

While husbands are raping their wives, what are we going to do?

While some people argue that rape by a married partner cannot occur, I would like to remind these individuals that their opinions do not obliterate the fact that there are married partners who are being raped by their spouses. That's a scientific fact. The longer we sit and debate the topic and delay on making rape by a spouse a crime, we are revictimizing those spouses who have no legal recourse.

What is even more painful is when some Christian leaders are claiming Biblical immunity for partners who do rape their spouses. In other words, they are suggesting that even though it looks like rape, it is not, because marriage is sacred and is protected from an invasion of criminal laws. How preposterous!

To explain further, some religious leaders are purporting that the upcoming proposed law that will make a rape by a spouse a criminal act, to be a violation of the sacredness of marriage. These individuals have it backwards. It is the rape that violates the sacredness of the marriage, not the law to criminalize rape by a spouse. In fact, the law will be preserving the sacred boundaries of marriage and acknowledging that anyone, in or out of marriage, can be a victim of rape.

There are those who believe that the proposed law violates Biblical principles of marriage. I wonder what principles they are talking about. While the Bible does not specifically deal with spousal rape, it has plenty to say about the husband-wife relationship and its representation of Christ and the church. Here is a Bible text that makes it clear the way a husband should treat his wife. "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them" (Colossians 3:19).

Let's dig a little deeper. The book of Ephesians certainly makes it clear how spouses should treat one another. Ephesians 5:25-28 states: "For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself."

These texts make it clear that in marriage there should be no harshness. The defenders of the view that there can be no rape in marriage are usually those who believe that women are to serve a man and not the other way around. How would these Bible-believing rapists respond to the wives who come to my office emotionally devastated and torn because of repeated excruciating sexual encounters with their husbands. They would have been subjected to their husbands' barrage of Biblical quotations intended to weaken them and to inflict guilt and shame.

To explain further how many wives are trapped in a prison of spouse sexual abuse, here is a quote from "Got Questions" webpage: "Unfortunately, spousal rape victims are sometimes advised to "put up with it." Too often, these women hear that they should be grateful that the rapist is a good father or a good provider or the like, and that it is their duty to "submit" in the bedroom. However, such thinking can inadvertently promote rape and an unbiblical concept of sex. Sex should be more than a "duty," and "submission" in the bedroom cannot be seen as the complement of compulsion."

While religious beliefs should be used to bring peace, healing, and inner freedom, it is being used by many spiritual leaders to cripple, shame, blame and subject people, especially females, to a world of pain of confusion. The spousal rape law will free women from the prison of abuse. It will remind us how sacred marriage is. It will also remind abusers that one cannot hide behind so-called spiritual beliefs and false Biblical concepts.

There are many who argue that there is something so unique about marriage that it makes it impossible for a husband to rape his wife. This is a very serious myth. I can ask the question, if marriage is so sacred and

unique, how come husbands or wives do kill their spouses and are found guilty of murder in the courts? Do spiritual leaders seek Biblical immunity in the courts of law to free the abuser or murderer? No, they do not. The spouse is dead. Many mourn. Many are forever wounded. It is real.

What is much worse than murder of a spouse is while still living, a spouse's body, spirit, and emotions are being ripped apart, forever wounded, by praying men who believe they have the right to prey on their partners. They are being empowered every week from the church pulpits by spiritual leaders who preach domination of the man and subjection of the woman. While the spousal rape law will not change the twisted minds and teachings of misguided spiritual leaders, it will restore dignity and value to women, just as the Apostle Paul was seeking to do in the books of Ephesians and Corinthians.

One more important point. Some argue that if the spousal rape law is passed there will be a big surge of false claims that will cause havoc on our society. There is no empirical evidence of this occurring anywhere in the world. It will allow women to report real incidents of spousal rape. Moreover, the law will allow investigation of the rape to proceed and be subjected to proof of evidence like any other criminal act.

Keep in mind that even with our current rape laws, it is believed that less than five percent of actual rapes are being reported each year. Why? Because of the shame we inflict on the victims. Also, we often do not believe their stories. On the other hand, when a single woman does cry rape and we listen to her, she is relieved and empowered because the law is on her side. She was raped.

In conclusion, when it comes to spousal rape, we can argue and disagree all we want to, the fact remains that within the past hour, at least one husband raped his wife, and we will never know. Why? Because no one will believe the wife's story. Let us free her from this pain. The spousal rape law can restore her dignity because we will be listening and responding to her cries for help.

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