

Here's What *Relational Awareness* Study Participants Are Saying

“We live in a world of broken and hurtful relationships. Taking an honest look at ourselves, we see areas where past wounding patterns, modeled or directed against us, continue to influence our behaviors and responses. *Relational Awareness* with its biblical grounding and sensitive testimonies is an excellent study to help us recognize and break these patterns in our own lives and in the community around us. This study is a needed resource for churches to learn signs of abuse and overcome biases that inadvertently further victimize those reaching out for help.”

—Denise Ahern, co-founder, Selah Glen—

A place of healing and renewal for those in vocational ministry

“Going through the Domestic Kindness study was an eye-opening and learning experience. I am especially thankful for the biblical foundation of this study; the knowledge of how to encourage and talk to those who are currently in an abusive relationship or have been in one in the past; and the warning signs of abusive relationships that I have been able to share with others. Any church or school would benefit by adding this study to their Bible study curriculum.”

—Marilyn Dilger

“I'm so grateful for Domestic Kindness! Having been raised in an unhealthy environment, I was very confused about where to set boundaries with relationships. I wasn't sure why I was attracting hurtful, careless, mean people. After a season of meeting with a Domestic Kindness group of friends, I became aware of healthy behaviors and boundaries! Now I'm confident in choosing relationships that enrich my life and I'm setting a better example for my children!! Thank you so much for teaching *Relational Awareness!*!”

—Letha Selby

“*Relational Awareness* is a valuable resource for anyone seeking to improve their relationships. What I like most about this study is its biblical foundation, pointing to scripture for help in understanding relationships. I also like that each lesson is filled with practical exercises and reflective questions, encouraging readers to apply the teachings in their daily lives. This study opened my eyes to areas of concern in my life and gave me steps to help me change my approach.”

—Kim McGill

"As I went through this Bible-based study I noticed things I could do better. It has raised my emotional intelligence. I think we could all benefit from this study."

—Mark McIntyre

"Through this biblical study, I found the tools necessary to evaluate healthy and unhealthy relationships. In the Bible, God clearly defines what love is and what He intends relationships to be. Take this journey and discover how God's creation of you and sacrifice for you helps you know the true love and sacrifice He intends for all relationships."

—Guyla Zarate-Lopez

"Whether you have just started dating or have been married for many years, the *Relational Awareness* study is a great tool to help build healthy relationships and opens your eyes to identify red flags that hurt relationships. The study is helpful for all relationships including friends, family, and coworkers. It can be done on your own, but you learn so much more by discussing and sharing as a group."

—Mona Hwang

"My life was forever changed after completing the Domestic Kindness Bible study. I learned how God truly views all forms of violence."

—Chanel Lewis

"*Relational Awareness* teaches what true biblical marriage should be. I thank God I ran across this study. It has helped me begin the journey of breaking free from years of guilt, depression, and despair. I've grown as a person, and now I can recognize abuse and give the right kind of help to others. I would highly recommend the study to those who have been abused and all who want to help end abuse."

—Darlene Aubrey

Relational Awareness

Second Edition

An Eight-Lesson Study Dedicated to Improving
All Relationships



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domestickindness@gmail.com

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Introduction

Domestic Kindness welcomes you to our first Bible study on relationships and domestic abuse. This eight-lesson study will take you through some fundamental principles in God’s Word, the Bible. These principles have the power to revolutionize your relationships and your heart. Whether in marriage, dating, work, friends, or family, the lessons will equip you to honor and glorify God in your interactions with all those around you.

What are some of the specific tools, skills, and knowledge you will be equipped with in this Relational Awareness study? Through this study, you will:

- Be inspired to evaluate your character and apply these principles.
- Be more equipped to identify “red flags” in relationships—signs of ungodly, dishonoring, or unsafe behaviors and attitudes that necessitate protecting yourself or others in various ways.
- Be able to discern between healthy relationships and unhealthy ones more readily.
- See how the proper reading and application of God’s Word—which results in mutual honor and peace—contrasts with the manipulative misuse of scripture intended to oppress or control others, which is counter to the character of God and his design for humankind.
- Learn what to do when someone you know is harming or being harmed by someone they love.
- Explore what you—and what we together—can do about the epidemic of domestic abuse.

We encourage using multiple Bible translations when reading scripture passages aloud during group lesson times.

How to Use the Materials

This study is designed as a small group study which encourages a lively discussion. Each person should read through the upcoming lesson, and answer the questions. Two-hour sessions are recommended although you may adjust the material to fit any time frame.

God loves to change lives through His Word as the Holy Spirit breathes life into it. If you follow the curriculum, you will see a difference in your life and your relationships, and be more in tune with the struggles of those around you. We pray that God will guide you with wisdom and understanding as you learn more about His heart for relationships. We pray that He is already working within you to prepare you.

At the beginning of each lesson, you will view three videos. The first is a summary of the main points. The next is a presentation covering key ideas that will help you optimize your understanding of the lesson. (Notes for this are included.) In the third, you will watch a segment of a testimony series. You

will find information to access these videos at domestickindness.org/studies or by emailing domestickindness@gmail.com.

At the **end** of each lesson, you will be challenged to apply what you've learned. At the **beginning** of the following lessons, you will have the opportunity to share how you applied what you learned.

The last portion of this study guide is a leader's guide for study facilitators. This has helpful information should you decide to lead a study group.

As you share during the discussion time be sure to keep in mind the **Discussion Guidelines** found on page five.

LESSON 1

What is Relational Awareness?

Video Notes

In this study you'll learn how to:

- Improve Relationships—Marriage, Dating, Friends, Family, Work
- Recognize Relationship Red Flags
- Respond to Those Who Are Being Mistreated
- See God's Plan for Relationships
- Recognize Abusive Patterns

Domestic Kindness is an organization that equips churches to be part of the solution to domestic abuse.

Our Mission

Our mission is to educate the Christian community about the domestic abuse epidemic and instruct in methods of what we can do to help solve the problem.

We train a group of church members who become a permanent Domestic Kindness Action Team at their church.

The Domestic Kindness Action Team educates the church through:

Special Events

Bible Studies

Sermon Suggestions

Training for Leaders

They connect victims and abusers to expert help.

Domestic Kindness provides teaching about healthy relationships and godly living.

What We Don't Do

We don't act as advocates or counselors to victims or abusers.

Why was this organization created?

Domestic abuse is a PANDEMIC that destroys many lives.

To help illustrate how many people are affected by domestic abuse, consider this:

In the USA how many cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in 2020 and 2021?

About **50 million**.

How many people in the USA are touched by domestic abuse?

The population of the USA is over 340 million.

One in four families in the USA has been touched by domestic abuse. That means...

Over **85 million** people in the USA are affected!¹

Churches need to know how to deal with this issue. Churches sometimes give bad advice.

- “Go to couples counseling” → This increases the victim’s trauma and gives the perpetrator more weapons.²
- “Pray more” → This puts pressure on the victim. (Remember, God doesn’t change abusers who are not willing to be changed.)
- “Love, sacrifice, and forgive more” → This further enables the abuser and thus perpetuates abuse.
- “Divorce is worse than abuse” → They try to keep the marriage together no matter what; they value the marriage over the individual.
- “What are you doing to make him/her angry?” “Why are you attracted to abusers?” → They blame the victim or assume the problem is mutual marital conflict.
- **They sometimes confront the abuser.** → This can increase the danger level for the victim.

What was God’s plan in creating people? To live in harmony with Him and with each other.

Why is our nation in the midst of turmoil right now? Because of hatred and selfishness on the part of so many. This was never God’s plan. It makes Him sad to see cruelty and violence perpetrated on the innocent.

¹ Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., Walters, M.L., Chen, J., Merrick, M.T. 2011. “Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization.” National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011. MMWR 2014; 63(SS-8): 1-18.

² In a normal marriage, couples counseling can be very helpful but in an abusive marriage, it can be very destructive.

What would the world look like if every home was a haven of love and kindness?

If your church does not have a Domestic Kindness Action Team, please consider yourself the beginning of that Action Team. Email domestickindness@gmail.com.

In today's lesson we will discuss:

- The Study Contents
- Relationship Red Flags
- Healthy Relationships
- Domestic Violence Statistics

The application for today is:

Ask God to reveal a red flag in one of your relationships or in a relationship you've observed.

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."
(Matthew 5:9 NIV)*

Discussion Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to provide a safe and productive meeting for everyone.

1. **Anonymity and confidentiality are basic requirements.** What is shared in the group stays in the group. The only exception is when someone threatens to harm themselves or others. We must not share information with our family, friends, or coworkers.
2. **Limit your sharing to two or three minutes,** so that everyone can share and so that one person does not dominate the group-sharing time.
3. **Do not engage in cross-talk.** Each person should be free to express ideas without being interrupted. Cross-talk is when two people engage in a conversation that excludes the others. It is also when someone makes distracting comments or asks questions while someone else is sharing.
4. **We are here to learn together, not to solve each other's problems.** We do not give advice or solve someone's problem during our sharing time. If you wish to discuss a personal struggle, email your group leader, and arrange a time to speak personally.

Prayer Time

Bible Study and Prayer are very important parts of our lives as believers. Because our study time is limited, only a certain amount of time is set aside for prayer. Remember to:

1. **Protect confidentiality.** Anything shared during group time is not to leave the group except when the person sharing gives permission.
2. **Respect third parties.** Intimate details of others' wrongdoings or their situations must not be shared.³
3. **Be concise and precise.**
4. **Be kind and considerate.**
5. **“Unspoken” requests are okay.** If you have a personal prayer request that you do not feel comfortable sharing with the whole class, you may express it by calling it an “unspoken need.” But we DO encourage you to share the details of this need with your leader or someone you trust so you can pray together privately.
6. **Don’t feel compelled to share or pray aloud.**

Note to those who desire to help others who are harming or being harmed:

As you work through the material in this study you will undoubtedly think of individuals who have been or are currently being harmed by others or of those who are hurting or oppressing others. Personal advocacy and intervention are beyond the Domestic Kindness ministry's scope, but we offer referrals to domestic violence intervention agencies and ministries. For more information, contact us at domestickindness@gmail.com.

A Prayer for Helping Others

Heavenly Father, may we be led by Your Holy Spirit as we seek to obey Your command to do good, seek justice, and help the oppressed. Grant us discernment to identify hidden abuse around us and wisdom in knowing how to approach both victims and perpetrators. We pray that we will plant seeds of peace as true peacemakers, so there may be a harvest of righteousness.

Isaiah 1:17: *“Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed” (NLT).*

³Note: If you feel you are in danger or are being abused in any way, whether physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially, or otherwise, please call the National Domestic Violence Hotline—800-799-7233—to get connected to an advocate who will help you understand your situation. The advocate can help you document things well and concisely so that you can discuss your situation with church leadership, an attorney, or other needed authorities. Contact Domestic Kindness at domestickindness@gmail.com to be referred to an organization where you can be matched with a faith-based advocate who will help you navigate a frightening, overwhelming situation.

Note to those who feel they have experienced or are experiencing abuse:

You may come to this study feeling your sense of self torn down by past or present experiences. You may feel alone and isolated not only from community and support but from God, due to various forms of abuse and ungodliness directed toward you. Through this study, we hope you will gain stability and clarity to move forward safely. May you receive validation and healing when you experience how God intends for people to be treated with respect, safety, and care. May you identify the lies your heart has believed and replace them with truth. We hope you find the tools, resources, and community to recover and thrive.

A Prayer for the Abused and Oppressed

Heavenly Father, we lift to You those with broken hearts and crushed spirits, and those being oppressed and mistreated. We thank You for affirming that You are close to them. Please protect them, and reawaken their hearts with hope and dreams of the abundant life You desire for them.

Psalm 34:18: *“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed” (NLT).*

Note to those who believe they may be harming others:

If you need to return to God’s design for relationships, He will enable you to learn new behaviors and attitudes that can replace ungodly ones. Changed behavior begins with changed beliefs. We have faith-based resources to help you at domestickindness.org/resources.

A Prayer for Those Oppressing Others and Misusing Power

Heavenly Father, may we live peaceful, pure, blameless lives in Your sight. Help us to put off our old selves and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, putting on the new self, created after Your likeness in true righteousness and holiness. Give us a heart after Your own heart, and enable us to walk in gentleness and kindness.

2 Peter 3:14: *“Make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in His sight” (NLT).*

Relationship Red Flags⁴

1. Emotional Reactivity

Your partner creates drama and turmoil frequently by being upset, sensitive, moody, angry, and reactive over things that aren't a big deal to you. As a result, you need to put energy into explaining what you meant, apologizing, and trying to fix your partner's feelings. As a result of this emotional reactivity, you find yourself walking on eggshells and afraid to be yourself.

2. Jealousy, Suspiciousness, Possessiveness, and Accusations

Your partner accuses you of being unfaithful, is suspicious of your relationships, acts like he/she owns you and your time, and shows extreme jealousy. This distrust is unrelated to a history of you being unfaithful or untrustworthy.

3. Excesses that Bother You

The things your partner does to excess, that bother you now, can potentially bother you more later on. These might include addictions, relationships, sports, work, and personality traits. The situation is even worse if your partner is defensive about the issue when you bring it up.

4. Lying

If you have caught your partner in lies, assume there will be more lies in the future unless the issue underlying the lies is resolved.

5. Control

Your partner tries to control who you see, what you do, and how you live. At first, this may feel caring, but the underlying issues behind this control are deep and lead to abuse later on.

6. Emotional/Verbal/Physical Abuse

Your partner uses manipulative and controlling tactics such as put-downs, minimizing, ridicule, name-calling, discounting, hostile anger, threats, withdrawal, and physical violence. These are all forms of abuse and only get worse the longer you are in the relationship.

7. Problems in Your Partner's Personal Life

Whether it is with children, finances, business, family, friends, work, physical health, mental health, or sexual problems, these will become your problems if the relationship continues.

⁴ Downing, Karla, <https://www.changemyrelationship.com>, 2015.

8. Self-Doubt

You find yourself questioning yourself, and wondering if you are crazy, overreacting, oversensitive, mean, or selfish because your partner is telling you that you are the problem in the relationship.

9. Partner's Family/Friends Don't Like You

Your partner's family or friends (children, parents, siblings, close friends) don't like or accept you. Carefully consider the effect on your life and relationship especially if your partner doesn't validate your concerns.

10. Partner's Past Relationship Baggage is Unresolved

Your partner needs to have worked through past relationships to be ready to have a new relationship. This includes working through the anger and sadness, accepting that the relationship is over, and having a balanced perspective about his/her part. Otherwise, unfinished business will spill onto you.

11. Different Values, Beliefs, Lifestyles, and Likes

Your partner doesn't have to be your clone, but you need more than physical attraction to build a happy life together.

12. Caretaking

You find yourself taking over your partner's responsibilities, fixing problems, and helping him/her to be a better person.

13. Your Family and Friends Don't Like Your Partner

Unless they have a history of not wanting you to be happy, their objective observations deserve your attention and consideration. Your family and friends know you and care about you, and can see things you may have already desensitized yourself to.

14. Inability to Resolve Conflict

Your partner is unable to resolve conflict and unwilling to learn how to communicate better. Conflict is healthy as long as it leads to better understanding and cooperation; the inability to resolve conflict and communicate in a healthy manner leads to dysfunction and pain.

15. Hoping for Change

You are already telling yourself that your partner needs to change. This means you see the red flags but are willing to convince yourself that they will go away rather than lose the relationship.

Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship

1. Trust

Trust requires reliability. Both partners do what they say and say what they mean. There is no deception or silent treatment. They respect boundaries when one person is uncomfortable with something.

2. Communication

They can share who they are and what they need from the people around them. They communicate honestly and respectfully. They don't blame or attack each other. They don't avoid uncomfortable things for the sake of harmony or the appearance of perfection. They don't take things too personally or lash out when they feel threatened. They are affirming and positive. They apologize when they are wrong or when they hurt the other person. They listen attentively, making eye contact.

3. Patience

Partners display patience that allows for peace, flexibility, and support when one person is having a bad day or is not at their best. The ability to adjust to the ebbs and flows of a partner's moods—within reason—can allow a feeling of being unconditionally loved.

4. Empathy

They are willing to put forth the effort to try to understand the other person's perspective even when they disagree with it. They try to help the other person feel better. They feel happy about the triumphs of the other.

5. Affection and Interest

Both partners are truly interested in each other and fond of each other. Small physical gestures of affection like hugs, kisses, and comforting touch can go a long way to keeping each person feeling comforted and secure within their relationship. They respect each other's wishes regarding types of affection.

6. Flexibility

Relationships take compromise. Both partners must show flexibility in day-to-day life and decision-making. If only one of the partners is always bending, that imbalance can grow toxic over time. In healthy relationships, both partners are willing to adjust, as needed, to the changes and growth that may occur during a relationship. They can evaluate on a joint level, especially during conflicts, what matters most to each person within the relationship, and how that should be prioritized.

7. Appreciation

Gratitude makes us feel happier and more secure with our partners, which improves the relationship's well-being. Even small expressions of gratitude and appreciation can help improve relationship satisfaction. Healthy partners often say "thank you" for something their partner did.

8. Room for Growth

Hopes, fears, goals, and interests constantly evolve. A relationship doesn't have to suffer because of this as long as both people allow each other the space to grow by not pigeonholing each other and by trying to take an interest in learning what's important to the other person.

9. Respect

Respect is very important within a close relationship. In healthy relationships, people talk to each other in ways that don't debase, invalidate, or belittle. They value each other's time and opinions like they value their own. They protect each other's privacy and don't use each other as the butt of jokes or as thankless help for menial tasks.

10. Reciprocity

In healthy relationships, you generally do things for each other when needed. In an ideal situation, the give-and-take roughly equals out over time, and neither partner feels resentful. Both partners feel comfortable overall with the level of give-and-take as it exists, and they each find a way to give *something* to the relationship and their partner—especially in the form of emotional support—when they can.

11. Healthy Conflict Resolution

Healthy couples express their emotions and work to resolve them as they arise even when it causes conflict. They refrain from stonewalling and escalating into personal attacks when there is a difference of opinion or a problem. They can talk it through with respect, empathy, and understanding. Discussing how a boundary has been crossed might take some back and forth before coming to an agreement that meets the needs of both partners.

12. Individuality and Boundaries

In a healthy relationship, similarities create a foundation to connect, while individual differences are respected and valued. Each partner must be given the freedom to live their own life, especially in friendships, professional goals, and hobbies. Each person has aspects of their life that are theirs alone. The boundaries of both parties must be respected.

Domestic Abuse Statistics

A major source of statistical information about domestic abuse comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through an annual telephone survey called National Data on Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, and Stalking (NISVS). This survey was developed to better describe and monitor the magnitude of these forms of violence in the United States.

Starting in 2010, NISVS has been collecting detailed information on adult women and men ages 18 and older in the United States, collecting data on past-year and lifetime experiences of violence. This survey tracks trends in intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence (SV), and stalking among women and men in the United States.

The NISVS 2010 Summary Report presents data from the first year of data collection, based on 16,507 completed telephone interviews (9,086 women and 7,421 men) in the general population sample. NISVS data is collected randomly, representative of each state.⁵

Key Findings:

- Intimate partner violence is widespread in the United States.
- Women experienced high rates of severe IPV, rape, and stalking; and long-term chronic disease and other negative health impacts, such as post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (PTSD).
- **1 in 4 women** and **1 in 7 men** have been victims of **physical violence** by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁶

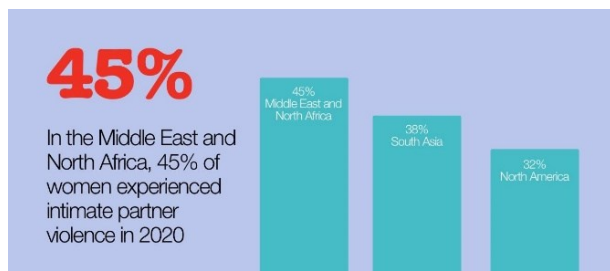
- **1 in 7 women** and **1 in 25 men** have been **injured** by an intimate partner.⁷
- **On a typical day**, domestic violence hotlines nationwide receive over **19,000 calls**.⁸

⁵ Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., Walters, M.L., Chen, J., Merrick, M.T. 2011. "Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization." National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011. MMWR 2014; 63(SS-8): 1-18.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ National Network to End Domestic Violence. 2017. "Domestic Violence Counts National Summary." Retrieved from https://nnedv.org/mdocposts/census_2016_handout_national-summary.

⁸ National Network to End Domestic Violence (2020). 14th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report. Washington, DC. Retrieved from: [NNEEDV.org/DVCounts](https://nnedv.org/DVCounts)



ActionAid.org

- **50% of both men and women** have been victims of **psychological aggression** (emotional abuse) from an intimate partner.⁹
- In the United States, approximately **20 adults** experience intimate partner physical violence **every minute**.¹⁰

- Intimate partner violence accounts for nearly **15% of all violent crimes**.¹¹
- In 2022, the National Domestic Violence Hotline received **775,073 calls and messages** from people in need of assistance with domestic abuse situations.¹²

Application for Today: Ask God to reveal a red flag in one of your relationships or in a relationship you've observed. *Share your answer with the group, now or at the beginning of the next class.*

This Bible study will make sense for those who have experienced a new life in Jesus. If you have not experienced this and would like to, below is a prayer you could pray. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (NIV). Here's how you could talk to Him:

"Jesus, I admit that I have sinned against You and I am asking You to forgive me. Please remove my sins and fill me with new life. Help me to walk side-by-side with You."

If this is the first time you've prayed a prayer like this, please let us know by emailing us at domestickindness@gmail.com.

⁹ Leemis, R.W., Friar, N., Khatiwada, S., Chen, M.S., Kresnow, M., Smith, S.G., Caslin, S., Basile, K.C. (2022). *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from: https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/124646/cdc_124646_DS1.pdf

¹⁰ Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J. & Stevens, M. 2011. "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report." Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf.

¹¹ Thompson, Alexandra, and Susannah N. Tapp. *Criminal Victimization, 2022*. PDF file. September 2023, NCJ 307089. Retrieved from: [bjs.ojp.gov > document](https://bjs.ojp.gov/document)

¹² National Domestic Violence Hotline (2023). 2022 Impact Report. Retrieved from: [https://www.thehotline.org > 2023/07](https://www.thehotline.org)

LESSON 2

Love Defined

Video Notes

Let's review our goals for this study.

- Identify Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships
- Help Others
- Be the Solution

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
(Matthew 5:9 NIV)*

In our last session, we learned about Domestic Kindness.

Domestic Kindness equips churches to be part of the solution to domestic abuse.

We looked at:

Healthy Relationships & Relationship Red Flags

Here are some other red flags:

- You don't feel comfortable with something **you are doing** for someone.
- You don't feel comfortable with something someone is **doing to you**.

We learned that domestic abuse is a PANDEMIC.

As Christians, this is an issue we must take SERIOUSLY.

Today's Lesson ~ Love Defined

*1 Corinthians 13 ~ God's Definition of Love
What it Means to Love and to Be Loved*

Why Study About Love?

God's love is how relationships are transformed.

We need to know what love really is.

Sin in the world:

- Causes a distorted view of love.
- Prevents us from recognizing when something is wrong in a relationship.

Love is not a feeling. Love is an attitude. It is a command.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18 NIV).

Loving God’s way requires that we:

- Recognize what God’s love looks like.
- Receive God’s love—*“We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19 NIV).*

You are like a glass filled to the brim.

Whatever is inside spills out when shaken.

Daily ask God to fill you with His love.

When we truly receive God’s love, it flows freely from us to others.

TRY THIS—Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- Ask God how He loves you in each of the characteristics of love mentioned in the verses.
- Ask how you can love others that way.

For example:

Love is patient... How is God patient with me?

How can I be patient with others?

LOVE and VALUE are intrinsically connected.

Until you know that you are **highly valued** by your heavenly Father, your love for others will be less effective than it could be.

LOVE is about VALUING a person.

A **loving** person treats others as if they have great **importance**.

ABUSE is about DEVALUING a person.

An **abusive** person treats others as if they are **worthless**.

PLEASE NOTE: If someone says they love you and yet is not practicing love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13, it is not love.

Goals for Today's Lesson

- Recognize real love according to God's word.
- Pass on God's love to others as you experience it from Him.
- Improve your current relationships.
- Examine yourself and see where you can improve.
- Avoid forming unhealthy relationships.
- The goal is NOT to make you feel guilty or to discourage you.

*"Love is kind."
(1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV)*

LESSON 2

Love Defined

In this lesson, we will learn that **God wants every person to be treated with honor and respect**, including in his or her own home. We will learn what it means to love and to be loved. Domestic abuse is an epidemic in the world. According to the CDC, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men in the USA have experienced physical abuse from an intimate partner.¹³ In our last lesson, we asked God to reveal a relationship red flag (page 13) we've observed in a relationship (anonymously). Would you like to share your answer?

1. What do you think is God's answer to the problem of domestic abuse?
2. **Read *Matthew 22:34-40***. What are the two most important commandments?
3. **Read *1 John 4:7-8***. Do we really love God if we don't love others?
(How we treat each person in our lives reveals whether we truly love God.)
4. **Read *1 Corinthians 13:1-13***. Which Greek word is used for the word 'love' in this passage?

phileo (brotherly) *eros* (physical passion) *agape* (sacrificial)

storge (parental) *pragma* (practical) *philautia* (self)

What's an example of God's sacrificial love?

5. What's the point made in **verses 1-3**?

¹³ National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011. MMWR 2014; 63 (SS-8): 1-18

6. Use various Bible translations to describe the definition of *agape* love and explain ways to put each description into action.

| DEFINITION (NIV) | SYNONYMS | WAYS TO PRACTICE IT |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>v.4) Patient</i> | Example: Long-suffering | Be okay with waiting |
| <i>v.4) Kind</i> | | |
| <i>v.4) Does not envy</i> | | |
| <i>v.4) Does not boast</i> | | |
| <i>v.4) Is not proud</i> | | |
| <i>v.4) Does not dishonor others</i> | | |
| <i>v.5) Is not self-seeking</i> | | |
| <i>v.5) Is not easily angered</i> | | |
| <i>v.5) Keeps no record of wrongs</i> | | |
| <i>v.6) Does not delight in evil</i> | | |
| <i>v.6) Rejoices with the truth</i> | | |

7. Commit (for at least one week) to praying over one of the above characteristics (your biggest challenge). Ask God to replace the negative quality: _____ with the positive quality: _____.
8. Examine all the relationships in your home or your family. Do they exemplify God’s love? Is each person treated with consistent kindness? If not, what can you do?
9. What one thing will you do this week to practice the attributes of love and improve your relationships?

LESSON 3

Mutual Submission

Video Notes

REVIEW

In our first lesson:

We learned about Domestic Kindness.

Domestic Kindness equips churches to be part of the solution to domestic abuse.

In our last lesson, we learned about God's definition of love.

We learned that love is better than spiritual gifts or great works.

Note: *We are commanded to love, yet we cannot fully love if we are not continuously filled with God's love.*

We learned how to evaluate our relationships based on 1 Corinthians 13.

Do we love others this way? Do others love us this way?

For example—Love is patient.

Am **I** patient with the other person? Is the **other person** patient with me?

Relationships must be mutual.

Today's Lesson ~ *Mutual Submission*

Ephesians 5 ~ God's Idea of Submission

Why Study About Submission?

God's design for relationships is mutual submission.

Why Study About Marriage?

- Marriage is a tangible way to see what God's unconditional, selfless, and never-ending love is all about.

- God’s relationship with His people is often compared to a husband and wife.
- Everyone can benefit from studying about marriage. Everyone knows someone who is married.
- Many principles for a good marital relationship apply to all close relationships.

Submission

The word “submit” in the Bible is often wrongly interpreted as “yield to someone’s control.”

- It is sometimes used for the ill-intentioned purposes of an abuser to control a spouse.
- Whenever Bible scripture is used as a weapon to control another person, that is **spiritual abuse**.

How should we interpret God’s Word?

- We should interpret God’s Word according to God’s heart, as seen **throughout the Bible**.
- God’s **love** is the foundation and motivation for all He does and all He says. Therefore, we must always interpret what He says **through the lens of His love**.

The Greek word for submit is *hupotasso*:

- Military – Arrange under the command of a leader
- Non-military – Willingly cooperate or attach

The Bible does **NOT** refer to marriage as a **military unit**, **NOR** as an **organization**.

The Bible refers to marriage as a **relationship** that operates as a physical body—**cooperating, working together, attached to each other**.

Ephesians 5:21 says, *“Submit to one another.”*
Submit = Cooperate = Work Together

The husband and wife submit to each other in different ways.

The **HUSBAND** submits by **SACRIFICING** (dying to himself) for her.

The **WIFE** submits by **RESPECTING** him. (He is an image bearer of God.)

Goals for Today’s Lesson

- Understand the meaning of submission according to God’s word.
- See what submission looks like in a marriage.

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
(Ephesians 5:21 NIV)

LESSON 3

Mutual Submission

Our last lesson discussed that love is better than spiritual gifts or great works. On page 18, you were challenged to:

- 1) Pray for God to replace a negative quality with a positive one.
- 2) Improve the kindness level of the relationships in your home.
- 3) Do one thing throughout the week to practice the attributes of love.

Share how this went.

Today we will see how God instructs us to submit to each other. We will explore what that means for a husband and wife. We will examine the differences between a mutual and an abusive relationship.

1. **Read *Ephesians 5:21-33*.** Verse 21 says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (NIV). What do you think it means to submit to each other?

The Greek word used here for submit is *hupotasso*. In non-military use, it was commonly used to mean “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.”¹⁴ Also, the word *hupotasso* occurs commonly in postal documents.¹⁵ The discovery of these ancient postal documents showed scholars that the word *hupotasso* was used as a term for writings that accompanied the original document to support, append, or uphold that original document. We need to rethink the word “submit” in English translations of the New Testament. Cooperating and supporting seem to be the more accurate meanings of “hupotasso” in the letters of Paul and Peter.

2. **Read *verse 25*.** How are husbands instructed to submit to their wives?
3. When husbands are told to love their wives, the Greek word for love is _____ (sacrificial, selfless).
4. **Read *1 John 3:16*.** How do we know what love is?

¹⁴ Thayer and Smith. “*Hupotasso*.” “The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon,” 1999.

¹⁵ <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/papyri-women-and-word-meaning-new-testament>, 2003.

5. A husband submits to his wife by sacrificing (dying to himself) for her. What are some practical ways for him to do that?
6. According to *Ephesians 5:33*, how are wives instructed to submit to their husbands?
7. A wife submits by respecting her husband. She does this by offering herself as a willing partner. **She must honor her husband as much as she honors any other person created in the image of God.** This type of respect is not earned. Just being a creation of God is reason enough to be respected and valued. In what ways can the wife show respect for her husband?

Acts 5:29 instructs us to obey God rather than men. The Bible never tells a person to force another person to submit. Paul is not talking about compulsion, but an attitude of submission from both parties.

*We will be reading the **Equality Wheel** and the **Power & Control Wheel**. It's important to see these characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships because there can be no change without first understanding what is wrong.*

8. **Read the Equality Wheel** (page 24). Which area has been the strongest in a relationship you've had?
 - Non-Threatening Behavior
 - Respect
 - Trust and Support
 - Honesty and Accountability
 - Responsible Parenting
 - Shared Responsibility
 - Economic Partnership
 - Negotiation and Fairness

9. Which area has been the weakest in a relationship you've had?

10. **Read the Power & Control Wheel** (page 25). Is there an area that has caused you concern in a relationship you've had?

- Intimidation
- Emotional Abuse
- Isolation
- Denying, Minimizing, and Blaming
- Using Children
- Economic Abuse
- Gender Privilege
- Coercion and Threats

11. Based on the Greek definition of submission, how can you practice submission to others this week? (In other words, how can you practice cooperating with or supporting others this week?)

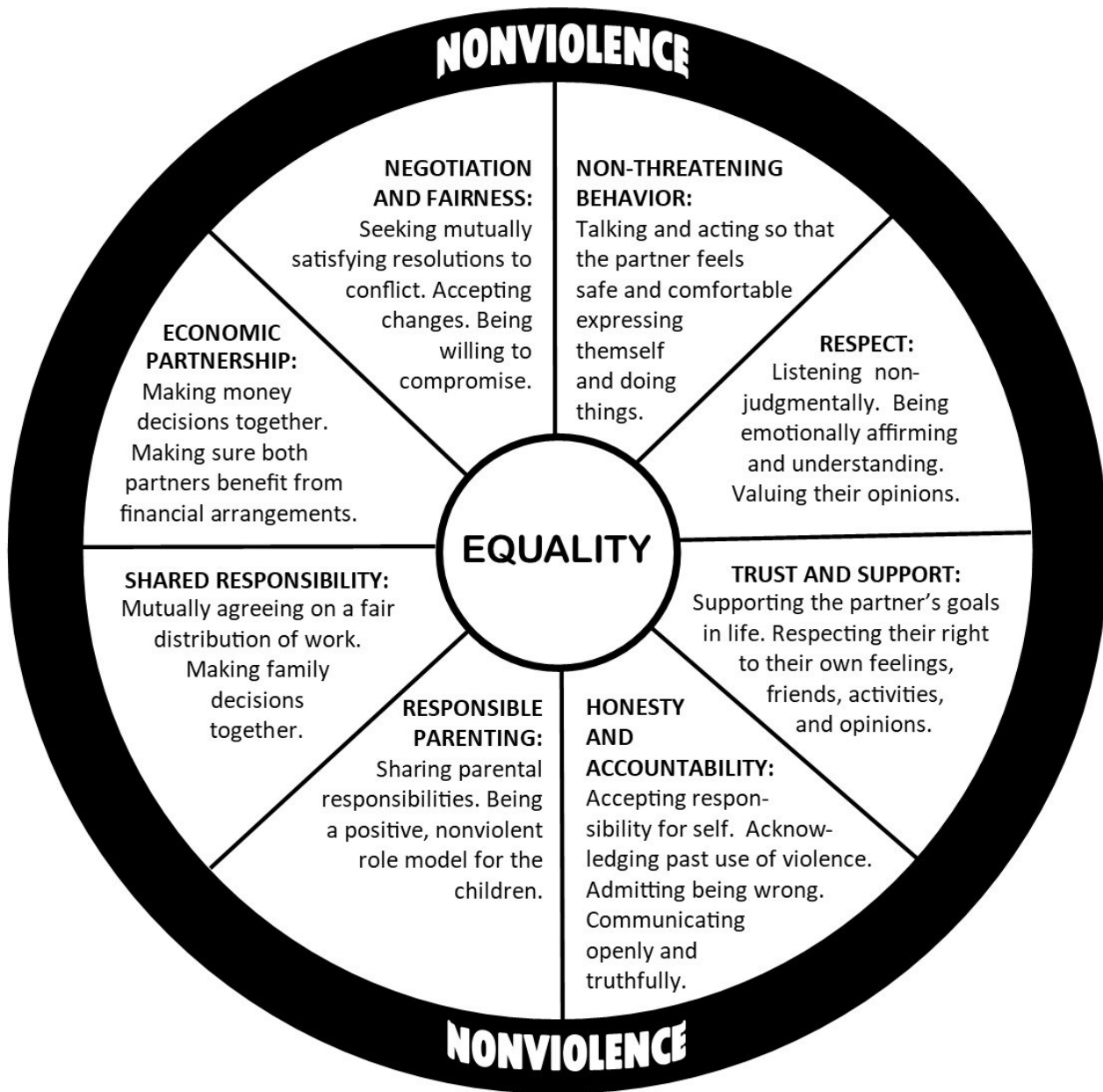


Your church's **Domestic Kindness Action Team** equips the whole church with instruction in godly living and connects the oppressed and the struggling abusers to expert help.

If You Can Be Anything, Choose to Be Kind.

EQUALITY WHEEL

Gender Neutral

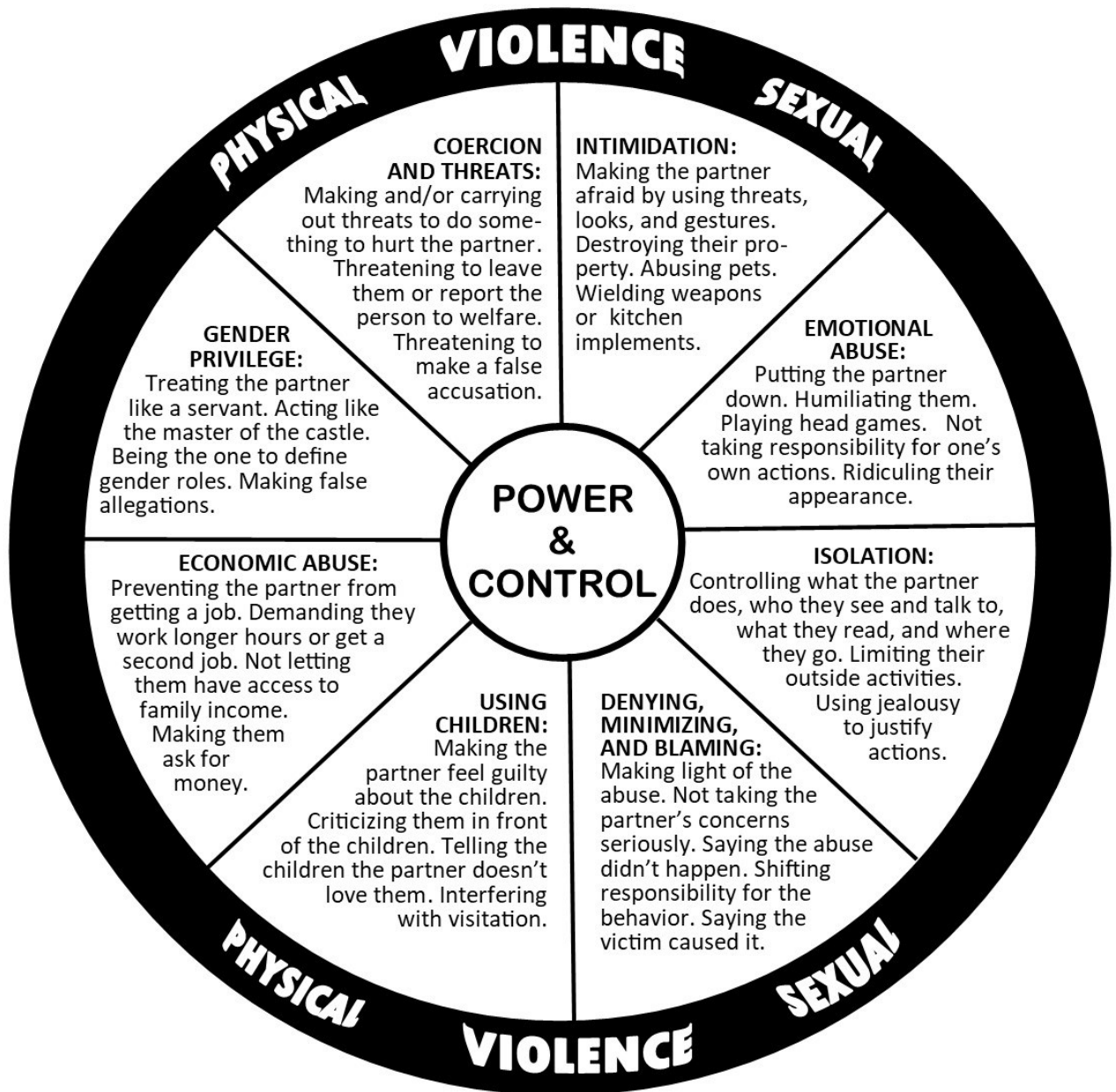


Original Equality Wheel developed by:
Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, MN 55802

Adapted by:
Domestic Kindness
23535 Palomino Drive #290
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Gender Neutral



Original Power & Control Wheel developed by:
Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, MN 55802

Adapted by:
Domestic Kindness
23535 Palomino Drive #290
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

LESSON 4

Biblical Headship

Video Notes

REVIEW

- Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships
- How to Evaluate the Love We Are Giving and Receiving
- God's Idea of Submission

God's idea is mutual submission.

The Greek word for submit is *hupotasso*:

- Military—Arrange under the command of a leader
- Non-military—Willingly cooperate or attach

Ephesians 5:21 says, "*Submit to one another*" (NIV).

Submit = Cooperate = Work Together

The **HUSBAND** submits by **SACRIFICING** (dying to himself).

The **WIFE** submits by **RESPECTING** him. (He is an image bearer of God.)

NOTE: The husband is instructed to **love** his wife.

There can be no **love** without **RESPECT**.

Showing honor and respect includes **recognition**. Studies show that ignoring people can be just as harmful as mistreating them.

Equality Wheel

This shows what an intimate partner relationship should look like.

Power & Control Wheel

This shows what you should **not** see in a healthy relationship.

When one person tries to control another, God's love cannot be part of the relationship.

Today's Lesson ~ *Biblical Headship*

Ephesians 5:23-32

How do a head and body operate together?

They are mutually dependent. They need each other.

The head exists to serve the body.

The body exists to serve the head.

Ephesians 5:32 says, *"This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one" (NLT).*

- We don't lose our identity when we are united with **Christ**.
- We don't lose our identity when united with our **spouse**.
- We work in partnership with **Christ**.
- We work in partnership with our **spouse**.

In this lesson, we will also learn to recognize some of the subtleties of abuse, and some selfish behaviors that can lead to abuse.

Goals for Today's Lesson

- See how marriage operates as a body.
- Distinguish behaviors (in a relationship) that are kind, selfish, or abusive.
- Work on relating in healthier ways.

"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ" (I Corinthians 12:12 NIV).

LESSON 4

Biblical Headship

So far, we've learned how to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships; how to practice love; and God's idea of submission. We saw the differences between a relationship with equality and one with power and control. We were challenged to practice submission in our relationships (page 23). Share how this went.

Today we will look at headship in marriage. We will also learn to recognize some of the subtleties of abuse and the symptoms of selfishness that can lead to abuse.

1. **Read *Ephesians 5:23-32*.** A husband and wife are referred to as a body. The head of a physical body doesn't make demands. The head makes choices in partnership with the body to do what is best for the body. The head wants the body to be comfortable and safe, never fearful. What does this show us about the dynamics between a husband and a wife?
2. **Read *John 13:14* and *Luke 22:27*.** How does Jesus, as head, treat His body, the church?
3. *Ephesians 5:23* says, "*The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior*" (NIV). This tells us that Jesus _ _ _ _ His church (His body). *Ephesians 5:29* says, "*No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church*" (NLT). Jesus _ _ _ _ for His church (His body).

In what ways does Jesus save and care for the people who are connected to Him?

4. We must not confuse the head of a body with the head of an organization. Why would it be harmful to think of them in the same way?
5. One person controlling another in a relationship causes the one controlled to lose their sense of value. This was never what God intended for relationships. Have you observed this dynamic in any relationship? If so, please explain.

6. **Read *Ephesians 5:30-31***. How are Christ and the church compared with marriage? How would spouses treat each other if they understood this?
7. Think about one of your closest relationships as you read these healthy and not-so-healthy ways to relate in a marriage. Most of these apply to other relationships, as well. In each category below, mark whether your relationship is kind, selfish, or abusive.

| | KIND | SELFISH | ABUSIVE |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| Communication | Two-way communication Listen and talk; compromise | Some two-way communication Sharing superficial information | One-way broadcast Loud or insulting words |
| Respect | Respectful Value each other's culture, beliefs, and opinions | Inconsiderate Not caring about the other's feelings and opinions | Disrespectful Intentionally disregarding or contrary to the other |
| Trust | Trusting Earned based on demonstrated reliability | Suspicious Actions, sayings, and intentions are questioned | Accusatory Asserts poor and wrong motives for actions and words |
| Honesty | Transparent (honest) Only good secrets (like surprises) | Selectively sneaky Some lies and hurtful secrets | Declines all accountability Denies events or blames the other |
| Thoughtfulness | Wants best for family Makes decisions together | Wants best for self Seeks their own way | Takes whatever they want By intimidation, tricks, or force |
| Sexuality | Mutual agreement and enjoyment of sex Time and ways agreed by both | Pressures sex types and times Not listening to the concerns of the partner | Forces sex types and times What I want, when I want; rape |
| Separateness | Provides for and respects space Me-time OK now and then | Us-time encroaches time with others Smothered or unavailable | Kept away from friends and relatives Controls who and where |

8. Which area above concerns you most? What can you do about it?
What **will** you do about it?

LESSON 5

Marriage Designed

Video Notes

REVIEW

So far, we have learned about:

- *Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships*
- *How to Practice Love*
- *God's Idea of Submission*

As God takes the lead in loving and **sacrificing** for us, the **husband** takes the lead in loving and **sacrificing** for his wife.

Both husband and wife must respect each other because there can be no love without respect.

An attitude of **criticism** is destructive in a relationship, but that does not mean we should not **confront problems**.

In a healthy relationship, **both parties lovingly confront behavior** that tears down the relationship.

- *We learned about biblical headship in marriage.*

How Marriage Operates as a Body

The head and body are mutually dependent. For example:

The finger touches something hot. It communicates to the head.

The head communicates back to protect the finger.

We evaluated relational patterns and tendencies:

Kindness Selfishness Abuse

Today's Lesson ~ Marriage Designed

Genesis 1 & 2

- There is no greater love than what God has shown the world through His creation and His great sacrifice. Marriage is a tangible way to see what His love is all about.

- Satan continually tries to destroy the most beautiful thing God created—marriage. There are many evil distortions of marriage. They do not even come close to representing God’s great love for the world.
- Male and female were made in God’s image. One is not better than the other. God’s creation of woman was **not** an afterthought. Interestingly, God sometimes describes himself with the characteristics of a mother.¹⁶
- Every person God created has **equal value**. It is **not** God’s will for either partner in the marriage to feel less valued.
- God told Adam and Eve to take dominion over the earth, **not over each other**. God’s plan was **never** for one person to **dominate** another or for one person to **mistreat** another.
- **Domestic abuse** is all about **one partner dominating the other**. **When one person tries to control another, God’s love cannot be part of the relationship**.
- God’s design for relationships was **not dominance over weakness**, but **protection and caring for the weak**.
- God is an **unselfish God** and He designed **all humans to be unselfish**, like Him.
- The **fruit of the Spirit** (*Galatians 5*) must be seen in the **marriage** relationship... **more than anywhere else on earth**.
- **Oneness in marriage is based on both partners giving and serving**.
- We don’t lose our identity when we are united with **Christ**.
- We don’t lose our identity when united with our **spouse**.

Goals for Today’s Lesson

- Understand God’s intention for marriage.
- See the dynamics of oneness in marriage.
- Understand that God doesn’t favor one gender over another.



“A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one” (Genesis 2:24 NLT).

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 32:18, Isaiah 66:13, Matthew 23:37

LESSON 5

Marriage Designed

So far, we've learned the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships; how to practice love; and God's idea of submission. Then in our last lesson, we learned about headship in marriage. We were challenged to identify a concern in a close relationship and take action (page 29). Share how this went.

In today's lesson, we will look at the first marriage in the history of the world. We will see God's intentions for this relationship.

1. Why should we learn about marriage?
2. **Read *Genesis chapters 1 and 2***. What stands out to you about God's creation of humans?
3. **Read *Genesis 1:26-27***. Who was created in God's image?

What does this tell us about who God is?

4. Why did God give Adam and Eve dominion over the animals but not over each other?
5. Read the following scriptures and comment on God's idea about people controlling others.

1 Samuel 8:6-7

Luke 22:25-26

1 Peter 5:3

Interesting fact: Domestic abuse is all about one partner dominating the other.

6. **Read *Genesis 2:7, 18***. What did God say was not good?
7. **Read *Ecclesiastes 4:9-12***. Why are two people better than one person?

*The closest companionship is marriage...
but all humans need companionship, even if not married.*

8. **Read *Genesis 2:19-20***. Did Adam find any animal that was a suitable companion to help him?
9. The Hebrew word for ‘helper’ in this text is *ezer*, which means rescuer and supporter. It is mostly used to describe God. Read these scriptures that use the word *ezer* (help or helper).

Psalm 33:20, Psalm 70:5

Does the word ‘helper’ in these passages imply subservience to the person being helped?

Do you believe that God intended one gender to be more valuable than the other?

*If God’s idea had been for the woman to be a servant to the man,
He could have created a robot.*

10. **Read *Galatians 3:28***. How does God want us to view our fellow humans, especially those in the faith?
11. **Read *Genesis 2:21-23***. God created a suitable companion for Adam. Why was it necessary that woman be created from man, rather than from the dust?
12. **Read *Genesis 2:24***. What does oneness in marriage mean to you?
13. What does it mean to leave your parents when you marry?
14. God could have created multiples for Adam or Eve. Why didn’t He?
15. Do you have any relationships in which one person dominates the other? Do you dominate someone? Does anyone dominate you? What will you do to bring about a change?

LESSON 6

Reverse the Curse

Video Notes

REVIEW

So far, we have learned about:

1. *Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships*
2. *Love Defined*
3. *Submission*
4. *Headship*

How Marriage Operates as a Body

The head and body are dependent on each other. One part never tries to take advantage of the other or cause it to feel pain.

The Bible does **not** describe marriage as a corporation where the head has authority or where there is a hierarchy.

The Bible describes marriage as a **physical body**. All parts of the body are **equally important**.

Jesus is God, and yet, in His role as head of the church He acts as a servant.

Biblical Headship = Servanthood

5. *Marriage Designed*

Males and females were made in God's image. One is not better than the other.

God told Adam and Eve to take dominion over the earth, **not over each other**. God's plan was **never** for one person to dominate another.

Domestic abuse is about one partner **dominating** the other.

Oneness in marriage does not mean we lose our separate identities.

Today's Lesson ~ *Reverse the Curse*

Genesis 3

The Beginning of Dysfunctional Relationships

The Blame Game—Adam blames Eve. Eve blames the serpent.

In dysfunctional relationships, at least one person blames others or circumstances for wrongdoing.

When humans disobeyed God... humans were punished with 5 curses:

1. **Death**—Adam and Eve (If you eat of the fruit you will die, physically and spiritually.)
2. **Pain**—Eve (You will have greater pain in childbirth.)
3. **Desire**—Eve (You will desire your husband.)
4. **Domination**—Eve (Your husband will rule over you.)
5. **Hard Labor**—Adam (The ground will have thorns and thistles.)

The Relational Curses on Women

You will desire your husband... and he will rule over you.

Why do women stay in abusive relationships?

There are many reasons but perhaps one reason is that... the curse of male domination is accompanied by the curse of desiring her husband despite mistreatment.

Notice: The **physical** curses continue until the end of time. However, **spiritual and relational curses** are broken by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Victims living under the oppression of a controller feel as if they are living in death.

Goals for Today's Lesson

- See that the curses on humans were never God's perfect plan.
- Recognize which curses have caused relational problems in marriage.
- See how these curses can be broken.

"As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22 NIV).

LESSON 6

Reverse the Curse

So far, we've learned how to recognize healthy relationships; how to practice *agape* love; God's idea of mutual submission; and how marriage operates as a body. Then in our last lesson, we studied God's original intent for marriage. We were asked to identify a personal relationship where one person is dominant over another and think of ways to bring about change (page 33). Please share how this went.

In today's lesson, we will examine the relational curses in Genesis 3. Also, we will see how a relationship can be built up or torn down.

1. **Read *Genesis chapter 3***. Who was the serpent, and how did he convince Eve to eat the fruit? (*vv. 1-5*)
2. How did Eve convince Adam to eat the fruit? (*v. 6*)
3. How did the disobedience of Adam and Eve affect their relationship with God? (*vv. 10, 23*)
4. In *verses 11-13* we see the beginning of dysfunctional relationships. Both the man and the woman chose not to take responsibility for their own actions and instead blamed someone else. They did wrong, they got caught, and they did not repent. How have you seen this type of dysfunction play out in a relationship?
5. What was God's curse on the serpent? (*vv. 14-15*)
6. **Read *Genesis 2:17* and *3:16-19***. Five curses were given to the humans—one for both, three for the woman, and one for the man. What are the five curses and which two are relational curses?
7. How have these relational curses affected marital relationships throughout history?

8. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:22 and Romans 8:2.** Can the curses be reversed? How?

Victims living under the oppression of a controller feel as if they are living in death.

9. When there is abuse in a marriage, children are being trained to abuse the next generation. How can marriages model God’s love for children to follow?

10. Let’s look at some characteristics that can either build a relationship or tear it down. These apply to marriage, as well as other relationships. In the chart below, fill in some other characteristics that build up or tear down a relationship.

| BUILDING UP | TEARING DOWN |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Honest/Sincere | Dishonest/Deceptive |
| Faithful | Unfaithful/Cheats/Betrays |
| Open | Covert/Conceals information |
| Allows freedom | Subjugates/Dominates/Controls |
| Values the other | Mistreats/Oppresses |
| Listens to ideas, concerns, and beliefs | Dismisses concerns of the other |
| Comforts | Torments/Harasses |
| Affirms | Criticizes/Judges |
| | |
| | |
| | |

11. Mark the characteristics above that apply to your closest relationship.

12. Without trying to change the other person, what one thing can you work on this week to build up a relationship?

LESSON 7

Shining the Light

Video Notes

REVIEW

So far, we have learned about:

1. **Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships**
2. **Love Defined**
3. **Mutual Submission**

Mutual Submission: *Ephesians 5*—Cooperate (Work Together)

Husbands submit by sacrificing. *Picture a husband dying to himself for his wife every day in every way.*

Wives submit by respecting. *Picture a wife honoring the intrinsic value God has placed on her husband in creating him. This respect is not earned. It is the value given by God.*

4. **Marriage as a Body**

Head & Body—Christ is the head (Savior) of His body (the church). The head saves the body from pain, suffering, and death. **The head loves its own body.**

In the way Christ loves the church, the husband must love his wife.

5. **God's Intention for Marriage**—*Genesis 1 & 2*

God instructed Adam and Eve to work as **partners** in ruling over the animals and the earth, but **not** to rule over each other.

God's plan was never for one person to dominate another.

We learned that the role of the helper (*ezer*) is not subservient. **God, Himself is our helper.**

Oneness in marriage does not mean we lose our separate identities.

6. **The Curses**—*Genesis 3*

On Women (relational)—You will desire your husband—and he will rule over you.

On Men & Women (spiritual)—You will surely die.

Relational and spiritual curses are broken through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Today's Lesson ~ *Shining the Light* ~ Ephesians 5:1-20
Contrasting Godly and Ungodly

In this lesson, we will shine a light on the issue of domestic abuse.

- Domestic abuse is a worldwide epidemic.
- Domestic abuse is evil. It comes from the enemy of our souls.
- Domestic abuse is the worst kind of betrayal. It is when the person who says they love you more than anyone in the world treats you like their worst enemy.
- Domestic abuse causes trauma for spouses and children that can take a lifetime to heal.

For far too long the Christian community has been silent on the issue of domestic abuse. Why?

- Do we think divorce is worse than abuse?
- Do we think the Bible advises a victim to stay with a spouse to bring about salvation for the spouse?
- Are we afraid that getting involved could get messy, and we might even risk our lives?
- Do we believe that what happens in the home stays in the home?

Secular domestic violence organizations do not like churches or Christians... for good reason.

We have traditionally been part of the problem, rather than part of the solution (because of teachings about marriage and giving wrong advice in abusive situations).

- **It's time** to make a change in the Christian community.
- **It's time** to stop ignoring domestic abuse and pretending it doesn't exist.
- **It's time** to take a risk for the sake of the many suffering at the hands of someone they have trusted.

Goals for Today's Lesson

- See how we are to live vs. how not to live.
- Hate what God hates.
- Expose evil deeds.
- Recognize the evil of domestic abuse.
- Learn what we can do when we become aware of physical domestic abuse.

“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11 NIV).

LESSON 7

Shining the Light

So far, we have learned about healthy vs. unhealthy relationships; how to practice *agape* love; how to submit to each other; oneness in marriage; and how the curse of domination can be broken. In our last session, we were challenged to work on a characteristic that would build up a relationship and not tear it down (page 37). Please share how this went.

In today’s lesson, we will contrast behaviors we are called to practice with behaviors we are told to avoid. We will also shine God’s light on the evil of abuse.

1. **Read *Ephesians 5:1-20*.** Identify all the behaviors mentioned here and place them into the correct column: GODLY LIVING or UNGODLY LIVING.

| GODLY LIVING | UNGODLY LIVING |
|--------------|----------------|
| <i>v.1)</i> | <i>v.3)</i> |
| <i>v.2)</i> | |
| <i>v.4)</i> | |
| <i>v.8)</i> | <i>v.4)</i> |
| <i>v.9)</i> | |
| | |
| | <i>v.6)</i> |
| <i>v.10)</i> | |
| <i>v.11)</i> | <i>v.7)</i> |
| | <i>v.8)</i> |
| <i>v.15)</i> | <i>v.12)</i> |
| <i>v.16)</i> | <i>v.15)</i> |
| <i>v.17)</i> | <i>v.17)</i> |
| <i>v.18)</i> | <i>v.18)</i> |
| <i>v.19)</i> | |
| <i>v.20)</i> | |

2. Notice that *verse 11* says to ‘*expose evil deeds.*’ **Read *Proverbs 8:13*.** We are to hate what God hates. What does He hate?

3. Let's talk about the evil of abuse. Domestic abuse is a pattern of hurtful behavior in a relationship used by one person to gain or maintain power and control over another person (usually an intimate partner). Can you name six common types of abuse?
4. Today we will focus on the evil of physical abuse. Here are a few types of physical abuse: *Slapping, shoving, spitting, pushing, pinning down, poking, pulling hair, restraining, punching walls, etc.*

What are some others?

5. **Read the interview (trigger warning)** (page 43). In this horrifying account, how old were the victim and abuser?

(Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls is a victim of interpersonal violence.)¹⁷

6. This was the first time he hurt her. What does that tell us?
7. They were at a party when he pounded her head into the cement. What did the bystanders do?
8. He locked Beti up in his room at his parents' home afterward. He knew he had behaved wrongly. Why didn't he take her to the hospital?

What can we do?

9. What would you have done if you had witnessed this incident?
10. If you ever suspect physical abuse, be a friend, promise confidentiality, and believe the victim's story. (The making of false allegations of spousal abuse is much less common than the problem of genuine victims who fail to report abuse.)¹⁸ What are some words you could use to address your concern?

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2006. "Physical Dating Violence Among High School Students-United States, 2003." *MMWR Weekly*. May 19, 2006. 55(19); 532-535.

¹⁸ Jaffe, Peter G., Johnston, Janet R., Crooks, Claire V., Bala, Nicholas. 2008. "Custody Disputes Involving Allegations of Domestic Violence."

Don't tell them what to do—they've already had too much controlling!

Ask if they'd like Domestic Kindness to help. If they say yes, offer to arrange a contact with your church's Domestic Kindness Action Team, using a safe phone and in a safe place. (If your church does not have a Domestic Kindness Action Team yet, contact domestickindness@gmail.com for advice.)

When a rescue is needed, your church's Domestic Kindness Action Team will:

- Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-799-7233** on a safe phone to confirm the crisis level.

This is an important step because the victim knows their situation better than anyone. They must be informed and lead the charge in deciding if and when they leave a home situation. We must understand that the time of most physical danger and lethality is when a victim is leaving or separating. (This is part of what would be discussed between the hotline and the victim.)

A church should never approach (even casually) an abuser about the situation in any way apart from the consent and leading of the abused partner.

- Help the victim find an opening at a local shelter ministry and receive coaching from the shelter on how to help with the escape. (Then the victim talks to the shelter.)

Some resources for help:

Victim: Local shelter

Struggling Abuser: Batterers program

Action Team Representative: Check domestickindness.org

11. Using the GODLY LIVING list from our lesson, how can you practice godly living this week?

The epidemic of domestic abuse affects 1 in 4 families in every community. Would you like to be a part of the solution by joining or starting the Domestic Kindness Action Team at your church?



The **Domestic Kindness Action Team** equips the whole church with Domestic Kindness instruction in godly living and connects the oppressed and the struggling abusers to expert help.

Interview with a Teen Victim

This is an excerpt from an interview that was conducted by The Sheepfold, a shelter that works with victims of domestic violence.

A young lady (we'll call her "Beti") explains:

"... I live with my boyfriend and his family, it's nice here. I have a family..."

Tell me about the first time he hurt you.

"Yeah, that was pretty bad... He thought I was flirting with a guy, but no way was I doing that."

What happened?

"It was pretty bad. I don't know exactly how I ended up on the ground, but there I was face down on the cement, and he was on top of me pounding my head into the ground."

"I remember crying out for him to stop. But he wouldn't. I tried to raise my head to look for someone to help. We were at a party, but all I could see were feet—they were afraid of him too."

"I remember feeling warm liquid on my hands, and I opened my eyes to see what it was... it was a puddle of my blood and he still wouldn't stop."

"Finally, I remember waking up but not seeing anything. My face was swollen beyond recognition. He kept me in his bedroom for days, because he said that if anyone would have seen me, he would go to jail, and I knew that too. He wouldn't even take me to the hospital."

LESSON 8

Responding to Abuse

Video Notes

REVIEW

So far, we have learned about:

- ***Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships***
- ***God's Definition of Love***—How Everyone Should Be Treated
- ***Mutual Submission***—Willingly Cooperate (Work Together)
Submission does not mean following the commands of another person.
- ***God's Intention for Marriage***
Males and females are created in God's image.
Together they were to rule over the animals, **but not rule over each other.**
The wife's role of helper (*ezer*) is compared to God as our helper.
- ***The Curse on Women***—The husband will rule over the wife.

The death and resurrection of Jesus break the spiritual and relational curses.

In our last lesson, we looked at... *Shining the Light on Evil*

We learned how to live and how not to live.

We were instructed to expose evil deeds.

Domestic abuse is evil. It's the worst kind of betrayal.

Domestic abuse is an epidemic. *In the USA—1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have been abused by an intimate partner.*

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is a **pattern** of **hurtful** behavior in a relationship used by one person to gain or maintain **power** and **control** over another person (usually an intimate partner).

Signs of Domestic Abuse

- One person **dominates** the other.
- One partner feels **unsafe** with the other.

Physical abuse can kill the body. Emotional abuse can crush the soul.

Today's Lesson ~ *Responding to Abuse* Recognizing Abuse & Helping the Victim

In this lesson, we will learn how to be part of the solution to domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is all around us. What can we do?

- We can learn to detect the signs.
- When you see something, say something.
- Know what to say and what not to say to the victim.
- *Don't give advice. Give options.*
- **LUV** the victim—**L**isten, **U**nderstand, **V**alidate
- Learn about the tactics of the abuser so you don't get fooled into believing the abuser over the victim.
- Know whom to contact in different situations.
- Know which resources to recommend.
- Pray regularly for God to raise up warriors to fight in the battle against domestic abuse.
- Get involved in educating the Christian community about domestic abuse.
- Join the Domestic Kindness Action Team at your church.

Goals for Today's Lesson

- Recognize the signs of domestic abuse.
- Learn how to respond to domestic abuse.
- Become part of the solution to domestic abuse.

“Rescue those being led away to death.”
(Proverbs 24:11 NIV)

LESSON 8

Responding to Abuse

So far, we've learned how to recognize healthy relationships; how to practice *agape* love; how husbands and wives submit to each other; and God's intentions for marriage. Then in our last lesson, we contrasted godly living with ungodly living, shining the light on the evil of domestic abuse. We were asked to practice one of the characteristics of godly living (page 42). Please share how this went.

Today's lesson will discuss the signs of domestic abuse and how to respond. Please note that Domestic Kindness volunteers are not trained domestic violence advocates. All Christians can be first responders. We can learn what to say and how to point people to resources.

1. **Read 1 John 3:14-18.** Our love for others shows whether we are spiritually alive. How do we demonstrate our love for others?
2. **Read Proverbs 24:11-12.** What does this tell us about getting involved in situations we would rather ignore?
3. The two main types of domestic abuse are **physical** and **emotional**. In our last lesson, we discussed what **physical** abuse looks like. What do you think **emotional** abuse looks like?
4. **Read these ways we can help a victim of abuse:**

DO

Talk to the victim alone.

Ask if something is wrong.

Express your concern. ("Wow, was that harsh!")

Listen and validate. ("I believe you." "That is tough.")

Offer help. ("What are some things we can do?")

DON'T

Don't confront the abuser.
(There are exceptions.)

Don't wait for the victim to come to you.

Don't judge or blame (either party).

Don't pressure the victim to act.

Don't give advice. (The victim has been *told* what to do, too often!)

DO

Be patient. (Some victims return to abuse seven times or more.)

Support their decisions.

Talk through several options.

DON'T

Don't force a choice. (*The victim* needs to take the first step.)

Don't place conditions on your support.

Don't tell an abused wife that she must stay with or be submissive to an abusive husband.

Adapted from the NY State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Do you have any suggestions for other ways to help a victim?

In many abuse cases, the victim may need to consider separation from a spouse to be truly safe, physically and emotionally.

Read *Malachi 2:13-16*. The Hebrew word translated as 'divorce' in *Malachi 2:16* means 'send away.' The meaning here is not that God hates divorce but that He hates the treacherous act of sending away the loyal wife, often leaving her destitute. This was considered to be violent toward her.

5. **Read *Ezra 10:10-11*.** Notice that God is okay with the Jewish men divorcing their pagan wives. **Read *Mark 2:27*.** Notice that Jesus Himself broke a Sabbath rule. Is God more concerned about the institution of marriage or the safety of the individuals? Why do you believe that?

God hates violence more than he hates divorce.

6. If the abuser has not shown a permanent change, is the victim safe to be with that person? What will happen if the victim returns to the abusive spouse?
7. If there are **minor children** in the home who have witnessed physical abuse, social services must be notified by mandated reporters. These children are considered victims of abuse if they have watched it, even if they have not been physically harmed. You can be better prepared by keeping the phone number of your local social welfare office in your contact list. Write that number here:

8. Do you know who the mandated reporters of child abuse are in your state? List them.
9. **Read the *Domestic Kindness Role Play*** (page 49). If you encounter a situation that seems to involve abuse, and you're not sure what to do, contact the **Domestic Kindness Action Team**. What is the name and number of your church's Domestic Kindness Action Team representative?
10. **Read *How to Help a Friend or Family Member*** (page 50). In the chart below, list some things you might see or hear that could be concerns and what you might do or say in response.

| SIGNS OF ABUSE | MY RESPONSE |
|----------------|-------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

11. What will you do to be part of the solution to the epidemic of domestic abuse?

Would you like more information about joining the Domestic Kindness Action Team?
 (domestickindness@gmail.com)



Your church's **Domestic Kindness Action Team** equips the whole church with instruction in godly living and connects the oppressed and the struggling abusers to expert help.

Please see the recommended books and websites at the end of this study.

If You Can Be Anything, Choose to Be Kind.

Domestic Kindness Role Play

Here is a possible scenario that could play out when someone approaches you about a situation that may involve domestic abuse.

(Phone rings)

Confidant: Hello?

Victim: Hi, Susan. Can I talk to you for a minute?

Confidant: Sure. What's going on?

Victim: Something happened last night and I don't really know what to do about it. I was hoping I could talk to you.

Confidant: Of course, you can talk to me. What's wrong?

Victim: I got into an argument with my boyfriend yesterday. We've been dating for a few months, and he is a really nice guy, but he was... not himself yesterday. It scared me and I don't know what to do or where to go.

Confidant: Are you okay?

Victim: Yes, yes, I'm fine. I just need to be away from him... let him cool off for a few days, you know? I just want someone else to know what's going on in case of... I don't know, just someone else to know.

Confidant: That relationship sounds scary and I'm scared for you. It sounds like you need help. My church has a program to help people in your situation. Do you mind if I give that information to you now?

Victim: Sure. Thanks.

Confidant: Here's the phone number of someone on the Domestic Kindness Action Team. I will call you in a few days to see how you're doing.

(The confidant will follow up with the victim to see if she has contacted someone for help.)

How to Help a Friend or Family Member¹⁹

Are you concerned that someone you care about is experiencing abuse? Maybe you've noticed some warning signs, including:

- Their partner puts them down in front of other people.
- They are constantly worried about making their partner angry.
- They make excuses for their partner's behavior.
- Their partner is extremely jealous or possessive.
- They have unexplained marks or injuries.
- They've stopped spending time with friends and family.
- They are depressed or anxious, or you notice changes in their personality.

If someone you love is being abused, your instinct may be to “save” them from the relationship. But keep in mind that there are many reasons why people stay in abusive relationships, and leaving can be a very dangerous time for a victim. Abuse is about power and control, so an important way you can help is to empower them to make their own decisions. Here are some ways you can offer support.

Acknowledge that they are in a very difficult and scary situation, be supportive, and listen.

Let them know that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure them that they are not alone and that help and support are available. It may be difficult for them to talk about the abuse. Let them know that you are available to help whenever they may need it. What they need most is someone who will believe and listen.

Be non-judgmental.

Respect your friend or family member's decisions. There are many reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. They may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize their decisions or try to guilt them. They will need your support even more during those times.

If they end that relationship, continue to be supportive of them.

Even though the relationship was abusive, your friend or family member may still feel sad and lonely once it is over. They will need time to mourn the loss of the relationship and will especially need your support at that time.

¹⁹National Domestic Violence Hotline

Encourage them to participate in activities outside of the relationship with friends and family.

Support is critical and the more they feel supported by people who care for them, the easier it will be for them to take the steps necessary to get and stay safe away from their abusive partner. You can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline to find local support groups and information on staying safe.

Help them develop a safety plan.

Check out thehotline.org for information on creating a safety plan for wherever they are in their relationship—whether they're choosing to stay, preparing to leave, or have already left.

Encourage them to talk to people who can provide help and guidance.

Find a local domestic violence agency that provides counseling or support groups. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 to get a referral to one of these programs near you. Offer to go with them. If they have to go to the police, court, or lawyer's office, offer to go along for moral support.

Remember that you cannot 'rescue' them.

Although it is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, ultimately, they must decide what they want to do. You need to support them no matter what they decide and help them find a way to safety and peace.



**RELATIONAL
AWARENESS**

Leader's Guide

RELATIONAL AWARENESS

SECOND EDITION

AN EIGHT-LESSON STUDY DEDICATED TO
IMPROVING ALL RELATIONSHIPS

domestic
KINDNESS



Bible Studies

Leader's Instructions

Thank you for facilitating the Relational Awareness study. We pray that God will use your leadership in this study to change lives. We welcome you to contact us at domestickindness@gmail.com to arrange a phone call so we can help you get started. Here is some information that will help you to lead successfully.

Participants

The number of class participants is not limited. However, if the group is large, it is best to break into smaller groups of 6-12 participants for most of the discussion time. This will help to encourage a healthy amount of discussion.

Length of Study

The recommended length of study is eight weeks, two hours per lesson. You may adjust your schedule as needed. We have included suggested time lengths for every part of each lesson.

Homework

Because there is a lot of material to cover, class participants should complete each lesson before meeting with the study group. This is a suggestion, not a requirement. Participants should not feel pressured to come prepared but the more time they spend with it, the more they will get out of it. However, you and the co-leaders must do the homework before each session.

Videos

- Each lesson begins with a video summary of the lesson.
- The second video is an introduction to the lesson. Participants may follow along on their *Video Notes* page.
- The third video is a portion of a testimony series. Participants may wish to take notes.
- You will find information to access these videos at domestickindness.org/studies or by emailing domestickindness@gmail.com.
- Discussing the videos is optional, based on whether there is time.

Leader's Guide

- If you find it difficult to finish all the questions in the study, prioritize the questions circled in red.
- Instructions for leaders are shown in purple on the Leader's Guide copy of the lesson.
- Read all parts of the lesson (in black print) aloud during the study. Also, read all the words in the supplemental pages aloud in the group.
- Don't read the answers in orange unless the group members have not given appropriate answers.

Facilitating the Discussion

- Be sure to read the **Discussion Guidelines** (page 5) before asking the questions for each lesson.
 1. Anonymity and confidentiality are basic requirements. What is shared in the group stays in the group. The only exception is when someone threatens to harm themselves or others. *(In these cases, evaluate the danger level and ask for advice from an expert. You may want to get the person's address and ask the local police to do a wellness check, or possibly call the suicide prevention hotline.)*
 2. Limit your sharing to 2 or 3 minutes.
 3. Do not engage in cross-talk. Each person is free to express ideas without interruptions.
 4. We are here to learn together, not to solve each other's problems.
- When instructed to read something, ask participants to read that scripture or section of material before reading the corresponding question.
- Make sure everyone has a chance to talk, but allow less-verbal participants to remain silent if they wish.
- Elicit as much discussion as possible, depending on your time restrictions.
- Keep small group discussions on track. Watch the clock.
- When one person wants to spend a lot of time discussing a personal struggle, invite them to email you to arrange a conversation with one of the leaders. Refer them to someone more experienced if you feel unqualified to help them.
- When participants want to give suggestions or resources to another participant, ask them to email the information to you and you will compile it and send it to that person.
- When someone speaks vulnerably about themselves, thank them for sharing and follow up later or pray for them right then.

Online (Zoom) Study

- Make sure the participants' names are written on their screens (first names).
- When watching the videos, all participants should be on mute and 'stop video.'
- The co-leaders should be checking the chat throughout the meeting.

Attendance

Let the participants know how you will manage your contact list. Perhaps email something like this:

For us to better manage our contact list, we will drop you from the list if you have been absent for three consecutive lessons AND you have not responded to three personal texts or emails. You may re-register anytime you wish to return.

Relational Awareness ~ Lesson 1

Leader's Guide

| | Minutes |
|---|---------|
| Opening Prayer | :04 |
| Ice Breaker— <i>What has God been doing in your life?</i> | :10 |
| Summary Video | :05 |
| Read the <i>Table of Contents</i> | :07 |
| Read all the parts of the lesson. (<i>Go around the room and ask each person to read a section or paragraph. Allow them to pass if they prefer not to read.</i>) | |
| <i>Introduction</i> | :06 |
| Intro Video | :07 |
| <i>Discussion Guidelines, Prayer Guidelines, and Notes</i> | :05 |
| <i>Relationship Red Flags</i> —Ask for comments after each point. | :20 |
| Testimony Video—Daren Part 1 | :10 |
| <i>Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship</i> —Discuss— <i>What stands out to you?</i> | :16 |
| <i>Domestic Violence Statistics</i> | :05 |
| Discuss the Application for Today: Ask God to reveal a red flag in one of your relationships or in a relationship you've observed. <i>Who would like to share?</i> <i>In our next study session, we will review this application assignment.</i> | :05 |
| Explain— This Bible study will make sense for those who have experienced a new life in Jesus. If you have not experienced this and would like to, I will help guide you in a prayer to Him. (Read 1 John 1:9.) Here's how you could talk to Him: <i>“Jesus, I admit that I have sinned against You. Please forgive me. Remove my sins and fill me with new life. Help me to walk side-by-side with You.”</i> If this is the first time you've prayed a prayer like this, please let us know by emailing us at domestickindness@gmail.com. | :05 |
| Elicit and pray for each prayer request. Announce the date of the next lesson. | :15 |

Lesson 2 Leader’s Guide

Love Defined

Opening Prayer :05

Summary Video :04

Ice Breaker—*What is one of your favorite places in the world?* :10

Intro Video :07

Read all parts of the lesson (in black print) aloud in the group. Don’t read the answers in orange unless the group members have not given appropriate answers. If you don’t have time to answer all the questions, prioritize the question numbers circled in red.

Read the Discussion Guidelines (page 5) together. In this lesson, we will learn that **God wants every person to be treated with honor and respect**, including in his or her own home. We will learn what it means to love and to be loved. Domestic abuse is an epidemic in the world. According to the CDC, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men in the USA have experienced severe physical abuse from an intimate partner.²⁰ In our last lesson, we asked God to reveal a relationship red flag (page 13) we’ve observed in a relationship (anonymously). Would you like to share your answer? :10

Testimony Video—Daren Part 2 :08

1. What do you think is God’s answer to the problem of domestic abuse?
For all people to consistently show love and kindness to everyone :02

2. **Read Matthew 22:34-40.** What are the two most important commandments?
Love God; love others :02

3. **Read 1 John 4:7-8.** Do we really love God if we don’t love others? **No**
(How we treat each person in our lives reveals whether we truly love God.) :02

4. **Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.**
Which Greek word is used for the word ‘love’ in this passage?
Phileo (brotherly) *eros* (physical passion) ***agape*** (sacrificial) :05
storge (parental) *pragma* (practical) *philautia* (self)

What’s an example of God’s sacrificial love?
Jesus coming to earth; dying for us; taking on the role of a servant

5. What’s the point made in **verses 1-3**? *Love is better than spiritual gifts; doing great things for God is pointless if done without love.* :02

²⁰ National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011. MMWR 2014; 63 (SS-8): 1-18

6. Use various Bible translations to describe the definition of *agape* love and explain ways to put each description into action.

:35

| DEFINITION (NIV) | SYNONYMS | WAYS TO PRACTICE IT |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>v.4) Patient</i> | Example: Long-suffering | Be okay with waiting |
| <i>v.4) Kind</i> | <i>Gentle</i> | <i>Encourage others</i> |
| <i>v.4) Does not envy</i> | <i>Not jealous</i> | <i>Be happy about the good things that others have</i> |
| <i>v.4) Does not boast</i> | <i>Doesn't brag</i> | <i>Spend time listening to others</i> |
| <i>v.4) Is not proud</i> | <i>Not puffed up</i> | <i>Admit when you're wrong</i> |
| <i>v.4) Does not dishonor others</i> | <i>Not rude</i> | <i>Show others their value</i> |
| <i>v.5) Is not self-seeking</i> | <i>Doesn't demand its own way</i> | <i>Let others decide what to do</i> |
| <i>v.5) Is not easily angered</i> | <i>Not easily irritated</i> | <i>Don't blame others for my feelings</i> |
| <i>v.5) Keeps no record of wrongs</i> | <i>Doesn't keep score</i> | <i>Pray for the offender</i> |
| <i>v.6) Does not delight in evil</i> | <i>Doesn't enjoy others' distress</i> | <i>Seek God's perspective in situations</i> |
| <i>v.6) Rejoices with the truth</i> | <i>Happy when the truth is revealed</i> | <i>Speak the truth in love</i> |

7. Commit (for at least one week) to praying over one of the above characteristics (your biggest challenge). Ask God to replace the negative quality: _____ with the positive quality: _____. *Does anyone want to share?*

:05

8. Examine all the relationships in your home or your family. Do they exemplify God's love? Is each person treated with consistent kindness? If not, what can you do?

:05

9. What one thing will you do this week to practice the attributes of love and improve your relationships? *Does anyone want to share? In our next session, we will discuss how we did.*

:04

Elicit and pray for each prayer request.

Announce the date of the next lesson.

:14

Lesson 3 Leader's Guide

Mutual Submission

Opening Prayer :05

Summary Video :04

Ice Breaker—*Name one thing on your bucket list.* :10

Intro Video :07

Read all parts of the lesson (in black print) aloud in the group. Don't read the answers in orange unless the group members have not given appropriate answers. If you don't have time to answer all the questions, prioritize the question numbers circled in red.

Read the Discussion Guidelines (page 5) together. Our last lesson discussed that love is better than spiritual gifts or great works. On page 18, you were challenged to:

- 1) Pray for God to replace a negative quality with a positive one.
 - 2) Improve the kindness level of the relationships in your home.
 - 3) Do one thing throughout the week to practice the attributes of love. :10
- Share how this went.

Today we will see how God instructs us to submit to each other. We will explore what that means for a husband and wife. We will examine the differences between a mutual and an abusive relationship.

Testimony Video—Daren Part 3 :07

1. **Read *Ephesians 5:21-33*.** Verse 21 says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (NIV). What do you think it means to submit to each other?

Serve each other. Give ourselves to each other by communicating. Respect the needs and wishes of the other person.

The Greek word used here for submit is *hupotasso*. In non-military use, it was commonly used to mean "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden."²¹ Also, the word *hupotasso* occurs commonly in postal documents.²² The discovery of these ancient postal documents showed scholars that the word *hupotasso* was used as a term for writings that accompanied the original document to support, append, or uphold that original document. :06

²¹ Thayer and Smith. "Hupotasso." "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon," 1999.

²² <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/papyri-women-and-word-meaning-new-testament>, 2003.

We need to rethink the word “submit” in English translations of the New Testament. Cooperating and supporting seem to be the more accurate meanings of “hupotasso” in the letters of Paul and Peter.

2. **Read *verse 25***. How are husbands instructed to submit to their wives? :04

Love her as Christ loved the church by dying for her.

3. When husbands are told to love their wives, the Greek word for love is agape (sacrificial, selfless). :02

4. **Read *1 John 3:16***. How do we know what love is? :04

Jesus laid down His life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for each other.

5. A husband submits to his wife by sacrificing (dying to himself) for her. What are some practical ways for him to do that?

Listen to her without trying to fix her. Do things to bless her even though it is an inconvenience for him. Ask for her opinions and receive her input as equally valuable as his own. :05

6. According to ***Ephesians 5:33***, how are wives instructed to submit to their husbands?

Respect them. :02

7. A wife submits by respecting her husband. She does this by offering herself as a willing partner. **She must honor her husband as much as she honors any other person created in the image of God.** This type of respect is not earned. Just being a creation of God is reason enough to be respected and valued. In what ways can the wife show respect for her husband?

Choose not to ridicule or argue with her husband. Give words of appreciation. Speak the truth in love. Have an attitude of cooperation. Don't try to control him. :05

Acts 5:29 instructs us to obey God rather than men. The Bible never tells a person to force another person to submit. Paul is not talking about compulsion, but an attitude of submission from both parties.

*We will be reading the **Equality Wheel** and the **Power & Control Wheel**. It's important to see these characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships because there can be no change without first understanding what is wrong.*

8. **Read the Equality Wheel** (page 24). *Read every part of the wheel.* Which area has been the strongest in a relationship you've had?
- Non-Threatening Behavior
 - Respect
 - Trust and Support
 - Honesty and Accountability
 - Responsible Parenting
 - Shared Responsibility
 - Economic Partnership
 - Negotiation and Fairness
- :10

9. Which area has been the weakest in a relationship you've had?
- :05

10. **Read the Power & Control Wheel** (page 25). *Read every part of the wheel. Stop after each section and ask, "Have you ever seen this in a relationship?"* Is there an area that has caused you concern in a relationship you've had?
- Intimidation
 - Emotional Abuse
 - Isolation
 - Denying, Minimizing, and Blaming
 - Using Children
 - Economic Abuse
 - Gender Privilege
 - Coercion and Threats
- :14

11. Based on the Greek definition of submission, how can you practice submission to others this week? (In other words, how can you practice cooperating with or supporting others this week?)
- :05

Read the following:



Your church's **Domestic Kindness Action Team** equips the whole church with Domestic Kindness instruction in godly living and connects the oppressed and the struggling abusers to expert help.

If You Can Be Anything, Choose to Be Kind.

Elicit and pray for each prayer request.

Announce the date of the next lesson.

:15

Lesson 4 Leader's Guide

Biblical Headship

Opening Prayer :05

Summary Video :04

Ice Breaker—*What is one thing you do well that you enjoy?* :10

Intro Video :05

If you don't have time to answer all the questions, prioritize the question numbers circled in red.

Read the Discussion Guidelines (page 5) together. So far, we've learned to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships; how to practice love; and God's idea of submission. We saw the differences between a relationship with equality and one with power and control. We were challenged to practice submission in our relationships (page 23). Share how this went. :08

Today we will look at headship in marriage. We will also learn to recognize some of the subtleties of abuse and the symptoms of selfishness that can lead to abuse.

Testimony Video—Annette Part 1 :13

1. **Read *Ephesians 5:23-32*.** A husband and wife are referred to as a body. The head of a physical body doesn't make demands. The head makes choices in partnership with the body to do what is best for the body. The head wants the body to be comfortable and safe, never fearful. What does this show us about the dynamics between a husband and a wife? :06
They need to work together and never hurt each other.

2. **Read *John 13:14* and *Luke 22:27*.** How does Jesus, as head, treat His body, the church? :05
Washing feet; serving; not acting as a dictator

3. *Ephesians 5:23* says, "The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior" (NIV). This tells us that Jesus *saves* His church (His body). *Ephesians 5:29* says, "No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church" (NLT). Jesus *cares* for His church (His body). :06

In what ways does Jesus save and care for the people who are connected to Him?

He protects us from harm. He cares about what we care about.

4. We must not confuse the head of a body with the head of an organization. Why would it be harmful to think of them in the same way? *The head of an organization doesn't have the same sense of oneness so they might mistreat those under them.* :03

5. One person controlling another in a relationship causes the one controlled to lose their sense of value. This was never what God intended for relationships. Have you observed this dynamic in any relationship? If so, please explain. :05

6. Read *Ephesians 5:30-31*. How are Christ and the church compared with marriage? How would spouses treat each other if they understood this?

Christ is one with His body, as husband and wife are one. This would cause us to want the other person to enjoy life as much as we want to enjoy life.

:05

7. Think about one of your closest relationships as you read these healthy and not-so-healthy ways to relate in a marriage. Most of these apply to other relationships, as well. In each category below, mark whether your relationship is kind, selfish, or abusive.

:20

| | KIND | SELFISH | ABUSIVE |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| Communication | Two-way communication Listen and talk; compromise | Some two-way communication Sharing superficial information | One-way broadcast Loud or insulting words |
| Respect | Respectful Value each other's culture, beliefs, and opinions | Inconsiderate Not caring about the other's feelings and opinions | Disrespectful Intentionally disregarding or contrary to the other |
| Trust | Trusting Earned based on demonstrated reliability | Suspicious Actions, sayings, and intentions are questioned | Accusatory Asserts poor and wrong motives for actions and words |
| Honesty | Transparent (honest) Only good secrets (like surprises) | Selectively sneaky Some lies and hurtful secrets | Declines all accountability Denies events or blames the other |
| Thoughtfulness | Wants best for family Makes decisions together | Wants best for self Seeks their own way | Takes whatever they want By intimidation, tricks, or force |
| Sexuality | Mutual agreement and enjoyment of sex Time and ways agreed by both | Pressures sex types and times Not listening to the concerns of the partner | Forces sex types and times What I want, when I want; rape |
| Separateness | Provides for and respects space Me-time OK now and then | Us-time encroaches time with others Smothered or unavailable | Kept away from friends and relatives Controls who and where |

8. Which area above concerns you most?

What can you do about it?

What **will** you do about it?

:10

Elicit and pray for each prayer request.

Announce the date of the next lesson.

:15

Lesson 5 Leader's Guide

Marriage Designed

Opening Prayer :05

Summary Video :05

Ice Breaker—*What is one of your favorite childhood memories?* :10

Intro Video :06

If you don't have time to answer all the questions, prioritize the question numbers circled in red.

Read the Discussion Guidelines (page 5) together. So far, we've learned the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships; how to practice love; and God's idea of submission. Then in our last lesson, we learned about headship in marriage. We were challenged to identify a concern in a close relationship and take action (page 29). Share how this went. :06

In today's lesson, we will look at the first marriage in the history of the world. We will see God's intentions for this relationship.

Testimony Video—Annette Part 2 :10

1. Why should we learn about marriage? *It's a model of the intimacy God wants with us. The first relationship God created was marriage. Every person will get married or has been married or knows someone who is married.* :03

2. **Read Genesis chapters 1 and 2.** What stands out to you about God's creation of humans? *Created in God's image; not good to be alone; the two are one flesh; told them to rule the world; God's creation of humans was very good.* :08

3. **Read Genesis 1:26-27.** Who was created in God's image? *Humans—male and female*
What does this tell us about who God is? :05
He has characteristics of both male and female.

4. Why did God give Adam and Eve dominion over the animals but not over each other? :03
Marital relationships were designed to be mutual.

5. Read the following scriptures and comment on God's idea about people controlling others. :07
1 Samuel 8:6-7 God was disappointed that Israel wanted a king.
Luke 22:25-26 The greatest must be the least.
1 Peter 5:3 Shepherds are not to rule, but to be examples.

Interesting fact: Domestic abuse is all about one partner dominating the other.

6. Read *Genesis 2:7, 18*. What did God say was not good? :04
Being alone; no match/helper—no equal—no peer

7. Read *Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*. Why are two people better than one person? :05
More reward for labor; help when one falls; keeping warm; overpowering an attacker

*The closest companionship is marriage...
but all humans need companionship, even if not married.*

8. Read *Genesis 2:19-20*. Did Adam find any animal that was a suitable companion to help him? *No* :02

9. The Hebrew word for ‘helper’ in this text is *ezer*, which means rescuer and supporter. It is mostly used to describe God. Read these scriptures that use the word *ezer* (help or helper). *Psalms 33:20, Psalm 70:5*. :06

Does the word ‘helper’ in these passages imply subservience to the person being helped? *No* Do you believe that God intended one gender to be more valuable than the other? *No*

*If God’s idea had been for the woman to be a servant to the man,
He could have created a robot.*

10. Read *Galatians 3:28*. How does God want us to view our fellow humans, especially those in the faith? *We are to see our brothers and sisters in Christ as equals*. :03

11. Read *Genesis 2:21-23*. God created a suitable companion for Adam. Why was it necessary that woman be created from man, rather than from the dust? *So that they would sense their connection with each other, as a mother feels a bond with a child from her womb*. :05

12. Read *Genesis 2:24*. What does oneness in marriage mean to you? :04
Mutual love and commitment; respecting each other’s differences

13. What does it mean to leave your parents when you marry? :03
The priority of the couple—spouse before the parents

14. God could have created multiples for Adam or Eve. Why didn’t He? :02
God’s plan is exclusivity (1 man—1 woman).

15. Do you have any relationships in which one person dominates the other? Do you dominate someone? Does anyone dominate you? What will you do to bring about a change? :05

Elicit and pray for each prayer request. :13
Announce the date of the next lesson.

Lesson 6 Leader's Guide

Reverse the Curse

Opening Prayer :05

Summary Video :04

Ice Breaker—*What is the meaning or significance of your first, middle, or last name?* :10

Intro Video :06

Read the Discussion Guidelines (page 5) together. So far, we've learned how to recognize healthy relationships; how to practice *agape* love; God's idea of mutual submission; and how marriage operates as a body. Then in our last lesson, we studied God's original intent for marriage. We were asked to identify a personal relationship where one person is dominant over another and think of ways to bring about change (page 33). Please share how this went. :10

In today's lesson, we will examine the relational curses in Genesis 3. Also, we will see how a relationship can be built up or torn down.

Testimony Video—Annette Part 3 :08

1. **Read Genesis chapter 3.** Who was the serpent, and how did he convince Eve to eat the fruit? (*vv. 1-5*) *Satan—he asked a deceptive question. He contradicted God by stating a half-truth (You will not die—spiritual vs. physical). He made it seem like God was withholding something good that they should want.* :07

2. How did Eve convince Adam to eat the fruit? (*v. 6*)
She gave some to him. :03

3. How did the disobedience of Adam and Eve affect their relationship with God?
(*vv. 10, 23*) *They were afraid of Him and they were ashamed of their naked bodies. God distanced Himself from them.* :05

4. In *verses 11-13* we see the beginning of dysfunctional relationships. Both the man and the woman chose not to take responsibility for their own actions and instead blamed someone else. They did wrong, they got caught, and they did not repent. How have you seen this type of dysfunction play out in a relationship? :07

5. What was God's curse on the serpent? (*vv. 14-15*) *He would crawl on his belly; the lowest of animals; the enemy of humans; crushed head vs. bruised heel* :04

6. Read *Genesis 2:17* and *3:16-19*. Five curses were given to the humans—one for both, three for the woman, and one for the man. What are the five curses and which two are relational curses? *1) Death, 2) Pain in childbirth, 3) Desire for husband (relational), 4) Husband to rule over the wife (relational), 5) Hard labor to produce food from the ground* :06

7. How have these relational curses affected marital relationships throughout history? *Men have controlled and abused women. Husbands have treated their wives like property.* :03

8. Read *1 Corinthians 15:22* and *Romans 8:2*. Can the curses be reversed? *Yes* How? *Jesus defeated sin and death. He restores relationships.* :05

Victims living under the oppression of a controller feel as if they are living in death.

9. When there is abuse in a marriage, children are being trained to abuse the next generation. How can marriages model God’s love for children to follow? *Show consistent respect.* :05

10. Let’s look at some characteristics that can either build a relationship or tear it down. These apply to marriage, as well as other relationships. In the chart below, fill in some other characteristics that build up or tear down a relationship. :07

| BUILDING UP | TEARING DOWN |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Honest/Sincere | Dishonest/Deceptive |
| Faithful | Unfaithful/Cheats/Betrays |
| Open | Covert/Conceals information |
| Allows freedom | Subjugates/Dominates/Controls |
| Values the other | Mistreats/Oppresses |
| Listens to ideas, concerns, and beliefs | Dismisses concerns of the other |
| Comforts | Torments/ Harasses |
| Affirms | Criticizes/Judges |
| <i>Accepts the other as they are</i> | <i>Becomes irritated</i> |
| <i>Encourages</i> | <i>Becomes frustrated</i> |
| <i>Patient</i> | <i>Angry</i> |

11. Mark the characteristics above that apply to your closest relationship. :05

12. Without trying to change the other person, what one thing can you work on this week to build up a relationship? :05

Elicit and pray for each prayer request. :15
Announce the date of the next lesson.

Lesson 7 Leader's Guide

Shining the Light

| | |
|---|-----|
| Opening Prayer | :03 |
| Summary Video | :04 |
| Ice Breaker— <i>Name a favorite color and something good it reminds you of.</i> | :10 |
| Intro Video | :06 |

Read the Discussion Guidelines (page 5) together. So far, we have learned about healthy vs. unhealthy relationships; how to practice *agape* love; how to submit to each other; oneness in marriage; and how the curse of domination can be broken. In our last session, we were challenged to work on a characteristic that would build up a relationship and not tear it down (page 37). Please share how this went. :10

In today's lesson, we will contrast behaviors we are called to practice with behaviors we are told to avoid. We will also shine God's light on the evil of abuse.

Testimony Video—Noelle Part 1 :14

1. **Read *Ephesians 5:1-20*.** Identify all the behaviors mentioned here and place them into the correct column: GODLY LIVING or UNGODLY LIVING. :13

| GODLY LIVING | UNGODLY LIVING |
|---|---|
| <i>v.1) Imitate God</i> | <i>v.3) Sexual immorality</i> |
| <i>v.2) Walk in the way of love</i> | <i>Impurity</i> |
| <i>v.4) Thanksgiving</i> | <i>Greed</i> |
| <i>v.8) Live as people of light</i> | <i>v.4) Obscenity</i> |
| <i>v.9) Goodness</i> | <i>Foolish talk</i> |
| <i>Righteousness</i> | <i>Coarse joking</i> |
| <i>Truth</i> | <i>v.6) Deception</i> |
| <i>v.10) Find what pleases the Lord</i> | <i>Disobedient to God</i> |
| <i>v.11) Avoid deeds of darkness</i> | <i>v.7) Partnering with the disobedient</i> |
| <i>Expose evil deeds</i> | <i>v.8) Full of darkness</i> |
| <i>v.15) Be careful to live wisely</i> | <i>v.12) Talk about ungodly deeds</i> |
| <i>v.16) Make the most of every opportunity</i> | <i>v.15) Unwise</i> |
| <i>v.17) Understand God's will</i> | <i>v.17) Foolish</i> |
| <i>v.18) Be filled with the Holy Spirit</i> | <i>v.18) Drunkenness</i> |
| <i>v.19) Sing spiritual songs, Make music to the Lord</i> | <i>Debauchery</i> |
| <i>v.20) Always thank God for everything</i> | |

2. Notice that *verse 11* says to 'expose evil deeds.' **Read *Proverbs 8:13*.** We are to hate what God hates. What does he hate? *Evil; pride; arrogance; evil behavior; perverse speech* :03

3. Let's talk about the evil of abuse. Domestic abuse is a pattern of hurtful behavior in a relationship used by one person to gain or maintain power and control over another person (usually an intimate partner). Can you name six common types of abuse? :04

Verbal; emotional; sexual; spiritual; financial; physical

4. Today we will focus on the evil of physical abuse. Here are a few types of physical abuse: *Slapping, shoving, spitting, pushing, pinning down, poking, pulling hair, restraining, punching walls, etc.* :05

What are some others? *Strangling; scratching; throwing or attacking with anything; brandishing or using a deadly weapon; burning; binding; beating; punching; biting; intimidating body language; flexing muscles; blocking doorways*

5. **Read the interview (trigger warning)** (page 43). (*This graphic interview could be triggering to some.*) In this horrifying account, how old were the victim and abuser? *Teenagers* (Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls is a victim of interpersonal violence.)²³ :05

6. This was the first time he hurt her. What does that tell us? *He has hurt her since then.* :03

7. They were at a party when he pounded her head into the cement. What did the bystanders do? *Nothing* :03

8. He locked Beti up in his room at his parents' home afterward. He knew he had behaved wrongly. Why didn't he take her to the hospital? :03

He cared about himself, not about her.

What can we do?

9. What would you have done if you had witnessed this incident? :05
- Call 911. Restrain him if you are strong enough.*

10. If you ever suspect physical abuse, be a friend, promise confidentiality, and believe the victim's story. (The making of false allegations of spousal abuse is much less common than the problem of genuine victims who fail to report abuse.)²⁴ What are some words you could use to address your concern?

"Is everything okay?" "You seem a bit down." "I'm concerned about you." "I'm here if you'd like to talk." :05

Don't tell them what to do—they've already had too much controlling!

Ask if they'd like Domestic Kindness to help. If they say yes, offer to arrange a contact with your church's Domestic Kindness Action Team, using a safe phone and in a safe place. (If your church does not have a Domestic Kindness Action Team yet, contact domestickindness@gmail.com for advice.)

²³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2006. "Physical Dating Violence Among High School Students-United States, 2003." MMWR Weekly. May 19, 2006. 55(19); 532-535.

²⁴ Jaffe, Peter G., Johnston, Janet R., Crooks, Claire V., Bala, Nicholas. 2008. "Custody Disputes Involving Allegations of Domestic Violence."

When a rescue is needed, your church's Domestic Kindness Action Team will:

- Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-799-7233** on a safe phone to confirm the crisis level.

This is an important step because the victim knows their situation better than anyone. They must be informed and lead the charge in deciding if and when they leave a home situation. We must understand that the time of most physical danger and lethality is when a victim is leaving or separating. (This is part of what would be discussed between the hotline and the victim.)

:05

A church should never approach (even casually) an abuser about the situation in any way apart from the consent and leading of the abused partner.

- Help the victim find an opening at a local shelter ministry and receive coaching from the shelter on how to help with the escape. (Then the victim talks to the shelter.)

Some resources for help:

Victim: *(Insert the name of a local shelter.)*

Struggling Abuser: *(Insert the name of a batterers program.)*

Action Team Representative: *(Insert the name and contact information.)*

11. Using the GODLY LIVING list from our lesson, how can you practice godly living this week?

:05

Read the following:

The epidemic of domestic abuse affects 1 in 4 families in every community. Would you like to be a part of the solution by joining or starting the Domestic Kindness Action Team at your church?

Ask for a show of hands. Get their contact information and pass it on to the Action Team or email it to domestickindness@gmail.com. Contact them within a week.



The **Domestic Kindness Action Team** equips the whole church with Domestic Kindness instruction in godly living and connects the oppressed and the struggling abusers to expert help.

Elicit and pray for each prayer request.

Announce the date of the next lesson.

:14

Lesson 8 Leader’s Guide

Responding to Abuse

| | |
|---|-----|
| Opening Prayer | :03 |
| Summary Video | :05 |
| Ice Breaker— <i>How do you bring joy to others?</i> | :10 |
| Intro Video | :06 |

Read the Discussion Guidelines (page 5) together. So far, we’ve learned how to recognize healthy relationships; how to practice *agape* love; how husbands and wives submit to each other; and God’s intentions for marriage. Then in our last lesson, we contrasted godly living with ungodly living, shining the light on the evil of domestic abuse. We were asked to practice one of the characteristics of godly living (page 42). Please share how this went. :08

Today’s lesson will discuss the signs of domestic abuse and how to respond. Please note that Domestic Kindness volunteers are not trained domestic violence advocates. All Christians can be first responders. We can learn what to say and how to point people to resources.

Testimony Video—Noelle Part 2 :14

1. **Read 1 John 3:14-18.** Our love for others shows whether we are spiritually alive. How do we demonstrate our love for others? *Sacrifice for each other. Have compassion for those in need. Truly help, not just in words.* :05

2. **Read Proverbs 24:11-12.** What does this tell us about getting involved in situations we would rather ignore? *If we see someone being destroyed, we are responsible for doing what we can to help.* :04

3. The two main types of domestic abuse are **physical** and **emotional**. In our last lesson, we discussed what **physical** abuse looks like. What do you think **emotional** abuse looks like? *critical, controlling, condescending, blaming, ignoring, sarcastic, deceptive* :05

4. **Read these ways we can help a victim of abuse:** :06

| DO | DON’T |
|----------------------------|--|
| Talk to the victim alone. | Don’t confront the abuser. (There are exceptions.) |
| Ask if something is wrong. | Don’t wait for the victim to come to you. |

| DO | DON'T |
|---|--|
| Express your concern. (“Wow, was that harsh!”) | Don’t judge or blame (either party). |
| Listen and validate. (“I believe you.” “That is tough.”) | Don’t pressure the victim to act. |
| Offer help. (“What are some things we can do?”) | Don’t give advice. (The victim has been told what to do, too often!) |
| Be patient. (Some victims return to abuse seven times or more.) | Don’t force a choice. (The victim needs to take the first step.) |
| Support their decisions. | Don’t place conditions on your support. |
| Talk through several options. | Don’t tell an abused wife that she must stay with or be submissive to an abusive husband. |

Adapted from the NY State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Do you have any suggestions for other ways to help a victim? *Don’t offer advice if you’re not sure about comments or questions. Say you’ll get back to them. Ask someone from Domestic Kindness to give you the appropriate information.* :04

In many abuse cases, the victim may need to consider separation from a spouse to be truly safe physically and emotionally.

Read Malachi 2:13-16. The Hebrew word translated as ‘divorce’ in *Malachi 2:16* means ‘send away.’ The meaning here is not that God hates divorce but that He hates the treacherous act of sending away the loyal wife, often leaving her destitute. This was considered to be violent toward her. :02

5. **Read Ezra 10:10-11.** Notice that God is okay with the Jewish men divorcing their pagan wives. **Read Mark 2:27.** Notice that Jesus Himself broke a Sabbath rule. Is God more concerned about the institution of marriage or the safety of the individuals? :05

The safety of people

Why do you believe that? *God created rules for people, not people for rules.*

God hates violence more than he hates divorce.

6. If the abuser has not shown a permanent change, is the victim safe to be with that person? **No** What will happen if the victim returns to the abusive spouse? *The abuse will escalate. The victim may attempt suicide, feeling that there is no other way out.* :03

7. If there are **minor children** in the home who have witnessed physical abuse, social services must be notified by mandated reporters. These children are considered victims of abuse if they have watched it, even if they have not been physically harmed. You can be better prepared by keeping the phone number of your local social welfare office in your contact list. Write that number here: :04

8. Do you know who the mandated reporters of child abuse are in your state? List them.
Look up the information for your state. (possibly members of the clergy, medical personnel, mental health providers, social workers, childcare providers, school employees, and law enforcement) :04
9. Read the **Domestic Kindness Role Play** (page 49). *(2 women if possible)* If you encounter a situation that seems to involve abuse, and you're not sure what to do, contact the **Domestic Kindness Action Team**. What is the name and number of your church's Domestic Kindness Action Team representative? *Have the name and number ready.* :05
10. Read **How to Help a Friend or Family Member** (page 50). In the chart below, list some things you might see or hear that could be concerns and what you might do or say in response. :11

| SIGNS OF ABUSE | MY RESPONSE |
|---|---|
| <i>A black eye or bruises</i> | <i>"Are you okay?"</i> |
| <i>Weak excuses</i> | <i>Suggest meeting together.</i> |
| <i>Financial restrictions</i> | <i>"Do you feel financially free in your marriage?"</i> |
| <i>Unexpected absences</i> | <i>"I'm concerned about you."</i> |
| <i>Self-dismissive (low self-worth)</i> | <i>"You have great value and God would never want anyone to devalue you."</i> |
| <i>Haughty put-downs by a spouse</i> | <i>Confidentially offer domestic violence information.</i> |
| <i>Unable to express feelings</i> | <i>"I'm here if you want to talk."</i> |

11. What will you do to be part of the solution to the epidemic of domestic abuse? :04

Read the following:

Would you like more information about joining the Domestic Kindness Action Team?
 (domestickindness@gmail.com) *Ask for a show of hands. Get their contact information and pass it on to the Action Team or email it to domestickindness@gmail.com. Contact them within a week.*



Your church's **Domestic Kindness Action Team** equips the whole church with instruction in godly living and connects the oppressed and the struggling abusers to expert help.

Please see the recommended books and websites at the end of this study.

- Elicit and pray for each prayer request. :12
- Announce the date of the next lesson.

Recommended Books

Bancroft, Lundy. *Why Does He Do That?* New York: Berkley Books, 2002.

Bancroft gives us a look inside the minds of angry and controlling men, describing abusive personality types and offering ways to survive or leave an abusive relationship.

Branson, Brenda, and Paula Silva. *Violence Among Us*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007.

Violence Among Us offers practical help in identifying abusive situations; gives strategic counseling tips; and provides case studies and models of effective ministry to both the victim and the perpetrator.

Evans, Patricia. *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*. Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 1996.

Evans offers strategies, sample scripts, and action plans to help you recognize verbal abuse and respond to abusers safely and appropriately.

Forrest, Joy. *Called to Peace*. Raleigh, NC: Blue Ink Press, 2018.

This inspirational book tells Joy's story, points out signs of abuse, and gives biblical guidance for healing.

Hambrick, Brad. *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2019.

This handbook guides churches in caring for sufferers of all types of abuse. Find correlating videos at churchcares.com.

Hoffman, Natalie. *Is it Me?* Rosemount, MN: Flying Free Media, 2018.

This book explains how a normal marriage differs from a confusing marriage and offers a roadmap to change.

Moles, Chris. *The Heart of Domestic Abuse*. Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2015.

The Heart of Domestic Abuse encourages godly men in the church to call abusive men to repentance and accountability through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pierre, Jeremy and Greg Wilson. *When Home Hurts*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd, 2021.

This book is intended to equip pastors, church leaders, and church members to respond with the heart of God to domestic abuse in their local church, prioritizing the safety of the victim.

Strickland, Darby. *Is it Abuse?* Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2020.

Learn how to identify the toxic entitlement that drives abusive behavior, better understand its impact on victims, and become equipped to provide wise and Christ-centered counsel to the oppressed spouse.

Vernick, Leslie. *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2013.

This book provides a plan of action for emotionally abusive relationships, helping to identify destructive behaviors, re-establish safety, stand up for yourself, and move toward a Christ-honoring restoration.

Recommended Websites

Called to Peace Ministries. calledtopeace.org

Called to Peace Ministries brings hope and healing to victims of domestic violence, emotionally destructive relationships, and sexual assault. They offer support groups for victims and training for helpers.

Change My Relationship. changemyrelationship.com

ChangeMyRelationship.com helps Christians in difficult relationships by providing practical solutions based on biblical truths for all relational issues. The website offers written and video materials.

Domestic Kindness. domestickindness.org

Domestic Kindness educates the Christian community about domestic abuse and how to connect individuals with preventive and recovery resources (through local church Domestic Kindness Action Teams).

Domestic Shelters. domesticshelters.org

This is the largest online searchable directory of domestic violence programs and shelters in the USA and is a leading source of helpful tools and information for people experiencing and working to end domestic violence.

FOCUS Ministries. focusministries1.org

This ministry offers education and assistance to women in dysfunctional marriages, spousal abuse, separation, or divorce. They also train those who want to help. Their website includes many Christian resources.

Give Her Wings. giveherwings.com

Give Her Wings serves single mothers who have left abusive relationships, showing them the love of Christ.

Men of Peace. chrismoles.org

Men of Peace educates churches in domestic abuse prevention and intervention and offers educational resources to abusive men.

The Mend Project. themendproject.com

The Mend Project provides training to equip helpers, including therapists and faith-based organizations, to identify abuse, respond to abuse, empower victims, and lead abusers toward change.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. ncadv.org

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence leads efforts to change conditions that can cause domestic violence while supporting survivors, holding offenders accountable, and supporting advocates.

National Domestic Violence Hotline. thehotline.org

This website contains a wealth of information about domestic abuse, including resources, safety plans, recognizing abuse, and helping victims.