TOOLKIT FOR FAITH LEADERS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Domestic Violence and the Impact in Arizona

What is domestic violence?

- Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive control where one partner uses their power to control the other partner. Domestic violence can take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012).
  - Physical abuse includes but is not limited to, hitting, slapping, shoving, biting.
  - Sexual abuse is described as coercing or attempting to coerce sexual contact without consent. It includes but is not limited to, forcing sex, marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body.
  - Emotional abuse is an attempt to undermine an individuals' self worth or self esteem. This includes but is not limited to, name-calling, constant criticism. Can also include psychological forms of abuse such as fear, intimidation and threats of violence.
  - Financial abuse includes using financial tools and money to maintain control.
- Domestic violence affects women, children, and men regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or class.
- 85% of victims of domestic violence are women (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003).
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime (CDC, 2010).
  - Women who are victims of domestic violence experienced multiple forms of violence where as male victims most often experienced physical violence only (CDC, 2010).
- About 10% of students nationwide report being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in one year (CDC, 2009).
- On average, 3 women are victims of domestic violence related homicide in America every year (NNEDV, 2012).

Domestic violence in Arizona

Every year the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) conducts a national census of domestic violence services. This survey reports domestic violence services that are utilized within a 24-hour period. The 2012 survey was conducted on September 12th and these are some of the findings from the survey:

- In one 24-hour period in 2012, 37 programs in Arizona served 1,487 victims of domestic violence. 1,104 of those victims were served in shelter or transitional housing programs; 383 were served in non-residential programs, like counseling, legal services, or children’s groups (NNEDV, 2012).
- In this same 24-hour period, domestic violence emergency hotlines in AZ answered 252 calls for help. That's more than 10 calls every hour (NNEDV, 2012).
- There were 152 unmet requests for services during this day. (NNEDV, 2012).
  - Cuts due to sequester have resulted in program and staff cuts which means fewer victims can be helped.
Programs are trying to do more with less: 42% of Arizona programs reported a lack of bed space or funding for motels, while 39% of programs reported not having enough funding for programs and services (NNEDV, 2012).

32 domestic violence programs across Arizona served a total of 8,916 victims in 2012. Nearly half of those served in shelters were children (Arizona Department of Economic Security, 2013). A breakdown by county:

- Cochise County served 411 victims
- Coconino County served 265 victims
- Gila County served 227 victims
- Graham/Greenlee Counties served 285 victims
- La Paz County served 98 victims
- Maricopa County served 5,317 victims
- Mohave County served 401 victims
- Navajo County served 359 victims
- Pima County served 525 victims
- Pinal County served 547 victims
- Santa Cruz served 50 victims
- Yavapai County served 231 victims
- Yuma County served 200 victims

In 2012, there were at least 139 domestic violence related homicides in Arizona. As of November 2013, there have been at least 115 domestic violence related homicides.
THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive control where one partner uses their power to control the other partner. Domestic violence can take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse. [DOJ, 2012]

Prevalence

1 IN 4 WOMEN & 1 IN 7 MEN
Have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime

THEREFORE
804,048 women & 453,689 men in Arizona will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. [CDC, 2010]

Demographics

Native American women experience domestic violence at rates 50% higher than other groups. [DOJ, 2004]

Lethality

In 2012, at least 139 people were killed in domestic violence related homicides in Arizona. [ACESDV, 2012]

Economic impact

The costs of intimate partner rape, physical assault, and stalking each year

$8.3 BILLION [CDC, 2003]

In one 24-hour period in 2012, 37 programs in Arizona served 1,487 victims of domestic violence. 1,104 of those victims were served in shelter or transitional housing programs; 383 were served in non-residential programs, like counseling, legal services, or children’s groups. [NNEDV, 2012]

Physical abuse includes but is not limited to, hitting, slapping, shoving, biting.

Sexual abuse is described as coercing or attempting to coerce sexual contact without consent.

Emotional abuse is an attempt to undermine an individual’s self-worth or self-esteem. This includes but is not limited to psychological forms of abuse such as fear, intimidation and threats of violence.

Financial abuse includes using financial tools and money to maintain control.

In Arizona, housing continues to be the most urgent need of survivors, with 142 requests for housing services unmet on a single day in 2012. The top four unmet request for services included emergency shelter, transitional housing, representation by attorney and legal advocacy. [NNEDV, 2012]
1,796 Victims Served in One Day
1,181 domestic violence victims (626 children and 555 adults) found refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing provided by local domestic violence programs.

615 adults and children received non-residential assistance and services, including counseling, legal advocacy, and children’s support groups.

This chart shows the percentage of programs that provided the following services on the Census Day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Provided by Local Programs:</th>
<th>Sept. 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Support or Advocacy</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Support or Advocacy</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court/Legal Accompaniment/Advocacy</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Support or Advocacy</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

269 Hotline Calls Answered
Domestic violence hotlines are a lifeline for victims in danger, providing support, information, safety planning, and resources. In the 24-hour survey period, local and state hotlines answered 269 calls, averaging more than 11 hotline calls every hour.

294 Educated in Prevention and Education Trainings
On the survey day, 294 individuals in communities across Arizona attended 20 training sessions provided by local domestic violence programs, gaining much needed information on domestic violence prevention and early intervention.

187 Unmet Requests for Services in One Day, of Which 76% (143) Were for Housing
Victims made more than 150 requests for services, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and nonresidential services, that could not be provided because programs did not have the resources to provide these services. The most frequently requested non-residential services that couldn’t be provided were housing, followed by legal representation and financial assistance.

Impact of Unmet Requests for Help
Domestic violence programs do not always know what happens when a survivor courageously calls a stranger to ask for a bed or other help and the services aren’t available; however 31% of programs report that victims return to their abuser, 14% report that victims become homeless, and 11% report that the families are end up living in their cars.

Cause of Unmet Requests for Help
- 26% reported reduced government funding.
- 11% reported not enough staff.
- 11% reported cuts from private funding sources.
- 9% reported reduced individual donations.

Across the Arizona 53 (8%) staff positions were eliminated in the past year and most of these positions were direct services, such as shelter or legal advocates, so there were fewer advocates to answer calls for help.

"On the Survey Day, we talked to a survivor who was raped by her abuser in front of his friends. He also stabbed her. She needed shelter, medical attention, and someone to talk to, all of which we helped provide."

— Advocate

2013 Domestic Violence Counts: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services
Who is calling the Hotline from AZ?

**CALLER TYPE DEFINITIONS:**
- **Victim/Survivor: IPV** (Intimate Partner Violence) – a victim or survivor of abuse from his/her partner or spouse
- **Friend/Family: IPV** (Intimate Partner Violence) – a friend or family member of a victim/survivor of IPV
- **Victim/Survivor: Non-IPV** – a victim or survivor of abuse by anyone else: parent, sibling, caretaker, etc.
- **Friend/Family: Non-IPV** – a friend or family member of a victim of any other type of abuse, such as child or elder abuse
- **Service Provider** – a caller from any agency, including other domestic violence agencies, which provides social services
- **Batterer** – a caller who identifies as abusive or who an Advocate believes to be a batterer
- **Other** – any caller about whom an Advocate is able to gather info, but who does not fit into an above category; this might include callers like law enforcement or medical professionals

**Victim Age**
- Under 18: 1%
- 18 - 24: 11%
- 25 - 35: 36%
- 36 - 45: 26%
- 46 - 54: 14%
- 55+: 12%

**Caller Ethnicity**
- Anglo: 54%
- Hispanic: 22%
- Other: 13%
- Multiracial, Native American, East, South, Multiracial, Asian, and Native American

**Caller Type**
- Victim/Survivor: IPV: 70%
- Family/Friend: IPV: 10%
- Other: 9%
- Family/Friend: Non-IPV: 4%
- Non-IPV: 1%
- Service Provider: 5%
- Batterer: 2%

**Hotline Call Volume**

In the first half of 2013, the National Domestic Violence Hotline documented **1,985 calls** from Arizona. The state ranks eighth in terms of Hotline call volume.

**From where are they calling?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tucson</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mesa</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Casa Grande</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Scottsdale</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Glendale</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chandler</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Flagstaff</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tempe</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kingman</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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What are victims experiencing?

Types of Abuse

96% Emotional/Verbal Abuse
74% Physical Abuse

*This represents the experiences disclosed by callers who are victim/survivors of intimate partner violence.

Additional Considerations in Victims' Experiences:
The Most Commonly Disclosed Special Factors

- Legal Issues: 48%
- Economic Abuse: 31%
- Child Abuse: 9%
- Immigration: 8%
- Spousal: 15%
- Male Victim: 7%
- Sexual: 8%
- Sexual Assault: 5%
- Pregnancy: 2%

Of those who disclosed Legal Issues, this is what they were seeking: protective orders (54%), custody/visitation (31%), divorce (24%), immigration assistance (7%), and other (23%).

How are victims' needs being met?

Most Commonly Requested Services:
On top of services provided by the Hotline (seen to the right), the external services below are also frequently requested by callers. Hotline Advocates refer callers to external providers to meet these needs.

Legal Representation
- 8%

This category indicates when a caller is seeking an on staff attorney who takes individual DV cases.

DV Advocacy 12%

This category includes non-residential services offered by a DV program, like: case management, advocacy, or crisis hotlines.

DV Support Groups 15%

This category encompasses group counseling provided by trained staff or therapists.

Individual Counseling 18%

Callers are often seeking counseling for victims provided by a therapist.

Legal Advocacy 17%

This category is marked when a caller is seeking protective/restraining order assistance, advocacy at court, or help with other legal agencies.

DV Shelter 47%

Though Advocates may sometimes offer homeless shelters and other community resources to certain callers, this number only represents victims who are seeking domestic violence related residential services.

Hotline Services

1,985 Hotline Calls Answered from AZ

1,959 Referrals to Service Providers

4,500 Local Providers across the Nation

1,279 Offers to Direct Connect
Hotline Advocate Offers to Directly Connect a Caller to a Provider

494 Referrals to Other Resources

Top 5 Resource Referrals in the First Half:
- AZ Statewide Bedline (Maricopa CO.)
- Womenslaw.org
- 211-United Way
- AZ Coalition Against D.V.
- Custody Preparation for Moms

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The Power and Control and Equality Wheels
These wheels were developed by Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) to use in connection with the DAIP batterers’ treatment program, “Power and Control: Tactics of Men Who Batter.” They show graphically how a system of power and control supports violence and how, alternatively, a system of equality supports non-violence. In the authorized programs, batterers’ group look closely at each of these issues and examine their own behaviors and underlying attitudes.
**Equality Wheel**

**Nonviolence**

- **Negotiation and Fairness**
  - Seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict
  - Accepting change
  - Being willing to compromise

- **Economic Partnership**
  - Making money decisions together
  - Ensuring both partners benefit from financial arrangements

- **Respect**
  - Listening to her non-judgmentally
  - Emotionally affirming and understanding
  - Valuing opinions

- **Trust and Support**
  - Supporting her goals in life
  - Respecting her right to her own feelings, friends, activities and opinions

- **Shared Responsibility**
  - Mutually agreeing on a fair distribution of work
  - Making family decisions together

- **Responsible Parenting**
  - Sharing parental responsibilities
  - Being a positive non-violent role model for the children

- **Honesty and Accountability**
  -Accepting responsibility for self
  - Acknowledging past use of violence
  - Admitting being wrong
  - Communicating openly and truthfully

**Domestic Abuse Intervention Project**
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55812
218-722-2780
SIN VIOLENCIA

NEGOCIACIÓN JUSTA

CONDUCTA NO AMENAZANTE
*Actuar y hablar de manera que ella se sienta segura y comoda al hacer sus cosas y al expresarse.

RESPETO

IGUALDAD

ECONOMÍA COMPARTIDA
*Tomar juntos las decisiones económicas. *Asegurar que los acuerdos económicos beneficien a los dos.

CONFIANZA Y APOYO
*Apoyarla en sus metas en la vida. *Respetar sus sentimientos, amigos(ás) actividades y opiniones.

RESPONSABILIDAD COMPARTIDA
*Llegar a un acuerdo para una justa distribución de las tareas de la casa. *Tomar juntos las decisiones familiares.

HONESTIDAD Y RESPONSABILIDAD

ASUMIR LA RESPONSABILIDAD PATerna
*Compartir las responsabilidades de la crianza. *Ser un modelo de conducta para sus hijo(ás), actuando positivamente y sin violencia.
This wheel demonstrates the ideal response of community faith leaders to domestic violence.

UNITED TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Adapted with permission from the "Power & Control and Equality Wheels," developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN.

Provided by:
Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
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Reflection on the Wheels

The process of reviewing biblical texts and historical quotations was a consuming one. The task was made easier by the use of the book, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* by Leonard Swidler, copyright 1979 by the Westminster Press.

The final product emerged as somewhat different than expected. Most biblical texts referring to women, directly or indirectly, are to be found on the wheel, “Women Created in God’s Image as Equal to Men.” There are specifically 73 total positive, as compared to 26 total negative, texts listed (there are, in addition, many ambivalent texts which were not included on either wheel). It is striking that, of the 73 positive texts, 50 are to be found in the Gospels and in Acts (as pened by the same evangelist as the book of Luke). In other words, 68% of the positive texts about women are to be found in the words and actions of Jesus, and in Jesus’ immediate legacy to the early Christian Church. By contrast, no references from the Gospels or the Book of Acts are found on the wheel entitled, “Power and Control of Women in Patriarchal Society”—instead, historical quotations of several of the influential Church fathers are easily placed in the outer ring, which corresponds to the “Physical and Sexual Violence” outer ring on the original “Power and Control” wheel.

What becomes apparent is that the weight of Christian scripture attests to the fact that women are created in the image of God, and Jesus reaffirmed the value of women as capable persons who should have the same options as men. However, very early in Christian history, something happened to change the Church’s move toward full inclusiveness. To answer why would divert from the intent of this booklet, which is to focus on churches’ response to victims of domestic violence. But it’s important to see these wheels as symbols of what the patriarchal system has meant to women. Although there are several significant quotations encircling the “Women Created in God’s image…” wheel, none carry the same weight as those prescriptions spoken by the Church “fathers,” who in many cases systematized Christian theology. This is the heritage received by all women. Because of this heritage, many centuries passed before women were allowed to own property; to vote; to decide whether, or whom to marry; and to speak the Word of God. Because of this heritage, many centuries passed before women were no longer subject to the chastising of their husbands by any means, including domestic violence.
Spiritual Abuse

by David Henke

Founding Date: Spiritual abuse is as old as false religion itself. While the practice is old, the term "spiritual abuse" may have been coined first by Jeff VanVonderen.

Organizational Structure: Can occur under virtually any organizational structure, but "top down" hierarchical structures are especially well suited to systemic spiritual abuse.

DEFINED

Spiritual abuse is the misuse of a position of power, leadership, or influence to further the selfish interests of someone other than the individual who needs help. Sometimes abuse arises out of a doctrinal position. At other times it occurs because of legitimate personal needs of a leader that are being met by illegitimate means. Spiritually abusive religious systems are sometimes described as legalistic, mind controlling, religiously addictive, and authoritarian.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

#1) Authoritarian

The most distinctive characteristic of a spiritually abusive religious system, or leader, is the over-emphasis on authority. Because a group claims to have been established by God Himself the leaders in this system claim the right to command their followers.

This authority supposedly comes from the position they occupy. In Matthew 23:1-2 Jesus said the Scribes and Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat," a position of spiritual authority. Many names are used but in the abusive system this is a position of power, not moral authority. The assumption is that God operates among His people through a hierarchy, or "chain of command." In this abusive system unconditional submission is often called a "covering," or "umbrella of protection" which will provide some spiritual blessing to those who fully submit. Followers may be told that God will bless their submission even if the leadership is wrong. It is not their place to judge or correct the leadership - God will see to that.

#2) Image Conscious

The abusive religious system is scrupulous to maintain an image of righteousness. The organization's history is often misrepresented in the effort to demonstrate the organization's special relationship to God. The mistaken judgements and character flaws of its leaders are denied or covered up in order to validate their authority. Impossibly high legalistic standards of thought and behavior may be imposed on the members. Their failure to live up to these standards is a constant reminder of the follower's inferiority to his leaders, and the necessity of submission to them. Abusive religion is, at heart, legalism.
Abusive religion is also paranoid. Because the truth about the abusive religious system would be quickly rejected if recognized, outsiders are shown only a positive image of the group. This is rationalized by assuming that the religion would not be understood by “worldly” people; therefore they have no right to know. This attitude leads to members being secretive about some doctrines and the inner policies and procedures of the group. Leaders, especially, will keep secrets from their members. This secrecy is rooted in a basic distrust of others because the belief system is false and can not stand scrutiny.

#3) Suppresses Criticism

Because the religious system is not based on the truth it cannot allow questions, dissent, or open discussions about issues. The person who dissents becomes the problem rather than the issue he raised. The truth about any issue is settled and handed down from the top of the hierarchy. Questioning anything is considered a challenge to authority. Thinking for oneself is suppressed by pointing out that it leads to doubts. This is portrayed as disbelief in God and His anointed leaders. Thus the follower controls his own thoughts by fear of doubting God.

#4) Perfectionistic

A most natural assumption is that a person does not get something for nothing. Apart from the express declarations of salvation by grace through faith God has given in the scriptures, it would be natural to think that one must earn salvation, or at least work to keep it. Thus, in abusive religions all blessings come through performance of spiritual requirements. Failure is strongly condemned so there is only one alternative, perfection. So long as he thinks he is succeeding in his observation of the rules, the follower typically exhibits pride, elitism, and arrogance. However, when reality and failure eventually set in, the result is the person experiences spiritual burnout, or even shipwreck of his faith. Those who fail in their efforts are labeled as apostates, weak, or some other such term so that they can be discarded by the system.

#5) Unbalanced

Abusive religions must distinguish themselves from all other religions so they can claim to be distinctive and therefore special to God. This is usually done by majoring on minor issues such as prophecy, carrying biblical law to extremes, or using strange methods of biblical interpretation. The imbalanced spiritual hobby-horse thus produced represents unique knowledge or practices which seem to validate the group’s claim to special status with God.

BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Examples of spiritual abuse are found throughout the Bible. God describes (and condemns) the "shepherds of Israel" who feed themselves rather than the flock, who do not heal those who are hurting, or seek to bring back those who were driven away but rather discard them, ruling with force and cruelty (Ezekiel 34:1-10). Jesus reacted with anger against the thievery of the money changers in the Temple as they misused God’s people for selfish reasons (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47; John 2:13-16). He was angry at those more concerned with rules and regulations than with human suffering (Mark 3:1-5). In Matthew 23, Jesus describes the abusive spiritual leader in great detail. In John 9 the Pharisees "cast out" the man born blind
simply because the truth he told about his healing exposed their own corruption. In Acts 7:51-56, Stephen called the Jewish leaders to account over their spiritual abuse. His testimony of Christ vindicated Jesus, whom they had abused, and condemned them. The legalistic Jews were so angry they stoned Stephen to death. In Galatians Paul addressed a performance based Christianity which leads to the abuse of legalism. There are many more such examples.

As God in human flesh, Jesus had legitimate spiritual authority. But He did not exercise it to gain power for Himself, or to abuse and control others with rules and regulations. He said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). The Greek word for "heavy laden" is phortizo which means here "to overburden with ceremony (or spiritual anxiety)" (Strong's Concordance #5412). Jesus gave a balanced perspective on positional authority when he said, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). He gave another key to discernment when He taught, "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory..." (John 7:18a).

Jesus was not "image conscious." He was willing to associate with wine drinkers, cheating tax collectors and even prostitutes. He accused the legalistic Pharisees of "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9) and likened their showy, hypocritical outward righteousness to "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).

Neither was He paranoid. His ministry was conspicuously open to the public. When He was on trial (John 18) He was asked about His teachings and His reply was, "Why askest thou me?" Jesus pointed out that He always taught in public, and never in secret, so why not ask His disciples. He had nothing to hide.

Jesus did not fear to criticize the religious leaders or their faulty doctrines (e.g. Matthew 15:1-9; 23:1-39, etc.). And when confronted with criticism or with treacherous questions designed to discredit Him, His response was never to simply demand silence or only positive recognition from His accusers. Rather, He gave answers - scriptural and reasonable answers - to their objections (e.g. Luke 7:36-47; Matthew 19:3-9).

Jesus upheld the high standard of the Law, yet He clearly placed the legitimate needs of people before any rules or regulations (Matthew 12:1-13; Mark 2:23-3:5). The scriptures make it clear that no one will cease to sin in this life (Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8). Jesus made it plain, however, that one can know in this life that one has eternal life (John 5:24; 6:37-40), a theme developed by Paul throughout his epistles, and by John (1 John 5:10-13).

The Pharisees, quintessential spiritually abusive leaders, were quite unbalanced in their perception of what mattered most to God. Jesus said they, "...pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, - judgment, mercy, and faith...." (Matthew 23:23).
EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Spiritual abuse has a devastating effect on people. A very high level of trust is often placed in spiritual leaders. It is, and ought to be, expected that the trust will be honored and guarded. When such trust is violated the wound is very deep. Sometimes the wound is so deep that the wounded person cannot trust even a legitimate spiritual authority again.

An analogous situation exists with the victims of incest. The emotional and psychological symptoms exhibited by victims of incest parallel those of spiritual abuse to a remarkable degree. The main symptom is the inability to relate normally to people who represent the source of their emotional injury.

Besides an unhealthy fear of, and disillusionment with, spiritual authorities, the spiritually abused person may find it difficult to trust even God. "How could (or why did) He let this happen to me?" Anger is also deeply felt. Anger itself is not always wrong - God Himself expresses anger at such spiritual abuse (see Biblical Response, above). However, even legitimate anger, if not properly channeled and dealt with, can degenerate into bitterness and cynicism toward everything spiritual.

RECOVERY FROM SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Healthy recovery from spiritual abuse must begin with understanding what has happened and how. A victim usually thinks he is the only one experiencing these problems. Just being able to give a name to the problem is important. There are many books on the subject (see Resources, below) that will be helpful in learning about spiritual abuse and recovery.

Afterward the abused person must learn the true nature of God's grace, love and forgiveness. This is the foundation for being able to eventually forgive the abuser. Being able to share the experience and what has been learned so as to minister to someone else's need is also very important. This could be done in a support group made up of people with a similar experience who can share the healing love of Christ.

Finally, a lot of time must be allowed for full recovery.

RESOURCES


*Faith That Hurts, Faith That Heals*, by Stephen Arterburn, and Jack Felton, Thomas Nelson Publishers. Very thorough treatment, analyzes beliefs that make harmful faith, religious addiction, etc. as well as treatment and recovery, and the characteristics of healthy faith. 320 pages-$11.
*Breaking Free*, by David R. Miller, Baker Book House. Speaking first-hand from the experiences of his own family, Miller penetrates virtually every nuance of legalism and its insidious effects on individual and family life. 176 pages-$10.$


*Churches That Abuse*, by Ronald Enroth, Zondervan. Providing real-life examples throughout, Enroth probes every corner of the abusive church. He also provides help to find the way out, and back to God's healing. 253 pages, endnotes-$6.$
What about the Children?

by Rev. Dr. Aleese Moore-Orbih

in the sweet moment that I witness a happy, smiling face on a child, all is right with the world. Her happiness becomes my happiness. The smile on her face produces a smile on my face. The brightness in her eyes activates joy in my heart and hope in my soul. What is it about children that their sweet essence can overpower us? How has God made them both extremely valuable and dangerously vulnerable? How is it that without any training or prompting they teach us unconditional love, compassion, humility, trust, independence and dependence? And how is it that throughout history these bearers of grace have been the objects of disrespect, neglect, exploitation and harm?

Researchers estimate that 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year. “Exposure to domestic violence can include watching or hearing the violent events, direct involvement (for example, trying to intervene or calling the police), or experiencing the aftermath (for example, seeing bruises or observing maternal depression).” In 1996, the National Incidence Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect estimated that approximately 2.8 million American children were maltreated in that year. In 1999, studies found that co-occurrence, exposure to domestic violence and maltreatment occur 30–60% of the time with a median of a 40% overlap. Studies suggest that in 30% to 60% of all families where women are being beaten, their children are also the victims of physical and/or sexual abuse by the same perpetrator. A small but growing body of research also suggests that children who witness domestic violence, but are not physically abused, may suffer social and mental health problems as a result.” Clearly, these statistics reflect the misuse of power, and my Christian faith tradition is very clear about the misuse of power and the hope of living in right relationship with God, includes honoring the least among us.

Jesus knew and understood the social and cultural oppression as well as the abuse into which children are often born. Jesus said to His disciples: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes a humble place—becoming like this child—is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3–4). I understand those words to mean that when you are in the presence of a child, you can see what it’s like to be a part of God’s Kingdom. This part of human life called “children” is special to God, so special that Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” Jesus makes quite plain His love for children, when He continues, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:5-6). Jesus clearly communicates that His liberating message and ministry is to those who are vulnerable to the misuse of power,
especially children. Although adults may think that children are their possessions—even property—Jesus makes it clear that we adults have Him to answer to for the safety and welfare of the least of these.

Children depend on their parents and guardians to provide for and protect them. When protection and provision are not available in the home, children should be able to find safety and welfare in abundance in God’s people and places of worship. Children should also have access to justice. As Marie Fortune has said on many occasions, “When harm is done by one person to another the church ought to be about justice making.” The church’s mission to continue the liberating ministry of Jesus is effectively demonstrated when we invite and receive children into a community of love, safety and justice.

Our faith communities can be sanctuaries for safety, healing and empowerment for all victims of domestic violence regardless of age. Children need the same type of support and advocacy that adult victims need:

- To be heard
- To be believed
- To be safe
- To be protected
- To be loved
- To be supported
- To have an advocate
- To have a safe, caring, nurturing adult friend or family member
- To know that the violence is not their fault
- To know there is hope
- To know God is present: God sees, God loves, God cares and God is acting on their behalf.

Early on in the battered women’s movement Joy Bussert wrote, “We need […] to begin articulating a faith that will provide women with resources for strength rather than resources for endurance. We must articulate a theology of empowerment rather than a theology of passive endurance.” The same is true for children who witness or are the victims of domestic violence. Just as we have insisted “wives submit to your husbands” is not meant to be a tool to oppress and abuse women, the virtue of obedience and honor can no longer be used to keep children silent and secret about the abuse in their homes. Children need a deeper theology and youth ministry experience than one that only teaches them not to “sin.” Children also need to be taught how to protect themselves from those that would sin against them.

Certainly our faith communities alone cannot help 10 million children any more than they can help the hundreds of thousands of women who are battered every year. This is why we at FaithTrust Institute are committed to training both religious leaders and community advocates on the religious issues of abuse. An effective and sustainable response to children exposed to
domestic violence can only happen with community collaboration. Just as most domestic violence programs and shelters began at the grass roots level, our continued response requires all faith communities, faith-based and secular advocacy programs, and various other safe family and children's community programs must work together to succeed. Working together we can create prevention and intervention strategies to respond to children who are exposed to domestic violence.

My prayer as I join FaithTrust Institute is that through our efforts with our many partners, the happy, healthy faces of children will increase, and that we all will continue to say “Yes” to the sacred work that is before us. May we continue to work on children’s behalf, strengthened in our faith traditions and raised up by one another.

Responding to Domestic Violence
What the Religious Community Can Do

Religious communities provide a safe haven for women and families in need. In addition, they exhort society to share compassion and comfort with those afflicted by the tragedy of domestic violence. Leaders of the religious community have identified actions to create a unified response to violence against women.

- **Become a Safe Place.** Make your church, temple, mosque or synagogue a safe place where victims of domestic violence can come for help. Display brochures and posters which include the telephone number of the domestic violence and sexual assault programs in your area. Publicize the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233), 800-787-3224 (TDD).

- **Educate the Congregation.** Provide ways for members of the congregation to learn as much as they can about domestic and sexual violence. Routinely include information in monthly newsletters, on bulletin boards, and in marriage preparation classes. Sponsor educational seminars on violence against women in your congregation.

- **Speak Out.** Speak out about domestic violence and sexual assault from the pulpit. As a faith leader, you can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs.

- **Lead by Example.** Volunteer to serve on the board of directors at the local domestic violence/sexual assault program or attend a training to become a crisis volunteer.

- **Offer Space.** Offer meeting space for educational seminars or weekly support groups or serve as a supervised visitation site when parents need to safely visit their children.

- **Partner with Existing Resources.** Include your local domestic violence or sexual assault program in donations and community service projects. Adopt a shelter for which your church, temple, mosque or synagogue provides material support, or provide similar support to families as they rebuild their lives following a shelter stay.

- **Prepare to Be a Resource.** Do the theological and scriptural homework necessary to better understand and respond to family violence and receive training from professionals in the fields of sexual and domestic violence.

- **Intervene.** If you suspect violence is occurring in a relationship, speak to each member of the couple separately. Help the victim plan for safety. Let both individuals know of the community resources available to assist them. Do not attempt couples counseling.
- **Support Professional Training.** Encourage and support training and education for clergy and lay leaders, hospital chaplains, and seminary students to increase awareness about sexual and domestic violence.

- **Address Internal Issues.** Encourage continued efforts by religious institutions to address allegations of abuse by religious leaders to insure that religious leaders are a safe resource for victims and their children.

*Adapted in part from the Nebraska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition and FaithTrust Institute. Used with permission.*
Sermon on Domestic Violence

by Rabbi Cindy G. Enger, Former Director of the Jewish Program

Picture for a moment summer nights in Jerusalem. We can hear the wind whistling through the roads and over the hills. Imagine the landscape in a time before buildings and try to envision the temporary structures that sheltered our ancestors, like Abraham and Sarah, as they journeyed in stages throughout the land. We can hear the wind whistling, not from an apartment or a cave, but from a tent in an encampment high up on a hill. What was it like? What was life like—in the hills, in the tents—for those people, for our people, back then?

"Ma tovah alecha Yaakov, mishk'notecha Yisrael," we read from sefer bamidbar, the book of Numbers in the Torah. (Num. 24:5). "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!" called out Bilaam, the Midianite prophet, with words of blessing for the Israelite people, instead of the curse that King Balak requested of him. Like Bilaam, the outsider who looked upon the Israelite encampment of tents, so, too, do we declare "Ma tovah," each day as we begin our morning liturgy—"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!"

In so many ways, our tents, the structures of our people today, are extraordinarily beautiful. Even after centuries of oppression and wandering, after ghettos and shtetls and death camps, with freedoms and abundance never experienced before, we gather together in community. We create synagogues in which we study and share our lives with one another. We continue to commit ourselves to reforming our tradition, to finding new meanings in our texts and to renewing our lives and the life of our people.

But we are not outsiders like Bilaam looking in from a distance. We dwell in the inside; ours is a different view. Yes, we want only to look upon our families and our communities and call out, "Ma tovah, "How beautiful!" But all is not so beautiful inside our tents. We don't like to talk about what is ugly and painful. We feel shame in revealing our less than perfect family lives. We don't want the outside world to know. We don't want each other to know. So we remain silent. But we are hurting, right here, in our midst. Others inflict deep pain upon those they claim to love. Some of us know the secrets that dwell with us in our homes. Some of us know that "Ma tovah," is not yet quite true.

Domestic violence is abuse which occurs within an intimate relationship. The partners might be married or unmarried. Statistics show us that it is most likely that the abuser will be male and the victim female. Yet domestic violence can also occur in same-gender relationships. Domestic violence encompasses a pattern of control and behavior exercised by one person over another.
The abuse can be physical, sexual, verbal or emotional. Abuse can come in the form of the ongoing use of demeaning words like “you’re stupid,” or ugly, or crazy. It can be total access to and control over bank accounts and finances. It can be threats to injure children or pets. It can be monitoring and limiting friendships, going out, talking on the phone. Domestic violence is not about having a bad temper or being out of control. It is about power and control—one person exerting power and control over an intimate partner. Domestic violence impacts on the entire family, injuring also the children who witness abuse by hearing it or seeing it.

We Jews are not immune to the problem of domestic violence. Contrary to our myths, we never have been. Domestic violence occurs in Jewish families at the same rate as in the general population. Yet Jewish women tend to stay in abusive relationships longer than non-Jewish women. Shalom bayit, the concept of “peace in the home,” is not solely a woman’s responsibility, nor should it be used as a weapon to keep her in an abusive relationship.

To hasten a time of true shalom bayit, we need to address the problem of domestic violence in our community, in our tents. Our silence has not saved us yet. We are still hurting. Our silence will not help us now. But with awareness and with courage we can help to save lives and bring about justice and healing. Our commitment to end domestic violence will help make true “Ma tovu.” The challenge is not impossible. There is much we can do.

First, we can assist victims of domestic violence establish their safety. The Torah tells us that in preparing to offer words of blessing to Israel, Bilaam turned his face toward the wilderness. As he lifted his eyes and saw Israel dwelling tribe by tribe, the spirit of God came upon him. (Num. 24:1-2). We, too, receive blessings when we gather together in the safety of community. Yet, in order to assist victims of domestic violence establish safety, as a community we must establish ourself as safe. We do this by learning about domestic violence, offering educational programming and developing awareness about our community’s resources. We do this by developing relationships with local shelters and advocates so we can make appropriate referrals. We do this by providing Shabbat candles and other religious materials to shelters for their Jewish residents. We do this when we listen to a woman and believe her when she says she is being abused. We do this when we speak with kindness and respect for one another, when we refuse to tolerate demeaning speech or behavior in our midst. We do this when we speak out as a community against abuse.

Assisting victims of domestic violence to establish their safety, however, is not enough to make our communities safe and healthy spaces. While safety for victims must remain our primary concern, as a community we also must hold abusers accountable for their behavior. This requires us to take a stand, to remember that we cannot watch on as neutral bystanders, that we must not stand by idly and watch our neighbor bleed. (Lev. 19:16). “Tzedek, tzedek, tirado,” the Torah implores us to actively pursue justice. (Deut. 16:20). In the context of domestic violence, justice requires that abusers be held accountable for their actions and that we participate in the process of accountability.
Our tradition recognizes situations in which, for all sorts of reasons, must a person separate himself from the community, temporarily dwelling hutz l’mahaneh, “outside the camp.” For example, in the book of Leviticus, we read in great detail of the process of examination and treatment of a wide variety of skin ailments. The priest would examine a patient and make a diagnosis, not for the purpose of medical treatment, but to distinguish tzara’at, which we often translate as leprosy, from all other skin ailments.

In no way should we suggest that perpetrating abuse on an intimate partner is analogous or even comparable to a skin ailment. Nor should we isolate or ostracize individuals with bodily ailments. But tzara’at, for our ancestors, was not simply a skin ailment or leprosy; it may not have been leprosy at all. Rather, our tradition recognizes tzara’at as a spiritual affliction, perhaps as a punishment for a breach of ethics. Recognizing that such a condition threatened the welfare of the larger community, the person afflicted with tzara’at needed to remain hutz l’mahaneh, “outside the camp,” for as long as he was so afflicted. We read in the Torah, “Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.” (Lev. 13:46).

Perpetrating violence on an intimate partner is a type of tzara’at, an affliction with a spiritual dimension that threatens the welfare of the entire community. We act with commitment to the health of our community when we hold abusers accountable. We act in accordance with our tradition’s call to pursue justice when we declare that abusers cannot remain in our midst and must dwell outside the camp for as long as their behavior patterns remain untreated. Experience shows us that the only hope that an abuser will change is that he admit to the problem and engage in long-term, specialized treatment for batterers. If an abuser has been arrested, we can encourage the legal system to follow through with prosecution and to hold him accountable. We can refuse to honor an abuser with aliyyot, being called to the Torah, or with other honors and positions of synagogue leadership.

In addressing the problem of domestic violence, we cannot focus solely on the victims. Those who abuse are also among us, and we must not minimize the damage they cause, no matter how wealthy or influential or charming they may be.

And yet, helping to establish safety for victims and participating in the pursuit of justice by holding abusers accountable is not enough. As a people, in our liturgy and in our holy day observances, in our beliefs and in our commitments, the prayer for peace, shalom, is always present and always remains our ultimate goal. Peace will come through acts of tikun, repair, that return us to wholeness, which in Hebrew is shalem. Here, too, our task is to bring about the return to wholeness.

Domestic violence rips at the fabric of the family. Abuse is a traumatic tear to our tents which cannot be undone. As with any loss, there is no going back to “how things were before.” Yet healing is possible, even a restored sense of wholeness.
Our tradition teaches that the gates of repentance are always open. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:12). With courage, commitment and appropriate treatment, an abuser may be able to change his behavior. Yet true repentance is a process and involves not only regret over the past but deep and lasting changes in psyche as well as behavior. Indeed, as Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik reminds us, real repentance is an act of self-creation.⁴ Real repentance is so complete that a new person emerges from this process of transformation.

Our society, however, does not value process or the reality that certain matters require time. In our emotional lives, “we expect to be healed without acknowledging the rupture. We expect to arrive at our destination with no journey. But the process of healing requires a journey for which there is no shortcut.”⁵ As a community, we fail both victims and abusers when we encourage premature requests or grants of forgiveness.

In fact, the journey of healing the wounds and losses of domestic violence may not result in reconciliation. If the marriage or partnership is going to be dissolved, then, as a community, we can assist those involved in mourning their losses. As a community, we gather together to rejoice with bride and groom. We consider it our sacred obligation to bury the dead and comfort the bereaved. So, too, it is our duty to create and participate in rituals and observances connected with endings of relationships and losses which result from domestic violence. Through our comforting presence, our rituals and acts of remembrance, we facilitate the process of mourning. It is this which allows for healing and wholeness.

In sefer Bamidbar, the book of Numbers in the Torah, we read that Bilaam, the Midianite prophet, looked upon the Israelite encampment of tents and called out, “Ma tovu cha'lecha Yaa'cov, mishk'notecha Yisrael.” “How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!” (Num. 24:5). Today, our tents are torn. But the fabric is still beautiful.

The fabric of our tents is those teachings and values that instruct us to create spaces of safety. The fabric of our tents are our ethics which demand that we pursue justice. The fabric of our tents are our liturgies and holy days which call upon us to heal and create wholeness in our world.

The fabric of our tents cries out to be repaired. It is time for us to address the problem of domestic violence. It is time for us to make true “Ma Tovu.” For the welfare of our community, I pray that we commit ourselves to do so.

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Samples for Congregational Use: Sermon

This story sermon was based on a lectionary text, *Luke 18: 9-14*. It was subsequently preached at a church using the Common Lectionary and at a church where clergy choose their own texts. It is an example of a sermon which is not explicitly about domestic violence, but which educated obliquely while addressing a Christian theme.

One gray, November day, toward evening, Sharon locked up the church office. She was anticipating doing some early Christmas shopping at the mall, where they were having a number of sales. She locked both doors to the outside, and walked quickly to the sanctuary, where someone had left the lights on. She was about to flip off the sanctuary lights just outside the door, when she happened to glance in and notice a person sitting in one of the pews near the front.

Probably one of those homeless people, she thought. That's what came from being an inner-city church and leaving the doors open most of the time. You just never knew what kind of person would wander in off the street! Well, she thought, it's time for this one to find another place to go - the rescue mission or a soup kitchen, or wherever such people go at this time of day. She opened the door and walked in, choosing to walk, not down the carpeted center aisle, but down a side aisle where her heels made brisk "click, click" sound on the bare linoleum. As she drew even with the pew where the person was sitting, it became obvious that it was not a he, but a she. She was Allie Hansen, one of the less active members of the congregation, verging on the "inactive."

"Excuse me," said Sharon, "I'm about to close up. You'll have to leave."

Allie brought her eyes very slowly to Sharon's face. Her thoughts seemed to come from an even greater distance away.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said, "but could I have just a few more minutes?"

And then she said what seemed to Sharon to be very strange thing. With a wry smile, she asked, "This place is called a sanctuary isn't it?"

Allie then seemed to grow quickly absorbed in her own thoughts again, so Sharon didn't answer what was obviously a rhetorical question. Sharon walked back to the rear of the sanctuary and sat in one of the last pews.

Struggling with her impatience, Sharon thought of what she knew about Allie. There were not many impressions, because Allie's personality had always seemed to Sharon to be pretty subdued. She had brought her kids (a boy and a girl) to Sunday School once or twice. The girl was so quiet, she seemed to melt into the background. The boy, though, had been asked to leave because he was physically combative with the other kids. That
was the end of Sunday School for both of them.

Allie had come to circle meetings occasionally, but she always came late and left early, and seemed nervous the whole time she was there—not of the other women but of the time. She kept looking at her watch. Sharon remembered that one of the pastors had tried to stop by once for a short visit, but Allie had met him at the door distractedly, saying she couldn’t invite him in because her husband was due home from work soon.

Then Sharon remembered the rumor—that Allie was being abused by her Husband. She contemplated that for a minute. Allie seemed mousy enough to allow herself to be pushed around. And it looked like she was training her little girl to be just the same way. Sharon sighed with exasperation. Wasn’t that always the way it was? Now, if she were abused just once, she would never stand for any more. She would be out the door, bag in hand—“Adios, jerk!” she could imagine saying. No amount of sweet talking could convince her to do otherwise! And if she didn’t have family or friends to help her, well, she would just do in on her own. And thanks to her work skills and God-given strength and determination, she knew she could!

(Pause)

Now Allie had no idea of Sharon’s thoughts about her. Her own thoughts had been in turmoil for the past half hour.

She knew she would be expected home soon. She had moved quickly at the grocery store just so she could have a few minutes to sit here in God’s presence and try to calm her mind.

Last night had been a bad night. The dinner was not as Jack had wanted it, so he had thrown in on the floor and then slapped her around for a while. The kids had disappeared—they’d probably gone to their rooms—she had heard loud music, which meant that they were trying very hard to tune out what was going on.

For the thousandth time, she regretted marrying Jack right out of high school before she could get her degree. He had been so romantic—love letters everyday, caring enough about her that he bought her beautiful clothes to wear (and then told her when to wear them! she thought ruefully). She married him in a blaze of romance, and it was mostly wonderful until she became pregnant with Bobby. Then Jack went crazy (there was no other word for it)—accusing her of seeing other men, pushing her around—once she nearly lost the baby. His need to maintain control over her at all costs became horribly apparent. Bringing herself
by to the present, she asked herself, “Why did I stay with him then?” but
of course, she knew the answer. She had no work skills or experience, a
tiny baby to care for – and the change had happened so quickly, it was
hardly believable. She knew her mother had trouble believing it – her
early responses had been unsupportive and blaming – telling her to forgive
him, to try harder to pleas him and to put him first. “But, God – isn’t that
idolatry? Putting Jack before you?” she wondered. Thinking again about
her present situation, she felt how hopeless it was. She could not jeop-
dardize the safety of family and friends by taking the kids and going to
live with one of them. And she couldn’t even chance going to the local
shelter – because Jack was a police officer. He knew the location, even
though the public did not. Allie chuckled without humor. Jack, as a police
officer, had sworn to “Serve and Protect” the public. If his fellow officers
only knew!

As was so often the case, Allie’s pondering brought her no solutions. But
It did bring her a sense of certainty that Jack was trying to control her
actions, and ever her thoughts, of nearly every waking moment. “God I
know I was made in you image,” she prayed. “And I know my body is the
temple of the Holy Spirit.”

She rubbed her eyes with weariness and painful selfknowledge. As she
did so, her left eye ached where it had been blackened a week or so ago.
She found herself praying silently: “Please renew my energy so that I
might have the imagination to see, and pursue, those possibilities that will
bring an end to this sinful situation. And although I realize that the sin is
Jack’s, I know that I am also a fallible human being. Please forgive my
Despair and help me to choose actions that will bring healing and peace. I
ask all this in Jesus’ name, who died for my sins. Amen.”

Allie turned to see Sharon regarding her curiously from the end of the
pew. She smiled at Sharon, feeling some of her burden lift. Then she left
the pew, walked down the aisle and out the back door. Sharon, wondering
what Allie could find to smile about, locked up in a hurry behind her.
Glancing at her watch, she sighed. Only another hour until the stores
closed! She climbed in her car, started it and sped off while Allie was still
fishing in her purse for her car keys. Allie’s hand closed on a piece of
paper. She drew it out and looked at it in the fading dusk. It was a song her
daughter had learned one of the few times she had attended Sunday
School, that she had illustrated with love. Allie had not really looked at the
words when she had first glanced at it distractedly and put it in her purse.
She read them now.
God is for Me
Though I am Little
God is for Me
Though I am Young*
God is for Me
Though I am Lazy
Or Mischievous
Or Glad
Or Glum
Think of it
Can you imagine
Think of it
God is for Me
Think of it
Can you imagine
God loves even You and Me!

Allie drove home with a smile.

(Pause)

The issues that face us in the text are pride and humility. Let’s look at them more closely. If you are not conscious of your sinful nature, you may be full of pride. Now, pride can be a tough thing to get past, because you feel so darned self-sufficient and good about yourself. You may feel that you don’t really have a need for other people, or even, sometimes, for God! You may be happy in your life; you may feel that you are extremely well-equipped to meet the challenges of life. You may, like the Pharisee, look around you and say, “I thank you, God, that I am not being abused. Or, thank you that I was born a white person. Or thank you that I am American, or that I have enough money to feed and clothe my family, or that my children turned out all right (a reflection on the way I raised them!), or thank you that I am not going to die of AIDS tomorrow.”

This may become a variation on “count you blessings,” which may be a wonderful thing to do generally, but when we use other people’s misfortune to bolster our own ego, we look very much like the Pharisee. (Pause) How many Pharisees are here today? (Raise hand.)

And then there’s the tax collector. A man who deserves punishment, or at the very least, to be shunned because of his greed and dishonesty. He remembers every time he extracted a few pennies more than what was due, every time he caused a person to despair because of his lack of sympathy. These sins weigh heavily on the his mind; he can’t pretend before God to be blameless.

He is in one of the times of his life when he knows his absolute need
for God. (Pause) How many tax collectors are here today? (Raise hand.)

Do you feel more like the tax collector or the Pharisee today? Are you conscious of your need for God, like Allie, or are you more like Sharon?

It doesn’t matter which you choose. Jesus speaks a work of judgment and promise to those who feel both ways. To those who are not currently conscious of their need for God, he promises, “You will be!” And to those who are too conscious of their failings, Jesus promises, “You will be Exalted.” To be exalted can have two meanings: To be made important, or High in the scheme of things. Or literally, “Lifted up.” Like Jesus on the cross.

We are promised that if we believe in the Jesus who humbled himself, taking on our sins, so that he was exalted on the cross, we will be exalted too. But not to joy and glory first of all. First we will be exalted on our own crosses, finding there the depth as well as the height of the exaltation - seeing our true need for Jesus Christ.

And so, both ways are difficult.

If you exalt yourself, you will come face to face with a great stumbling block- pride. Yet if you humble yourself, you will come face to face with the greatest

stumbling block of all – the cross. Jesus Christ’s – and your own.

God’s promise to you today is this:

“I will help you clear the stumbling blocks of sin and unbelief, which keep reappearing just when you think they’re gone for good.

And I will be your faithful companion every remaining step of the way; whether or not you are aware of me, I am here beside you. Goading you to notice your pride and lack of love. Carrying your sin-wracked should all the way to the cross.”

(Pause)

“Think of it – can you imagine? God loves even you and me!”

Amen.

*Word altered (original word: “dumb”)

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Culture and Religion Are Integral to Healing Approaches and Practices

by Adelita M. Medina, Former Director, Alianza

For nearly 10 years, the National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza) has created important inroads and made significant contributions that are changing how gender-based violence is addressed, not only in Latino communities, but in the domestic violence field in general. We are developing our own research, programs, training materials, and healing approaches.

From the beginning, we have recognized that in order to be effective in ending violence and creating families and relationships that are safe, healthy, and nurturing, we have to develop “truly transforming structured methods and models that reflect who we are, and that are respectful of our traditions, our cultures, and our diversity.”

Alianza is a continually growing “network” of Latina and Latino advocates, community activists, practitioners, researchers, and survivors of domestic violence, all working together to fulfill our mission which is “to promote understanding, sustain dialogue, and generate solutions that will move toward the elimination of domestic violence in Latino communities—with an understanding of the sacredness of all relationships and communities.”

Because of the magnitude of the problem and its far-reaching effects on our families and communities, we recognize the need to involve multiple sectors of our population in our efforts to fulfill this mission. Everyone from family and friends, to basic service providers, schools, courts, hospitals and religious institutions, has a necessary role to play.

Over the years, we have looked to identify both the negative and positive elements of our culture, our traditions and our beliefs and the impact these have had on either helping or hindering the work of service providers and on the healing of women, men, and children affected by violence. We have found that Latino cultures, as do other cultures, contain values, beliefs, and expectations that can be used to justify, excuse, and even encourage domestic violence. At the same time, we have identified Latino cultural traditions and values that support and celebrate respectful and healthy relationships and that can be integrated into asset-based prevention and intervention efforts.

From our very first national forum, the National Symposium on La Violencia Domestica: An Emerging Dialogue Among Latinos, which took place in 1997, participants recognized the important role that spiritual or religious beliefs play in the lives of many Latinas/os. Participants at succeeding Alianza forums have reaffirmed the primacy of spirituality in their lives and its
importance in healing practitioners, survivors, and batterers. They have cautioned about the negative influence that some religious leaders have had on perpetuating abusive relationships, but also cited examples of the wonderful healing work that some clergy have carried out in their communities and parishes.

Just as key events in the life cycles of families—birth, graduations, marriage, death—are celebrated by religious/spiritual rites or ceremonies, so too are Alianza’s gatherings. From its Board of Director meetings to its national conferences, Alianza’s gatherings include ceremonies which help create a sacred and safe working space where participants can openly share their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. We set up an altar and set aside time to remember our loved ones, ancestors, and people we work with, and to ask for guidance and strength to continue our efforts.

Several of Alianza’s founders and Board Members also work in organizations that incorporate aspects of spirituality and traditional healing practices in their programming and services for both survivors and batterers.

Regardless of the religious or spiritual persuasions of the survivors they work with, Alianza believes that service providers need to take their faith into consideration when trying to help them. Often under trying and desperate circumstances, faith serves as an important anchor.

Domestic violence advocates can also look to build alliances with local religious/spiritual leaders who can provide resources and solace to people of faith. They can offer to provide trainings that will help religious leaders and others in their congregations to recognize signs of abuse and to provide safe haven, resources and other types of support.

In recent months, Alianza has received requests from women who want to start support groups for survivors within their congregations or learn how to provide other types of support. We hope that in the near future we can address these requests.

Alianza looks forward to exploring ways that we can work with FaithTrust Institute to even more effectively respond to the needs of our communities drawing on the strengths and resources of our faith traditions.