction: "Lose not your authority...it must be maintained...not by fierceness or cruelty, by threatenings or stripes (unless by distraction or loss of reason, they cease to be incapable[sic] of the carriage otherwise due a wife)" (1990:439). Are we to conclude that if a wife is "incapable" of fulfilling her role as a wife, then her husband is justified in giving her "stripes"? It is a strange attitude to our modern ears and from the pen of such a caring and effective pastor.

William Perkins (1558-1602)

William Perkins was one English Puritan pastor who approached the concerns of the victims of domestic violence in a more compassionate way. Perkins wrote a discussion on the subject of marriage and divorce, Christian Oeconomie: Or, A Short Survey of the Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family According to the Scriptures in 1618. The PCA 1990 report, "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage" quoted from this work of Perkins on the implications of First Corinthians 7:15 to the issue of divorce. Perkins argued that a wife who "by occasion of fear, be compelled to depart from the other [her abusive spouse]; and cannot return again without apparent danger of life" was entitled to leave and divorce her husband (Perkins as quoted in PCA 1990:615). He wrote, "And if the husband threateneth hurt, the believing wife may flie in this case; and it is all one, as if the unbelieving man should depart. For to depart from one, and

drive one away by threat, are equipollent [equivalent]" (Perkins as quoted in PCA 1990:615).

Taking up the nature of the abuse that justifies pastoral action, Perkins wrote:

The malicious or willful departing of the unbeliever, doth dissolve the marriage...Like unto desertion is malicious and spiteful dealing of married folks one with another. Malicious dealing is, when dwelling together, they require of each other intolerable conditions.. Here it may be demanded, what a believer should do, who is in certain and imminent danger, either of loss of life, or breach of conscience, if they both abide together. ..Again, if the husband threateneth hurt the believing wife may flie in this case (Perkins as quoted in PCA 1990:615,616).

In this teaching Perkins likens the person who deserts his spouse to the person who abuses his spouse. The sinful behavior of both denies any reasonable test for a Christian profession. Perkins directs the church to act accordingly: "For he that upon malice flieth away from his mate, is to be holden in the same terms as with an unbeliever, who departs upon detestation of religion, and the service of God" (Perkins as quoted in PCA 1990:615).

The manner in which Perkins argues this point is significant. He does not search for specific proof texts to make his point. Rather, he infers from one biblical case to another that involves the same basic issues. In so doing he was able to apply biblical directions concerning adultery and desertion and apply them to abuse.

However, Perkins does not permit the person who leaves an abusive spouse to divorce or remarry. He will not take the inference to this extent. Any separation must only be temporary and not lead to divorce. He writes, "She forsakes him not finally, but leaves him for a time" (Perkins as quoted in PCA 1990:616). This qualification to leaving meant that the abused person might be forced to return to the marital home and to

the continued abuse. For all that, Perkins lay a hermeneutic lifeline for the future release of victims from abuse--an inferential relationship between desertion and abuse.

William Ames (1576-1633)

William Ames was an English Puritan who authored one of the most significant literary works of this period: The Marrow of Divinity. However, it is in his work, Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof, that he discusses marriage and divorce. In this book Ames connects desertion and abuse directly. He writes:

The great danger, which one party may bee in by the cruelty of the other, or by any other manifest meanes of cohabitation . . . may bee just cause of retiring for a time, so to provide for his owne safety and security, but not for an absolute desertion, unlesse first hee bee deserted. For if one party drive away the other with great fierceness and cruelty, there is cause of desertion, and hee is to bee reputed the deserter. But if hee obstinately neglect, that necessary departure of the other avoyding the eminent danger, hee himselfe in that playeth the deserter (Ames as quoted in PCA 1990:618, 619).

Ames' s point is that the church should regard a person who drives out his or her spouse by violence as the deserter, and not the one who has been forced to leave. This is a significant step toward regarding abuse as a legitimate ground for divorce.

Theodore Beza (1519-1605)

Theodore Beza was a continental Puritan. His views about abuse and desertion closely mirrored those of William Ames. He identified abusers who drove their partners from the marital home as deserters. On this matter he wrote:

He appears the deserter not only who positively refuses a mutual living together, but also who demands intolerable conditions from the faithful [spouse] do when indeed cohabitation is not denied, but hazard of life is incurred...To depart from someone and to drive the other away by threats or force are the same thing (Ames as quoted in PCA 1990:621).

Beza believed it was the duty of the church to deal with the offender. He said that if "the unfaithful [abusive] spouse does not care as is right that the faithful spouse is in peril, no one does not see, I think, not only that he is a deserter, but also that he may be shunned with a good conscience as a traitor" (Ames as quoted in PCA 1990:621,622). It is refreshing to read for the first time a specific action that addresses the sin of the abuser. He is to be disciplined until he repents and is restored.

It is noteworthy that another continental divine, Samuel Maresius (1599-1673) made this same connection between desertion and abuse (Maresius as quoted in PCA 1990:622). In fact, Maresius was willing to apply the 1Corinthians 7:15 provision for divorce to "whatever, by analogy, is equivalent to or greater than this desertion" (Maresius as quoted in PCA 1990:622).

Chapter Summary

It is not hard to conclude that most of the teachers of the past, until the Puritan era, failed those who were caught up in marital abuse. By unwitting omission and misguided commission they did not regard this as a serious enough breach of Christian conduct to apply church discipline in order to see it solved.

The Puritans attempted to find a different way to deal with the abusers and their victims. They saw abusers as "deserters" who needed to be disciplined. They also saw

the victims of abuse as people in need of their spiritual counsel. While the counsel they gave largely continued to reinforce some of the false ideas about women and men from the views of the past, at least they were recognizing the reality of marital abuse. The Puritans opened the possibility for divorce and the need for the church to get serious about the sinful conduct of its members behind the closed doors of their homes. It is a heritage that we build on in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF THE PROBLEM

The biblical/theological findings of Chapter 2 point to the importance of church discipline, especially when marital abuse is uncovered within the church. There can be little doubt that church members and leaders have a solemn and important duty to confront the abuser and comfort the victims of domestic violence. Yet the historical/literature review of Chapter 3 reveals a long history of failure and neglect in this area of pastoral oversight. The Puritans offered the first rays of hope for the victim and the perpetrator.

What of the Church of today? Have they learned from the Scriptures and from Church history and built upon the labors of the Puritans? Tragically, we must conclude that it has not. Church discipline is virtually unknown in most churches, even among the most evangelical. And marital abusers remain unchallenged and their victims uncared for.

This chapter focuses on the reasons why the Church has failed to appropriate and apply the wisdom of the Scriptures outlined above. We must ask why church discipline has faded from the agenda and operation of the modern church. We must seek to understand why it is virtually unknown in most local congregations. And even more disturbing, we must ask why there is almost complete inactivity in the local church when it comes to dealing with the problem of marital abuse.

Why Has Church Discipline Ceased in the Local Church?

There are many reasons why local churches are reluctant to engage in church discipline. Ronald E. Lutz's excellent Doctor of Ministry dissertation, The Redemptive Power of Church Discipline, has provided much of the background material for the reasons listed below (Lutz 1987:6-18).

Reason 1. An Ignorance of What It Involves

First among the many reasons that might be offered to explain the cessation of church discipline must be an ignorance of what it involves. People do not understand how church discipline should operate, what sins should be addressed by it, what processes should be followed, and where they can go to see it operate in a redemptive manner.

The whole realm of Christian ethics seems to be under review in theological circles at the moment. This has led to a debate on a number of topics including the relationship between the Christian and the Mosaic law, the believer's responsibility to the Decalogue, the nature and content of the new covenant regulations, and many other issues. In this state of uncertainty some conservative churches have sought to develop codes of ethics, much like the Puritans' directories of the seventeenth century, listing the sins that are disciplinary offenses. Others have passed the responsibility of dealing with sin among members on to their elders to deal with as they think best. Most, it seems, have simply relegated the problem to the "Too-Hard Basket" (Jeschke 1972:14). With the practice of church discipline being so rare, most congregations have had little

experience of it, even from a bystanders' point of view. If it is to be recovered in local churches, preachers and teachers must go back to the Scriptures to see what they teach on the subject and then teach and apply it to themselves and others. We must recover the spirit of Ezra "who set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

Reason 2. An Unwillingness to Be Disciplined

People doubt that the local church can do anything in disciplining its members. Why try to discipline members who will not listen, or, when confronted, will pack up and leave to be welcomed into other churches? Even those committed to practicing church discipline struggle with this objection. Martin Luther is reported to have written, "I would gladly institute it...If only there were people who would allow themselves to be disciplined!" (Luther as quoted in Jeschke 1972:14).

Until local churches take seriously what is their calling and nature they will not be willing to submit to church discipline. The church must rediscover its calling to be a holy people. The Apostle Peter reminded the churches he wrote to that they were "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Holiness is to mark the lives of God's people as it marks His being. Without it no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). It is the life of Christ Himself working in us, transforming us to be like Him, according to Paul in Ephesians 4:20-24. We are to lay aside the works of the flesh in order to "put on the new self, which in the likeness of

God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (v. 24). There are few more wonderful words to describe what Jesus has done for the church than those penned by Paul in Ephesians 5: 25-27:

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

We must be awakened to see that discipline in our lives is "for our good, that we may share His holiness" (Heb. 12:10).

Reason 3. The Fear of a Censorious Spirit

Few things are more feared in these postmodern days than the accusation of bigotry and hypocrisy. Church discipline carries a stigma for producing both. Some would say that a call to practice church discipline is too much like a commitment to impose cold-hearted trials, judgmental courts and petty investigations on Christians who find it hard enough to live godly lives. Christians fear the "professional purifiers" whose desire for purity is not tempered and controlled by love but who are quick to call for punishment.

At the heart of some people's fear is the belief that the gospel of grace cannot coexist with a commitment to practice discipline. Few passages show the folly of this view more clearly than Hebrews 12. The discipline of the Lord is revealed to be an expression of true love. Rather than be the enemy of grace, discipline is in fact a means

of grace. Avoiding the practice of church discipline is not being more gracious, but less so. F. J. Taylor writes,

[Church] discipline, with its suggestions of hardness and rigidity, is contrasted unfavorably with the New Testament emphasis on love and the Spirit of Christ. But the plain fact is that our Christian life has been impoverished as the result of this lack of proper discipline...so that instead of helping each other to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," we have been, albeit unconsciously, holding each other back (as quoted by Jeschke 1972:37).

Reason 4. The Fear of Being Condemned for Judging Others

There is a common perception that Church discipline violates the Bible teaching that prohibits judging others. It is not uncommon to hear people defend the lack of concern for sin by appealing to these verses of Scripture:

Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you (Mt. 7:1-2).

And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned (Lk. 6:37).

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Rom. 14:4).

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10).

Yet Church discipline does not seek to judge anyone. Rather, when a local church is genuinely concerned for the holiness of God and about the welfare of His people, there

is always going to be the need for Christians to lovingly confront those who they see straying from the truth.

Reason 5. The Fear of Negative Outcomes

Church discipline is seen by some as potentially damaging, even dangerous. It can lead to people having hurt feelings, a sense of alienation, and outrage. Churches have split over the actions taken in the process of disciplining members. Some church discipline has even led to legal action in civil court resulting in the Church's reputation being severely damaged. With so much potential for harm, some would argue it is foolhardy to pursue church discipline.

When a local church discovers that one of its members is the victim of domestic abuse and another is the perpetrator, the temptation to procrastinate or avoid doing anything about it is often seen as overwhelming. It is not that Christians condone this sinful behavior, nor does it necessarily mean that they do not care for the victim. What they find so fearful is becoming involved in something that might lead to the complete breakdown of someone else's marriage and the destruction of someone else's family. As Hazel Eivers put it, "They are bound by loyalty to what they perceive to be the teaching of Scripture, namely that a family must stay together despite the cost to victims of domestic violence" (1991:12).

However, to abandon church discipline just because it is hard is to deny the cross of Christ we are called to carry. The consequences of not confronting sin among the

members are too terrible to consider them a better option to facing the difficulties involved in doing church discipline. As McNeill warns,

The difficulties of discipline have led to its too easy surrender by the churches. No church has ever ideally solved the problem of maintaining standards and correcting the shortcomings of its members without infringing the law of charity. But if discipline should disappear to the point at which the manner of life of church people is not distinguishable from that of persons who make no religious profession, the Church would have lost her significance (1951:285).

Rather than considering the consequences for practicing church discipline, it is time to seriously reckon the damage to the church for not doing it. R.B. Kuiper identifies a few of these costs.

The church that fails to exercise discipline is sure to lose both its self-respect and the respect of those without. Strange though it may seem, the world today despises the church precisely because the church is so worldly, and the members of the church by and large take no pride in their membership because it carries with it no distinction (1967:305).

Reason 6. The Market-Driven Individualism of the Age

Religion and piety have been privatized so that it is considered inappropriate to hold members of churches to some standard of faith and life. Fewer people are making the commitment to become members of a local church, preferring to remain as adherents, so that their status in the church is unequivocally voluntary and loose. Ian Breward describes the situation in Australia today with these words:

Privatisation is not complete, but it is powerful. Churches like ours which a century ago kept a close scrutiny of member's behavior now leave that kind of accountability out of its priorities for the 21st century. If members are seen to be guilty of serious misdemeanors, they are likely either to drop out entirely or change denomination. A public rebuke, or pastoral dealing by the council of elders would be regarded as an intolerable intrusion into private life (1991:52).

The whole concept of elders disciplining a congregational member is considered to be highly irregular and unnecessary, perhaps even dangerous. When meeting the needs of the church attendee becomes the primary concern of the church, a commitment to conform to a divine standard is always problematic. Individualism finds mutual accountability an unwanted companion. As observed by Hadden Robinson, "It is not the place of the seller to discipline the consumer" (Littleton 1981:31).

The tragic irony is that when church discipline is deliberately overlooked to avoid driving away those seeking membership in churches, the result is that the same members are prevented from receiving one of their richest privileges. As Jay E. Adams writes, "The failure to discipline church members amounts to withholding from them the privilege of being confronted by others, and by the church, when they err in doctrine or life. Christ granted them this right; we have no right to withhold it from them" (1979: 286).

Reason 7. Spiritual Immaturity and Shallow Piety

Of course, there are many among today's Christians who evidence great spiritual maturity and notable practical godliness. Yet, it would take a very optimistic person to describe Christianity at the beginning of 2002 as marked by great piety and passion for godliness. In *Eros Defiled*, John White suggests why this general state of shallowness makes church discipline a difficult thing to promote and practice.

Instead of our being free to love and to plead, to warn and to rebuke, we are hung up with our own inner problems. We are inhibited. We are ourselves guilt ridden...We are not prepared to lay our cards on the tables, or to call spades spades (1977:167).

The church has not always been in such a state of spiritual declension. During times of revival, as in the days of the Reformation, in the 16th and 17th Centuries, and the Great Awakening of the 18th Century, there was a renewed concern for practical godliness and holiness (Wells 1998:196-205). With this concern came a commitment to church discipline.

Reason 8. The Transitory Mobility and Lack of Connectedness of Congregations

More than at any other time in human history, churches are made up of people who are highly mobile and prepared to remain uncommitted for the duration of their time in a particular church.

According to the National Church Life Survey research project, which surveyed all 20 major denominations in Australia, there are increasing numbers of professing Christians not only switching from one church to another within their denominations, but also from one denomination to another (Kaldor Peter, J. Bellamy, R. Powell, K. Castle, and B. Hughes 1999:38-43). Their study revealed that more than 53% of 15-39 year olds change churches every 3 years, while 31% of all church attenders change their local church affiliation over the same period (Kaldor et al 1999:38).

It is not unusual for congregations to have less than 70% of their "regulars" in attendance each week. A significant number of members of local churches struggle to attend one service each Sunday, let alone meet with their fellow members at other times during the week.

Many are content to view their local church in the same way they regard the other clubs or social groups they are members of. They see the church as little more than a

voluntary association one joins for a specific task, like a gymnasium one might join for a weekly workout, which has few, if any, mutual obligations, mutual expectations, or mutual responsibilities (White 1977:160). It is the way they like it.

This makes intimacy and concern for one another very difficult. Little wonder then that Christians find confrontation with their brothers and sisters difficult (Stafford 1984:48). It seems so much easier to turn away from being involved in someone else's struggles.

Likewise, the practice of pastors remaining in parishes for only a couple of years before accepting calls to other churches only exacerbates this problem. When a pastor is staying only a short term, there is a great temptation for him or her to use the time to do the easier and more popular tasks. Church discipline is not one of these. Short-term pastors have little opportunity or incentive to tackle what can be longstanding disciplinary matters, especially when their predecessors have taken no action.

Reason 9. The Sinful Neglect of Pastors and Elders

The demise of church discipline in local churches can be traced back squarely to pastors and elders. It is they who have the special responsibility to see that redemptive discipline takes place (Bubna 1981:78). Few biblical injunctions make this plainer than the word from Paul to the Galatians in chapter 6:1-2: "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of Christ."

The phrase "you who are spiritual" in verse one surely included the pastors and elders of the church. It is primarily their solemn responsibility to restore the fallen saint as well as bind up the wounds of the needy.

Yet pastors seldom preach sermons on this duty of the church. Nor are elders or deacons trained to participate in this vital ministry. Instead, ministers find themselves much happier in their studies or in activities of secondary or tertiary importance. As Craig Keener warns, pastors are too often "ivory tower theologians who spend their time picking apart the grammar of New Testament texts without regard to the situations it addresses or the situations which pastors must grapple with today" (1991:107).

The great Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter, gave this instruction to church leaders in his own day:

If ministers would be conscientious in performing this duty entirely and self-denyingly, they might make something of it, and expect a blessing upon it; but when we shrink from all that is dangerous or ungrateful in our work, and shift off all that is costly and troublesome, we cannot expect that any great good should be effected by such a carnal, partial use of means (1974:105).

More dramatically, the Lord spoke through his prophet Ezekiel, warning the spiritual leaders of Israel who had failed to fulfil their duty to His people with these words:

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, "Thus says the Lord God, 'Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.

And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill, and My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth; and there was no one to search or seek for them' " (Ezek. 34:2-6).

It is no small thing for pastors and elders to neglect so great a duty as church discipline. Richard Baxter put it poignantly:

To be against discipline is near to being against the ministry; and to be against the ministry is near to being absolutely against the church; and to be against the church, is near to being absolutely against Christ. Blame not the harshness of the inference, till you can avoid it, and free yourselves from the charge of it before the Lord (1974:111).

Reason 10. The Ministry of Counseling

In the local church we have witnessed the increasing abdication of a corrective ministry by elders and church members to specialist counselors. Many Christians believe they have been abandoned by the church and consequently turn to psychology for solutions. What are they to do when the problems of daily life seem insurmountable and no one in the church seems to care enough to listen or suggest solutions?

The church is caught in a worldwide trend toward seeking the answer to life's problems in some form of psychotherapy. "For millions of Americans including many Christians 'professional' mental health workers are the expensive answer. In 1988 Americans spent an estimated \$273.3 billion on mental health services" (Rice, Kelman, Miller and Dunmeyer 1990:81). To handle this growth, between 1959 and 1989, the number of practicing professional clinical psychologists in the USA alone increased by a factor of 16, from 2,500 to 40,000. Figures are not available in Australia but there is no reason to think that the trend would be any different.

In the local church scene we have observed the growing expansion to church staff lists of mental health therapists. It is not uncommon today to find licensed social workers, clinical workers, lay counselors, pastoral counselors, peer counselors, support group leaders, and other assorted caregivers, all working under the canopy of the local church. To keep up with this trend Bible colleges, theological colleges and seminaries now include various types of psychotherapy courses in their programs. More and more Christian conferences and Christian publishers are promoting counseling topics to help Christians solve their personal problems and find personal fulfillment.

It is not surprising that this trend has had the effect of redefining sin in terms that are much more at home in a psychology textbook than a Bible. A number of significant Christian writers, including some who are involved in a more Christian approach to counseling, have warned the church, denouncing secular psychology as a rival religion and substitute for the atoning and cleansing work of Christ. Authors such as Martin and Deidre Bobgan, Dave Hunt, and Jay Adams clearly demarcate between the secular "psychological way" and the "spiritual way."⁸ Their writings call upon church leaders to take up their responsibility to feed and care for the flock, at the same time calling church members to exercise greater confidence in the wisdom of God to deal with their sins and struggles.

⁸ Some of the most important critics of the trend toward secular based counseling to replace biblical counseling conducted within the context of a local church are the following authors:

Jay E. Adams (1986), David G. Benner (1987), Martin and Deidre Bobgan (1987, 1990), Terence W. Campbell (1994), Gary R. Collins (1993), Robyn M. Dawes (1994), C. Stephen Evans (1989), Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman (1991), William Kirk Kilpatrick (1985), Paul Meier, Frank B. Minirth, Frank B. Wichern and Donald E. Ratcliff (1991), J. P. Moreland (1989), Steve Shores (1993), Darrell Smith (1990), Paul C. Vitz (1994).

The lack of confidence in the capacity of the local church to cope with the kind of issues that confront people today has not been a recent development. Twenty years ago Eugene Heideman observed:

Matters which a century ago would have been cause for excommunication now are remitted to the pastor or other experts for "pastoral counseling". Having thus referred the matter, nothing more is heard about the case in the official assembly unless the congregation begins to ask too many questions. Yet there remains an uneasy feeling within the breast of the office-bearers, who fear the official discipline is too "rigid" and pastoral counseling is too "permissive" (1981:17-18).

Reason 11. A Lack of Love for One Another

There is a cost involved in caring enough to confront and restore a brother or sister. Too often it seems we are unwilling to care enough to pay this price (Augsburger 1986). Jude exhorts believers to: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh" (Jude 21-23).

A church must not focus all of its attention on saving the lost. It must also help those who are believers to grow in Christ-likeness. R.C. Sproul writes, "The church is called not only to a ministry of reconciliation, but a ministry of nurture to those within her gates. Part of that nurture includes church discipline" (1983:182). The law of love compels us to care for one another. So does obedience to Christ's command: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35).

Love demands that we care enough to graciously confront. The tragedy is that too many wayward Christians fear that if they turned up at church and confessed their sin and their need of grace they would be rejected and not loved.

*What Has Made Church Discipline for
Marital Abuse So Difficult in the Local Church?*

If the local church has found it hard to engage in church discipline, then it has found it almost impossible to use church discipline to stop the perpetrators of marital abuse within its membership. The failure to discipline those who are perpetrators of marital abuse comes in large part from the church's acceptance of two things: common myths and distorted beliefs.

Expose the Common Myths

The trouble with dealing with myths is that they can get so embedded in our thinking that we begin to hold them at a non-rational level. They become part of our prejudices because they appeal to the base instincts of our minds. Myths are not easily rooted out. Paul warned Timothy to instruct certain men "not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths" because they could so easily lead God's people away from "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:3-5). Several myths relating to marital abuse serve to perpetuate and maintain the secrecy and shame that surround this problem. Here are the most common:

Myth 1: Marital Abuse Is Not That Bad, and Its Victims Do Not Suffer Much

Every day there are people being hit, beaten, threatened, humiliated, or otherwise subjected to physical and emotional harm by their spouses. Victims say that it is not the blackened eye or the broken limb that produces their deepest and longest lasting scars. Their physical injuries tend to heal over time. It is their psychological injuries that last a lifetime. Exposure to long periods of humiliation, criticism, and insults can destroy a person's sense of self-worth. One study showed that 86% of victims reported emotional side effects of abuse including anger, loss of trust, loss of self-esteem, shame, guilt and depression (Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project 1994:4).

Fear is the most debilitating consequence of abuse. Joan Burgess Winfrey has found in the words of Psalm 55 the same fearful anguish victims of abuse feel (1996:148).

My heart is in anguish within me,
 And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
 Fear and trembling come upon me;
 And horror has overwhelmed me.
 And I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
 I would fly away and be at rest.
 Behold, I would wander far away,
 I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah.
 I would hasten to my place of refuge
 From the stormy wind and tempest."
 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me,
 Then I could bear it;
 Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me,
 Then I could hide myself from him.
 But it is you, a man my equal,
 My companion and my familiar friend (Ps. 55:4-8, 12-13).

Betrayal by someone who is "my equal, my companion and my familiar friend" is what produces such intense feelings of "fear," "trembling" and "horror."

The perpetrator uses fear to maintain control over his victim. He need not resort to actual physical violence. The threat of it is often enough.

Tracy Spencer has made a comparison of the methods and results of marital abusers with those of interrogators and torturers during wartime. Using the research of Biderman on the impact of torture on captured allied forces in the Korean War, Spencer noticed the similarity of methodology employed by marital abusers on their victims. She contends that psychological and emotional violence within the home is as severe and as much a crime against humanity as the violence of torture experienced by Prisoners of War (1991:7)--see Table 1 below. My own experience in counseling victims of abuse bears out this similarity of methodology employed by many marital abusers.

To reduce a wife or a husband to such a state of bondage is never acceptable, particularly for Christians who are called to reflect in their married life the union of Christ and his Church. Spencer reminds the local church "that the hidden violence of psychological and emotional abuse is also unequivocally wrong." She adds, "We give survivors of prison camps medals: what can we give survivors of domestic violence?"(1991:9).

Marital abuse is now widely recognized in the community as a human rights issue. Australia became a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 affirming rights which are inconsistent with marital abuse-- Articles 1, 3, 5, 12, and 28 in particular. Victims rightly claim to have their rights

violated when they are abused. Their dignity is destroyed, their families are traumatized, and their health is broken.

If the Church wants to maintain its credibility as a force for social justice it can not be seen to minimize or mask the suffering involved in marital abuse. The myth that "This form of domestic abuse is not that bad, and that its victims do not suffer much" must be exposed as a destructive lie.

On too many occasions I have been introduced to someone who has lived for years in the shadows of despair and pain. It is not always the sharp agony of flesh assaulted by bone that has left them broken. It is the inner bruises of the heart, the loss of dignity and freedom, and the shame of failure. No broken limb or kidney stone comes close to the ache these victims feel. How wretchedly insensitive and dishonest are those who minimize the sorrow an abused spouse bears.

TABLE 1

BIDERMAN'S CHART OF COERCION

Developed from Biderman's Chart of Coercion in Amnesty International's "Report on Torture" (1975:53).

General Method	Effects and Purposes
1. Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deprives victim of all social support and the ability to resist • Develops an intense concern with self • Makes victim dependent on interrogator
2. Monopolization of perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixes attention on immediate predicament; fosters introspection • Eliminates stimuli competing with those controlled by captor • Frustrates all actions not consistent with compliance
3. Induced debility and exhaustion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakens mental and physical ability to resist
4. Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivates anxiety and despair
5. Occasional indulgences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides positive motivation for compliance
6. Demonstrating 'omnipotence'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggests futility of resistance
7. Degradation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes cost of resistance more damaging to self-esteem than capitulation • Reduces prisoner to ' animal level' concerns
8. Enforcing trivial demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops habit of compliance

Myth 2: Marital Abuse Is Caused by Stress

There is a common myth that perpetrators of marital abuse must be psychologically impaired. Their abuse is seen to be an inevitable by-product of frenetic lifestyles and therefore beyond their control. This view translates into a reluctance to hold an abuser responsible for his or her actions. However, the existence of stress never excuses destructive and abusive behavior. Nor does stress automatically guarantee sinful behavior. Nor does it explain why some people are abusive. Many batterers only display abusive behavior at home. As one writer observed, "people under stress who are violent at home are usually not violent at work or towards non-family members" (Cox 1994:7).

For Christians, stress can never be used as a cloak to hide from the consequences of their sinful behavior. If anything, a Christian's stress is to drive him or her into a higher experience of the grace of God and a more godly lifestyle. The apostle Paul demonstrated this. He described the stresses he had to endure in his second letter to the Corinthians--stresses that were physical, psychological, and spiritual.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you (2 Cor. 4:8-12).

Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things,

there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:24-28).

Paul did not give in to the extraordinary stresses of life that assaulted him. He turned to the God of all grace and found more than he needed in the power of Christ. Paul described how the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). When a perpetrator seeks to hide behind stress the local church must expose him for the rebel he is. Grace and holiness demands it of us.

Myth 3: Marital Abuse Happens to Poor People

There is a common misconception that marital abuse only occurs among the poor, the marginalized, the minorities, and the mentally challenged. However, people of all socioeconomic classes, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and sexual orientations are numbered among the victims and the perpetrators of domestic violence. It is not the exclusive behavior of the poor or the deprived. Abusers and victims are the people with whom we work, play, worship, eat, socialize, and befriend.

It is emerging that as much battering occurs in middle class homes as among other socioeconomic groups, but that it is markedly underreported for reasons of "respectability." Middle class churchgoers are even more reluctant to come forward for two reasons: 1. This kind of thing ought not to be happening in their Church, and, 2. If victims came forward, they are often blamed for their victimization (Wells 1988:4).

Valerie Cox relates the story of one such reluctant victim:

In April, 1988, during the National Month of Awareness about Domestic Violence, a Western Australian country woman confided: "I still live with my husband, a Minister of Religion who beats me...I live in a small

country town and no one knows...I tried to tell the police once but they said they couldn't do anything because he was respected, he was liked" (1994:7).

Local churches can overturn this "working class myth" by encouraging their members to come forward and tell their stories. As believers have the opportunity to hear their brothers and sisters share their painful situations, they will realize that the "Surely not I, Lord" response is entirely unfounded (Mt. 26:22).

Myth 4: Only Those Affected by Alcohol or Drugs Engage in Marital Abuse

Among the evangelical denominations there is little recorded alcohol or drug abuse. Local churches do not typically have significant numbers of regular attenders who continue to drink alcohol to excess or take illicit drugs. However, it would be a mistake to presume that an absence of excessive alcohol or drug use guarantees an absence of marital abuse. While alcohol consumption and drug abuse is strongly associated with marital abuse, it is erroneous to assume that they are prerequisites to marital abuse. Research has revealed that in over half the reported cases of marital abuse, neither partner had consumed alcohol at the time of the abuse (Cox 1994:7).

Myth 5: If Victims of Marital Abuse Do Not Like It, They Can Leave

This is perhaps the most pervasive myth surrounding marital abuse. Such an attitude fails to account for the extreme difficulty facing someone who wants to leave an abusive relationship. It also does not take into account the fact that almost all battered women try to leave at least once (Battered Women Fighting Back n.d.).

Why do they stay? One of the things that prevent victims from leaving for good is the fear and threats of reprisal. A study by the United States Department of Justice states that the most dangerous time for a woman who is being battered is when she leaves. In Michigan, 75% of the women who are killed by their partners are murdered after the relationship is over or as it ends (Battered Women Fighting Back n.d.).

The burden of leaving is also a financial one. Because financial deprivation is a common part of the abuse, the victim may not have access to the funds necessary to provide food and shelter for themselves and their children. It is lamentable that in the USA there are nearly three times as many animal shelters as shelters for battered women and their children (Battered Women Fighting Back n.d.). Victims do not leave because they have no where else to go.

It is not just the material and physical concerns that prevent some victims from leaving. It is also the fear of isolation and of social stigmatization that keeps them in an abusive situation. To be left alone is a prospect too difficult for some to contemplate.

Perhaps the most significant restraint to leaving is the feeling of codependency the victim has with her or his abuser. Many victims still nurture strong feelings of love and hope for their partners. They remember the time when their partners seemed to be content and in love with them.

Christians believe they have an added incentive to stick it out with their abusive partner. They want to be faithful to the covenant commitment they made to their partners, and before God, when they shared their marital vows--words something like

these: "for better and for worse," and "to love, honor and obey, until death parts us."

"They want the violence to stop, not the relationship," says Cox after years of counseling victims of abuse (1994:8).

It is not just that Christians want to be faithful to their vows. Many have also been taught that the Bible gives them no grounds to leave an abusive spouse. This interpretation of the biblical texts concerning marriage and divorce will be addressed later in this study. It is enough to say that, for many Christians living in abusive relationships, the fear of stigmatization and rejection from their own Christian community is too great to contemplate leaving their abusive partner.

If only a few non-churched victims of marital abuse end up leaving their abusive partners, then even fewer Christians will leave the marital home. Their staying does not mitigate the seriousness of the abuse they face. Nor should it diminish the local church's commitment to deal with this difficult issue.

Myth 6: Marital Abuse Is Something Men Do, Not Women

There can be little dispute that the most severe physical violence in marital abuse is done by husbands (Dutton 1988:18-20). Not only are abusive husbands more violent than abusive wives, they also inflict far more serious and frequent injuries on their partners. It has been claimed by one expert that husbands are 20 times more likely to use physical violence than their wives (Cox 1994:3). Domestic abuse is thereby cast as a male issue and a man's problem. The perpetrator is almost always presumed to be a male, the victim almost always the female.

Given that this is the way many approach the problem, it is of little surprise that it should become a feminist issue. Both secular and Christian feminist groups are highly critical of anyone who suggests that women can and do abuse their partners.

However, some wives do abuse their husbands.⁹ In one of the most comprehensive epidemiological studies of domestic abuse yet undertaken Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz found that women initiate violence in intimate relationships at least as often as men do (1980:36-40). The study concluded: "The number of wives who threw things at their husbands is almost twice as large as the number of husbands who threw things at their wives. The rate for kicking and hitting with an object is also higher for wives than for husbands" (1980:40).

In another longitudinal analysis conducted by K. O'Leary and others the rates of abuse between men and women were compared. The study revealed:

According to self-reports, 31% of the men and 44% of the women indicated that they had engaged in aggression against their partners in the year prior to marriage...At 18 months after marriage, the prevalence of spousal aggression during the year prior to the assessment was 27% and 36% respectively, for men and women. At 30 months after marriage, the prevalence of spousal aggression for the previous year were 25% and 32% for men and women, respectively (1989:263-268).

The Bible seems to recognize the possibility of an abusive wife. In several of the Proverbs Solomon describes how hard life can be with a contentious woman:

It is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a house shared with a contentious woman (Prov. 21:9).

⁹ Michael Rivero has listed over 60 articles and books on the subject of domestic abuse involving men as the victim on this internet site: <http://www.vix.com/pub/men/battery/battery.html> (Viewed on 24 April, 2001).

It is better to live in a desert land, than with a contentious and vexing woman (Prov. 21:19).

It is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman (Prov. 25:24).

A constant dripping on a day of steady rain and a contentious woman are alike (Prov. 27:15).

Acknowledging that some women are abusers does not negate or excuse the tragic reality of husbands who abuse. But to deny it is to remove the necessity of applying corrective and restorative church discipline to errant wives.

Even more important, to deny that husbands can be the victims too is to rob them of the support and help they need. It creates a sense of injustice and betrayal in the minds and hearts of male victims. For an Australian husband to admit that he is suffering abuse from his wife (something so contrary to the "Aussie male" stereotype), is hard enough. The church should not make it more difficult by denying it even happens.

Myth 7: The Victim Is Never Responsible For His or Her Abuse, Even in Part

Some would have us believe that in every abusive situation there are always two distinct parties. First, there is the guilty unprovoked abuser, and second, there is the innocent passive victim. One is entirely at fault, the other entirely innocent.

Few things more powerfully establish this myth than the idea that abuse can be reduced to a simple diagram, like the very popular "Cycle of Abuse" developed by Lenore E. Walker (1997)--see Appendix A. The presumption that seems to be behind this depiction of abuse is that the abuser is locked into a pattern of behavior he is unable to control, and over which his victim has no power to change or influence by her own

actions. She is never pictured as having any responsibility for his actions. She does not spar with him, either physically or verbally, and thereby add to the atmosphere of tension and violence.

Such a construction does not accord with the reality of abuse that takes place in most abusive homes. The roles of abuser and victim are often difficult to separate. One may be responsible for the explosion and the violence. But both may be responsible for the verbal conflict that leads up to it. And when both are involved, locked in the wrestling grip of abuse, both are in need of repentance and discipline.

The account of the fall of the first couple, Adam and Eve, in Genesis 3 is helpful in dealing with the issue of apportioning responsibility. When Adam and Eve sinned and were summoned to account for their actions by God, they each attempted to shift the blame from themselves to others. Adam blamed God and Eve. "And the man said, 'The woman whom Thou gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate'" (Gen. 3:12). Eve blamed the serpent, Satan. "And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate'" (Gen. 3:13).

The Lord would not let either of them off the hook. He spoke to them specifically and individually about the consequences of their sinful actions. It is worth noting that He brought His righteous judgment on everyone involved in this sin. Satan, Adam and Eve all received His pronouncement of condemnation. However, He did not accept any responsibility Himself for what happened. He did not need to because He was not responsible. He had not sinned or contributed in any way to the tragedy of the fall. In reality, He had done everything possible to prevent it from happening.

How does this relate to dealing with marital abuse? Every husband and every wife is a sinner. Neither is like God in perfect holiness, nor can either claim to be free of sinful actions in their marriage. If we are to take seriously the biblical doctrine of total depravity, then we must not always think of domestic violence as an either/or phenomenon. In a marriage setting, where two sinners are living together, even if they have been born-again, the perpetrator is seldom going to be the only one at fault. Marital abuse can be, and often is, a "both-and" problem. Unless we are prepared to accept this, we may never be able to really help those who are caught up in abuse.

However, every abuser must be held personally responsible for his or her sinful actions. There is no excuse, no mitigation, and no warrant for marital abuse. God hates it and so must we. No failure or sin, either real or imagined, on the part of the spouse ever justifies it. No amount of provocation (like Eve's sin), nor the pressure of external factors (like Satan's taunting) can remove the responsibility that the abuser must bear. The perpetrator must be compelled to believe that "She made me do it" is a lie. He must be willing to confess, "I was provoked but I take responsibility for the way I responded." The response God requires of His people when they fall into sin is a broken and contrite heart.

Confront the Distorted Beliefs

There are some that would claim that evangelical theology has played a significant role in both protecting and prospering perpetrators of marital abuse.¹⁰ In

¹⁰ See John Bodycomb's, "The Dark Side of Bible-Bashing: Ally of Domestic Violence" (1991). Bodycomb accuses evangelical Churches of having four significant flaws, all of which are said to

response to such accusations one must admit that conservative Christians can and do get some of their theology and practice wrong. But when this happens it is not their confidence in God's Word that is at fault, only their interpretation of what it means or how they should apply it. It does not follow that a high view of the inspiration and authority of the Bible makes evangelical Christians excessively strict, self-congratulatory, humorless, judgmental, authoritarian, punitive, exclusivistic, closed-minded, ungracious and inconvivial, as some have claimed.

But are there beliefs that are commonly found in evangelical teaching that may contribute to marital abuse being excused, accepted or encouraged? I believe there are four significant distortions of biblical truth that have interacted with other factors to create an environment where abuse may occur.

The Subordination Distortion: Wives Submit, Husbands Dominate

It is clear that the Bible does teach Christians to be submissive. Every Christian is to be submissive to God (Phil. 3:21; Jas. 4:7; 1Pet. 5:5), to leaders (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5), and to human authorities (1 Pet. 2:13). Women are to be subject to the customs of the church (1 Cor. 14:34). Workers are to be submissive to their bosses (Titus 2:9; 3:1). Christians [or perhaps husbands and wives] are to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21). Wives are to be subject to their husbands (Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5). There is

contribute to marital abuse: 1. They constrain the thinking and behaviour of their adherents within excessively strict boundaries. 2. They are self-congratulatory, humourless and judgmental. 3. They are isolationist with regard to other belief systems. 4. They are authoritarian and punitive (1991:17). This leads to 3 problems: 1. They promulgate an unrealistic view of marriage and the family (1991:19). 2. They promote a "patriarchal tradition" (1991:20). 3. They use guilt rather than grace to govern their homes (1991:21).

nothing intrinsically abusive in any of these relationships. They were intended by God to bring blessing and joy to His people.

Even if one believes the Bible teaches mutual submission, the truth remains that the submission of wives to their husbands is a biblical direction that was never designed to be a sentence to hard labor and abuse. John Piper shows us both the glory of the task given to a husband to treat his wife as Christ treats His Church, and the way the task can be perverted to treat his wife as though she was a slave and his subordinate:

So in this mysterious parable of marriage, the wife is to take her special cue from God's purpose for the church in its relationship to Christ. And to the husbands Paul says, Take your special cue from Christ...If the husband is the head of the wife, let it be very plain to all husbands that this means primarily leading out in the kind of love that is willing to die to give her life...The husband who plops himself down in front of the TV and orders his wife around like a slave has abandoned the way of Christ. Jesus bound himself with a towel and washed the disciples' feet...If you would be a Christian husband you become a servant not a boss (1986:180-181).

Whenever men are the perpetrators of marital abuse in Christian homes inevitably there is this dimension to it: submission has turned into subordination and servant-hearted leadership has become domination. It is not hard to see why. This is a view of women that has had a very long history in the church. As we have already seen in chapter 3 the greater part of Christian history taught that women are subservient to men. Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas all taught that God's divine plan for men and women was for men to rule, by force if necessary, and for women to serve. Virtue for a husband was defined in terms of his capacity to rule his wife and his family well. Likewise, virtue for a wife was defined in terms of her readiness to serve her husband and submit to him, no matter what.

An appeal for husband domination and wife subordination is made from three biblical teachings:

The Order of Creation-- Those who make this claim point to four things in the text from Genesis 2 and First Timothy 2. First, Eve is created after Adam and not Adam after Eve. Second, Eve was derived from Adam and not Adam from Eve. Third, Eve was named by Adam, and not Adam from Eve, and fourth, Eve is the "helper" and not Adam (Oulund 1991:481).

The creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 actually begins with one of the grandest statements about the equality and dignity of both the man and the woman. The opening chapter of the Bible describes the majesty of God's creative glory. The creation of the first human beings is the crowning of his work. In the space of three verses, Genesis 1:26-28, Moses captures the essence of the man and the woman's glory. They are both made in God's image. "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness' ...And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:26-27). Both are given charge over the creation.

Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth...And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Gen. 1:26, 28).

And they were both blessed, "And God blessed them." These seem to be the foundational statements upon which Moses builds his further comments about man and woman in Chapter 2 (Kroeger and Beck 1996:16).

It is perhaps noteworthy that the hierarchy that is established in the first chapter is a divine one, namely, God over all His creatures, under whom man and woman are jointly charged to subdue and rule. There is no hint of human patriarchy here at the beginning. Ontologically and functionally the man and the woman are equal.

The text of Genesis 2 also has a number of problems for those who wish to establish male dominance from it. First, the creation of Adam before Eve does not, by itself, give him the prerogatives of rule over her any more than the creation of the other animals before Adam sets them as ruler over him. Nor does the ancient practice of primogeniture apply to Adam and Eve.¹¹ Eve is not the offspring of Adam. Nor is she his younger sister. She is "bone of [his] bones" and "flesh of [his] flesh" and holds a unique co-equal relationship with him.

John Calvin recognized that prior existence on its own was "not a very strong argument in favor of her [Eve's] subjection; for John the Baptist was before Christ in the order of time, and yet was greatly inferior in rank" (1981:68).

At first glance First Timothy 2:11-15 may seem to give a clear and unequivocal statement about the subordination of women to men. Does not Paul give a general command concerning women -- they are not to teach or exercise authority over men? And does he not base this on the arguments that Adam was created before Eve, and that

¹¹ Primogeniture is the custom of giving to the firstborn son the right of leadership in the family.

the woman was deceived and not the man. Such a simple reconstruction of Paul's argument belies the difficulties surrounding the passage.

A crucial question is "What is the context of this instruction?" Another is "How does it fit into the letter's purpose?" Some have argued that Paul is writing a manual of church order and that 2:11-15 is part of that general instruction (Poythress 1991:235). Others believe that in 2:11-15 he is writing to specifically warn Timothy of dangerous false teachers who were threatening the church at Ephesus -- teachers who held an early form of Gnostic teaching on women and of women's origin and authority (Marshall 1999:16-17).

In a helpful study of this key passage, Richard Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger have drawn particular attention to several aspects of Gnostic and pagan "feminism" in Ephesus which promoted the idea that woman was, in fact, the source of man (1993:103). If the Kroegers are correct, then Paul's argument does not teach female subordination and male domination at all. Instead, it restores some biblical facts that were being disputed. The woman was not created first. Nor was she an innocent party in the fall. Paul sets forth the truth from Genesis 2 and 3 and then directs Timothy to forbid from teaching or leadership the women who were teaching these falsehoods about Eve.

In keeping with this interpretation, Kroeger and Kroeger have translated the text of First Timothy 2:12-13, "I do not permit a woman to teach nor to represent herself as originator of man but she is to be in conformity (with the Scriptures) (or that she keeps it a secret.) For Adam was created first, then Eve" (1993:103). One wonders how many

Christian men might have been restrained from abusive attitudes and actions if they had known that this was what Paul really meant?

Headship and the Trinity -- The priority and authority of the husband over the wife is also argued on the basis of the nature of the God whom man is to image. The appointment of man as dominant and the woman as subordinate is grounded ontologically in the being of God. This argument rests on the correct presumption that the three persons of the Godhead exist in a state of perfect equality and unity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are from eternity coequal in the unity of their being "the same in substance, equal in power and glory" as the Shorter Catechism declares (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1976:288).

It also rests on the presumption of a hierarchy of relationships: a subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father. At the same time the Son and the Spirit remain perfectly equal with the Father. As Robert Letham put it, "The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and not vice versa. The Father is not sent, neither does he proceed. The Son obeys the Father. The Father does not enter into a situation where obedience is owed to the Son" (1990:69). Without any diminution of glory or honor, the Son and the Spirit yield to the will and direction of the Father. A few verses in John's gospel will illustrate this point:

I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me...I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father...For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak (Jn. 8:42; 10:1; 12:49).

It is not only for the plan of redemption that an order exists within the operation of the Trinity; there is also an eternal ontological order within the Godhead (Torrance 1975:337-50). The exact nature of this order has been the cause of great debate, especially between the Eastern and Western branches of Christendom (Pelikan 1971-1984:195-98).

What has never been in dispute is that the Bible teaches that the Son and the Spirit give prominence to the Father. The Father directs the ministry and the working of the other two members of the Godhead. There is authority and obedience, rule and subordination in the economy of redemption (Warfield 1968:54-59). It is a union that is more than the members of the Godhead being in harmony and agreement. There is obedience willingly given to the Father's will (Jn. 5:19-43; 17:1-27; Heb. 5:8; 10:5-10).

It is proposed that the relationships of authority and submission within the Trinity are mirrored in a husband's authority over his wife. In this viewpoint, the submission of a wife to her husband is not a consequence of the fall, but an expression of the ontological relationships within the Godhead. Therefore, argues Letham, since the fall did not create the submission of the wife to the husband, redemption does not alter this relationship anymore than redemption alters the relationships within the Trinity (1990:79).

It is the nature of this divine order within the Godhead that is crucial to the discussion of subordination in marriage. First Corinthians 11:3 ties the two things together. "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."

If we are to rightly understand Paul we must understand what he means by "head" (*kephale*). A veritable battle has been waged over what this word means in Greek literature, both biblical and extrabiblical. In 1986 it led to a debate involving Wayne Grudem, Gilbert Bilezikian, and Catherine Clark Kroeger at the meeting of The 38th Evangelical Theological Society. Christianity Today reported the meeting in an article entitled, "The Battle of the Lexicons" (Neff 1987:44-45). Wayne Grudem argued that in 2,336 examples of "head" (*kephale*) in Greek literature, all, without exception, had the meaning "authority over," "leader," or "ruler" (1987:44-45). Gilbert Bilezikian counter-argued that he had examined an even larger number of examples of "head" (*kephale*) from Greek literature, including all of Grudem's examples, and found that all, without exception, meant "source" and not "authority over," "leader," or "ruler" (1987:44-45). When scholars of this caliber differ, to this extent, it is probably better to look for more certain arguments than the etymology of the words to settle the question.

The context provides a possible answer. If in First Corinthians 11:3 Paul had intended "head" (*kephale*) to mean "to have authority over," then is he teaching that men have authority over women in the same way that Christ has authority over the Church and God has authority over Christ? It seems highly unlikely. The authority a husband has over a wife can never be this absolute. He is a sinner and is not fit to exercise such complete authority. It is not difficult to see how a view of headship that gives a husband a divine prerogative of authority over his wife could be corrupted by sin into absolute dominion demanding absolute subordination and leading to abuse.

If Paul used this word "head" to mean "source" or "origin," as in the "head" of a river, then he is teaching something quite different. He is directing the husband to regard the wife as part of himself not merely in some literal biological way, but metaphorically. As Jesus finds his strength and power from the Father, and the Church finds its resources in Christ, so the wife is to find in her "head" the resources and strength she needs. Such a view is a far cry from an excuse to abuse. Ephesians 5:23 and 5:25 seem to bear out this view. Paul defines the husband's "headship" in terms of Christlike servanthood rather than authority. It is a headship that is expressed in love according to Paul. "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:23, 25).

First Timothy 2:11-12 -- The call to entire submissiveness and the prerogative of male authority from First Timothy 2:11-12 are the most appealed to reasons for women's subordination to men: "Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet" (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

As I have already indicated above, First Timothy 2:11-15 is plagued by difficulties. Scholars are not only divided on the meaning of nearly every word and phrase, they differ over what situation Paul is responding to. Crucial to this discussion is the meaning of the phrases "entire submissiveness" and "exercise authority."

Who are these women who are called to "entire submissiveness"? As I have already indicated, I believe Paul is writing to address a pastoral situation that involved

false teachers who were women who were teaching a false view of men and women, derived from the mystery cults. These false teachers were not only challenging the church leaders but they were disrupting homes.

When Paul said, "Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness," who were these women to submit to? Does he have in mind the leaders of the church, the elders (1 Tim. 3: 2--those "able to teach")? Or were their instructors to be their husbands (1 Pet. 3:6--"being submissive to their own husbands")?

A third possibility seems even more reasonable. Paul may be directing these wives to be entirely submissive to the Word of God. The word "entire" (v.11) would only seem to be appropriate if it were to be applied to the Lord Himself. To whom but God Himself, and His Word, are we ever exhorted to give such complete submission?

John Piper, who argues strongly for a wife to submit to her husband, acknowledges that this can never involve absolute submissiveness:

The reason I say that submission means a *disposition* to yield and an *inclination* to follow is that no submission of one human being to another is absolute. The husband does not replace Christ as the woman's supreme authority. She must never follow her husband's leadership into sin (1986: 180).

The connection that Paul makes between quietness and submissiveness may be significant. Kroeger and Kroeger quote Rabbi Isaac who asked: "What should be a man's pursuit in this world? He should be silent. Perhaps he should be so with regard to the words of the Torah?" (1993:75) Kroeger and Kroeger conclude: "Silence, then, was the duty of the learner. The phrase silence and submission is a Near Eastern formula implying willingness to heed and obey instruction in this case that contained the Word of

God" (1993:75-76). In two of the Psalms (Ps. 37:7; 62:1, 5) the Hebrew text speaks of being silent before God. In each case the Septuagint renders the word "silent" with the same verb used here for submissiveness (Kroeger and Kroeger 1993:76). Given that God is the one before whom the woman is to come quietly and give complete submissiveness, verse 11 provides no basis for an abusive husband to dominate his wife.

The phrase "exercise authority" is one word in the original, *authentein*. It is a rarely used word occurring only in First Timothy 2:12 and in less than 40 extant extra-biblical sources dated prior to Paul. Most translations render the word as the NASB has done above. Ordinarily the word used in the New Testament for "having power over" is another word--either *kurieuein* or *exousiazein*. The meaning of *authentein* is a matter of great debate. David M. Scholer has summarized the contribution of evangelicals to this debate in an article entitled, "The Evangelical Debate over Biblical 'Headship'"(1996:28-57). In the section headed, "The Meaning of Authentein and First Timothy 2:8-15," he acknowledges the contribution of Catherine Clark Kroeger, George A. Knight III, Paul W. Barnett, Richard Clark Kroeger, A.C. Perriman and Leland Edward Wilshire, among others (1996: 28-50). Scholer concludes that the evidence points to *authentein* being a negative term, indicating violence and inappropriate behavior (1996:50).

If this is so then Paul is saying that women are not to *authentein* "exercise authority" (an unspecified action of violence and inappropriate behavior). It is highly unlikely that Paul would prohibit women from doing something violent and inappropriate and then expect men to do that very thing. First Timothy 2 also fails the test of providing a basis for subordinating wives and putting men in a position of domination.

The "wives submit, husbands dominate" construct cannot be sustained on biblical or theological grounds. Neither the order of creation, nor male headship and the subordination analogy of the Trinity, nor the call to entire submissiveness and the prerogative of authority in First Timothy 2:11,12 provide a basis for this perversity of Christlike submission to operate. It must be abandoned in the interest of tearing down a citadel for the abusive husband to operate from and retreat to.

The Suffering Servant Argument: Marital Suffering Is Christ-like Martyrdom

When a Christian is abused, is she to take comfort that her sufferings enable her to experience the suffering of Christ? Further, is it wrong for this same person to seek to remove herself from the source of her suffering? These are questions that are often addressed to Christians who seek aid from their Christian leaders and friends. They are expected to answer "Yes" to the first and "No" to the second. In other words they are expected to think on their abuse as a means of becoming more Christ-like. And they are to give up all efforts to remove themselves from their abuser.

Clyde Narramore, a well-respected Christian counselor with many thousands of books in print, offers this very advice to a women facing "hostile, angry and disturbed" husbands. He writes: "The Bible does not say, 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands if they are the kind of men they should be'"(1960:14). Further he advises counselors to present the "clear teaching of God's Word," which is that wives are to accommodate themselves to abusive situations and by so doing allow themselves to suffer for Jesus and "follow in his steps" (1960:14-15).

Few evangelicals would doubt that the cross is the central motif of Christianity. It is through the suffering of Christ on the cross that salvation and redemption is secured. Believers are exhorted to take up the cross daily (Lk. 9:23). We are also instructed to suffer for the gospel. Paul writes, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, .. but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8). Peter also wrote, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). James went even further. He said we were to embrace suffering with joy because it was God's means of sanctifying us: "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas. 1:2-3).

It is little wonder that Christian communities came to regard all suffering as virtuous. Martyrdom, the fullest expression of a believer's commitment to the faith, brought with it a special place of honor among Christians. The writer to the Hebrews recalls as an example to his readers the names of many that suffered and died for the faith in Chapter 11.

Carolyn Holderread Heggen describes how this high view of suffering was perverted into a belief that women were both capable of enduring more severe suffering and more likely to have to do so (1996:22-23). Over time this was further extended to mean that a woman who suffered was able to reveal Christ to those around her. She became a martyr. One client told Heggen, "If my gentle spirit in the midst of his violence

finally causes him to see the face of Jesus in me, every blow I have sustained throughout our marriage will have been worth it" (1996:23).

While Christians may be confident that God is always present with us in the times of our greatest trials, and that He makes all trials work for His own glory and our good, it is another thing to believe that God would want His people to remain in their suffering if He has provided a way for them to escape it. Some suffering is voluntary and embraced willingly--as in the birth pangs a mother endures, or the suffering for one's faith. Other suffering is involuntary and seems to serve no purpose or end.

I have sat with broken-hearted parents who have lost a child and known this misery of involuntary suffering. I have also sat with a wife who is black and blue with bruises who can see little spiritual value in her sorrow. God will use it in some way, we can be sure, but to romanticize it or welcome it makes a mockery of God's desire for His people (Heggen 1996:23). Rejoicing in the suffering that comes from the sin of marital abuse is sick. Soelle calls it "Christian masochism" (Heggen 1996:24).

It is appalling to think of Christian pastors and teachers directing believers to accept marital abuse because it is good for them. Such an attitude is guaranteed to create a greater sense of victimization by the one who is suffering. It also reflects an indifference to the offensiveness of this abuse. Eric Hudson and Greg Yee quote from an ancient Rabbinical statement: "Whoever is merciful to the cruel will end by being indifferent to the innocent" (quoted in Cox 1994:17).

But do pastors actually teach this? James and Phyllis Alsdurf quotes Bill Gothard, the guru of Christian marriage for many conservative evangelicals: "Can a wife

claim to be following Scripture when she rejects the ministry and rewards of suffering for righteousness' sake which God calls every Christian to accept (1 Pet. 2:18-3:10)?" (1989:88)

When abuse is involved the answer to Gothard's outrageous rhetorical question is a resounding YES! She most certainly is following the Scripture when a wife demands an end to the violence from her marriage partner because it is not for righteousness sake that she endures her abuse. Few things reflect the revealed will of God better in these circumstances than for the abused wife to call upon God and her brethren to assist her in the time of her distress. The Psalmist sums up the response God demands of us:

God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked (Ps. 82:1-4).

The Forgiveness Argument: Forgiveness Is Unconditional

When marital abuse happens in church homes the most common belief appealed to by abusers, to keep their victims from exposing and leaving them, is the Christian's obligation to forgive. There is a powerful incentive for believers to forgive. They know what it is like to be forgiven for each one has experienced the forgiveness from God. And if that was not reason enough to forgive, God has commanded us to forgive those who sin against us and warned us of dire consequences if we do not forgive. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:32: "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Few duties are more clearly or repeatedly given to believers than that of forgiving. Bruce Barber has expressed this well when he writes, "Forgiveness is not merely one choice amongst a host of Christian themes, which, if added end to end would result in a complete glossary of faith. Forgiveness is rather Christian faith itself whole, complete" (1991:47). And how often must a Christian forgive? Jesus said, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Mt. 18:22).

However, it is not always easy to forgive. If someone is the victim of terrible sinful actions or behaviors that are of a particularly unsavory nature, like some forms of cruelty or abuse, especially when children are the victims, or when some form of sexual perversity is involved, it is hard to forgive. There are certain sinful acts that so offend the sensibilities of Christians that when someone is accused of doing them, his forgiveness is not entertained as a real option. Likewise, there are certain people who may be considered beyond the range of forgiveness because the breach of trust involved in their sin is so great as when a pastor or elder is caught out in adultery.

Such limitations on forgiveness do not accord with the commands or example of Christ. We have no option but to forgive the person who comes seeking it. As Steven Fleming observed, "The church is meant to be a bastion for hurting people, not only for the victim, but for the abuser as well. He is also a wounded person in need of help" (1996:175).

No matter how hard it might be to come to a person who has sinned against you or others with a spirit of forgiveness, it remains your responsibility to do so. Without this

there can be little possibility of love and gentleness being present, but a greater likelihood of harshness and punitive revenge.

The grace of God may be staggeringly generous, gracious and extensive, but it is not unconditional. Many abusers have sheltered under the misconception and false teaching of many that there are no conditions attached to forgiveness. They are wrong and those that teach forgiveness as unconditional have perverted a glorious truth and put lives and souls at stake.

In Luke 17:3 Jesus gave this qualification to forgiveness when teaching His disciples about disciplining a brother who had sinned: "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." The qualification, "if he repents," places a condition on forgiveness. This means that the one who wishes to forgive has an obligation to his errant brother. He must be able to see and/or hear some kind of evidence of repentance.

What is that evidence? Jesus explains, "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him" (Lk. 17:3). Two things are given as evidence of repentance. First, he is willing to return to the brother who has confronted him and presumably accept responsibility for his transgression. The "returning" may imply a period of time has elapsed where the person has had the opportunity to consider his actions. Therefore, when he returns it is in an attitude of godly sorrow and confession.

Second, the offending brother makes a statement about his repentance. Jesus describes this in terms of a simple profession --'I repent' (*metanoo*). Jesus does not

discuss the sincerity and authenticity of the statement. However, the form of the verb used in the profession "I repent" (present indicate active) points to an action that has already started and is continuing. It could have been translated, "I am repenting." In other words, this is not an empty profession without some evidence of practical action. Like all true repentance there is a turning away from the sinful patterns of behavior from the past.

What Jesus does make clear is that the person who comes in confession and repentance seeking forgiveness must be forgiven, irrespective of how often he might come seeking it. "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him" (Lk. 17:4).

The reality of a person's sincerity in repentance is difficult to ascertain at any time. It is doubly so for those who are assessing the genuineness of abusers. A sense of remorse immediately after an incident of abuse is the common response of many marital abusers. The authors of the Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project Report, "Questions Women Ask About Domestic Violence And Christian Beliefs," describe this feature:

After a violent outburst the abusive partner may feel ashamed and frightened of the consequences of his actions. Typically, he expresses remorse, promises that it will never happen again, and attempts to win his partner's affections through demonstrations of his love and good intentions. He may buy her flowers, take more interest in the children, enroll in counseling or begin attending church (1994:16).

This kind of remorse is seldom evidence of genuine repentance. It is necessary for the victims of marital abuse, and those who are involved in confronting the sinning

brother or sister, to exercise great discernment in determining the genuineness of any display or profession of repentance and sorrow. The words "I repent" must have some reality if they are to be the basis of encouraging a victim of abuse to stay with her or his abuser.

Repentance is an about-face movement from denial and rebellion to truth and surrender from death to life...Repentance involves the response of humble hunger, bold movement, and wild celebration when faced with the reality of our fallen state and the grace of God. [Using the story of the prodigal son as a background] The Father wants us to be hungry and dissatisfied with our pigpen cuisine. He wants us to return in absolute dependence and dine on the fatter calf (Allender 1995:215, 219-220).

Richard Baxter counsels pastors to be wary of accepting a proven recidivist's testimony of repentance:

But if any notorious perfidiousness, or frequent covenant-breaking, have forfeited the credit of their words, or have long continued in the sin which they do confess, so that their forsaking it hath no proof; the church then must have testimony of the actual reformation of such as these, before they may take their professions and promises as credible; yet here the difference of persons and offenses is so great, that this is to be much left to the prudence of pastors that are present, and acquainted with the persons and circumstances of the case (1990:942).

It is not a contradiction of true love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things" (1 Cor. 13:7) for the victim and church to seek some assurance that the person's professed sorrow and repentance is real. This means the sentiment expressed by some counselors to victims of abuse, "You must forgive your abuser!" is entirely inappropriate. So too is the subtle, and sometimes blatant, pressure to shame and coerce victims to forgive without delay or evidence. This persuasion to forgive and be

reconciled without any delay or fuss can be heightened if both victim and perpetrator are members of the same church. As Carolyn Heggen observes,

As long as the relationship is broken, the broader Christian community is affected. Because it makes the entire religious community uncomfortable when there is unresolved conflict, it is understandable, if not appropriate, that victims feel great urging to forgive promptly and be reconciled (1996: 24-25).

She is correct to add,

Quick forgiveness without true repentance on the part of the offender may make the community less anxious, but it is not a healing experience for either the victim or the perpetrator of abuse A facile, quick forgiveness that doesn't appropriately hold the perpetrator of abuse responsible for his behaviour not only puts others in danger of his ongoing violence, it likewise decreases the likelihood that he will honestly face his sinful behaviour, repent, and get the help he needs to understand and change his destructive patterns of behaviour. Pushing for quick forgiveness and cheap mercy not only trivializes the victim's depth of pain and woundedness, but may also rob the perpetrator of the opportunity to experience true repentance and redemption (1996:25,27).

Christian teachers who claim that forgiveness is unconditional trivialize something that is meant to be precious. They do so in three ways (Barber 1991:48). First, by making forgiveness a state of mind, a sentiment, a feeling that can be unilateral, that does not require involvement with the other person; they remove the need for repentant actions to accompany it.

Second, they have trivialized forgiveness by making it all about the past and something best left in the past. "Forgive and forget" is the idea. This teaching encourages people to forget the injuries and injustices of the past. "Forgiveness built on 'forgetfulness' is a Christian version of a frontal lobotomy" (Allender 1995:13). It makes

any consideration of the abuse, any appeal for help or justice, sound like self-centredness and selfishness. To avoid the past is an act of denial not of grace.

Third, they have trivialized forgiveness by claiming that we can forgive in a way that God cannot. He attaches repentance to His forgiveness. How arrogant we are to think we can out forgive God by counseling a type of forgiveness without repentance.

The victim and the perpetrator need to understand the dynamic of conditional forgiveness. The victim needs to know it so she can reach the state of healing whereby she is able to "let go of the experience and not allow it to dominate her life" (Cox 1994: 13). The perpetrator needs to know it so he will cry out to God for the grace needed to bring forth the fruit of repentance, and then do it.

The No Divorce Argument: Abuse is No Ground for Divorce

Why does a professing Christian who abuses his spouse not fear that she will leave and divorce him? The answer is a simple one: he (and often she) has the distorted belief that abuse is not a biblical ground for doing so. I know several wives who separated from, and then divorced, their abusive husbands only to face the extreme disapproval and open animosity of the local church where they attend. This is not an unexpected response because it is still a common belief held among evangelical churches that abuse is not a legitimate ground for divorce. I have found very few evangelical churches willing to give their blessing to victims who divorce for marital abuse.

We have already seen in Chapter 2 of this study that marriage was a divinely instituted relationship intended to bring husband and wife mutual help and blessing in an unbroken union of joy and loving companionship. Jesus called His disciples to

faithfulness in marriage that reflected God's original design (Mt. 5:31-32; 19:3-8) and rejected the casual indifference to marriage by the cultural norms of their day. The New Testament church recognized that the risen Christ had elevated the institution of marriage to an even higher status. Christians were now to reflect their union with Christ through the way they loved together as husband and wife (Ephesians 5).

But the Bible's teaching on the sanctity of marriage did not exclude the possibility of divorce. Divorce is something that arises from sin and God hates it. Malachi 2:16 states this in unequivocal language: "'For I hate divorce,' says the Lord, the God of Israel." However, we must also acknowledge that not everything about divorce is contrary to the will of God, for God pictures Himself as a divorced person. Murray says:

While God emphatically says, "I hate divorce" (Mal. 2:16), that statement must not be taken absolutely to mean that there is *nothing* about divorce that could be anything but detestable, because He, Himself, also tells us... for all the adulteries which faithless Israel had done, I sent her away and gave her a divorce bill (1972:23).

The evangelical Church has been divided over what this means. Does it mean that God permits divorce? If so, to whom and under what circumstances? And if divorce is permitted, do the Scriptures also permit remarriage? These questions have vexed the Christian community, especially in the last half a century, when we have seen divorce rates soar in both the unchurched community around us and in the church attending community.

H. Wayne House has edited a book summarizing the four most common positions represented in Christian churches on this question of divorce and remarriage (1990).

They are:

1. No divorce, no remarriage.¹²
2. Divorce only for adultery and desertion but no remarriage.¹³
3. Divorce and remarriage only for adultery and desertion.¹⁴
4. Divorce and remarriage for a wide variety of grounds.¹⁵

The most commonly held view is #3, the view that divorce is permissible but only on the grounds of adultery and desertion. Such a view recognizes that the seven passages in the Bible that speak directly to the issue of divorce do not always condemn it as a practice (Deut. 24:1-4; Mal. 2:6-16; Mt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mk. 10:2-12; Lk. 16:18 and 1 Cor. 7:10-15). Indeed, divorce was practiced because it was permitted (for example Lev. 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num. 30:9; Deut. 22:19; 29; 24:1-4). Any condemnation for the perversion of what God prescribed does not change the legitimacy of the practice.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that divorce was a divine provision for bringing closure to marriages when the covenant bond was irreversibly broken. Covenantal language surrounds the biblical description of marriage from its institution in Genesis 2:22-24.

And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man. And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

¹² Proponents of this view include J. Carl Laney (1981), and Charles C. Ryrie (1982)

¹³ Proponents of this view include William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham (1984), and John Piper (1986).

¹⁴ Proponents of this view include the Westminster Confession [Chapter XXIV: v-vi], Thomas Edgar (1990), and John Murray (1972).

¹⁵ Proponents of this view include Lawrence O. Richards (1990) and David Atkinson (1979).

When Scripture says that a man shall "cleave" to his wife, it is using a covenantal term employed elsewhere to express in the Old Testament the way the Israelites were to cleave with affection and loyalty to the Lord (Deut. 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20; Jos. 22:5; 23:8). Adams writes of marriage as a "covenant of companionship" (1980:8).

Divorce is the formal means of severing the covenant bond that has already been severed by sin. Just as the formula to enact a covenant involved cutting, so too did the formula for enacting a divorce. Divorce is a severing of the bond of marriage. The PCA statement on marriage and divorce recognized this aspect of divorce when it reviewed the original words used to describe it. It states:

The Old Testament term for divorce which occurs in the phrase "bill of divorce" (Deut. 24; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8) means "to cut off, to hew off" (*kerithuth*). Other Old Testament words are used to "expel, put away" (*garash*) or "to dismiss, send away, let go, put away" (*shalach*). The New Testament has similar words in the Greek which mean the same thing: "to set free, release, dismiss, send away" (*apoluo*), "to separate, divide" (*chorizo*), and "to let go, send away" (*aphiemi*). The notion of severance or being cut off is implied within the contextual use of these terms, and it would be difficult to argue that the terms do not connote a total break in marital obligations (PCA 1990:629).

The crucial issue is what type of sinful behavior has the effect of justifying such a drastic response? The two actions most commonly accepted by those in evangelical churches are adultery (*porneia*) and desertion.

Adultery (Porneia) -- The argument for adultery (*porneia*) rests in the words of Jesus. His teaching on divorce and remarriage is recorded in Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-11; and Luke 16:18. Although all four passages vary in precise detail, they cannot be said to be contradictory. Each elaborates and complements what the others

say. In the Matthew and Mark passages Jesus couches his teaching within the context of the rabbinic perversion of Moses' instruction on divorce in Deuteronomy 24. He is not quoting Moses verbatim, but is stating the popular interpretation of Moses that permitted divorce for any reason. Divorce, under this distortion of Scripture, became a simple matter of issuing a certificate (Mt. 5:31). Jesus restores the biblical standard. He teaches that divorce cannot be granted "except for the cause of unchastity" (Mt. 5:32), and "except for immorality" (Mt. 19:9). The Matthean exception has provoked tremendous debate among evangelicals. The authenticity of the phrases has been challenged,¹⁶ along with the context and the scope of the exception.

The most significant debate centers on the meaning of *porneia* translated variously as "unchastity," "immorality," "adultery," or "fornication" in most English Bibles. The presumption for most evangelicals is that whatever this word means, Jesus permitted it as a ground for divorce.

Determining the meaning of *porneia* must begin with an examination of the way it was used in the Old and New Testaments. According to the Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon, *porneia* and its cognates are used to translate the Old Testament Hebrew word *zannah*, and may be translated "prostitution, unchastity, fornication, and may be used to translate 'every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse'" (1957:699). *Porneia* is used interchangeably with the more common word in Greek for adultery, *moicheia*. Yet *porneia* is not merely an alternative for adultery. It seems best to see the word used in

¹⁶ See John Murray (1972:47-51) for a defense of the textual authenticity of this phrase.

the Scriptures to describe the whole class of sins associated with sexual unfaithfulness.¹⁷ David C. Jones writes,

Porneia is the general term for all illicit or immoral sexual intercourse. The specific form may sometimes be indicated by the context. If payment of wages is involved, it is *prostitution*. If it involves close relatives, it is *incest*. If it involves persons of the same sex, it is *homosexuality*. If it involves an unmarried couple, it is *unchastity*. If it involves a married person outside of marriage, it is *adultery* (1989:n.p.).

In my experience in counseling husbands and wives who have been the victims of marital abuse it is very common for them to speak of their abusers using sexual abuse to maintain control and power over them. For wives this usually comes in the form of forced sexual intercourse. For husbands, forced sexual intercourse is not common. But they do report their abusive wives using humiliation and scorn in relation to sexual intimacy. Do these fall within the purview of *porneia*? It is hard to see why not.

Some have extended the meaning of *porneia* beyond that of literal sexual unfaithfulness. They note the figurative way the word is used to describe covenant breaking and a broad range of sins. God Himself used the term in this way to describe Israel's covenant-breaking behavior (for example Num. 14:33; Hos. 1:2; 6:10; Ezek. 16, 23; Jer. 3:2, 9). He calls the sins committed by His Old Covenant people *porneia*, not because they have all engaged in illicit sexual unfaithfulness, but because they have done all manner of evil against Him, including idolatry and violence to one another (see Jer. 3, especially vv. 8-9). The word is used in this combined figurative and literal way in the

¹⁷ Some scholars argue for a much more limited and defined meaning including: 1. Those who hold that *porneia* refers only to incest (1 Cor 5:1; Acts 15:20). 2. Those who hold that *porneia* refers only to sexual unfaithfulness before marriage.

New Testament by John to describe the rebellion of sinful humanity, coming to its climax in the abominations of evil represented in the "Great Harlot" (Rev. 2:21; 9:21; 14:8; 17:2, 4; 18:3; and 19:2).

By this construction *porneia* could be legitimately used to describe abuse. Just as sexual unfaithfulness strains the covenant bond until it breaks, when all trust is destroyed, so too does marital abuse. To suggest that the "one-flesh" bond of marriage is broken by sexual immorality but not by violence does not accord with the way God has viewed both in the life of Israel. If God hates sexual immorality so much that He permits divorce, which He hates, then why would He not hate marital abuse to the same extent when His Word declares, "The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates" (Ps. 11:5).

Desertion -- The argument for desertion rests on Paul's inspired teaching in First Corinthians 7:10-15. Just as Jesus' instruction on divorce began with a firm command not to do it, and then proceeded to explain under what circumstances it was possible, Paul does the same thing. In this passage he begins by giving Christians living in mixed marriages where one is a Christian and the other is not this clear instruction to the believers: they were not to divorce their unbelieving partners. Paul says: "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband ...and that the husband should not send his wife away" (7:10,11). The word "leave" (*chorizo*) was the common word to describe a woman's method of divorcing her husband, and the words "send ...away" (*aphiemi*) are the normal way of describing how a husband divorced his wife. Gordon Fee explains this:

Ordinarily when a wife "divorces" she simply leaves her husband ("is separated" from him); the same verb is used in verse 15 of a pagan partner of either sex who leaves, and occurs regularly in the papyri for mutual divorce (agreeing to "separate from each other"). On the other hand, a man ordinarily "divorced his wife" ("sent her away"); nevertheless in v.13 the wife can do the same (1988b:193-194).

From this command not to divorce, Paul now proceeds to explain when divorce is permitted. "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). Paul again uses the word "leaves" to refer to divorce. His concern is for the person who is abandoned by an unbelieving spouse. The PCA is loath to make this a second ground for divorce. Instead it makes this point:

Herein lies an interesting point. Paul is referring to a situation in which the deserted spouse is the passive victim of the unrighteous termination of a marriage. This suggests that what we have here is not another ground for divorce, but from the perspective of the offended spouse, a *fait accompli* (1990:651).

Paul is instructing the abandoned believer to accept the reality of her or his abandonment. The covenant bond is broken. The divorce has been enacted. The abandoned spouse is "not bound" (*douleuo*) any longer and is now free to know "peace" in this difficult situation. The word "not bound" (*douleuo*) is in the perfect tense and communicates the idea that he or she is no longer in a state of bondage.

As we have already seen, several of the Puritans considered the plight of the victims of marital abuse as one of abandonment. So too did the Committee who drafted the PCA paper on Divorce and Remarriage. They wrote:

A husband's violence, particularly to the degree that it endangers his wife's safety, if unremedied, seems to us, by any application of Biblical norms, to be as much a ruination of the marriage in fact as adultery or actual departure. Further, insofar as the "passivity" of the blameless spouse is an important prerequisite in Paul's permission of the dissolution of marriage on account of desertion, it seems right to note that in the case of physical abuse, for example; the blameless spouse is similarly victimized (1990:652).

A brutal partner forsook his spouse by his abuse. The covenant of companionship by which they were bound can become so sorely violated by the violence that the marriage bond ceases to exist. If the victim left the home in these circumstances, she should not be regarded as the one who has abandoned her husband. The abuser is the one who has abandoned his injured spouse. Given these circumstances, without repentance, she should be free to divorce and to remarry without reproach.

Divorce is always a tragedy. But God permits it in those special cases when the covenant bond is broken. Continued abuse from unrepentant hearts break that bond. Sometimes, the threat of divorce is the only thing that will awaken a perpetrator to the seriousness of his sin. For the church not to offer it as a way of setting the abused free is a serious weakness that the victims of abuse can ill afford. The Scriptures and the wisdom of the Puritans must be used to challenge the distorted teaching on divorce that preserves the abuser's marriage.

Such a view of divorce contains the inherent danger of easy divorce—something that the Scriptures clearly condemn. How can pastors avoid the situation of an unhappy member of a marriage reinterpreting his or her struggling relationship as abuse and therefore as a justification for separation and divorce? The answer lies in the wise application of church discipline as described earlier. Let the final determination of a

genuinely abusive relationship be determined by the church (“tell it to the church Mt. 18:17), with the elders or leaders in full agreement, rather than by the pastor alone.

Chapter Summary

When God calls the Church to do something as profoundly important as putting an end to marital abuse, the common excuses used to avoid doing it must be cast aside. So too must the false but popular ideas and beliefs that leave us unmoved and uninvolved. Too much is at stake to get it wrong. We are charged to bring good news to the oppressed. Carolyn Heggen warns Christians what happens if we get this wrong:

Any religious teaching that isn't good news for even the most vulnerable among us is a distortion of Jesus' gospel. Teachings that cause women [and men] to doubt their own intrinsic preciousness and equal worth ...or that make them vulnerable to violence and abuse even within their most intimate relationships and homes are surely a blasphemous misrepresentation of Jesus' intentions for us (Heggen 1996:27).

CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS: TOWARD A SOLUTION

When confronted with marital abuse among its members, the goal of the local church is to end the sinful behaviour and to facilitate, where possible, the restoration of a God-honoring marriage. Notwithstanding the difficulty of the task, or the magnitude of the problem, the local church can still be confident that, with God's help and by His grace, it can confront and deliver its members caught up in marital abuse.

To accomplish the goal the local church must get two things right: the right attitude in approaching the task and the right actions in doing the task. If they attempt to confront the problem without getting the attitude right, their actions will be devoid of the grace of God and accomplish little. Likewise, if they seek to adopt the right attitude but are unwilling to implement an effective strategy built upon biblical principles then, again, they will be unsuccessful. This chapter seeks to provide a description of the right attitudes and the right actions for ending marital abuse.

Getting the Attitude Right

An encounter between a Samaritan woman and Jesus gives an insight into the attitude needed for effective ministry to those involved in marital abuse. The Apostle John records in his Gospel how a Samaritan woman met Jesus beside a well at Sychar.

She was surprised by his request for a drink. She knew that Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Yet, here he was--a Rabbi, speaking to her, sharing his need and inviting her to share her burdens. His attitude of acceptance and concern opened her heart to Him. Before long she would discover that He was the Christ, "The Living Water," and in so doing she would find a way beyond the bitter disappointment and shame of her failed marriages and abusive partners. His gracious attitude prepared her for transformation and recovery.

The challenge of the Church is to have "the same attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). What does this mean? It means approaching people caught up in marital abuse by manifesting six graces.

With Love

The chief attitude we ought to have when ministering to those caught up in marital abuse, whether to the victim or the perpetrator, is summed up in First Corinthians 13. It is the requirement of love. Loveless ministry is futile and worthless (1 Cor. 13:1-3). So is loveless church discipline, but it is also disastrous. The Apostle Paul defines in practical terms what this attitude of love means in First Corinthians 13:4-7. We must come to the members of the church caught up in marital abuse with love expressed in "patience, kindness, . . . rejoicing with the truth, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, and enduring all things." We must seek to minister "without jealousy, bragging, arrogance, self-seeking, account-keeping, or rejoicing in another's unrighteousness."

It is this type of love that is needed for all forms of church discipline involving marital abuse because the process of recovery is often long and demanding. The fruit of it may not be evident for some time. It is love that keeps people at the task.

It is vital that when a perpetrator is challenged about his abusive behaviour, that those who confront him be Christian brothers and sisters who love him. They must communicate that love has brought them to him, not a desire for punitive condemnation.

This is such a different approach to the largely negative and punitive model of marital abuse counseling known as the "Duluth Model--the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project" (DAIP) from Duluth, Minnesota. This very popular approach, built on a feminist perspective, offers little to perpetrators beyond blame, shame, civil action and divorce. It presumes that marital abuse is all about male-centered power and control spawned in a patriarchal society that renders women powerless and impotent to change their circumstances.

The Duluth Model offers little hope of reconciliation. There is virtually no expectation of a change of behaviour on the part of the abuser. Although Walker is willing to acknowledge the power of love--"It is love alone that will effectually conquer. Whoever, therefore, would be successful in such reformatory efforts as he may think it his duty to put forth, must see to it that those efforts are dictated by love" (1983:93)--she also wrote, "In working with battered women, however, psychotherapists must encourage breaking the family apart" (1979:230). Such an attitude almost guarantees that confronted perpetrators will be defensive, self-justifying, and resistant to change.

Grace demands love, but a love that does not countenance sin. When a Christian approaches a brother or sister about his or her sin with an attitude of love, the impact of the confrontation is enhanced not reduced. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6). Knowing that Jesus loved him did not mitigate the Apostle Peter's guilt and sorrow for his sinful denial. Jesus' love for him made it more painful and real. But when Jesus recommissioned Peter, it was this assurance of Jesus' love that transformed Peter and set him free to serve the Lord again.

With Humility

Humility involves an acknowledging that the task is too great, too complex, too important to be done without divine aid. The natural outworking of humility is a deep commitment to prayer for the Spirit's wisdom and strength. Without humility there will be no prayer, and without prayer there will be no power to accomplish so great a task. It is vital this be borne in mind when dealing with cases of domestic abuse.

A congregation faced with an abusive situation needs to pray earnestly and powerfully. Violence is specifically associated with Satan (Ezek. 28:16) and only by prayer can his stronghold be assailed.

It is not insignificant that Jesus should include a promise about prayer in his teaching on church discipline. "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 18:19).

To be humble in heart is the only defense against the evil specter of pride that attends every effort to engage in correcting others. Calvin noted this tendency toward an "inordinate love of self and an innate pride, which makes us very indulgent to our own faults while being ruthless of those of others" (1972:277).

With Gentleness

Having identified gentleness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23), Paul goes on to say it is a grace that is absolutely necessary to the one who would be engaged in church discipline. "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). A spirit of gentleness is the capacity to act with tenderness, kindness, empathy and without derision or high-mindedness. When a man is prepared to approach a situation of discipline with gentleness he is not concerned about elevating himself at the other person's expense, but approaches as a fellow sinner saved and kept by grace. Gentleness does not imply prevarication or avoidance of the chief issues involved in the offense. Rather, it points to a generous and loving spirit intent on restoration.

No one would be gentler than Jesus. His treatment of sinners was marked by a generosity that illustrated the true spirit of gentleness. This was particularly so of women who were being maltreated or marginalized. The woman at the well (Jn. 4) and the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8) are two examples of his astonishing gentleness towards

women in abusive situations--one, the discarded victim of many husbands, the other, the victim of scheming religious leaders intent on using her to entrap Jesus.

If gentleness is needed for the person who ministers to the victim of abuse, then it is essential for the person who confronts the abuser. Holy Spirit inspired gentleness disarms the power of anger. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1). It is not insignificant that Paul makes gentleness an essential qualification for elders while pugnaciousness and contentiousness are disqualifying attitudes (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2).

With Impartiality and Fairness

Few things are guaranteed to undermine the effectiveness of church discipline more than partiality and unfairness. A person approached by a fellow member whom he knows to be impartial and fair in his dealings is always more likely to receive the rebuke and counsel given.

This impartiality and fairness is expressed in a willingness to listen thoroughly, to be patient, and to be considered in one's judgment. The tendency to jump to conclusions, or to be reactive, or precipitous in actions, weakens the credibility of a counselor and the effectiveness of the church discipline. The failure of the Church to accept both the reality of marital abuse among its members and its responsibility to deal with it has left many victims feeling that justice and help has been denied them.

With Godly Sorrow

Sin is a dreadful thing that ought to provoke grief in the hearts of all God's people. So it is not enough for just the people who face corrective discipline to be sorrowful over their sin. Paul calls upon those who engage in this disciplinary ministry to also have a clear realization of their own struggle with sin--"each one looking to yourself" (Gal. 6:1). The weeping over sin we share with our brethren is a powerful evidence of grace and a precursor of blessing. As the Psalmist declares, "Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

With Joy

It is important that Christians understand that the restoration of an erring brother deserves to be treated with the same joy we might experience when a sinner repents for the first time and comes to Christ. R.B Kuiper captures this when he wrote, "If he repents, he should be welcomed back into the fold with joy and thanksgiving" (1967: 309).

The response of the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15) provides a pattern for the church to follow when an erring believer returns to the household of faith. The younger brother returns with a spirit of humility and repentance and is welcomed back as a treasured son. The negative, uncharitable response of the older brother does not reflect the grace of Christ or His church. He is rebuked by his father for being a hypocrite, robbed of the joy of his own sonship as well as the pleasure of seeing his

brother restored. The church has for too long followed the example of the judgmental older brother rather than the gracious father.

One way that churches can encourage the spirit of restoration is to provide opportunities for those who have been the subjects of church discipline to share how God has turned them back to Himself and brought them to repentance. Such testimonies, given either publicly or informally, can be a powerful positive encouragement for God's people to continue in restorative discipline. This is certainly so of those who are restored after they have been publicly rebuked or excommunicated from fellowship. A joyous public reinstatement will do more than simply remove a public or commonly known censure against a fallen brother. It will declare the restorative grace of God and bring joy to the brethren.

Restoration within the church community may, sadly, not always mean a restoration of the marriage. Sometimes, the perpetrator of marital abuse must live with the consequences of his actions, much in the same way a victim may have to live with the scars of her abuse. It is possible that repentance is so slow in coming that a victim has sought and received separation, divorce and remarriage by the time he comes to his senses. The sad reality of sin is that it often has continuing consequences, even when it has been forgiven and cleansed. Abusers need to be warned of this, if they are unwilling to face up to their sinful behavior and reluctant to bring forth the fruit of repentance.

What the church must be very clear about is that their chief concern and highest priority for an abuser is for his restoration to God and to the fellowship of the saints, not the restoration of his marriage. The second without the first would be futile. Jesus

taught, it is better for you to go through life crippled, lame and blind in the Kingdom of God than to live outside the Kingdom having both hands, both feet, and both eyes, and be ultimately cast into hell (Mk. 9:43, 45, 47). So we might extrapolate His teaching to say, it is better to enter the Kingdom having lost a spouse than to be left in the realm of sin unrepentant with one.

Getting the Actions Right

Marital abuse rarely stops without intervention. As we have already seen in Chapter 2 the local church's method of intervention is restorative church discipline. This is no easy task, because sin is a subtle and complex problem and each abusive marriage has its own unique dynamics.

The following is one possible methodology to end marital abuse. It is an eclectic work, tried and modified over 10 years of ministry and based on the work of many others who have been working with victims and perpetrators. What makes it different to many of the other approaches I have come across is its two presuppositions: first, that the methodology be rigorously consistent with biblical principles, and second, that it can be done best by members of a local church within the context of a local church.

The methodology involves seven interwoven parts:

1. Demonstrate a Commitment to Confront the Secret
2. Establish Pastoral Training Programs
3. Provide Safety for Victims
4. Provide Immediate Support for Victims

5. Stop the Abuser Committing the Abuse
6. Reconstruct the Marriage Bond
7. Build an Intimate Relationship with God

Demonstrate a Commitment to Confront the Secret

Local churches must admit the reality of marital abuse. Both victims and perpetrators of abuse experience great relief and gratitude to God when their local church acknowledges that their problem exists and shows a willingness to help them be free of it.

Preaching and Teaching

Hosea wrote, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). It is the privilege and duty of preachers and teachers in a local church to provide the biblical knowledge God's people need to live a godly life and to deal with problems like domestic abuse. They can include themes, texts, stories, illustrations, and exhortations involving marital abuse when they are planning their preaching schedules and their Christian education programs. This is particularly so when special meetings are being planned to minister to married couples, men's and women's groups, family relationship conferences, elders and pastors retreats, and singles retreats. The almost total absence of seminary teaching on this subject in ministerial training reinforces the need for teachers and preachers at the local church level to do this important task.

When congregations are educated by word and deed that marital abuse will not be tolerated within the membership, that victims will always be supported, and that perpetrators will be dealt with by restorative church discipline, victims will come forward and the process of restoring marriages can begin.

Pastoral Prayer

Few things are more powerfully reflective of a church's pastoral concern than what they pray for publicly. Many victims of abuse have informed me of the great sense of comfort and support they have felt when they heard God's people pleading for them before the throne of grace. Those who have a ministry in corporate prayer can be encouraged to include the victims and the perpetrators of marital abuse in the content of their pastoral prayers. As the members and leaders of the church hear regular intercession made on behalf of those trapped in marital abuse they become more aware of their responsibility before God to actively remove it from their midst.

Establish Specific Pastoral Training Programs

As part of the pastoral training program carried out in a local church, members of the congregation should be given instruction to do the following:

1. Identify the characteristics of perpetrators of marital abuse
2. Identify the victims of marital abuse

Identify the Characteristics of Perpetrators of Marital Abuse

Jesus said, "The bad tree bears bad fruit . . . you will know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:17, 20). Many a battered Christian wife has wished that she had been able to identify the characteristics of an abuser before she had married one. Yet, it is not surprising that she has been unable to do so. Three commonly held presumptions about abusers make identification difficult before marriage takes place:

1. The presumption that a Christian spouse could not be an abuser.

One of the most bewildering surprises a victim of abuse within a Christian community receives is that the professing Christian she married is a violent abuser.

"How can a Christian act in this way?" is a question I am often asked. The reality that we have already seen is that all Christians can and some do become abusers.

2. The presumption that they were too much in love for abuse to be a possibility.

Betty and Graham's story illustrates this: Betty fell in love with Graham and he with her. She naturally believed that the love they shared was too strong for any possibility of abuse. How devastated she was when she discovered that their love did not restrain his abusive behaviour. It is the very strong emotional attachment that develops during the dating phase of a relationship that masks the danger signs.

3. The presumption that there was no prior indication or warning signs of an abusive partner. "He was such a nice guy. He was not poor, drug or alcohol dependent, non-religious, or from a dysfunctional home. How could he be an abuser?" This is not an uncommon question asked by victims. As we have seen already in this study, abusers come from all socioeconomic groups, all races, all cultures, and all religions. They are unrecognizable to most church members, just as they are unrecognizable to most of the

community. It is why their abusive behavior is so likely to be dismissed as an over-reaction or a misunderstanding. Kay Marshall Strom states the dilemma faced by many victims of abuse:

When a man does not fit the stereotype of a wife abuser, people find it hard to believe that the battering is really going on. How could such a nice guy be capable of beating and battering his wife? What Janet's friends don't understand is that there is no such thing as "the abusive type" (1986:21).

Research into the profiling of abusers is a recent field of study based on a significant number of descriptions of abusers, and focusing on their personalities and the social influences that have shaped their lives (Martin 1987a:31). One of the pioneers in this research is Lenore E. Walker (1979). Her research identified eight common characteristics among abusers:

1. Low self-esteem
2. Traditional ideas of family, in particular that the husband is the supreme leader of the home
3. Concern for personal power and control over every aspect of family life and environment
4. The belief that men are superior to women
5. Avoidance of responsibility for his own abusive behavior--typically the wife was to blame
6. Excessive possessiveness and jealousy
7. Obsessed with losing his wife--constant checking of her whereabouts and activities
8. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality--at one point charming, at another out of control with rage (Walker 1984:57-66).

Lenore E. Walker's list of characteristics have been refined and extended by a number of writers (Fleming 1996:176-178). As helpful as these various lists may be, I have found that it is more useful to ask a series of questions like those given in Table 2 below. The major virtue of this list of questions lies in the way it encourages those who are contemplating marriage to think very seriously about the character and behavior of the person they are considering as a partner for life.

An affirmative answer to any of the questions does not necessarily mean the death knoll for a relationship or that an intended partner is an abusive person. However, affirmative answers may justify some caution and the need for pre-marital counseling that includes confronting this issue of marital abuse.

Wisdom dictates that people avoid the future heartbreak of marital abuse if it can be avoided. What better incentive is there for a man struggling with abusive tendencies to show a change of heart before committing to marriage, than being forced to wait to marry his beloved?

One person who came to me with the partner she wanted to marry was forced to admit that her prospective husband had a long history of violence, uncontrolled temper, and drug and alcohol abuse. She insisted that these were minor problems and pleaded for me to marry them without delay. When I declined, on the basis that he seek immediate help for these problems, they stopped attending church and went somewhere else where the celebrant was less interested in their problems.

TABLE 2

QUESTIONS FOR THOSE INTENDING MARRIAGE

Based on a list of questions used by Valerie Cox (1994:6).

Does Your Partner . . . ?

- Abuse drugs, alcohol, or other mood-altering substances?
- Act jealous or possessive toward you?
- Always have to be in control?
- Become hypersensitive to criticism or perceived criticism?
- Become violent with you or others?
- Become angry when responding to his anxiety, fear, or frustration?
- Believe in stereotyped sex roles?
- Blame others for his/her problems, feelings, or behaviors?
- Break or strike objects?
- Constantly check up on you?
- Come from a family where abuse took place between his parents?
- Get too serious too fast?
- Have a history of bad relationships?
- Have a history of fighting?
- Have a lack of assertiveness?
- Have a quick temper?
- Have difficulty identifying feelings and communicating them?
- Have extreme mood swings?
- Have unrealistic expectations of you or the relationship?
- Hide his weaknesses and insecurities? Does he seem to suffer from crippling insecurity, immaturity, and self-doubt?
- Look at the opposite sex as sex objects?
- Manipulate you?
- Mistreat animals or children?
- Make scapegoats of others to avoid responsibility?
- Own or use weapons or display them to back up threats?
- Pressure you for sex?
- Pressure you to use/abuse alcohol or drugs?
- Refuse to accept breaking up?
- Refuse to let you have other friends?
- Refuse or is unable to discuss, negotiate, and compromise?
- Scare you?
- Seem obsessed to live up to a tough, self-sufficient, masculine role?
- Seem to have an inordinate fear of losing you?
- Show little respect for the opposite sex?
- Threaten you or others?

Identify the Victims of Marital Abuse

It is important that church members be trained to look for the tell-tale signs of the abused in their midst, if they are to put an end to the abuse. This is not an easy task. Identification requires sensitivity and wisdom because victims are as unwilling to be discovered by their fellow believers as their abusers. Several factors contribute to this:

1. The low self-esteem of victims
2. The fear of stigmatization by their fellow church members
3. The belief that their abuse is their own fault
4. The fear of retaliation by their abuser. The fear they suffer may not be

from the threat of physical violence, but of emotional and economic retribution.

Yet there are ways believers can identify and assist reluctant victims of abuse.

These can be summed up in the following ways:

1. **Physical Indicators.** These are the most obvious signs. They include bruising, split lips, signs of choking, edema, scars, welts, fractured bones, dislocation of limbs, excessive loss of weight, and chronic headaches. If anyone has a history of being repeatedly treated for any of these at Accident and Emergency wards then she/he may be an abuse victim. There should also be concern for anyone that has incurred an obvious physical injury and is highly evasive about how it happened, or claims to bruise easily, or delays seeking treatment.

2. **Psychological Indicators.** These may not be as obvious, but are just as real. They include bouts of depression, long periods of crying, addiction to prescribed

medications and/or illegal drugs, symptoms of post traumatic stress (terrifying panic and anxiety attacks, nightmares, emotional numbness, and headaches), and suicide attempts.

3. Social Indicators. Victims of abuse typically give the impression they are fearful of their partner's wrath. They are hesitant to say anything that may cause him offence. However, they are excessively concerned about his welfare and his approval. They give up interests, activities, and relationships that once were important to them. They seldom venture outside their own home, even to attend Bible studies or friendship meetings. They seem to dismiss the concerns expressed by their own family and friends for them.

It is important that all members be highly sensitive when approaching suspected victims so that foolish accusations and unfounded allegations are not made. Every effort must be made to avoid frightening off, or placing in greater danger, genuine victims. Yet, church members must not let possible negative outcomes paralyze them from acting to end suspected abuse. William M. Kinnaird, in an article in *Christianity Today*, gave this counsel to church members:

If you sense that a couple is having problems and they do not come to you, go to them! It is your responsibility...In most cases God will be able to work through you to save a marriage and family...Let the church take the time and make an effort to reach out to the one lost marriage, rescuing it from destruction and divorce. Let us remain silent no longer...People caring for people is necessary to heal relationships (1980:26).

Provide Safety for Victims

When a victim of marital abuse comes forward of her own account, or is revealed in some other way, it is vital that her physical vulnerability be determined. The safety of the victim, and her dependent children, must be the top priority and primary concern for the local church.

A Safe Haven if They Separate

If she is in danger, or perceives herself to be, then the church should immediately secure a safe haven for her and any children she might have. Leaving the marital home, or asking the abuser to leave, is a dramatic but sometimes necessary step if marital abuse is ongoing and threatens the health of a spouse or her/his child(ren). When the couple involved are professing Christians and members of a local church, the church has a vital role in ensuring that any separation is managed without acrimony or violence. The local church is in a very good position to assess security issues and provide helpful counsel to victims after a crisis. The pastor can provide an important role in assisting the victim make a wise and appropriate decision. The victim must be given the opportunity to decide her fate without the shadow of fear hanging over her head.

If the victim decides that leaving is the best option then the church should do what is necessary to expedite this. They might arrange accommodation at a member's home. Or they might provide sufficient funds for the victim to relocate to a friend or relative's home, or to a nearby motel, or, as a last resort, to a refuge for abused persons.

A non-Christian woman's refuge is usually not recommended because they are often operated by agencies notoriously antagonistic to evangelical churches. They also tend to be poorly resourced and are reluctant to permit victims to maintain contact with their abusive spouses or groups like churches. In my experience, they do not have reconciliation as one of their primary goals. In fact they often actively oppose attempts at reconciliation claiming these are futile and dangerous for abused women.

If the abused spouse leaves the marital home it is likely she will want to take her children with her. This can be a very volatile and combative issue for many abusers. However, when it is the pastor who is involved in negotiating these matters, there is always a greater hope of compliance and acceptance.

Many victims do not want to leave the marital home. In this case the abusive husband needs to be persuaded to leave. This decision may be easier for him if his local church is prepared to assist him in his accommodation needs. Marital abusers fear losing their partners and covet control over their environment, so separation of any kind -- especially if it involves moving out of his home and losing control over his wife and children--is a powerful reality check and an important ingredient in goading him into repentance. When abusers know that the length of separation is dependent, in large measure, on their own willingness to bring forth the fruits of true repentance, they are less likely to act in a disgruntled way.

If the victim does stay, she needs to know she will be secure from any uninvited visits from her abusive spouse. This is where the pastor can help by insisting the perpetrator make assurances that he will not violate her home without her consent. This

may not be enough. It may also be necessary to see that the locks are changed and that someone be asked to stay with the victim until she feels safe. Local churches must not dismiss safety issues as unimportant, but remain vigilant. Their members' lives can be at stake.

If the abuser fails to keep these assurances, but persists in violating the safety of his victim, then a restraining order may need to be taken out at a local Police station. Courts in Australia respond quickly to threats of domestic violence. It is always wise for a victim remaining in the marital home to have a personalized safety plan worked out if her situation deteriorates and her personal safety is severely threatened. Appendix B has a sample of a safety plan that churches can use to support victims.

A Safe Haven if They Remain Together

If a victim of abuse decides that her situation does not necessitate separation, she still needs to know she is safe from further domestic violence. Churches can help in ensuring this by providing support for the victim and accountability for the perpetrator. The greater the degree of transparency in their relationship, the less opportunity there will be for the abuser to continue his sinful behavior undetected. Likewise, the more an abuser is monitored and supported by Christian brothers who love him, the less likely he is to reoffend.

Some victims decide they do not need to leave their spouse, but need a period of separation from the marital bed and conjugal relations. Paul advises against a cessation of sexual intimacy for married couples in First Corinthians 7, unless by mutual consent, and then, only for a short period of time (1 Cor. 7:5).

However, it would be a distortion of Paul's teaching to insist that a partner rendered unwilling to engage in sexual intimacy by abuse, should be compelled to submit to her abusive partner's desire for sex. A time of sexual separation that enables both parties to reflect on their situation and to pray for divine help is very much in keeping with Paul's teaching. It is worthwhile repeating that it is always wise for a victim remaining in the marital home to have a personalized safety plan worked out if her situation deteriorates and her personal safety is severely threatened.

Provide Immediate Support for Victims

Once the church has secured the safety of the victim of marital abuse, it must now focus its attention on providing support and nurture for her. Whether the victim remains in the marital home, or moves to a place of refuge, it is vital that the church rallies around her so she knows she has a supportive, caring and loving community to share her burden. It is advisable that an appropriately trained person(s) from the local church's pastoral care givers (often a pastor/elder and his wife or another suitable person) be appointed to begin the process of counseling the victim.

The early stages of counseling a victim of marital abuse should focus on four goals in particular:

1. Restoring self-esteem
2. Establishing reality/removing unrealistic hope
3. Restoring fellowship and removing isolation
4. Reducing emotional dependency (Martin 1987a:76-96).

Restore Self-Esteem

It is important that counselors begin their support of victims by affirming their value and worth. Protracted abuse will have left them with extreme doubts about their ability to cope without the direction of their dominating spouse. It diminishes self-worth, creates a feeling of inadequacy, negative self-image, and a deterioration of self-respect. Choosing to remain in a relationship in which a person is made to feel devalued inevitably leads to a loss of self-esteem and depression.

If the victim is to take responsibility for her life she must first rebuild her conception of herself. This must be based upon what God says in His Word, rather than what she may have heard her partner say about her, or even what she may have come to think about herself.

Martin identifies the components of self-esteem that need to be developed as "three building blocks: A Sense of Being, a Sense of Purpose, and a Sense of Ministry" (1987a:76). Martin's contention is that a person's self-esteem is based on understanding and believing the Bible's answer to three fundamental questions:

1. Who am I in God's sight? (A Sense of Being)
2. Why did God make me? (A Sense of Purpose)
3. What does God want me to do? (A Sense of Ministry) (1987a:78-80)

Helping the victim discover the answers to these important questions requires the counselor to have a thorough knowledge of what the Bible says on each of these three concerns. The counselor(s) will need to be conscious of three common pitfalls in the

counseling process. First, there is the possibility of settling for a dry Bible study that does not penetrate into the needs of the victim. Second, there is the possibility of focusing entirely on the hurts of the victim without addressing these with the healing and comforting Word of God. Third, there is the possibility of undue haste. The victim must be permitted to share her hurts, her disappointments, and her anger. This will take extended periods of listening and require great patience and sensitivity.

When victims discover the reality of Paul's words in Romans 8:15 ("For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'",), that they are the children of God and loved by a caring Heavenly Father, they begin to find themselves and lose their fear.

Establish Reality--Remove Unrealistic Hope

It is important that in conjunction with the counseling on self-esteem that the counselor be committed to helping the victim establish a realistic view of her situation. Long term exposure to marital abuse has the effect of creating a false reality for victims. They can become convinced that they are able to control the sinful behavior of their abusive spouse by changing their own behavior, or by carefully manipulating him.

Lenore E. Walker's research indicated that victims of abuse are highly manipulative and learn to accept helplessness rather than seek for realistic solutions (1984:126). A victim may well fear the church's assistance because she thinks that their involvement will only intensify the possibility of further abuse and that she is better off left to her own devices.

Battered people find it hard to get a proper sense of perspective on the truly destructive and sinful behavior of their abusive spouse and their own responsibility in the abuse. This can be done by addressing the issues of denial and sin related to this behaviour. Some of the questions that might be raised and answered here include the following: What kind of abuse has she faced? How often does it occur? What, if anything, seems to trigger it? What behaviour is she responsible for that may have contributed to this sinful pattern of behaviour from her partner? Where does forgiveness fit into her situation, and what are her obligations to forgive? How can the grace of God enable her to get through this trial? What is He calling her to do about her own behaviour?

Just as the Lord lifted Job out of his despair and raging for justice by changing Job's perspective and permitting him to see the world from God's point of view, so too the victim of abuse must see the truth about her circumstance, and her own failure from God's view point, if she is to be restored.

Accepting the reality of her situation is not the same as doing nothing about it. In fact, the very opposite is the case. Because the victim is able to understand more fully and clearly what and why the abuse is happening, she is empowered to do something about it.

Restore Fellowship and Remove Isolation

The local church's social and spiritual activities provide a natural way for victims of abuse to re-establish social and emotional contact with others. This socialization is an

important part of restoring her confidence and a sense of being both supported and sheltered by people who care and love her.

The best initial group contact is with people who have personal experience of marital abuse themselves. Christians who have discovered the grace of God in the midst of suffering are in the best position to comfort and help others going through similar trials. This reflects Paul's counsel to the Corinthians "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Support groups for Christians who have been abused exist in many larger churches. Smaller local churches may need to make contact with larger congregations in order to find an appropriate group for the person they are seeking to help. Care must be taken to make sure that self-help groups do not degenerate into hate sessions against men.

Martin gives another important warning to churches: "Do not place a battered woman in a Bible study group where pressure will be placed on the victim to return to her husband, forgive, or submit prematurely" (1987a:83). Great wisdom and grace is necessary for the local church leadership to ensure that the victim does not become the object of vilification or stigmatization by insensitive and ignorant members, particularly if she and her abusive husband are separated.

The greatest pressure placed upon a victim to abandon the process of dealing with her abuse and return to the marital home, or to permit the abuser to return, will come from her own family--her children, her parents and her in-laws. Church leaders must

ensure that she does not face this pressure alone, and that she face it with their encouragement to go on with what is necessary to stop the abuse. It may be necessary for leaders to speak to her family and extended family and assure them that her commitment to end being a victim and to confront her abuser is the best possible course of action.

Redirect Emotional Dependency

A victim's emotional dependency on her abuser is a powerful disincentive to doing something positive about her abusive relationship. The abuse creates a deep sense of disappointment, shattered dreams, fear, shame, and guilt - all of which conspire to produce a state of hopelessness and impotence. Victims lose any motivation or emotional energy to confront or escape their abusers.

When victims begin the journey of recovery and release from their abuser they can easily refocus their dependency away from their abuser on to their counselor. This form of transference is to be avoided because it does not encourage the degree of independence and personal responsibility necessary for a victim to take control of her own life.

The local church committed to biblical principles is able to offer a solution to victims that sets them free. It lies in the Romans 12:2 principle of rejecting the mindset of the world and being "transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Martin states why this is so important:

God doesn't transform us by the elimination of our problems but by the renewing of our minds. The goal is to learn how our inner thoughts can be

changed to produce a more productive mind. The key to eliminating worry is to place our trust in something solid, predictable, and helpful for growth (1987a: 85,86).

A new way of dependency must take the place of the one that has held the victim captive--a dependence on the God of all mercy and grace. With this new paradigm in thinking comes a new way of living, expressed well in these verses in Colossians 3:

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful (Col. 3:5-15).

Victims need to be constantly assured that lives can be transformed by the grace of God. God's promises are given to His people to encourage them to grasp this reality of transformation. The Apostle Peter wrote, "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Pet. 1:4).

Like the woman who came to Jesus with an incurable hemorrhage and thought, "If I just touch His garments, I shall get well" (Mk. 5:25-34), the victim of marital abuse

must be willing to reach out to Him, even if it is a tentative touch. Many an abused woman has come to Jesus in this way--"fearing and trembling"--only to leave healed and in peace. It is this dependence on Him that holds the promise of a new beginning.

Stop the Perpetrator Committing the Abuse

It seems absurdly simple and obvious to say that the way a local church puts an end to marital abuse occurring in the homes of its members is to get the abusers to stop their abuse. Assisting an abuser to stop abusing is as complex and difficult as helping an alcoholic to give up his alcoholic abuse. The pastoral team of a local church needs extraordinary wisdom if they are to bring the abuse to an end. Divine grace has been promised to them in this enterprise (review the Biblical section [Chapter 2] on church discipline), so it ought to be done with humble confidence.

The inveterate abuser in a church community is not an archetypal brute or a blatant monster. Nor is he likely to be much different from any other person attending church regularly. He will seldom be a drug and alcohol abuser. He is a "Judas"--someone respected and involved in a ministry but living a lie and bound in a dark and hateful habit. The abuser most churches must deal with will treat his fellow members, both men and women, with courtesy and respect. It is his wife who sees the sinful bondage he is in. She is the one who will bear the scars of his unsanctified life until he repents. The church must help him to do this.

A task this important and difficult must be undertaken with the right presuppositions in place. Martin has identified seven assumptions or principles that provide a basis for a treatment program for abusers:

1. Abusive anger is a learned behavior that stems out of the basic [sinful] nature of mankind
2. The abuser is solely responsible for his own violence and abuse . . . the victim cannot cause or eliminate the violence of the abuser
3. Abusive behavior may start small but will eventually contaminate the entire relationship
4. Outward action is a product of internal thoughts Abusive anger is a function of how a person perceives his situation and the nature of his internal self-dialogue
5. Violent behavior is motivated by low self-esteem and a sense of powerlessness
6. Violence is likely when the couple does not have adequate problem-solving or conflict-resolution skills
7. The problems of the relationship should not be the initial focus of therapy. Marriage or family counseling should not occur until the violence has stopped and the victim is no longer afraid . . . (1987a:98-100).

To these assumptions/principles I would add the following:

1. The abuser, if he is genuinely a born-again Christian, is able to cast aside this behavior and must do so.
2. The abuser's actions are a matter of personal volition and not the result of determiners outside his control, like genetic disposition, childhood abuse, witness of parental battering, external stress, poor communication skills, illiteracy, false teaching, demonic influence, or other supposed factors. Abusers choose to do evil.

3. The church is committed to ending the abuse, even if it means assisting in the victim's divorce from her abuser and/or handing the perpetrator over to civil authorities.

4. If the perpetrator demonstrates the fruit of genuine, speedy repentance the church will do everything it can to save the marriage. If it can be saved, then the church will work with the couple to see it flourish in loving Christ-likeness and mutual joy.

The local church should focus on two things if it is to stop an abuser: confronting the denial and confront the anger and the abuse. This involves great wisdom and grace to be done effectively.

Confront the Denial

A professing Christian who is an abuser is living in denial. It is the only way he is able to continue in his abusive behavior without being crushed by guilt and shame. When the reality of his sin is put to him--and this typically occurs after a crisis during which he has abused his wife--he will not break down in unconditional confession and unqualified contrition. Instead he will attempt to deny what is plainly evident: he is an abuser, a wife basher, and a batterer. He has sinned against the God he professes to serve and against the person he professes to love.

Resentment, skepticism, embarrassment, hopelessness, and anger at being found out, all contribute to the resistance that leads to denial (Martin 1987a:102-103). As the abuser desperately seeks to pass his guilt off onto someone else, to "scapegoat," he will appeal to a range of excuses. "She provoked me do it." "I did not mean to do it--it

accidentally got out of hand." "It looks worse than it is." "She started it." "It was only a tap." "It's the stress I've been under." "I just snapped." "I do not know what came over me." "I did not do it--it was self inflicted." "I cannot remember doing anything like this." "It worked for my father." The excuses fall into five categories:

1. Blaming the victim
2. Justifying his violence
3. Distorting and minimizing
4. Externalizing
5. Omitting and lying (Martin 1987a:103-104).

Denial, blocked memories, and fabricated personal histories are the "stock and trade" of abusers. Ann Jones, in her book on abuse, Next Time She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It, writes:

It's vital to understand that battering is not a series of isolated blow-ups. It is a process of deliberate intimidation intended to coerce the victim to do the will of the victimizer. The batterer is not just losing his temper, not just suffering from stress, not just manifesting "insecurity" or a spontaneous reaction "provoked" by something the victim did or (as psychologists put it) "a deficit of interpersonal skills" or an "inhibition in anger control mechanisms." These are excuses for violence, popular even among therapists who work with batterers; yet we all know aggrieved, insecure, stressed-out people with meagre interpersonal skills who lose their temper without becoming violent. We assume, then, that the grievances of the violent man must be worse, and that under extreme stress he has spun out of control. He looks it, and that's what he says: "I wasn't myself." "I was drunk." "I went bananas." "I lost it." "I went out of my mind." It's lines like these that provide a public excuse and deceive a battered woman into giving one more chance to the so-called real, nonviolent men underneath. But in fact that violence is himself, perfectly in control and exercising control (1993:88-89).

Corrective church discipline involves unmasking denial. Just as God challenged Adam and Eve with the words, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9) and Nathan confronted David by saying, "You are the man!" (2 Sam. 12:7), spiritual believers must make sure that their erring brother is honestly and squarely challenged about his actions. If the perpetrator will not acknowledge his sin, there can be no grace of repentance. However, when the abuser takes the vital first step of unqualified responsibility for his abuse the end of the abuse can be seen, even if it looks afar off. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

It is often the case that the most powerful and effective way of forcing a perpetrator to accept responsibility is the threat of permanently losing his wife and family through divorce. When a local church is willing to accept that an abused wife has legitimate biblical grounds for divorce, they have a powerful tool to bring the abuser to accept responsibility for his actions. Fleming makes this observation:

Ironically, this treat is the only thing that may save a relationship. The crisis that is created by the threat of divorce is an open door for change. It has been said a crisis is actually a crossroads in disguise. If the abuser is not challenged adequately, the destructive cycle of violence may continue until the family is in ruin (1996:182).

Confront the Anger and Abuse

Jesus taught that the root of all evil resided in the "heart of man," the ancient world's metaphor for a person's thoughts, values, desires, and ideas. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders,

adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mk. 7:21-23; Mt. 15:18-20).

If a person's anger and abusiveness is to be ended, then his thinking has to be reshaped by focusing on five questions:

1. How do you define anger and physical abuse? (The definition)
2. Why do you use anger and physical abuse? (The motivation)
3. How do you view the person you abuse (their spouse)? (The object)
4. What are the catalysts to your anger and abuse? (The process)
5. What are the alternatives to your abuse?

Defining the sinful behavior is crucial to stopping it. Many abusers avoid the need for repentance by redefining anger and physical abuse. Restorative church discipline seeks to awaken the erring saint to the reality of their specific sins. Sharing the appropriate Scriptures provides the best way to do this: "Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

The abuser often has the perception that his use of violence is "out of his control" and spontaneous. Paradoxically, he is obsessed with a desire to control his own environment. He needs to see that the reason he chooses to be violently angry is not because of an irrational rage overtaking him. He chooses to abuse because he believes there is a benefit in doing so, even if it is only a temporary one. He must admit that deep down he gets satisfaction out of abuse, because through his anger and abuse he gains control.

He must be persuaded to see that there is no true benefit to his uncontrolled and abusive anger. There are only terrible consequences: An abuser could end up in prison. He could lose his wife, family (abusers are seldom granted custody of children in Australia), and goods (through divorce). He will suffer the loss of his reputation, his self-respect, and his standing in the community. He will, if he does not repent, be put out of the church as an unbeliever and handed over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. He will almost certainly suffer in his own body and mind as a consequence of this sin. Above everything else, he will grieve the Holy Spirit, bring dishonor to Christ, and destroy any testimony of the gospel he might have had. Physically, socially, economically, emotionally, and spiritually he will lose. That is a powerful incentive to stop.

The rethinking process must involve creating a radically different view of the abuser's spouse. It is common for abusers to refer to their victims by derogatory names or labels. Abusers find anger and violent abuse easier if they can reduce their partner to a mere "object." The recovery of the biblical view of husband and wife as co-heirs of Christ and equals in His kingdom is an important step in undoing violence in the home. Restorative church discipline involves helping those in abusive marriages to develop respect and equality in relationships. Anger that leads to abuse dies off when the object of abuse is seen in the light of Christ.

It is necessary to consider the pathology of abuse--how it grows and develops. An outbreak of anger that leads to physical abuse does not occur without a whole series of preliminary steps in the mind of the abuser. Martin writes, "All anger is preceded by a

thought process in which the event is perceived, interpreted, and then acted upon" (1987a:106).

Abusers need to understand how their own anger works--what provokes it, what intensifies it, and what leads it on to physical abuse. Counseling abusers should therefore be at the micro level, an examination of the moment by moment decisions that lead to the action. Or to use another biblical metaphor, the abuser must be helped to recognize his own destructive "little foxes" (Song 2:15). Keeping a detailed "anger log" of past crises can be a potent practical aid in understanding and ending the process of sin (Martin 1987a:106).

Having identified how his anger leads inevitably to abuse, the abuser must begin to learn new strategies that can be used as alternatives to his anger and abuse. Changing beliefs and attitudes is most effective when it is accompanied by specific examples of how to act differently. The Apostle Paul provides a new paradigm for the abuser in Colossians 3:8-15. He uses the metaphor of changing clothing to make his point. The first step comes in discarding the old garment of abuse. "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth" (Col. 3:8). Anger is wrath conceived. Wrath is wrath nurtured. Malice, slander and abuse are wrath expressed. These are things that ought to have been "laid aside with the "old self and its evil practices" (Col. 3:9).

In practical terms, this means teaching the abuser to apply the technique of "time outs"--recognizing that when he experiences the physical and behavioral symptoms of anger (raised heart rate, sweating, head ache followed by clenching his fist, taking an

aggressive pose, starting to raise his voice or shout, or name call) he must step away from the conflict. When an abuser breaks from his former pattern of behavior by taking a time-out, and tells his spouse what and why he is doing so, he has taken an important step toward ceasing the abuse.

Another practical skill for an abuser to learn in laying aside the past sinful behaviors is "self-talk, or mental dialogue" (Fleming 1996:190). This involves teaching the abuser that his use of negative, derogatory, and pejorative names for his spouse, or for what she does, will lead to more dangerous abuse. He must learn to ask himself what he really wants from her and what he really feels for her, rather than react irrationally to her. Self-talk also involves assessing the consequences for his actions before he does them.

The next step is to put on a new garment--"the new self" in Christ that is "being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col. 3:10). This new garment is defined in more detail in the verses that follow:

1. The garment of forgiveness--"Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (Col. 3:13).
2. The garment of love--"And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col. 3:14).
3. The garment of peace--"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15).
4. The garment of Christ's Word--"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Col. 3:16).

The practical application of this re-clothing process lies in developing a new focus for an abuser's interests and desires. He must develop a deeper relationship with Christ. This aspect is developed later in this chapter. He must also seek to take control of the things in his life that exacerbate his anger and need for control over his partner. This means focusing on self-care--like proper nutrition, sleep, exercise, drug and alcohol controls, stress management, financial stability and debt management, recreation, and other factors that influence abusive behavior.

One of the most effective means of working through these issues of "unclothing" and "re-clothing" with abusers is to use group therapy (Martin 1987a:100-101). A group will help abusers overcome their sense of emotional isolation and shame--they will know they are not alone. Group members also provide a valuable support for individual abusers when they feel tempted to return to their old ways. "Two are better than one...for if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Eccl. 4:9). Working through groups enables the teaching of skills through role-plays, brainstorming, and re-enactments. The frankness and honesty of a group discussion also assists in breaking through the denial barrier.

Many smaller churches may not be able to gather a group of abusers willing to meet in this way. Co-operating with a church that does, or with community based agencies that run groups for abusers, are solutions to this problem.

Reconstruct the Marriage Bond

Local churches that want to put an end to abuse among their members must be careful to ensure their first concern is the victim's safety and the ending of the abuse. When these issues have been dealt with, marriage counseling to reconstruct the marriage bond should follow.

It is important to note that not all marriages survive marital abuse, even when the abuser stops his sinful behavior. The longer an abuser takes to admit his sinful behavior and actively pursue repentance, the less likely his abused spouse will want to stay with him. Sometimes the violence and psychological damage is too severe for trust and love to be restored. Sometimes the victim is not willing to wait until her abuser changes, particularly if she has been forced for safety reasons to live apart from him for some time. Victims get used to living free of fear and will not risk returning to a life of oppression. Sometimes, when a church is forced to finally excommunicate an unrepentant abuser, the believing spouse gets divorced so she can rebuild her life with someone else. His restoration just comes too late.

There are many very effective resources available to churches to assist pastors and pastoral workers in marriage rebuilding and enrichment. This is an area of practical theology that is abundantly provided for in most seminary courses, Christian-counseling agencies, and Christian bookshops which needs little elaboration. It is sufficient to draw attention to the important matters raised in this study that relate to a biblical view of marriage, including the biblical identities and roles of husbands and wives, forgiveness in marriage, and the need for Christ-like love and servanthood. Counseling of couples

recovering from abusive relationships should also spend time building relational skills, addressing issues of conflict management, stress management, and career and financial planning.

Build an Intimate Relationship with God

Of all the tasks related to ending marital abuse that a local church ought to be well-equipped to do, helping Christians build an intimate relationship with God should be the one they know best. It is also the most important and the most effective. Nothing will stop sinful behavior and encourage godly behavior more than a rich and deep relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is therefore vital that a local church go beyond the counseling issues related to abuse, as important as they are, and focus on building up the child of God wounded and bound by sin.

There are many excellent resources available to churches to help in this task. Experts abound throughout church history and in contemporary theology to assist pastors and congregational leaders to assist their congregations to grow in holiness and practical piety. None are more useful than that holy band of Puritan writers from the 17th and 18th centuries including Baxter, Boston, Bunyan, Edwards, Flavel, Owen, and Sibbes.

One of the most effective resources we have used in our own local church is a series of studies designed to develop ten habits crucial to a Holy Spirit controlled Christian life, the titles of which are given below:

Habit #1. The Habit of Dynamic Devotions

Habit #2. The Habit of Persistent Prayer

Habit #3. The Habit of Generous Giving

Habit #4. The Habit of Faithful Fellowship

Habit #5. The Habit of Gossiping the Gospel

Habit #6. The Habit of Sensitive Servantheartedness

Habit #7. The Habit of Enthusiastic Encouragement

Habit #8. The Habit of Regular Reflection or Serious Self-examination

Habit #9. The Habit of Instant Obedience (the Decided Doer)

Habit #10. The Habit of Maintaining the Machinery (Self control)

When a former abuser makes a commitment to live his life in the power of the Holy Spirit, in an environment of God's grace, and under the rule of Christ, he will manifest the mystery and wonder of the gospel. Like the Apostle Paul, he will be able to confess to the reality of "once being a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:13-14). When this happens, God is glorified and the people of God are filled with benedictions like Paul's: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:17).

Chapter Summary

This chapter is a summary of the major elements involved in ministering to those who are victims or perpetrators of marital abuse. It is not an exhaustive list of specific and practical methods, but it does provide a sufficient structure for church leaders to build upon for use in their local churches. A new or better methodology will not end

abuse in churches or in our communities. This is why it is folly to think that the content of this chapter, or any other book on marital abuse, is what is vitally needed to solve the problem. Ending marital abuse is a spiritual task as well as an ethical one. It requires humble, sincere, and importunate prayer if it is to be achieved. The task is beyond us. Only the Lord is able to truly deliver people from the bondage of sin and rebuild their lives. Our confidence is that He does these things, and that He uses poor and beggarly means--like the members of our local churches and the methodology described in this chapter--so that He can get all the glory.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

There has been some debate over the competence of local churches to adequately help the victims and perpetrators of abuse. Some doubt that pastors and church leaders have the time, training and commitment to see the process through. They fear that church leaders might get it wrong and endanger a victim further by their inept dealing with the issues. Fleming states this view when he wrote:

Pastors and church members do not have the time, energy, or skills to focus on treatment in their intervention with the abuser. It is a daunting task. One pastor conceded that his role is to be a support person and to provide pastoral care as the abuser and his wife get outside help. Church members will find themselves needing to refer the abuser and his wife to competent therapists. It is crucial that the counselors are trained and experienced in domestic violence treatment. Safety is a vital issue here (1996:187).

I might subscribe to such a view, especially when I consider the past failure of the Church to confront this issue, except for the teaching of Jesus. I cannot square the strategy of passing on a needy brother or sister to others, with what Jesus taught. He called for feeding the hungry, refreshing the thirsty, accommodating the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and the imprisoned--and He condemned believers for failing to do it themselves (Matt. 25:35-36).

Nor can I reconcile this view of handing over needy members to outside agencies with what Jesus said about the Church. One of the foundations of pastoral care in the local church is its capacity to deal with the sin and brokenness of its members, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the Word of Christ. Christ did not commit the primary care of His sheep to counseling professionals, but to Spirit-filled believers within the context of a local church. The responsibility and privilege of "ordinary local churches" with "ordinary church members" is to be involved in the extraordinary task of delivering their fellow saints who are weighed down with sinful behaviors and the terrible consequences of sin.

Restorative church discipline lies at the heart of this important ministry. It holds the key to the transformation needed to stop all sinful habits, including the sins associated with marital abuse. Such a potent remedy for sin is needed if an abuser is to be stopped permanently. However, it is a potion that is not easy to handle correctly. Nor does it work speedily or predictably. At a time when the world demands quick and easy fixes, ending abuse calls for perseverance and prayer. "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" (Mk. 9:29).

Research Summary

This study has highlighted some of the most important reasons why the local church has found the task of ministering to the victims and perpetrators of marital abuse so difficult. We have seen that the Church's failure to meet the needs of the abused and stop the abuser lie within the very beliefs and practices of the Church itself, rather than

obstacles due to the complexity of the task or the inadequacy of resources. The Church's own sinful failure has blighted its ministry. Like the abuser, it has lived in denial and failed to admit what cannot be denied:

1. Churches do not want to admit that marital abuse is a problem among their members. They do not want to accept that there is a significant minority of members who are being battered around by some of their most respected members. They find it bewildering that they are unable to identify either the abused or the perpetrators.

2. Churches do not want to admit that for centuries Christian leaders have encouraged both the practice and the cover-up of the abuse. They do not want to accept that some of the most widely held and long cherished beliefs have contributed to the continuance of the practice of abuse--beliefs which are distortions of the biblical truth concerning the roles of men and women, the sanctity of marriage, the nature of forgiveness, and the grounds of divorce. They find it astonishing that victims of abuse should consider the church culpable for its failure to help them.

3. Churches do not want to admit that they have largely failed to apply the principles and practices of biblical church discipline. Their leaders do not want to accept that they are chiefly responsible for this failure.

4. Churches do not want to admit that there are many references to marital abuse in the Bible and they never noticed them. They do not want to acknowledge that they have little understanding of how to go about building a practical theology to deal with this type of sin.

These denials would point to a deeply disturbing and distressing picture except for one undeniable reality: most local churches are deeply committed to glorifying God by obeying His Word and doing His will. Confronted with the truth about marital abuse, God's people can be relied upon to change. The Holy Spirit will ensure this is so. To make this claim does not negate the reality that changes in attitude and belief will require a long fought spiritual battle against prejudices and misinformation. But truth has a way of finding a path to the hearts of God's people and the cry of the afflicted will not go unheard and unheeded forever.

Some local churches have already discovered how to minister to the abused. They have abandoned the beliefs and practices that permit abuse to persist in church homes. They are experimenting with new approaches and new methodologies that are consistent with the Word of God and applied in ways that are effective. They offer hope to those who believed that hope was in vain.

Conclusions and Findings

This study has revealed a number of conclusions and findings that can assist local churches to build a paradigm of pastoral care capable of stopping marital abuse. The findings and conclusions themselves are not very original or even profoundly significant. But they are important to the group of believers who are oppressed by marital abuse and to the other group of believers who use their power and violence to abuse. The findings point to a way to liberate our brothers and sisters who have lived in the tragedy of what is described in Ecclesiastes 4:1 -- "Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which

were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them."

The findings and conclusions can be summed up in these interconnected propositions:

1. Marital abuse is a biblical issue with a biblical solution. The task of the local church is to discover from God's Word what He has directed them to do about this problem facing them.
2. Marital abuse is a spiritual issue with spiritual solutions. The challenge of the local church is to harness its spiritual strength in Christ in order to combat the sin in its midst. It calls for deeper levels of prayer, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines in the lives of leaders and members alike.
3. Marital abuse is a church disciplinary issue with church disciplinary solutions. The responsibility of the local church is to interfere lovingly and wisely with the sinful lives of its members. It is not the harsh and acrimonious meddling of a busybody or a pharisaical accuser, but the intervention of a loving friend and fellow sinner saved by grace.
4. Marital abuse is a local church issue with local church solutions. The privilege of the local church is to receive from Christ what is necessary for their welfare and growth. The Apostle Paul wrote of the gifts, promised in the Old Testament, that Jesus gave to the Church at His ascension: "Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on

high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men'.. for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:8, 12).

A local church may be numerically small, or deficient in trained personnel, but it is never without the Spirit's grace and power. It is a formidable power against evil that must never be underestimated. Jesus said, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it" (Mt. 16:18).

5. Marital abuse is a practical issue with practical solutions. The duty of the local church is to apply God's Word to the challenges confronting it. This must not be merely theoretical but practical. The same commitment to flexibility and adaptability needed for evangelism (See 1 Cor. 9:22,23 "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel") is also needed for confronting sin and helping the victims of sin.

6. Marital abuse is a life and death issue with life and death implications. The burden of the local church is to get its beliefs, practices, and programs right. Lives are at stake. If the church gets it wrong, marital abuse will continue and kill people. It will destroy relationships that should be reflecting on the union of Christ and His Church. It will leave victims bitter that the local church they attended did nothing to help them. But if the local church gets it right, abuse will end and life will be preserved. The church will become a refuge for the broken hearted and a place where holiness and peace is restored. Christ will be glorified in such a place and the kingdom of God will be extended.

Recommendations and Resources

These recommendations are intended to be the minimal response of local churches and clergy, lay leaders, Christian counselors and Church workers to the problem of marital abuse. Much more can and should be done. Likewise, the resources referred to in this chapter are somewhere near the minimum requirement necessary to make a reasonable response.

Resources given in this study are largely limited to Australia, although a simple search on the Internet will yield a veritable mountain of support agencies and resources available in most parts of the Western world. Agencies specializing in domestic abuse are often poorly funded and so their contact details need to be updated regularly.

Recommendations for Local Churches

Local church leaders and members of each congregation need to make a practical response to end all forms of domestic abuse, including marital abuse, in the church community. What follows are guidelines to assist churches to do this

1. Accumulate and distribute educational resources, discussion papers, publicity brochures from domestic abuse agencies. A local church's resources, advertising and publicity posters should indicate that it has placed this problem on its agenda and it is determined to combat it. Utilize the local church and denominational networks to disseminate the information to everyone in the church community, including the non-churched that interface with the church's outreach and mercy ministries--

including playgroups, craft groups, youth groups, aged care, schools, and missionary organizations.

2. Include information concerning domestic abuse in sermons, Bible study materials, books, mission and ministry statements, study guides and prayer notes. Invite speakers and facilitators experienced in the field of domestic abuse to address the congregation at worship services or to speak at small groups, special interest groups, and camps. Set apart a Sunday each year on the church's calendar of events to highlight this problem in the church community.

3. Set up support groups for abused spouses where victims can meet together for study, sharing, personal growth, and prayer. Adequate child care and confidentiality issues need to be considered here. Likewise, set up abuse counseling workshops for the perpetrators of abuse to teach abusers how to end their abuse and rebuild their lives. These can also be times for study, sharing, personal growth, and prayer. Confidentiality issues apply here too.

4. Introduce pastoral care education programs, including workshops on the identification of abusers and victims, for all pastoral care workers. Provide family life and marriage enrichment seminars, inclusive of single parenting and non-traditional families, which focus on biblical egalitarianism, equality in relationships and mutual submissiveness. Strengthen and expand small groups that aim at bringing people together, outside of structured times, into support structures that will provide accountability and care, especially to those that seem most isolated.

5. Provide pre-marital counseling to those contemplating marriage, and those who may be looking to do so in the future, that has topics including abusive personality profiling, anger management, conflict resolution, communication dynamics, "scape-goating," explorations of marital roles and expectations, and power and interdependence issues.

Recommendations for Educators and Counselors

Denominational leaders and professional educators share in the responsibility to end domestic abuse, including marital abuse, in local churches. They have the opportunity and the responsibility to provide the theological foundation and practical training that local church leaders need to equip their congregations in the prevention and treatment of abuse. The following recommendations apply to them.

1. Denominational leaders should take proactive steps to make a clear "no-tolerance" position on domestic abuse in all public statements on the subject. The Australian National Committee on Violence called on all denominational heads to "foster non-violent values by..denouncing violence when and where it occurs" (Last 1990:36).

2. Theological training institutions should review their curricula in pastoral and practical theology programs to ensure the inclusion of domestic abuse in the appropriate modules of study. Professionals and expert practitioners in the field of marital abuse should be included in these programs. It should be mandatory for all graduates of seminaries and pastors training programs to attend these courses, if they are destined to become pastors and congregational leaders in local churches.

3. In-service and advanced training seminars should be developed to assist clergy and congregational leaders who have already graduated, but have little knowledge or experience, to develop pastoral skills and knowledge specific to ending marital abuse.

4. Educational materials and publicity to deal with domestic abuse, appropriate for informing and assisting members in local church communities, should be developed and distributed to all congregations.

Resources

The Church's response to abuse, in all its forms, past and present, has come under particular scrutiny in recent days as victims have found their voices in the media and in the courtrooms. Churches cannot afford to be ill-prepared or poorly resourced on the subject of abuse--domestic, marital, sexual, or spiritual abuse.

Discrimination and wisdom needs to be exercised by church leaders as they consider the resources and services they will access. Many of the secular programs treating abusers and providing support for victims are deeply antagonistic to churches and evangelical Christians. Likewise, many of the written and electronic resources available on marital abuse are going to be of mixed benefit to churches seeking to become better informed and equipped.

Each church should endeavor to have contact lists which access emergency referral services, crisis care services, legal advocacy services, interpreter services, counseling services, and police and emergency services. These can be accessed through

a simple search of the local telephone directories. Country and remote regions may not have access to all of these and churches in these areas may have the opportunity to offer the only support available to a community.

Written materials including brochures, books, and training literature are freely available throughout Australia, North America, and much of the western world. Amazon.com can supply a staggering number of resources to virtually anywhere on the globe via their Internet service. Most Christian organizations producing literature in this field are only too willing to pass on their work to churches seeking to become better informed. Churches should ensure that part of their yearly budget for ministry includes the purchase of good up to date literature for their pastors and lay people.

In larger towns and cities churches can and should access specialized support groups for recovering abusers and victim support groups. These are not always advertised in directories and care should be taken to ensure that the groups are run by people sympathetic to the core values of Christians.

For those that are unwilling to take literature or join a group there are also resources available on video and audio. Sometimes a film night at a church or a video watched in someone's home can be a powerfully effective way of introducing and developing the subject of marital abuse.

In Australia and much of the developed world the Internet provides the most accessible and diverse source for resources on marital abuse. The sheer volume and diversity of information available can make the task of searching the Web a frustrating and time consuming one. However, for those who are able to sift through the various

sites and documents available on the subject of marital abuse, there is the promise of materials that can be highly beneficial.

I have included a concise list of the specific resources I have found most profitable in Appendix C. Each few months more useful resources and services become available and deserve to be included in such a list.

Final Summary

The Apostle Peter had good news for those who would be reviled and abused for the name of Christ--they would be blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God would rest upon them (1 Pet. 4:14). There was to be no feeling of shame, for the person was suffering as a Christian (1 Pet. 4:16). They were to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator, who could be relied upon to do the right thing for them (1 Pet. 4:19).

But what if a Christian suffers for a cause not nearly so noble? What if the suffering is simply because the Christian has married an abuser? Will the faithful Creator and Chief Shepherd also watch over this person? And what of the abuser--what if he or she is a Christian too? Can this type of suffering bring blessing and glory to God and to His people?

These are the questions that vex the hearts of some who sit alongside us every Sunday morning. This study has sought to demonstrate that marital abuse exists among believers. There is a high probability that in every local church there are professing Christians who are perpetrator and victim in the web of domestic violence. It is the responsibility and privilege of God's people to identify their fellow believers who are

being battered. The afflicted must be told that God does care for them, that He is not indifferent to their plight or their pain, and that He has called the Church to deliver them from their oppressor. Victims must be given practical, wise and sensitive support, or judgment will surely come upon the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

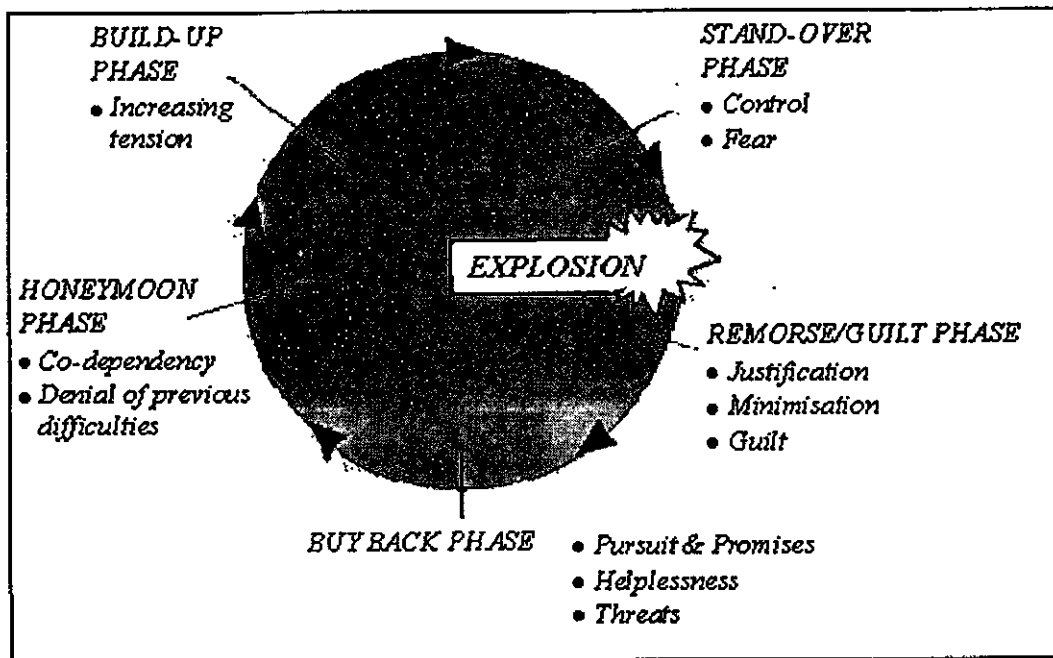
But that is not all. The elders must also seek to do their task of humbly and wisely shepherding the abuser toward genuine godly repentance. It is not an easy task, for it will involve practicing restorative church discipline, an almost lost art. But by doing what the Lord has instructed them to do, the leaders can become a model of what all believers can do when a brother or sister sins (1 Pet. 5:3). They can become restorers and repairers. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, what rejoicing there will be when all receive the unfading crown of glory He has promised to give to His faithful servants (1 Pet. 5:4).

What a precious thing it is to be entrusted with such a task. What a joyous privilege to be able to say to both a repentant perpetrator and a restored victim of abuse: "And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 5:10-11).

APPENDIX A

CYCLE OF ABUSE

Lenore Walker's description and representation of what happens in an abusive relationship is so universally accepted that all students of marital abuse counseling need to be familiar with it. Questions about its validity are raised in this study.



WALKER'S CYCLE OF ABUSE

Adapted from the original concept of Lenore Walker, 1979 The Battered Woman. New York: Harper and Row, 1979 and a later version by Valerie Cox, (1994) Domestic Violence: It Doesn't Happen at Our Church . . . Or Does It? (Bankstown: LifeCare): 10.

APPENDIX B

PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

The following is a worksheet I ask victims of marital abuse to fill in. It is adapted from "Domestic Violence: The Facts--A Handbook to Stop Violence," produced by Peace At Home (formerly Battered Women Fighting Back), and published on the following website: <<http://www.Cybergrrl.com /views/dv//book/safe.html>> .

SAFETY PLAN WORKSHEET

Suggestions for increasing safety--in the relationship

*I will have important phone numbers available to my children and myself.

*I can tell _____ and _____ about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.

*If I leave my home, I can go (list four places): _____,
_____, _____, or _____.

*I can leave extra money, car keys, clothes, and copies of documents with _____.

*If I leave, I will bring _____ (see checklist below).

*To ensure safety and independence, I can: Keep change for phone calls with me at all times; open my own savings account; rehearse my escape route with a support person; and review safety plan on _____ (date).

Suggestions for increasing safety--when the relationship is over

*I can: change the locks; install steel/metal doors, a security system, smoke detectors and an outside lighting system.

*I will inform _____ and _____ that my spouse no longer lives with me and ask them to call the police if s/he is observed near my home or my children.

*I will tell people who take care of my children the names of those who have permission to pick them up. The people who have permission are: _____,
_____ and _____.

*I can tell _____ at work about my situation and ask _____ to screen my calls.

*I can avoid stores, banks, and _____ that I used when living with my battering partner.

*I can obtain a protective order from _____. I can keep it on or near me at all times as well as leave a copy with _____.

*If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call _____ for support or attend workshops and support groups to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

Important Phone Numbers

Police _____

Family member _____

Pastor/ elders _____, _____, _____

Friends _____, _____, _____

Lawyer _____,

Items to Take Checklist

*Identification

*Birth certificates for me and my children

*Social Security cards

*School and medical records

*Money, bankbooks, credit cards

*Keys - house/car/office

*Driver's license and registration

*Medications

*Change of clothes

*Welfare identification

*Passport(s), work permits

*Lease/rental agreement, house deed

*Mortgage payment book, current unpaid bills

*Insurance papers

*Address book

*Pictures, jewelry, items of sentimental value

*Children's favorite toys and/or blankets

APPENDIX C

RESOURCES LIST AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

The following is a list of selected resources and services available in Western Australia. Some services from other States are included because of their special contribution to victims of domestic abuse.

Emergency

Sexual Assault and Referral Centre --24-hour crisis line. (08) 9340 1828
Crisis Care--24-hour crisis line (08) 9325 1111, Country 1800 199008
Child Protection and Family Crisis--24-hour crisis line. 1800 066777
Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre--24-hour crisis line. (03) 9387 9155
Domestic Violence Advocacy Service--24-hour crisis line--(02) 9637 3741, Country callers 1800 810784
Women's Refuge Referrals--24-hour line. (03) 329 8433
Telephone Interpreter Service--24-hour line. 131 450
Lifeline--24-hour crisis line. 131 114
Women's Legal Services Inc (WA)--M, T, Th, F 9-12. (08) 9221 5122, country callers 1800 625122
WIRE: Women's Information Referral and Exchange Service--24-hour crisis line. 1800 817227
ANGLICARE--Welfare Services. (02) 98958000
Police Emergencies--24-hour crisis line. 11 444 or 000

Written materials

Brochures:

"Questions Women Ask About Domestic Violence and Christian Beliefs"--for Christians--Joint Churches Domestic Violence Protection Project, Queensland, Available through Anglican Family Care, PO Box 10448, Adelaide Street, Brisbane 4000

"Family Violence: Misuse of Power, Joint Churches Domestic Violence Protection Project"--Available through Anglican Family Care, PO Box 10448, Adelaide Street, Brisbane 4000

Living Beyond Abuse--support group brochure--for victims--LifeCare, Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention Services, Baptist Community Services, NSW & ACT ACN 000 049 525

Living Without Abusing, support group brochure--for perpetrators--LifeCare, Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention Services, Baptist Community Services, NSW & ACT ACN 000 049 525

Kids Time, Support Group Brochure--for children who witness domestic abuse--LifeCare, Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention Services, Baptist Community Services, NSW & ACT ACN 000 049 525

"Domestic Violence: The Facts--A Handbook to Stop Violence," Peace At Home (Boston) Available from <http://www.cybergirl.com/views/dv//book/toc.html>

Books:

Amos, Anne, ed.

1991 Victims into Victors: Beyond Family Violence. Melbourne, VIC: Joint Board of Christian Education. Collection of essays and personal stories about domestic abuse.

Basham, Beth, and Sara Lisherness, ed.

1997 Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence. Louisville, KY: Bridge Resources. A challenging series of essays on the response of churches to domestic abuse.

Bilezikian, Gilbert

1985 Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says About a Woman's Place in Church and Family. Grand Rapids: Baker. Helpful study on the place of women.

Clarke, Rita-Lou

1986 Pastoral Care of Battered Wives. Philadelphia: Westminster. An important study of abuse. A classic early work on marital abuse.

Conway, Helen L.

1998 Domestic Violence and the Church. Carlisle: Paternoster. A helpful recent study of marital abuse in the Churches of the United Kingdom.

Cooper-White, Pamela

1995 The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. A critical response to violence in churches.

Cox, Valerie

- 1994 Domestic Violence: It Doesn't Happen At Our church ... Or Does It? Bankstown, NSW: LifeCare. A discussion starter and resource kit. A study guide is also available.
- Francis, Ruth, Noel Belfarge, Ivan Wilson ed.
 1998 Mirrors, Windows & Doors: A Self-Help Book for Men about Violence and Abuse in the Home. Richmond, VIC: No To Violence (NTV). Popular resource for male perpetrators of abuse.
- Fortune, Marie Marshall
 1967 Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman. San Francisco: Harper & Row. Helpful resource for victims of abuse.
- Giarretto, H.
 1982 Integrated Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse: A Treatment and Training Manual. Palo Alto: Science and Behavioral Books. An instruction manual for treatment of abusers and victims.
- Kroeger, Catherine Clark and James R Beck, ed.
 1996 Women, Abuse and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or to Heal. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker. Thoughtful essays on the theological and practical issues involved in marital abuse.
- Kroeger, Catherine Clark and Nancy Nason-Clark
 2001 No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence. Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press. One of the most recent and thorough Christian surveys of abuse world-wide, with six appendices and an extensive bibliography of practical resources.
- Last, Helen
 1989 A Pastoral Report to the Churches on Sexual Violence Against Women and Children of the Church Community. Melbourne, VIC: Casa House. A report for women and children involved in abuse.
- Martin, Grant L.
 1987a Counseling for Family Violence and Abuse. Waco, TX: Word Books.
 1987b Please Don't Hurt Me: A Sensitive Look at the Growing Problem of Abuse in Christian Homes. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. Both of these volumes provide essential practical information for those engaged in the process of counseling victims and perpetrators of abuse
- Miles, Al
 2000 Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. One of the recent volumes addressing these issues.

Neidig, H.

1982 Integrated Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse: A Treatment and Training Manual. Palo Alto: Science and Behavioral Books. An instruction manual for treatment of abusers and victims.

Training Literature and Groups:

The Family and Domestic Violence Training Package--West Australian Domestic Violence Task Force 1986, "Break the Silence," Perth, WA Available from <http://www.health.wa.gov.au/index.html>

Domestic Violence Information Manual--training pack--Women's Issues and Social Empowerment. Available from <http://infoxchange.net.au/wise/DVIM/htm>

Compassion Power Workshops--A balanced approach to counseling abusers developed by Dr. Steven Stosny. Two day seminar. Available through Kinway (08) 9321 5801.

The Male Family Violence Association (NTV)--co-ordinates and overviews over 20 groups in Victoria. (03) 9428 3536

"Men Choosing Solutions to Violence"--an excellent program for abusive men --Bethany Family Support, Geelong VIC. (03) 52 788122

Audio-visual materials

"Behind Closed Doors"--discussion starter for domestic violence--1980, 16mm film, The National Library of Australia, Parkes Place, Canberra, ACT 2600.

"Something Wrong at My Home"--discussion on domestic violence with dramatization of specific incidents--Video, Ministry for the Status of Women, NSW, (02) 9334-1160

"Breaking the Silence: The Church and Domestic Violence" A 21 min. audiovisual, Australian Council of Churches, P.O. Box C199, Clarence Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000

"City of Shelter" A coordinated community response to domestic violence--eight 30 min. videos, 11-part video-based training series for professionals. Produced by Global Village Communications and available from <http://www.cityofshelter.org/>

"Once Were Warriors" A confronting Adults-Only movie depicting marital violence set in a New Zealand urban setting. 1995 Director Lee Tamahori (102 min.)

"Defending Our Lives" Academy Award-winning documentary film that portrays the severity of domestic violence. Produced by CDF and BWFB

Video material on domestic violence in an American setting available from:
Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1914 N. 34th Street, Suite
105, Seattle, WA. USA 98103

Internet Resources

Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse:
<http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au>

Partnerships against Domestic Violence: <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/osw/padv/index.html>

National Crime Prevention: <http://ncp.gov.au/ncp/>

Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre (DVIRC):
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~dvirc/index.html>

The Tasmanian Women's Health Network Web Site:
<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/twhn/domest.htm>

Health Department of Western Australia:
<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/publications/fdypam.html>

Justice Institute of British Columbia Library:
<http://www.jibc.bc.ca/Libraryfiles/pdfDownloads/wifeabus.pdf>

A Manual for Clergy and Congregations
(Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice)
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/infores/clergy/>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Jay E.

- 1979 More Than Redemption. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- 1980 Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- 1983 Solving Marriage Problems: Biblical Solutions for Christian Counselors. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- 1986 Handbook of Church Discipline. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- 1986 The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, and Self-Image. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers.
- 1990 "What is She to Do?" Journal of Pastoral Practice. X, (2): 40-43.

Allender, Dan B.

- 1995 The Wounded Heart: Hope for the Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse. Colorado Spring, CO: NavPress.

Alsdurf, James and Phyllis Alsdurf

- 1989 Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home. Guildford, Surrey: Highland Books.

Amos, Anne, ed.

- 1991 Victims into Victors. Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education.

Amnesty International

- 1993 Report on Torture. London: Gerald Duckworth and Co.

Anderson, Herbert and Robert Cotton Fite

- 1993 Becoming Married: Family Living in Pastoral Perspective. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Anderson, Neil T. and Charles Mylander

- 1997 The Christ Centered Marriage: Discovering and Enjoying Your Freedom in Christ Together. Glendale, CA: Regal Books.

Aquinas, Thomas

- n.d. The Summa Theologica. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benziger Brothers trans. Published online:
<http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/FP.html#TOC05>, Question 96, Articles 1- 3.

Arndt, W. F. and F. Gingrich

- 1957 A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Augsburger, David

- 1981 Caring Enough to Forgive; Caring Enough Not To Forgive. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- 1986 Caring Enough to Confront. Ventura, CA: Regal.

Augustine, Saint

- 1996 Confessions of Saint Augustine. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

- 1996 Women's Safety Survey. Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue No. 4128.0, 2-11.

Bachman, R.

- 1994 Violence Against Women: A National Crime Victimization Survey Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, (January).

Bachman, R. and L. Saltzman

- 1995 "Violence against women: Estimates from the Resigned Survey," Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice (August).

Baker, Don

- 1984 Beyond Forgiveness--The Healing Touch of Church Discipline. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press.

Bannerman, James

- 1960 The Church of Christ. Vol. 2. London: Banner of Truth.

Barber, Bruce

- 1991 "Forgiveness is for the Future." In Victims into Victors. Anne Amos ed., Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education: 47-50.

Barna, George

1998 The Second Coming of the Church. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing.

Baxter, Richard

1990 Baxter's Practical Works: A Christian Directory. Vol.1, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria.

1974 The Reformed Pastor. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth.

Benner, David G., ed.

1987 Psychotherapy in Christian Perspective. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Berkouwer, G. C.

1976 The Church. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Berry, D. B.

1995 The Domestic Violence Sourcebook. Los Angeles, CA: Lowell House.

Bilezikian, Gilbert

1985 Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Bloomfield, Peter

n.d. "Divorce ... The Big Picture." A paper presented at a meeting of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in 1993. Unpublished.

Bobgan, Martin and Deidre Bobgan

1987 Psychoheresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity. Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers.

1990 Prophets of Psychoheresy II. Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers.

Bodycomb, John

1991 "The dark Side of Bible bashing: Ally of Domestic Violence?" In Victims Into Victors. Anne Amos ed., Melbourne, VIC: Joint Board of Christian Education: 16-22.

Bokmer, C. and A. Parrot.

1993 Sexual Assault on Campus: The Problem and the Solution. New York, NY: Lexington.

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich
1963 The Cost of Discipleship. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Bowman, Elizabeth S.
1989 "When Theology Leads to Abuse." Update: Newsletter of the Evangelical Women's Caucus. 12, no.4 (Winter 1988/1989).
- Breward, Ian
1991 "Family Life is Not Always Christian." In Victims Into Victors. Anne Amos ed., Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education: 51-57.
- Broadus, J. A.
1986 Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. Valley Forge, VT: Judson Press.
- Brown, Harold O. J.
1983 "The Role of Discipline in the Church." Covenant Quarterly. 41 (August): 52-55.
- Bubna, Donald L.
1981 "Redemptive Love: The Key to Church Discipline." Leadership. (Summer): 77-79.
- Buzzard, Lynn
1982 Tell it to the Church: Reconciling Out of Court. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook.
- Calvin, John
1949 Institutes of the Christian Religion. Vol. 2, Henry Beveridge trans., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

1972 Calvin's Commentaries: A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels. Vol. 9, William Pringle trans., Lafayette, IN: Calvin Publications.

1981 Genesis. London: Banner of Truth.
- Carcach, Carlos and Marianne James
1998 "Homicide between intimate partners in Australia." Trends and Issues. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Criminology, No. 90, (July): 2-9.
- Campbell, Terence W.
1994 Beware the Talking Cure. Boca Raton, FL: Upton Books.

- Chrysostom, John
1983 On Virginity...Against Remarriage. Sally Reiger Shore trans., Lewistown: Edwin Mellan Press.
- Clarke, Rita-Lou
1986 Pastoral Care of Battered Wives. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.
- Clouse, Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse, ed.
1989 Women in Ministry: Four Views. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Crabb, Lawrence Jr.
1992 The Marriage Builder: A Blueprint for Couples and Counselors. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Craigie, Peter C.
1992 Deuteronomy. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Collins, Gary R.
1993 The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
- Collins, Sheila D.
1972 "Toward a feminist Theology." Christian Century. 89 (August 2): 796.
- Conrade, Glenys
1993 Abuse in Families of the Church Community: A Study of Anglican and Uniting Church. Brisbane, QL.: University of Queensland.
- Cox, Valerie
1994 Domestic Violence: It Doesn't Happen at Our Church... Or Does It?. Bankstown, NSW: LifeCare.
- Davis, Kenneth R.
1982 "No Discipline, No Church: An Anabaptist Contribution to the Reformed Tradition." Sixteenth Century Journal. 13:4 (Winter): 43-57.
- Dawes, Robyn M.
1994 House of Cards: Psychology and Psychotherapy Built on Myth. New York: Macmillan and Company.

Department of Justice Victoria

1996 Crimes (Family Violence) Act Monitoring Report 1995/96. Melbourne, VIC: Courts and Tribunals Division, Department of Justice. Pp. 1-13.

Duff, Alan

1992 Once Were Warriors. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Duncan, Ligon

1993 "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: A Committee Report to Presbytery." An unpublished paper. Jackson, MS: Presbyterian Church of America.

Easteal, Patricia

1993 Killing the Beloved: Homicide Between Adult Sexual Intimates. Canberra, ACT: Australian Studies in Law.

Eivers, Hazel

1991 "The Struggle to have Domestic Violence Recognised as an Issue Within the Church." In Victims Into Victors. Anne Amos ed., Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education: 10-15.

Engle, Paul

1981 "When It's Okay To Pass Judgment." Moody Monthly, 81 (May): 39-43.

Evans, C. Stephen

1989 Wisdom and Humanness in Psychology: Prospects for a Christian Approach. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Fee, Gordon D.

1988 First and Second Timothy, Titus. The New International Commentary. Peabody, MA: Eerdmans.

1988 The First Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Fitzmeyer, J. A.

1976 "The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence." Theological Studies. (37): 197-226

Fleming, Steven R.

1996 "Competent Christian Intervention with Men Who Batter." In Women, Abuse and the Bible. Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

- Foe, Susan
1980 Women and The Word of God: A Biblical Response to Biblical Feminism. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- Fortune, Marie Marshall
1967 Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row.
- Forward, Susan
1986 Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them: When Loving Hurts and You Don't Know Why. New York: Bantam.
- Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
1976 The Westminster Confession of Faith. Inverness: Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.
- Garrett, James Leo
1962 Baptist Church Discipline. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.
- Goodwin, Thomas
1965 The Works of Thomas Goodwin. Edinburgh: James Nichol. (XI):1-484, 485-525.
- Groothuis, Rebecca
1994 Women Caught in the Conflict. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
1997 Good News For Women: A Biblical Picture Of Gender Equality. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Grosheide, F. W.
1964 Commentary of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. London: Banner of Truth.
- Heideman, Eugene
1980 A People in Mission: Their Surprising Harvest. New York: Reformed Church Press.
- Heggen, Carolyn Holderread
1996 Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.

Hendriksen, William

1974 Exposition of the Gospel According To Matthew. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth.

Hodge, Charles

1972 An Exposition of 1 and 2 Corinthians. Wilmington, NC: Sovereign Grace Publishers.

House, H. Wayne, ed.

1990 Divorce and Remarriage: Four Views. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Jeschke, Marlin

1972 Disciplining The Brother. Scottsdale, PA: Herald.

Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Unit

1994 Questions Women Ask About Domestic Violence And Christian Beliefs. Brisbane, QLD: Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project.

Jones, Ann

1993 Next Time, She'll Be Dead. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Jones, David

1989 "The Westminster Confession on Divorce and Remarriage." Unpublished paper submitted to the Eighteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America as part of the Ad-hoc Committee on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage.

Jones, Stanton L. and Richard E Butman

1991 Modern Psycho-Therapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Joy, Donald M.

1996 Re-bonding: Preventing and Restoring Damaged Relationships. Wilmore: Center for the Study of the Family.

Kaldor, Peter, J. Bellamy, R. Powell, K. Castle, and B. Hughes

1999 Shaping a Future: National Church Life Survey. Adelaide, SA: Open Book.

Keener, Craig S.

1991 ...And Marry Another: Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

1985 The Emperor's New Clothes. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.

Kinnaird, William M.

1980 "Divorce and Remarriage: Ministers in the Middle." Christianity Today. XXIV: 11, (June 6): 24-27.

Kroeger, Catherine Clark and James R. Beck, ed.

1996 Women, Abuse and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or to Heal. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Kroeger, Richard Clark and Catherine Clark Kroeger

1993 I Suffer Not A Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in the Light of Ancient Evidence. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Kuiper, R. B.

1967 The Glorious Body of the Christ. London: Banner of Truth.

Laney, J. Carl

1981 The Divorce Myth. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.

1985 A Guide to Church Discipline. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.

Last, Helen

1989 A Pastoral Report to the Churches on Sexual Violence Against Women and Children of the Church Community. Melbourne, VIC: Casa House.

Last, Helen and Jan Rawlins Tully

1990 Women, the Church and Domestic Violence. Melbourne, VIC.: Joint Board of Christian Education.

Liaboe, Gary P.

1985 "The Place of Wife Battering in Considering Divorce." Journal of Psychology and Theology. (Vol. 13, No.2): 129-138.

Letham, Robert

1990 "The Man-Woman Debate: Theological Comment." Westminster Theological Journal. 52:1 (Spring): 65-78.

Littleton, Mark R.

- 1981 "Church Discipline: A Remedy For What Ails The Body." *Christianity Today*. XXV: 4, (May 8): 30-33.

Livezey, Lois G.

- 1987 "Sexual and Family Violence: A Growing Issue for the Churches." *The Christian Century*. (October 28): 938-942.

Lumpkin, William L.

- 1981 *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Valley Forge, VT: Judson Press.

Luther, Martin

- 1958 *Luther's Works*. (American Edition), Conrad Bergendoff ed., Vol. 40. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.

- n.d. "Smalcald Confession." F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau trans. Published online: http://www.theologywebsite.com/etext/luther_smalcald.shtml

Lutz, Ronald E.

- 1987 *The Redemptive Power of Church Discipline*. Portland, OR: Theological Exchange Network.

McCue, Margi Laird

- 1995 *Domestic Violence: a Reference Handbook*. California: ABC-CLIO Inc.

McNeill, John T.

- 1951 *A History Of The Cure Of Souls*. New York: Harper and Row.

McQuilkin, Robert

- 1974 "Whatever Happened To Church Discipline?" *Christianity Today*. (March 29): 8-12.

Mackin, Theodore

- 1984 *Divorce and Remarriage*. New York: Paulist Press.

Macchia, Stephen A.

- 1999 *Becoming A Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Marshall, I. Howard

- 1999 *The Pastoral Epistles*. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark.

- Martin, Grant L.
1987 Counseling for Family Violence and Abuse. Waco, TX: Word Books.
- Mazza, D., L. Dennerstein, and V. Ryan
1996 "Physical, sexual and emotional violence against women: A general practice-based prevalence study." Medical Journal of Australia. Vol. 164(1): 14-17
- Mickelsen, Alvera, ed.
1986 Women, Authority, and the Bible. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.
- Molina, B.
1972 "Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication?" Nouvum Testamentum. (14): 10-21.
- Moreland, J. P.
1989 Christianity and the Nature of Science. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Morris, Leon
1958 The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Mueller, J. R.
1980 "Temple Scroll and Divorce Texts." Revue de Qumran, (10): 247-256.
- Murray, John
1972 Divorce. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- Meier, Paul, Frank B. Minirth, Frank B. Wichern, and Donald E. Ratcliff
1991 Introduction to Psychology and Counseling. Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House.
- Narramore, Clyde M.
1960 The Psychology of Counseling. Professional Techniques for Pastors, Teachers, Youth Leaders, and All Who Are Engaged in the Incomparable Art of Counseling. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Neff, David
1987 "The Battle of the Lexicons." Christianity Today. 31, 1(16 January): 44-45.

Neuer, Werner

1991 Man and Woman in Christian Perspective. Gordon Wenham Westchester trans. IL: Crossway Books.

O'Leary K. Daniel, J. Barling, Ilena Arias, Alan Rosenbaum, J. Malone and A. Tyree

1989 "Prevalence and stability of physical aggression between spouses: a longitudinal analysis." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. 57(2): 263-268.

O'Reilly, Jane

1983 "Wife Beating: The Silent Crime." Time. (5 September 1983): 23-24.

Office of the Status of Women

1995 Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women. Sydney, NSW: ANOP Research Services.

Owen, John

1826 The Works of John Owen. Thomas Russell ed.. London: Richard Baynes: XIX, 69-108, 463 -568, XX, 65-250, 337-601.

Packer, James I.

1990 A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Pelikan, Jaroslav

1971-1984 The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Vols. 1-4. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Piper, John

1986 Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist. Portland, OR: Multnomah.

Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, ed.

1991 Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Poythress, Vern Sheridan

1991 "The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church," in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism. ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books: 245-246.

Presbyterian Church in America

- 1990 "The 19th General Assembly's Report on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage." Jackson, MS: General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, unpublished: 606-699.

Rice, D. P., S. Kelman, L. S. Miller, and S. Dunmeyer

- 1990 The Economic Costs of Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Mental Illness. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Health and Aging, University of California.

Rinck, Margaret Josephson

- 1990 Christian Men Who Hate Women: Healing Hurting Relationships. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Roberts, G., O'Toole, B. Lawrence, and B. Raphael

- 1993 "Domestic Violence Victims in a Hospital Emergency Department," Medical Journal of Australia. Vol. 1595 (September): 307-10.

Ryrie, C. C.

- 1982 "Biblical Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage." Grace Theological Journal. (3): 177-192.

Schaeffer, Francis A.

- 1970 The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- 1972 The Church Before the Watching World. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Schaff, Philip, ed.

- 1931 The Creeds of Christendom. Vol. 3, New York: Harper and Row.

Scholer, David M.

- 1996 "The Evangelical Debate over Biblical 'Headship.'" Women, Abuse and the Bible. Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House: 28-57.

Smith, Darrell

- 1990 Integrative Therapy. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Stacey, William A. and Anson Shupe

- 1983 The Family Secret. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

- Stafford, Tim
1984 "The Tightrope: A Case Study in Church Discipline." *Leadership*. V:3, (Summer): 40-48.
- Stock, A.
1978 "Matthean Divorce Texts." *Biblical Theological Bulletin*. (8): 24-33.
- Straus, M. A., R.J Gelles and S. Steinmetz
1980 Behind Closed Doors. Anchor: Doubleday.
- Strom, Kay Marshall
1986 In the Name of Submission: A Painful Look at Wife Battering. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press.
- Tertullian, Quintus Septimius Florens
n.d. Ante-Nicene Fathers. S. Thelwall trans. Vol. IV. Published online: http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-04/anf04-06.htm#P265_52058
- Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks
1981 "Battered Women and the Bible: From Subjection to Liberation." Christianity and Crisis. 41, no.18 (16 November): 308-313.
- Tucker, Ruth and Walter Liefeld
1987 Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from the New Testament Times to the Present. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Victoria Police
1997 "Crime Statistics 1995/96." Melbourne, VIC: Victoria Police Family Violence Project Office. Published on the Internet: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~dvirc/StatREFS.htm>
- Wagner, C. Peter
1989 Strategies for Church Growth. Ventura, CA: Regal.
1989 Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs Of A Healthy Church. Ventura, CA: Regal.
- Walker, Lenore
1979 The Battered Woman. New York: Harper and Row.
1984 The Battered Woman Syndrome. New York: Springer.

Ward, Rowland S.

- 1992 The Westminster Confession For The Church Today. Melbourne, VIC.: Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

Warfield, Benjamin B.

- 1968 Biblical and Theological Studies. Samuel G. Craig ed., Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed.

Wells, David F.

- 1998 Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Wells, Ronald A.

- 1988 "Dark News from the Evangelical Home." Reformed Journal. 38:11, (Nov.): 4.

Wenham, Gordon J. and William E. Heth

- 1984 Jesus and Divorce. Carlisle: Paternoster.

White, John

- 1977 Eros Defiled: The Christian and Sexual Sin. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

White, John and Ken Blue

- 1985 Healing the Wounded: The Costly Love of Church Discipline. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press.

Williams, William

- 1973 The Experience Meeting. London: Evangelical Press.

Wray, Daniel E.

- 1978 Biblical Church Discipline. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth.

Wright, H. Norman

- 1974 Communication: Key to Your Marriage. Glendale, CA: Regal Books.

SCRIPTURE INDEX

Old Testament

Genesis

1:26-28--	112
2--	111-113
2:22-24--	132
2:24--	51
3--	37, 108
3:9--	171
3:12-13	107
3:16--	36-37, 67, 227
4:7--	37
4:23--	38

Exodus

21:26-27--	43
32:25-29--	60
32:35--	60

Leviticus

10--	60
20:10--	40
21:7,14--	132
22:13--	132

Numbers

5:11-31--	40
14:33--	135
16:31-35--	61
30:9--	132

Deuteronomy

10:20--	133
11:22--	133
13:4--	133
19:15--	19
20:10--	38
22:13-29--	38-40, 132
23:19-25:19--	38
24:1-39--	38-40, 47, 128-129, 132
25:1-16	39
30:20--	133

Joshua

22:5, 8--	133
-----------	-----

Judges

9:23--	42
--------	----

2 Samuel

12:7--	171
--------	-----

Ezra

7:10--	84
--------	----

Psalms

7:9--	58
7:12,16--	44
10:8-10--	44
11:5--	136
17:10--	43
30:5--	146
37:7--	120
55--	97
62:1, 5--	120
82:1-4--	123

Proverbs

2:17--	41
15:1--	145
21:7--	44
21:9--	106
21:19--	107
25:24--	107
27:6--	143
27:15--	107

Ecclesiastes

4:1--	58, 184
4:9--	175

Song of Solomon

2:15--	174
--------	-----

Isaiah

3:14-15--	41
50:1--	132

Jeremiah			7:1-17--	41
3:2, 9--	135-136		7:36-50--	41
3:8, 9--	132		8:8--	18
Ezekiel			8:43-48--	41
16--	135		9:23--	122
23--	135		13:10-17--	41
28:16--	143		14:35--	18
34:2-6--	93		15--	146
45:9-11--	43		15:8-10--	46
Hosea			16:18--	132-133
1:2--	135		17:3-4--	126-127
6:10--	135		18:1-8--	46
4:6--	149		18:11--	20
Malachi			John	
2:6-16--	41-42, 131-132		4--	49, 144
New Testament			4:27--	46
Matthew			4:14--	50
5:21-32--	45-48, 130		5:19-43--	116
	132-134		8--	144
7:1-2--	86		8:42--	115
7:4--	17		8:44--	56
7:17,20--	150		10:1--	115
10:34-36--	53		12:49--	115
11:28--	46		13:34-35--	95
13:33--	46		17:1-27--	116
15:18-20--	172		21:15-17--	32
16--	70		Acts	
16:18-19--	32, 186		1:14--	54
18:1-35--	16-22, 31, 33		5--	23
	125, 139, 143		5:14--	54
19:3-9--	51, 132, 134		7:6--	54
25:35-36--	181		8:3--	53
26:22--	103		8:12--	54
Mark			9:2--	53
2:17--	33		16:13--	54
4: 9, 23--	18		17:4--	54
5:25-34--	166		20:28-29--	33
7:21-23--	171		22:4--	53
9:29--	181		Romans	
9:43, 45-46--	147		3:20--	172
10:2-12--	131, 133		6:18, 22--	54
12:41-44--	46		8:15--	162
Luke			12:2--	165
4:38-39--	41		14:4--	86
6:37--	86		14:10--	86
			1 Corinthians	
			5--	21, 26, 28-29
			5:1-5--	22-23
			5: 9-14--	25
			6:9-10--	51, 55

6:11	56	2 Thessalonians	
6:16--	51	3: 6-15--	27-28
7--	51, 155		
7:5--	21, 159	1 Timothy	
7:10-15--	52, 132, 136-137	1:3-5--	96
7:15--	52, 54, 77	1:13-14--	179
9:19--	54, 56	1:17--	179
9:22-23--	186	1:20--	29
11:3--	116-117	2:11-15--	113-114, 118, 120-121
11:7--	63	3:3--	145
11:30--	23	3:2-5--	56, 119
3:1-8--	140	5:19-20--	29
13:1-7--	128, 141		
14:34--	110	2 Timothy	
2 Corinthians		1:8--	122
1:3-4--	164	2:24--	56
2:5-11--	26-28		
4:8-12--	101	Titus	
11:24-28--	101-102	1:7--	56
12:9--	101	2:3--	54
Galatians		2:5--	110
4:3--	54	2:9--	110
5:19-21--	55	3:1-2--	110, 145
5:23--	144	3:10-11--	31
6:1-2--	91, 144, 146	Hebrews	
Ephesians		5:8--	121
1:3--	51	10:5-10--	116
4:8, 12--	186	11--	122
4:11-12--	32	12--	85
4:20-24--	84	12:10--	85
4:23-33--	55, 61	13:17--	110
4:29--	43	James	
4:31--	55	1:2-3--	122
4:32--	124	3:2-10--	43
5--	50-52, 131	4:7--	110
5:21-25--	110, 118	1 Peter	
5:25-27--	85	2:9--	84
5:28-29--	51	2:13--	110
Philippians		2:21--	122
2:5--	140	2:18-3:10--	124
3:21--	109	3:6--	119
Colossians		3:7--	50
3:5-15--	166, 174-175	4:14-19--	192
3:8--	55	5:3-4--	193
3:18--	110	5:5--	110
1 Thessalonians		5:10-11--	193
5:14--	27		

2 Peter		
	1:4--	166
	2:19--	54
1 John		
	1:9--	171
Jude		
	21-23--	95
Revelations		
	2:7,11--	18
	2:14--	136
	2:17--	18
	2:29--	18
	3: 6, 13, 22--	18
	9:21--	136
	14:8--	136
	17:2, 4--	136
	18:3--	136
	19:2--	136

INDEX

- abuse:
 cycle of, 107, 170, 193
 defined, 7
 physical, 2-3, 7, 43, 47,
 54-55, 61, 96-97, 99-
 100, 103-104, 107, 137,
 154, 171-174
 psychological, 7, 94, 96-
 98, 100, 154, 176
 women, 104-106
- accountability, 88, 158, 188
- Adams, Jay E., 7, 88, 94, 132
- adultery, 19, 39-41, 46-49, 54, 68,
 76, 78, 124, 131, 133-134
- Akiba, Rabbi, 40
- alcohol, 54, 102, 150, 152-153,
 166, 175
- Allender, Dan B., 127-128
- Alsdurf, James & Phyllis, 122
- Ames, William, 78-79
- Anabaptists, 71-72
- anger: 14, 55-56, 65, 74, 97, 144,
 161, 165, 167-169, 171-
 174, 188
 anger log, 173
 anger symptoms, 174
- Anglican Church 3, 194
- Arndt, W.F., & F. Gingrich, 133
- assumptions, 10-11, 167
- Augustine, 65-67, 111
- Augsburger, David, 94
- Australia, 88-89, 93, 98, 106, 158,
 172, 186, 190-191
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 3
- Authentein*, 119
- authority, 10, 32, 59, 63, 76, 109,
 113-120
- Aquinas, Thomas, 61, 111
- awareness, 101
- Bannerman, James, 32
- Baptist, 4-5, 20
- Barber, Bruce, 124, 128
- Battered Women Fight Back, 103
- Baxter, Richard, 74-76, 91-92, 127,
 177
- Beck, Edmund, 73
- Belgic Confession, 58
- Barnett, Paul W., 119
- Benner, David G., 94
- Beza, Theodore, 79
- bible:
 Abel, 38
 Abimelech, 41
 Adam & Eve, 23, 37-38,
 51, 107-108, 111-114,
 170
 Adah & Zilah, 38
 Ananias & Saphira, 23
 Ezra, 83
 Hymenaeus & Alexander
 29
 John the Baptist, 112
 Jude, 94
 Korah-Dathan-Abiram, 60
 Lamech, 38
 Nadab-Abihu, 60
 Matthew's Bible, 73
 Moses, 38-40, 42, 47, 51,
 109-112, 133
 Samaritan Woman, 21, 49,
 140
 sufficiency, 10
- Biderman, Spencer, 97, 99
- Bilezikian, Gilbert, 116
- Bloomfield, Peter, 39-40, 48
- Blue, Ken, 7, 15
- Bobgan, Martin & Deidre, 94
- Bodycomb, John, 109
- bondage, 6, 8, 10, 51-54, 64, 97,
 136-137, 167, 179
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, 6
- Breward, Ian, 88
- Brown, Harold O.J., 14
- Bubna, Donald, 91
- Calvin, John, 18, 23, 36, 70-71
 112, 143
- Carcach, Carlos, & Marianne
 James, 3
- Chrysostom, John, 63-64, 111
- Church:
 Byzantine Church 68
 conservative, 1, 5, 83,
 109, 122
 members, 9-10, 22, 66, 75,
 81, 85, 92, 94, 151,
 154-155, 180-181

- Collins, Gary, 94
 Collins, Sheila, 44
 confidentiality, 187
 Conrade, Glenys, 3
 consequences, 20, 44, 87, -97, 100,
 107, 123, 126, 146, 168,
 172, 174, 181
 Constantine, 66
 counseling, 1-2, 8, 11, 92-94, 97,
 104, 126, 129, 134, 141,
 152, 159, 161, 173, 176-
 177, 181, 187-188, 190,
 Corinth, 26-28
 covenant, 41-43, 72, 83, 97, 103,
 127, 131-132, 134-137
 Cox, Valerie, 4, 97, 100-101, 104,
 122, 129, 153
 creation, 111-112
 crisis, 97, 156, 168, 170, 190
 Cyprian, 62
- Davis, Kenneth, 71
 Dawes, Robyn M., 94
 death, 3, 23, 39, 45, 47, 58, 62-63,
 70-71, 97, 100, 104, 127,
 152, 185
 delimitations, 9
 denial, 127, 129, 142, 162, 168-
 170, 175, 182-183.
 Department of Justice Victoria, 3
 depression, 96, 154, 160
 Dionysius of Alexander, 62
 disclosure, 25
 desertion, 5, 52, 54, 77, 80, 131-
 132, 135, 137
 divorce, 1, 5, 11, 39-40, 42, 46-50
 52, 54, 60, 66, 68, 75, 77-
 80, 104, 129-133, 135-
 138, 141, 146, 155, 168,
 170, 172, 176, 182
- Domestic Violence
 Intervention and
 Protective Services, 4,
 drug abuse, 102
 Duluth Model, 141
 Dutton, Donald G., 104
- economic factors, 101, 150, 154,
 172
 Eden, 23, 36
 Edgar, Thomas, 131
 elders, 19-20, 29, 32-34, 75, 83, 88,
 91-92, 118, 144, 148,
 192
 Eivers, Hazel, 86
 Engle, Paul, 25
 ethics, 82-83
 excommunication, 23-26, 35, 60-
 61, 66, 69-70, 94
- family therapy, 167
 fear, 2, 6, 11, 66, 74, 77, 84-86, 94-
 97, 103-104, 129, 153-
 157, 161-162, 164, 166,
 176, 180
 Fee, Gordon, 136
 Fitzmeyer, J. A., 49
 Fleming, Steven R., 13, 124, 152,
 167, 170, 174, 180
 Foe, Susan, 37
 forgiveness, 6, 16, 21, 24, 27, 123-
 126, 128-129, 162, 167,
 174, 177, 186
 Friar Cherubino, 67
 Free Presbyterian Church of
 Scotland, 72, 114
- Garrett, James L., 60
 Gothard, Bill, 122
 Goodwin, Thomas, 73
 grace, 6, 10-11, 21-24, 26, 50, 56,
 85, 95, 101, 110, 125-127,
 129, 139-140, 142-143,
 145-146, 162-163, 165-
 166, 168-170, 178, 184-
 185, 192
 Greece, 59
 Gregory, 62, 67
 group therapy, 175
 Grudem, Wayne, 116
 guilt, 35, 41, 60, 62, 75, 88-89, 96,
 106, 110, 142, 164, 168-
 169
- hatred, 38, 42, 51, 76
 headship, 51, 112, 114, 116-120
 Heideman, Eugene, 94
 Hendriksen, William, 21, 46
 Heggen, Carolyn Holderread,
 121-122, 128, 138
 Heth, William, A., & Gordon
 J. Wenham, 131
 hierarchy, 112, 114
 holiness, piety, godliness, 7, 11, 73,

- 84, 86, 89, 101, 108, 177, 186
- homicide, 3
- Holy Spirit, 10-11, 32, 114, 143-144, 172, 178, 181, 183
- hope, 37, 55, 76, 81, 103, 140, 157, 159, 161, 183
- House, Wayne H., 131
- Hudson, Eric & Greg Yee, 122
- Hunt, Dave, 94
- ignorance, 82
- indecentcy, 39
- immaturity, 89, 153
- immorality, 21-22, 49, 55, 61, 133, 135, 165
- intervention, 34, 141, 147, 180, 184
- Isaac, Rabbi, 118
- Jacob, 37
- James, Marianne, 3
- Jeschke, Marlin, 83, 85
- Joint Churches Domestic Violence, Prevention Project, 97, 126
- Jones, Ann, 169
- Jones, David C., 42, 143
- Jones, Stanton L. & Richard E. Butman, 94
- Josephus, 44
- Judaism 44-50, 60
- Judaisers, 49
- Hillelites, 49
- Talmud, 60
- justice, 8, 42-43, 98, 123, 129, 144, 162
- Kaldor, Peter, et al., 90
- Keener, Craig, 37, 91
- Kilpatrick, William K., 94
- Kinnaird, W. M., 155
- Kuiper, R.B., 33, 35, 87, 145
- Knight III, George, 119
- Kroeger, Catherine Clark, 116-117
- Kroeger, Catherine Clark & James R. Beck, 113
- Kroeger, Richard, 119
- Kroeger, Richard & Catherine Clark Kroeger, 113, 114
- Laney, Carl, 32
- Liaboe, Gary P., 49
- law of God, 31, 34, 38-40, 45, 51-
- 54, 59-60, 62, 68, 74, 76, 82-83, 87, 91, 95, 109
- leaders, leadership, 4-5, 9-11, 14, 29, 32, 56-58, 81, 91-94, 109-110, 112-113, 116, 144, 149, 151, 163-164, 177, 179-180, 182, 184, 186, 188-189, 192
- leaving the abuser, 5, 51, 78, 103-104, 121, 123, 156
- Littleton, Mark R., 88
- Livezey, Lois G., 70
- love, 3-4, 15, 21, 27, 31, 34, 37, 42, 50-51, 56, 69, 76, 85, 89, 95-96, 103, 110, 117, 125-127, 130, 135, 140-143, 150, 152, 158, 161, 163, 165, 168, 175-178
- Lumpkin, W.L., 71
- Luther, Martin, 37, 69-70, 83
- Lutz, Ronald E., 82
- McCue, Margi Laird, 7
- McNeill, John, 15, 87
- McQuilkin, Robert, 14
- Mackin, Theodore, 66, 68
- Maresius, Samuel, 80
- Marshall, I. Howard, 113
- Martin, Grant L., 49, 59, 61, 68, 151, 160, 165, 167, 169, 173, 175
- martyrdom, 72, 120-121
- Meier, Paul et. al., 94
- Melbourne, 3, 11, 14
- middle class, 101
- Moreland, J. P., 101
- Morina, B., 49
- Morris, Leon, 25
- Mueller, J. R., 49
- murder, 38, 47, 56, 68, 76, 103, 171
- Murray, John, 40, 130-131, 133
- myths, 96-108
- National Church Life Survey, 89
- Narramore, Clyde, 120
- O'Leary, K. et al., 105
- O'Reilly, Jane, 3
- Oulund Jr., and Raymond C., 111
- Owen, John, 72, 73, 177

- pathology:
 of abuse, 173
 of victimization, 101, 122
 peace, 4, 52-54, 63, 136, 165-166,
 175, 186
 Pelikan, Jaroslav, 115
 Perkins, William, 77-78
 Perriman, A.C., 119
 piety, 74, 87, 89, 177
porneia, 21, 49, 132-135
 Presbyterian Church of America,
 42, 54, 66, 77, 80, 132,
 136-137
 Piper, John, 110, 118
 prisoners, 57, 98
 Puritans, 8, 57-59, 72, 74, 77-78,
 80, 102, 137-138, 177
 police intervention, 3, 81, 83, 91,
 102, 137, 158, 190, 192
 Poythress, Vern Sheridan, 113
 primogeniture, 112
 provocation, 66, 108

 Reformed Theological Seminary,
 11
 Reformation, 58
 remorse, 63, 126
 repentance, 6, 14, 17-18, 20, 24,
 26, 28, 30-31, 35, 56, 107,
 125, 129, 137, 146, 157,
 168, 170-171, 176, 192
 restraining order, 158
 restoration, 16-18, 20, 24, 27, 56,
 66, 139, 143, 145-146,
 147, 176
 Rice, D. P., et al., 93
 risk, 176
 Robinson, Hadden, 88
 Roman Catholic, 3, 5
 Rome, 59, 69
 Rylie, C. C., 49

 Satan, 22-23, 27, 29, 107-108,
 142, 172
 safety plan, 158, 194-196
 Schaller, Hans, 72
 Scholer, David M., 63-64, 73, 119
 self-esteem, 97, 99, 151, 154,
 159-161, 167
 shelters, 103
 Shores, Steve, 94

 Shupe, Anson, 5
 significance, 7, 40, 48, 87
 Smalcald Articles, 69
 Smith, Darrell, 94
 Spencer, Tracy, 97
 Sproul, R.C., 95
 Stacey, William & Anson Shupe, 5
 Stafford, Tim, 90
 Straus M. A., et. al, 105
 Stock, A., 49
 stress, 100-101, 155, 168-169, 175,
 177
 Strom, Kay Marshall, 151
 submission, 36, 51, 64, 110, 115,
 118-120
 subordination, 109-111, 113-115,
 117, 120
 suffering, 4, 74, 98, 106, 120, 123,
 163, 169, 191
 suicide, 155
 sympathy, 6, 70

 Taylor, F.J., 85
 Tertullian, 8, 62-63, 110
 Torah, 59, 118
 Tucker, Ruth & Walter Liefeld, 67
 trinity, 114-115, 120

 United Nations Universal
 Declaration of Human
 Rights, 98
 Uniting Church in Australia, 3

 violence: 3-4, 13-14, 36, 38, 41-45,
 54-55, 57, 59, 64, 77, 79,
 81, 87, 97-98, 101, 104-
 105, 107-108, 119, 121,
 123, 126, 128, 135, 137-
 138, 154, 156, 158, 167,
 169-172, 176, 180, 184,
 188, 192
 Victoria Police, 3
 Vitz, Paul C., 94

 Walker, Lenore, 107, 141, 151-152,
 161, 193
 Ward, Roland S., 48
 Warfield, Benjamin B., 115
 weapons, 153
 Wells, David, 101
 Wells, Ronald, 89
 Westminster Confession of Faith,
 72, 131

Shorter Catechism, 114
White, John, 89-90
White, John & Ken Blue, 7, 15
Williams, William, 35
Wilshire, Leland Edward, 119
Winfrey, Joan, Burgess, 97
Wray, Daniel, 15
Wright, H. Norman, 60

VITA

Peter F. Rutledge was born in New Zealand (03.12.1954) and is proud of his Maori heritage from both of his parents, Tom and Netta. He grew up in a small New Zealand town, Thames, and married his high school sweetheart, Janine Clark. They both trained at Hamilton Teachers College and Waikato University. Both Peter and Janine became Christians while at Teachers College. Peter graduated as a primary school teacher and taught for several years as a primary and a secondary teacher in Hamilton. Janine raised their three children, Tiani, Caleb and Tobias, then went on to do post-graduate studies and is now working as a university lecturer while completing her D.Ed.

In 1980 Peter moved his family to Melbourne, Australia, in order to begin theological studies at the Presbyterian Theological Hall and graduated with a Bachelor of Theology in 1983. Since graduating he has served as pastor in two Baptist churches in Melbourne and is currently Senior Pastor of Melville Baptist Church in Perth, Western Australia.

In 1993 he became a D.Min student at Reformed Theological Seminary. He has been a lecturer at the Melbourne School of Divinity and contributed to several journals. He also serves as a supervisor in the Supervised Field Education program at Baptist Theological College, Perth, WA.

Peter and Janine are proud grandparents of Isabella Grace Wilkes, daughter of Tiani and Tim Wilkes.