

**IN THE IMAGE OF GOD:
THE CHRISTIAN VISION FOR LOVE AND MARRIAGE
ABUSE: THE SILENT SIN**

Randall A. Schroeder, Ph.D.

September 19, 2006

- I. STATISTICS ON ABUSE

- II. TYPES OF ABUSE
 - A. Emotional Abuse
 - B. Verbal Abuse
 - C. Physical Abuse
 - D. Sexual Abuse

- III. TRAITS IN ABUSIVE MEN
 - A. Very traditional: expects the wife to serve, obey and remain at home
 - B. Unrealistic expectations of everyone
 - C. Wants all authority
 - D. Strong sexual stereotypes; rigid sex roles
 - E. Jealous
 - F. Has the right to make all the decisions in the relationship
 - G. Blames the wife when things go wrong
 - H. Believes women are inferior to men
 - I. Believes a woman's role is only to have children and take care of her husband
 - J. Sudden mood swings: switches from sweetly loving to explosively violent in a matter of minutes
 - K. Very outgoing and a really nice person because he only has periodic episodes at home

IV. QUESTIONS FOR DETERMINING ABUSE

- A. Do you feel like you have to “walk on egg shells” to keep your spouse from getting angry?
- B. Are you and the children frightened by your spouse’s temper?
- C. Does your spouse criticize everything that you do?
- D. Does your spouse complain about how you look or parent your children?
- E. Does your spouse have unrealistic expectations by expecting you to be the perfect partner and meet his every need?
- F. Is your spouse hypersensitive and easily insulted?
- G. Does your spouse rant about unfairness and injustices that are just part of life?
- H. Does your spouse control the money and make all financial decisions?
- I. Does your spouse interrogate you intensely about whom you talk to and your whereabouts?
- J. Does your spouse call you names or put you down?
- K. Does your spouse isolate you by trying to cut you off from family and friends?
- L. Is your spouse extremely jealous?
- M. Are you often compliant because you are afraid to hurt your spouse’s feelings?
- N. Are you afraid to tell your spouse your worries and feelings about the marriage?
- O. Do you find yourself apologizing to others for your spouse’s behavior when you are treated badly?
- P. Does your spouse give you the silent treatment for hours, days or even longer to punish you?
- Q. Does your spouse do everything to win an argument including threatening or intimidating you?
- R. Does your spouse blame others for mistakes because it is always someone else’s fault if anything goes wrong?
- S. Does your spouse blame you for his anger and refuse to accept responsibility for his actions?
- T. Does your spouse make threats and then dismiss them with, “I really didn’t mean it?”

V. EFFECTS OF ABUSE ON THE SPOUSE

- A. Lower self-esteem and self-confidence
- B. Afraid for her life and the well-being of her children
- C. Extreme guilt
- D. Abnormal or crazy
- E. Feels small or powerless
- F. Physical problems
- G. Suppressed or unrecognized anger

VI. EFFECTS OF ABUSE ON THE CHILDREN

- A. Depression, anxiety, fears, eating difficulties, sleep disorders and guilt
- B. Health problems
- C. Psychological and emotional problems are more frequent
- D. School-age boys are likely to be more aggressive and show more behavioral problems
- E. More likely to be abusers
- F. Marry or date abusive men
- G. Spiritual confusion
- H. Experience verbal and emotional abuse living in the environment

VII. VERBAL ABUSE IN MARRIAGE

- A. Words are powerful
 - 1. James 3:1-12
 - 2. Proverbs 18:21
- B. Words can build up, Proverbs 16:24
- C. Words can tear down
 - 1. Proverbs 12:10
 - 2. James 3:8
 - 3. Psalm 52:2
 - 4. Psalm 10:7

5. Ephesians 4:5

6. Colossians 3:8

D. Types of verbal attacks

1. Guilt trips

2. Faultfinding

3. Name calling

4. Yelling or shouting

5. Sarcasm

6. Blaming

7. Put-downs

VIII. RESPONDING TO VERBAL ABUSE IN MARRIAGE

A. Admit that abuse is present in the relationship

B. Faulty thinking by the abuser

1. Easy-going versus tense

2. Accepting of everyone versus critical

3. Better than others: difficult time accepting responsibility

a. Does not care about offensive ways, Romans 12:18

b. Shortcomings, Matthew 7:3-5

C. Recognize the words and phrases of abuse

D. Keep a journal in a spiral notebook, I Corinthians 13:5

E. Confront the abuser

1. Establish boundaries and limits

2. Describe the verbal attack

3. Key phrases spoken with a tone of respect, authority and firmness

a. "Do you hear yourself?"

b. "Stop it!"

c. "Cut out the criticisms!"

d. "I do not raise my voice at you. Please do not raise your voice at me."

- e. "Do not talk to me in an ungodly way."
- f. "I do not want to hear any name-calling in this house anymore."
- g. "Can you please say that nicely?"

F. Follow through with consequences

IX. PHYSICAL ABUSE IN MARRIAGE

A. How physical abuse begins

- 1. Pattern of behavior
- 2. "Adam and Eve" blame game
- 3. Entitlement

B. Abuse becomes more frequent and more severe over time

C. God hates violence, Malachi 2:16

D. The cycle

- 1. Tension
- 2. Explosion
- 3. Honeymoon

X. UNDERSTANDING ANGER

A. Almighty God speaks

- 1. Ecclesiastes 7:9
- 2. Proverbs 16:32
- 3. Galatians 5:19-21
- 4. Ephesians 4:26-27
- 5. Colossians 3:8
- 6. James 1:19-20

B. Righteous anger is:

- 1. Directed at something that is wrong
- 2. Not an uncontrolled passion
- 3. Never hatred

C. Questions to ask abusers

1. How much time do you spend criticizing people in your mind rather than looking for their positive qualities and virtues?
2. How often do others do things that bother you so much that you have to tell them?
3. How often do you talk about others in a derogatory manner behind their back?
4. How often do you have standards for others that even you yourself cannot live up to?
5. How often do you want to pressure others to conform to your high expectations so that you can accept them?

D. Root causes of anger

1. Perception of rights and a critical attitude
2. First emotions: hurts, fears, frustrations, injustices, UNFAIRNESS and PERFECTION
3. Filling the balloon with first emotions

E. Anger management skills

1. Lower their expectations of others and life
2. Say aloud every morning, "something unfair will happen today"
3. Think in "grays" and percentages somewhere between 60% to 90%
4. Grade situations, people, circumstances and events a "B-"
5. Teach the abuser to ask: "What will my anger accomplish?"
6. What can you do to help yourself be slow to anger? Describe how to be angry and sin not
7. Log the anger episodes
8. Pause for twenty seconds – LISTEN!

XI. COUNSELING SPOUSES IN ABUSIVE SITUATIONS

- A. Common counseling mistakes when dealing with physical abuse**
 - 1. Significant personal issue**
 - 2. Issues or problems do not cause physical abuse**

- B. Problems with joint marriage counseling**
 - 1. Inhibits the wife's freedom to talk honestly about the situation**
 - 2. Gives the abuser more power over his wife**
 - 3. Puts the wife in danger of retaliation**
 - 4. May be useful and safe only after the abuser has stopped all forms of abuse**

- C. Meet with the wife individually**
 - 1. Often, the wife will only give a small glimpse of the abuse because she does not feel she is being abused**
 - 2. Ask questions in a nonjudgmental, routine way**
 - a. What happens when you and your spouse disagree?**
 - b. What happens when you express an opinion different from your husbands?**
 - c. Do you ever feel afraid or frightened of your spouse?**
 - d. Has your spouse ever shoved you? Slapped you? Kicked you?**
 - e. Has your spouse kept you from leaving when you wanted to leave?**
 - f. Ask if guns or other weapons are available in the home?**
 - g. Ask about substance abuse because that can get in the way of any treatment effort and increase the risk for severe violence in the future**
 - h. Ask about depression and suicidal ideation on the part of both spouses**
 - i. Ask about family of origin abuse background. Abuse may have influenced their perception of the acceptability of abuse in marriage, Exodus 34:6**
 - 3. Speak the truth in love**

4. Pray with her
5. Learn to forgive as God has forgiven you
 - a. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, Luke 6:27-36
 - b. Romans 12:19-21
 - c. Forgiveness does not necessarily lead to trust or reconciliation
6. A plan of action
 - a. Talk with trustworthy friends, a pastor or a Christian counselor
 - b. Develop a safety plan.
 - c. Safety kit hidden in the laundry hamper or oven
 - d. Keep a record of all incidents for evidence
 - e. Write down the details as soon as possible after an assault
 - f. Call the police after an assault
 - g. Leave the home during the tension-building phase
 - h. A safe shelter
 - i. Phone numbers, website and resources
 - 1) National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE and for the hearing-impaired 800-787-3224
 - 2) Face-to-face (plastic surgery for survivors of domestic violence) at 1-800-842-4546
 - 3) Fort Wayne, YWCA shelter for battered women, 447-7233
 - 4) www.endabuse.org
 - 5) The Open Window, video by the International LWML
 - 6) Has God Abandoned Me? and Guidance for Pastors from a Pastor's Handbook by the LC-MS
 - 7) Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men by Lundy Bancroft
 - 8) The Control Freak by Les Parrott
 - 9) Make Anger Your Ally by Neil Warren
 - 10) The Verbally Abusive Relationship by Patricia Evans
 - 11) Verbal Abuse Survivors Speak Out by Patricia Evans
 - 12) Controlling People by Patricia Evans

- D. **Meet with the husband individually**
 - 1. **Master manipulators**
 - 2. **Dual personality**
 - 3. **Faulty thinking patterns**
 - 4. **Do not contact the husband to tell him about his wife's visit without her permission and without a safety plan in place**
 - 5. **Sinful behavior is the problem**
 - 6. **Genuine repentance and a sincere apology**

- E. **Couples conjoint counseling**
 - 1. **No violence contract**
 - 2. **Each session meet separately with each spouse**
 - 3. **Determine the impact of the abuse on the marriage**
 - 4. **Increasing positive behavior**
 - 5. **Disagreement discussion skills**
 - a. **Between the "9s"**
 - b. **Soft start-up leads to a solution ending**
 - c. **Always sit at the kitchen table**
 - d. **Drive through discussion**
 - e. **Be an echo to avoid interruptions: "I heard you say . . ."**

XII. FORGIVENESS, REPENTANCE AND HEALING

- A. **Unconditional forgiveness**
 - 1. **Matthew 6:12**
 - 2. **Luke 23:34**
- B. **Abusers deny or rationalize their sin -- "Adam and Eve Blame Game," I John 1:8**
- C. **Watch for quick apologies**
- D. **Self-centered demands for forgiveness and reconciliation**
- E. **Anger self-talk skills**
 - 1. **Proverbs 25:28**
 - 2. **Proverbs 19:19**
 - 3. **Titus 1:8**