

Close to Home

Domestic Violence in God's Family

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Content Warning

Domestic violence is confronting.

For those amongst us who are experiencing or who have experienced violence, please be aware that some of the content in this study may prove distressing.

Please take care as you work with this material.

What is Domestic Violence?

"The traditional associations of domestic violence are with acts of physical violence within relationships occurring in the home. This understanding fails to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon. The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and Children (NCRVWC) found that –

*... a central element of domestic violence is that of an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling one's partner through fear (for example, by using violent or threatening behaviour) ... the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics used by the perpetrator to exercise power and control ... and can be both criminal and non-criminal in nature."*¹ Forms can include emotional, verbal, social, economic, psychological, spiritual, physical and sexual abuse.

A few Australian facts:²

- 1 in 2 women have experienced sexual harassment during her lifetime.
- 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.
- 1 in 4 women have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner since the age of 15.
- On average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner.
- Intimate partner violence is a leading contributor to illness, disability and premature death for women aged 18-44.

Note: It is important to acknowledge that men can also experience domestic violence. For the purpose of this study however, we will be focusing on violence against women.

¹ "Domestic violence in Australia – an overview of the issues" By Liesl Mitchell, Social Policy Section, Parliamentary Library Research Publications, 22 November 2011, Parliament of Australia
http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/2011-2012/DVAustralia

² <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/understand-domestic-violence/facts-violence-women/domestic-violence-statistics/>

Getting Started (select one)

Option 1. Watch the first 10 minutes of the following Ted Talk *“Violence against Women – It’s a Men’s Issue”* by Jackson Katz and spend a few minutes together sharing any thoughts or reactions you had.

https://www.ted.com/talks/jackson_katz_violence_against_women_it_s_a_men_s_issue

Option 2. *(for those who do not have access to the video)*
When you hear the phrase “domestic violence” what comes to mind for you? Discuss your thoughts in light of the statistics from page 1.

Looking at a Family in the Bible

“We recognise that gender inequality lies at the heart of domestic & family violence. That violent attitudes and behaviours have their root in the same place – the abuse of power and control of one person over another.”³

The Story of Tamar – an act of sexual violence in the House of David.

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22

1. Discuss the role of each man in the rape of Tamar (Amnon, Jonadab, Absalom, David).
2. What circumstances allow this to take place?
3. What is the impact on Tamar?
4. What insight(s) does this example of violence give us in understanding domestic violence today – both inside and outside the church community?

³ https://www.commongrace.org.au/domestic_violence

Looking at Jesus

In a patriarchal world where men held all the power and women held little value, Jesus' interactions with women were consistently countercultural: he engaged publicly with them (*the Samaritan Woman - John 4:4-42*); he defended them against religious hypocrisy and condemnation (*Jesus & the woman caught in adultery – John 8:2-11*); he treated them with honour and respect (*the bleeding woman - Luke 8:43-48*); he encouraged them to learn and occupy the place commonly held by a male disciple (*Mary & Martha - Luke 10:38-42*); he chose to reveal his resurrected self in the first instance to women (*Matt 28:1-10, Luke 24:1-8*).

Read Luke 7:36-50

1. Discuss how Jesus' behaviour challenges the social and religious protocols of his day.
2. How would you describe Jesus' 'maleness'?

Looking at Us

*"It's confronting to open up questions about how power might be abused in our churches. That might be because we're not used to thinking about broader church dynamics in terms of 'power'; we prefer terms like 'community' and 'fellowship,' both of which have their own dynamic. But if abuse of power is at the heart of domestic abuse in the church, any response will need to involve an interrogation of how power works in our churches."*⁴

1. As a church community at St Faith's, how can we grow in making our church a safe place in regards to domestic violence? What are we doing well? What needs to change?

⁴ https://www.commongrace.org.au/what_is_your_churchs_culture_of_power

Prayer:

- Pray for those who have been impacted by domestic violence.
- Pray that perpetrators of domestic violence will come to a point of repentance, transformation and change.
- Pray that we can be a violent-free community that is well-equipped to protect and support those who have experienced abuse.

Resources:

For those needing help:

Domestic Violence Crisis Line: 1800 656 463

1800 RESPECT National Helpline: [1800 737 732](tel:1800737732)

Women's Crisis Line: [1800 811 811](tel:1800811811)

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service: [1800 938 227](tel:1800938227)

Men's Referral Service: [1300 766 491](tel:1300766491)

www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au

Cottage Counselling Centre: 9972 0141

Learn more about how to support those who are impacted by domestic violence:

Christian Resources:

www.ajustcause.com.au

www.commongrace.org.au

www.saferresource.org.au

https://www.saferresource.org.au/safety_first

https://www.saferresource.org.au/dealing_with_disclosures_of_abuse

St Faith's Website - Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse which we have adopted and are seeking to put into practice in our church community.

<http://stfaiths.net/resources/domestic-violence/>

Article:

<https://www.pblicchristianity.org/the-church-must-confront-domestic-abuse/>