



# Religion, the Church, and Domestic Violence

*Improving the Health Care Response to  
Domestic Violence*

Barrington H. Brennen

**Hosea 8:7**

“They have sown the wind, and they reap the whirlwind.”

**Galatians 6:7**

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever you sow, that shall you also reap.”

We sow the seeds of negative thoughts.  
We reap the harvest of negative attitude.

We sow the seeds of bitterness.  
We reap the harvest of a bitter spirit.

We sow the seeds of fear.  
We reap the harvest of anxiety.

We sow the seeds of legalism.  
We reap the harvest of emotional and physical violence.

Who is sowing  
these destructive  
seeds?

## History of Medical Psychology

*Aldous Huxley*

“The tormentors of the insane have been drawn, in the main, from two professions--the medical or the clerical.

To which shall we award the palm? Have clergymen been responsible for more gratuitous suffering than doctors?

Or have doctors made up for a certain lack of intensity in their brand of suffering or torture (after all, they never went so far as to burn anyone alive for being mad) . . . .

... by its longer duration and greater number of victims?

It is a nice point. To prevent hard feelings, let us divide the prize equally between the two contenders.”

## The Medical and the Clerical

“The seeds of brokenness sown in our homes *and the church* by selfishness, alienation, neglect, and distrust have produced a harvest in society of angry, broken lives.”

The seeds of broken lives have produced the harvest of deep-seated anger.

The seeds of deep-seated anger have produced the harvest of unparalleled crime.

The seeds of crime have produced the harvest of victims, scarred, wounded, broken and in pain."



Leaders are always right.

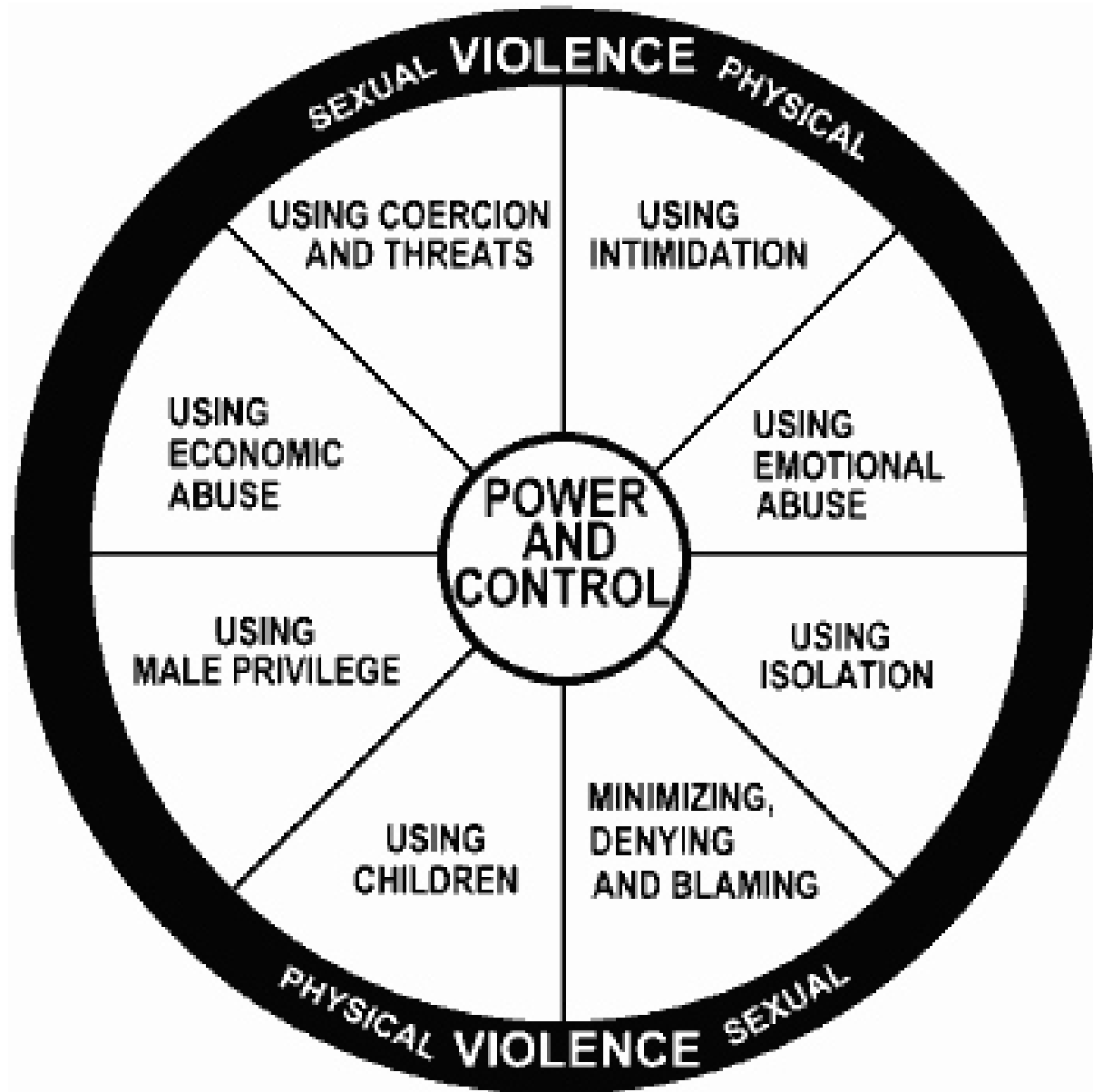
Obey.

My needs are not as important  
at the churches needs.

# Legalism

Don't criticize.

Don't ask questions.





# Shame-based Relationships



"Spiritual abuse is the mistreatment of a person who is in need of help, support of greater spiritual empowerment, with the result of weakening, undermining or decreasing that person's spiritual empowerment."



Spiritual abuse is also the use or misuse of scripture to control another.

We have spiritual abuse when a rigid, traditional approach to life and Christianity is reenforced by rigid pulpit preaching and teaching.

Kenya

# "12 Christian Beliefs that can Drive you Crazy"

*Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, clinical psychologists,*

Christians who had been raised with minimal Bible training were less injured by these false assumptions—supposedly biblical teachings—than Christians with extensive Bible training. In other words, Christians who know their Bibles the best are often injured the most.



“When the person's allegiance to the scripture was combined with dangerous teachings, much pain often resulted.”

"Being born a woman is a divine punishment, since a woman is halfway between a man and an animal" *Plato*

**Aristotle** taught: "A female is a deformed male."

**Paul** declared: "Male and female are one in Christ"  
Galatians 3:28

**Jewish custom:** Men and women are to be separated during worship. Only men count in determining a quorum for worship.

**Paul** declared: Women as well as men are to lead in worship.  
1 Corinthians 11:4

**Aristotle** argued: Women are inferior to men in their ability to reason

**Paul** insisted: Women are to learn: Timothy 2:11

**Stoics** taught: Sexual intercourse is harmful and marriage distracts a man from the study of philosophy.

**Paul** declared: Marriage and sexual intimacy are gifts from God.

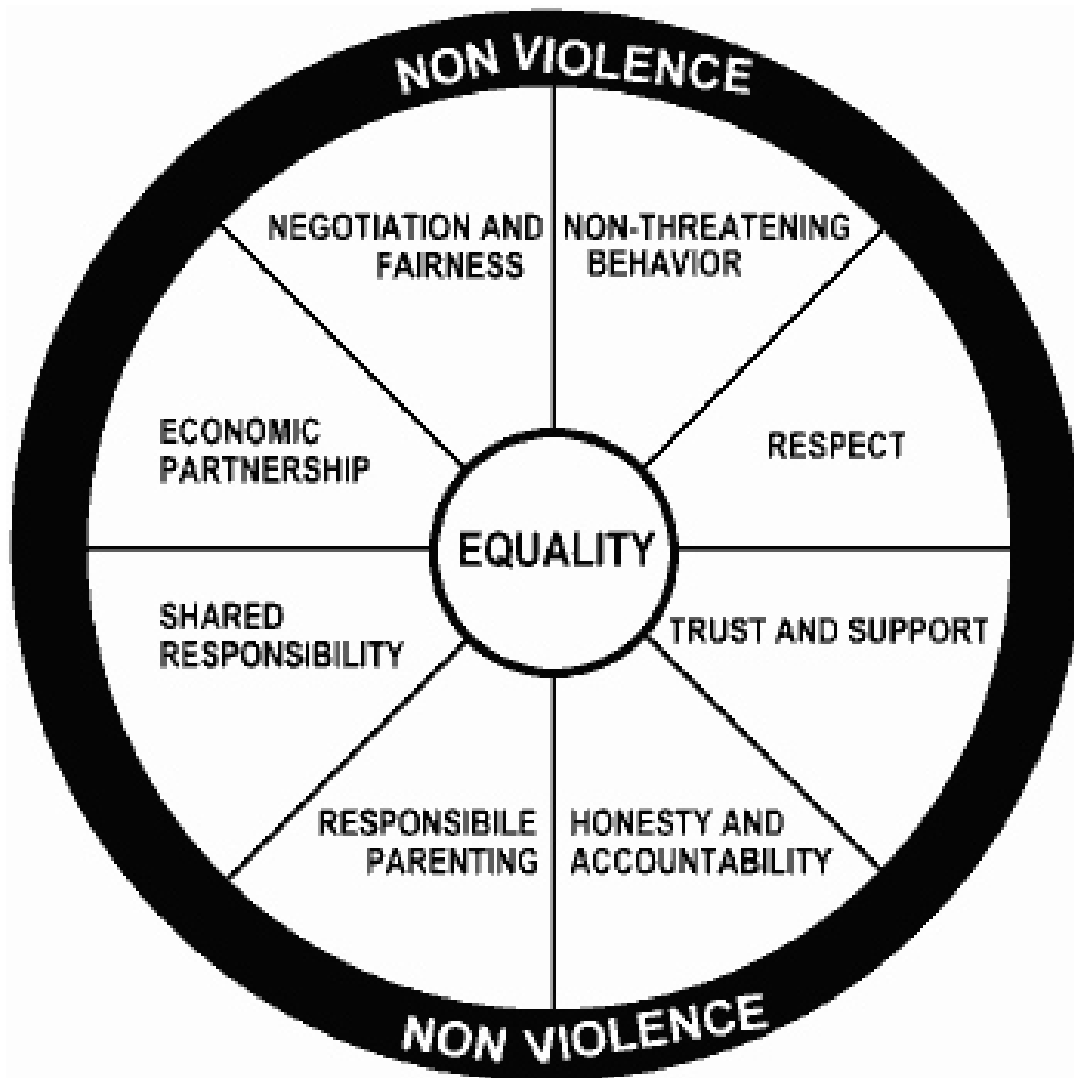
1 Corinthians 7:11; Ephesians 5:31

# What Can the Church Do?

- ① Develop a Proper Theology of Marriage, Family life, and Reconciliation.
- ② Admit That Domestic Violence Exists -Awareness.
- ③ Develop Compassion.



④ Be Willing to Change the  
Church's Perspective on Marriage



Avoid this phrase:

"Marriage is a private affair."

The message:

Whatever happens in marriage,  
no matter how life-threatening,  
keep it a secret.

Avoid this phrase:

"A woman should obey her man."

The message:

A woman should be submissive to her partner. The man is not to be submissive.

Avoid this phrase:

"Keep the family together at all cost."

The message:

I must keep the family together  
even if it costs my life.

Avoid this phrase:

"Do not air your dirty linen."

The message:

I should talk about the good, positive aspects of my relationship. I should not discuss the negative, even if I need help.

Avoid this phrase:

"Pray about it. God will give you strength to endure."

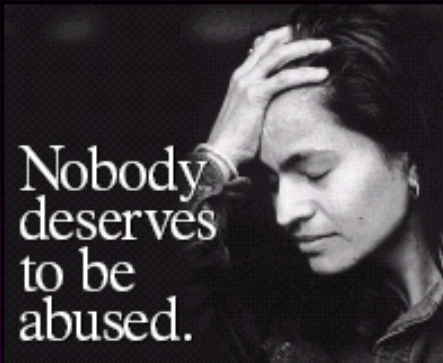
The message:

If I cannot endure the abuse, then God has not heard my prayers. I am not a good Christian.

The Church Can:

Stop creating and  
sheltering the  
abusers.





# The Church Can: Listen to the hurting.



We sow the seeds of kindness.  
We reap the harvest of a kind  
disposition.

We sow the seeds of joy.  
We reap the harvest of a joyful  
heart.

We sow the seeds of love.  
We reap the fullness of God, who is  
love.

# I Was Abused

I was abused by my partner, and you told me to stay because it was the Lord's will.

I became hungry because I could not work and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger. Thank you.

My clothes became worn and torn, exposing my naked body and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

At times I became seriously ill because of my lack of nutrients and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I was thrown out of my house and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.

I was abandoned and became lonely and you left me alone to pray for me.

You seem so holy, so close to God. But I'm still being abused. I'm still hungry, lonely and cold.



Thank you for listening  
Live In Peace