



Christians ending violence against women

Resources for churches

Resources for Churches on ending violence against women

This document has been produced by White Ribbon Campaign (www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk) and Restored (www.restoredrelationships.org) as a resource for churches to be able to challenge violence against women in the context of biblical teaching. It is also designed to give you information needed to prepare a sermon on the Christian perspective on domestic violence.

It has a particular focus on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, also known as White Ribbon Day. This is an opportunity for all men to wear a white ribbon to show their commitment to ending violence against women.

We are encouraging all Christian churches to adopt the theme of domestic violence, or more general violence against women and girls, for their sermon on 25 November, or sometime around that date.

At the end of this document we have provided a guide to sources of help and support available for people that can be used as part of any work you do in the church.

For churches looking for more general information and practical guidance about a Christian response to domestic violence, we recommend Restored's church pack which is downloadable from the Restored website at: http://www.restoredrelationships.org/media/website/file/Church_Pack_Final_Version.pdf

1. Why Christianity is opposed to

violence against women

Christianity is about serving the God of love who made all people with value and dignity. It is about following Jesus Christ who honoured and respected women, and resisted violence. The list below gives a summary of some of the reasons why Christians should oppose all forms of violence against women. In the past, courageous Christians have taken a stand against slavery, racism and international debt. We believe that now is the time for the church to speak out about this appalling global epidemic of injustice and oppression against women.

God is love and Christians are commanded to love one another.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

God is a God of justice and will hold all people to account.

For the LORD is a God of justice. (Isaiah 30:18b)

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13)

Every person is made in the image of God and has value.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

God upholds the cause of the oppressed.

He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free. (Psalm 146:7)

The essence of Christianity is sacrificial love and service, not power and domination. Jesus warned his followers not to seek or abuse power.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)

One of Jesus' purposes was to liberate the oppressed.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed (Luke 4:18)

Jesus brought healing and restoration.

Many followed him, and he healed all their sick (Matthew 12:15)

Jesus respected and empowered women.

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. (Luke 13:10-13)

The Bible instructs men to love their wives and lay down their lives for them.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25)

There is no difference between men and women in the kingdom of God.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Christians are commanded to do good to all people.

... as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people (Galatians 6:10)

Loving relationships in the family and in society are at the core of Christianity.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)

Those who abuse women will face God's judgement.

...they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (1 Peter 4:5)

There is always hope in God.

No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders (Isaiah 60:18)

The fruit of the Holy Spirit are incompatible with violence against women.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

2. Scriptures and passages

There are many passages from the Bible which illustrate the character of God and what He requires of Christians in our everyday lives. These mean that we must never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. There are also stories in the Bible that give examples of horrific abuse, and help us to understand what causes such violence and how it can be prevented. The passages listed below are some examples which can be used as readings during church services, or as passages on which sermons can be based.

God's love and our love. 1 John 4:7-21

This passage outlines God's sacrificial love for us demonstrated in Jesus, and calls upon us to love one another. Violence and abuse are completely incompatible with living a life of love.

Jesus' manifesto. Luke 4:16-21

Jesus read the words from Isaiah Chapter 61 in the synagogue in Nazareth, and then applied them to himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (v 18-19) Jesus cared for and empowered those who had suffered oppression and violence and calls on his church to continue this ministry today.

Hope for transformation. Isaiah 61:1-4

The passage from Isaiah Chapter 61, quoted by Jesus in Luke Chapter 4, goes on to talk about "...a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." (v3) It provides a wonderful picture of hope for those suffering from abuse.

Instructions for husbands to love their wives sacrificially. Ephesians 5:25-33, Colossians 3:19

The Bible is clear that each man is called upon to demonstrate sacrificial love to his wife or partner; loving her as he loves himself and being willing to lay down his life for her. Such sacrificial love is completely incompatible with abuse.

The equality and mutual obligation of husbands and wives. 1 Corinthians 7:3-4

This passage says that the sexual rights and obligations of a man and a woman are equal and reciprocal. This was an astonishing teaching in the first century, and remains the foundation for a relationship of equality and respect.

The rape of Tamar. 2 Samuel 13:1-22

This passage tells the story of the rape of Tamar, the daughter of King David, by her half-brother Amnon. There are several men in the story who are complicit in the rape. King David does nothing in response to the abuse, and Amnon is murdered two years later, on the orders of Tamar's brother, Absalom. The story is a horrific account of how lust and the abuse of power can inflict lifelong damage on a woman and lead to a cycle of violence and retribution. It challenges us to say how the story could have been

changed to prevent the rape in the first place, or to respond to it with justice and compassion.

True love. *1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

This classic description of love, so often read out at marriage services, provides the basis for positive, healthy and non-violent relationships.

God's comfort for the suffering. *Isaiah 43:1-2*

This passage speaks of God's love and care for his people and how He will be with those who are suffering.

Serving or neglecting Christ as you serve or neglect others. *Matthew 25:31-46*

This parable of "the sheep and the goats" illustrates that God's judgement of each of us will be based on how we have demonstrated practical love for those in need. It means that we cannot ignore women affected by abuse and that when we provide help and support to the vulnerable and oppressed it is as though we are doing so to Jesus himself.

The Good Samaritan. *Luke 10:25-37*

Jesus describes the two greatest commandments as loving God and loving your neighbour. In the parable of the Good Samaritan he defines everyone as our neighbour and highlights a Samaritan man, despised by many Jewish people, as a model for us to follow in showing practical love and support to those who are suffering. Jesus doesn't give us the option to walk on by in the face of violence.

Jesus prevents violence against a woman. *John 8:1-11*

A crowd of men bring forward a woman accused of adultery. No man is brought forward as the other party. Jesus challenges her accusers as to which of them is without sin. As they disappear Jesus says to her "... neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." He challenges the hypocrisy and judgemental attitudes of the religious leaders while giving new hope to the woman and saving her from a brutal punishment.

The fruit of the Spirit. *Galatians 5:22-23*

This list of fruit of the Holy Spirit includes love, kindness, gentleness and self-control which are incompatible with violence against women.

Jesus' compassion for Jairus' daughter and a women bleeding. *Luke 8:41-56*

Jesus heals two women. The first a girl of twelve is raised from the dead. The second, a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, is healed. Jesus is not concerned about the ritual uncleanness of touching a body or a woman who is bleeding. He reaches out with compassion to bring healing and new life. We are called upon to do the same for all women and girls who are suffering.

3. Points for a sermon on or around 25 November

25 November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women. It is also White Ribbon Day when all men are asked to wear a white ribbon to show their commitment to ending violence against women. The Sunday nearest to 25 November provides an opportunity for churches to raise these issues in their sermons, to make a commitment to being a safe place for women affected by abuse, and to become a voice speaking out against all forms of violence against women.

• Some statistics on violence against women in the UK:

- *Domestic violence accounts for between 16% and one quarter of all recorded violent crime in the UK (Home Office, 2004; Dodd et al., 2004; British Crime Survey, 1998)*
- *In any one year, there are 13 million separate incidents of physical violence or threats of violence against women from partners or former partners. (Walby and Allen, 2004)*
- *On average 2 women a week are killed by a male partner or former partner: this constitutes around one-third of all female homicide victims. (Povey, (ed.), 2004, 2005; Home Office, 1999; Department of Health, 2005)*
- *One third of teenage girls suffer unwanted sexual acts in a relationship and quarter physical violence. (NSPCC/University of Bristol, Sept. 2009)*

- Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called violence against women: "The most pervasive human rights violation in the world".
- God calls on us to act against such injustice. He takes the side of the oppressed.
- There are great examples of Christians throughout history who have taken a lead in addressing slavery (William Wilberforce); racism (Martin Luther King) and debt (Jubilee 2000). The global abuse of women cries out for similar action in our generation.
- God will hold us to account for our actions and for our lack of action.
- Domestic violence affects one in four women in the UK and also affects women in our churches.
- Domestic violence is often hidden and surrounded by stigma and shame.
- The church needs to be a safe place for women affected by abuse.
- Jesus called on us to love one another. Abuse can have no place in Christian relationships.
- The church needs to promote positive and strong relationships.

- Young people need help and guidance to identify and avoid abusive relationships.
 - We need to challenge any theology or teaching in the church that demeans women or condones violence against women.
 - Churches can provide financial and other support to local refuges and other services supporting women and children affected by violence.
 - Men have a key role to model good relationships and challenge abusive attitudes and behaviour amongst their friends, including the use of pornography and prostitution.
 - There is hope for perpetrators of violence to reform, but only if they recognise and repent of their behaviour, and commit themselves to a long term process of change and accountability.
- There are actions we can all take:
 - Educate ourselves on the issues of what is and isn't a healthy relationship;
 - Think about and challenge our own attitudes and behaviours;
 - (For men) Sign up to the White Ribbon Pledge and "First Man Standing";
 - Adopt a Domestic Abuse Charter for our church – see the Restored church pack; and
 - Draw ideas for action from the Restored church pack and other sources.

4. Contacts and copyright



Restored is an international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women. We work with churches to help them prevent and respond effectively to domestic abuse and sexual violence within the church and in the wider community. Restored has also launched "First Man Standing" as a campaign to mobilise men to end violence against women by modelling good relationships, respecting all women, challenging other men's behaviour and signing up to the White Ribbon pledge.



The White Ribbon Campaign an international movement of men working to end men's violence against women and girls. We focus on primary prevention of violence against women and girls by engaging with men and boys and raising their awareness of how big a problem this is for society and the issues related to it, such as the objectification of women and the various different forms that abuse takes.

For further details and information contact Chris Hancox at White Ribbon Campaign (info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk) Tel. 01422 886545 or Peter Grant at Restored (peter.grant@restoredrelationships.org) Tel. 020 8943 7706.

This resource may be freely reproduced and distributed without amendment.

Scripture quotations taken from the Holy Bible, New International version. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission.

Sources of Help and Support in respect of domestic abuse and sexual violence

Below are the major national sources of help, support and advice for people suffering from domestic or sexual violence.

Restored

Restored is an international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women.
www.restoredrelationships.org

White Ribbon Campaign

The White Ribbon Campaign is an organisation that encourages and supports men campaigning on the issue of violence against women and girls.
www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

The National Domestic Violence Helpline

A national 24 hour helpline for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.
0808 2000 247

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is working to end domestic violence against women and children. They support a network of domestic and sexual violence services across the UK.

England: www.womensaid.org.uk (runs national helpline)

Scotland: www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk Helpline 0800 027 1234 (24 hours)

Wales: www.welshwomensaid.org

Northern Ireland: www.womensaidni.org Helpline 0800 917 1414 (24 Hours)

Refuge

Refuge's network of safe houses provides emergency accommodation for women and children when they are most in need.

www.refuge.org.uk

National Centre for Domestic Violence

A free, fast, emergency service to survivors of domestic violence enabling them to apply for an injunction within 24 hours of first contact (in most circumstances).

0844 8044 999

www.ncdv.org.uk

The National Stalking Helpline

Practical advice and information to anyone who is currently or previously been effected by harassment or stalking.

0808 802 0300 - 09:30am till 4:00pm weekdays (except Wed 13:00 - 16:00)

www.stalkinghelpline.org

Rape Crisis England and Wales

This is the national organisation for Rape Crisis Centres and there web site has information on what services are available locally.

www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Freephone helpline 0808 802 9999 (12 - 2.30pm 7 - 9.30pm)

Respect

A helpline for men who commit domestic abuse and for people concerned for someone they know, who they think is abusive.

www.respectphonenumber.org.uk

0808 802 4040

Broken Rainbow

Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic abuse

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

0300 999 5428

Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH)

An international coalition of men and women promoting peace and safety in Christian homes.

www.peaceandsafety.com

Religion and Violence Elearning (RAVE)

RAVE is an initiative that seeks to bring knowledge and social action together to assist families of faith impacted by abuse.

www.theraveproject.org

Against Violence and Abuse

AVA provides a range of domestic abuse services to UK based organisations and agencies working in the voluntary and statutory sector as well as to individual practitioners.

www.avaproject.org.uk

This document has been produced by White Ribbon Campaign and Restored.

Please let us know if any information is out of date on 01422 886545 so we can update this document. Alternatively you can e-mail the information to info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

Disclaimer – while every effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate at the time of publication, we cannot be held responsible for any errors or subsequent changes, or their consequences.