



# Leslie Vernick

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*Enriching the relationships that matter most!*

## A Biblical Response to Domestic Violence

Every week I receive frantic calls and e-mails from Christian women who feel scared, trapped, hopeless and helpless because their most intimate relationship is abusive; verbally, physically, sexually or all three.

Church leaders often lack the skills necessary to address the problem in a wise and competent manner. So how do we look at domestic violence biblically?

1. **It is always sin.** Malachi 2:16-17; Psalm 11:5; Colossians 3:19 Abusive speech is never an acceptable way to communicate (Colossians 3:8)
2. **Violence is never an appropriate response to being provoked.** People provoke us all the time but we are still responsible for our response (Ephesians 4:26; Luke 6:45)
3. **Biblical headship does not grant a husband unlimited power** over his wife, the right to remove her choices from her, or the right to have his own way all the time. (Mark 10:42-45; Ephesians 5:1,2; Eph. 6:21-29). [See article on Headship and Submission](#)
4. **God's purpose is to deliver the abused.** (Psalms 5,7,10, 140; Acts 14:5)

So how does a Christian respond? The apostle Paul encountered some spiritually abusive leaders in 2 Corinthians and he tells us not to put up with it (2 Cor. 11:20). He also encourages us in Romans 12:21 to not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Below are some biblical guidelines that will help you respond to the evil of domestic violence with good toward the victim and perpetrator.

1. **It is good to protect yourself from violent people.** (Proverbs 27:12; Prov. 11:9) David fled King Saul when he was violent toward him. The angel of the Lord warned Joseph to flee to Egypt with Jesus because Herod was trying to kill him. Paul escaped from those who sought to stone him.



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2. **It is good to expose the abuser.** (Eph 5:11) Bringing the deeds of darkness into the light is the only way to get help for both the victim and the abuser.
3. **It is good to speak the truth in love** (Matthew 18:15-17) When someone grievously sins against us and will not listen, it is good to bring the matter before the church for additional support and authority.
4. **It is good to allow the violent person to experience the consequences of his/her sinful behavior.** One of life's greatest teachers is consequences. God says what we sow, we reap (Gal. 6:7) A person uses violence at home because he gets away with it. Don't let that happen. (Prov. 19:19). God has put civil authorities in place to protect victims of abuse. The apostle Paul appealed to the Roman government when he was being mistreated (Acts 22:24-29). We should do likewise.

Churches can do much to combat domestic violence. They can:

1. **Educate teens on healthy dating relationships**
2. **Teach the proper relationship between husbands and wives and the misuse of authority.**
3. **Create a healing environment in the church.**
4. **Have a zero tolerance for abuse of any kind.**
5. **Become familiar with community resources to help women and families in crisis.**

**Please forward this to your pastor or other church leaders with a note of encouragement. They are on the front line in the war against domestic violence in the home**