

Survivors of abuse deserve the best of what both faith leaders and advocates bring to the table.

- REV. DR. ANNE MARIE HUNTER



WHAT WILL BE

- ABUSERS IN RELIGION?
- OVERVIEW OF MAJOR RELIGIONS
 - CHRISTINIATY
 - SLAM
 - JUDAISM
- What can Be done?

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN AFFECT ANYONE

- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN AFFECT ANYONE, REGARDLESS OF HOW THEY IDENTIFY, THE COMMUNITIES THEY BELONG TO, OR HOW THEY ARE SEEN BY OTHERS. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IS NO EXCEPTION TO THIS—DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN AFFECT PEOPLE WHO PRACTICE ANY RELIGION, NO RELIGION, MULTIPLE RELIGIONS, OR WHO ENGAGE IN OTHER SPIRITUAL PRACTICES.
- ABUSERS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MISINTERPRETATIONS OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS AND EXPLOIT SCRIPTURE AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR HARMING OTHERS BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.

Asserting Authority

Using Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to impose gender roles that are abusive or coercive, to assert authority, to reinforce male privilege, to encourage you to submit, to give commands, or to punish you.

Reproduction Using Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to force you to have sex or unprotected sex, to deny or force family planning, to participate in polygamous marriage or genital mutilation, to have sex or be married at a young age, to be in an arranged or forced marriage.

Controlling

Sexuality and

Using Children

emergency medical care, or to

neglect medical care for your

Using Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to arrange and force marriage for teens, to value male over female children, to use Restricting girls as commodities for bride prize Access to or Use or dowry, to sell young girls of Health Care as commodities, to force Using Scripture, traditions you to raise children or cultural norms to force you in another faith to forego regular check ups, or no faith. family planning, medications,

Relationships Using Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to encourage you to

Prolonging Abusive

forgive, to keep the relationship together, to sacrifice yourself for Isolation the relationship, to excuse or Isolating you from minimize the abuse. your faith community to remain silent. by not allowing you to or to accept participate in services or events, suffering. by silencing you when you are there, by moving the family from congregation to congregation, or by forcing you to attend services in a different faith community.

Spiritual **And Religious** Abuse

Using Scripture, Traditions, and Cultural Norms to Assert Power and Control

> Blaming The Victim Using Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to blame you and justify abuse because you are

defiled.

Using Community Coercion

Working through clergy or lay leader, or friends or family from your faith community, to put pressure on you to stay in the relationship or to put up with abuse. Coercion may take the form of letters or phone calls on the abuser's behalf, comments in social settings, etc. female, sinful, and the weaker vessel, estranged from God, not created in God's image, created to be man's servant, unclean, polluted,

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION: ROADBLOCK OR RESOURCE?

- CHURCH DOCTRINES AND TEACHINGS ABOUT A WOMAN'S PLACE, DUTY, AND NATURE ADD TO THE PROBLEM.
- Many refuse to believe that abuse exists within their congregations.
- Religious leaders hold significant power in either aiding victims or encouraging violence by abusers.
- A LOT OF VICTIMS IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS BEGIN TO QUESTION "WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME? WHY WOULD GOD ALLOW THIS?"
- THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT FAITH AND RELIGIOUS TEXTS HAVE NOT HELPED VICTIMS ON THEIR JOURNEYS OF HEALING.



WORLD RELIGIONS

- CHRISTIANITY
 - WORLDWIDE: 2.4 BILLION CHRISTIANS
 - HOLY BOOK: BIBLE
- ISLAM
 - WORLDWIDE: 1.9 BILLIION MUSLIMS
 - HOLY BOOK: QURAN
- JUDAISM
 - WORLDWIDE: 15.7 MILLION JEWS
 - HOLY BOOK: TORAH

STATISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITHIN WORLD RELIGIONS

- IN THE U.S., THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND UNDERSTANDING, POLLED MUSLIMS, JEWS, CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS, AND NON-AFFILIATED AMERICANS. IT FOUND THAT MUSLIMS, BOTH CHRISTIAN GROUPS, NON-AFFILIATED, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC WERE ALL EQUALLY LIKELY TO REPORT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THEIR FAITH COMMUNITY.
- ULTIMATELY, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RATES
 AMONG DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS GROUPS
 ARE SIMILAR. THIS IS PARTICULARLY
 CONCERNING DUE TO WESTERN
 CULTURE CLASSIFYING ISLAM AS A
 VIOLENT RELIGION.

CHRISTIANITY: WHAT DOES IT TEACH ABOUT SUFFERING?

God is merciful and loving. Suffering is not pleasing to God and he does not single anyone out to suffer just because.

In Christian teaching, at no point does God promise that we will not suffer. In scripture, God does promise to be present with us during our suffering.

For Christians, the promise to victims from God is that even though all others might abandon them, God will be faithful.

CHRISTIANITY: WHAT DOES IT TEACH ABOUT MARRIAGE?

- MISINTERPRETATIONS OF TEXTS HAVE CREATED SUBSTANTIAL PROBLEMS FOR THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP.
 - FOR EXAMPLE, WOMEN SUBMITTING TO THEIR HUSBANDS, HAVING TO OBEY, ADULTERY BEING THE ONLY JUSTIFIABLE REASON FOR DIVORCE, ETC.
- EVEN SO HUSBANDS SHOULD LOVE THEIR WIVES AS THEIR OWN BODIES. HE WHO LOVES HIS WIFE LOVES HIMSELF. FOR NO MAN EVER HATES HIS OWN FLESH, BUT NOURISHES IT AND CHERISHES IT, AS CHRIST DOES THE CHURCH, BECAUSE WE ARE MEMBERS OF HIS BODY.' (EPHESIANS 5:28-29)
 - THIS INSTRUCTION TO HUSBANDS IS VERY CLEAR AND CONCRETE. A HUSBAND IS TO NOURISH AND CHERISH HIS OWN BODY AND THAT OF HIS WIFE. PHYSICALLY BATTERING ONE'S SPOUSE IS PROBABLY THE MOST BLATANT VIOLATION OF THIS TEACHING AND A CLEAR REFLECTION OF THE SELF-HATRED WITHIN THE ABUSER.

ISLAM: MISCONCEPTIONS

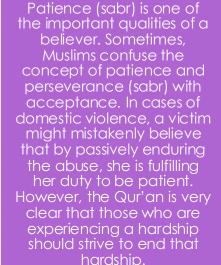
Honor killings are not caused or encouraged by Islam. Honor killings are not even a problem specific to Muslims.

No laws condoning honor killings are based on Islamic teachings.

Feeding the rhetoric that Islam is a violent religion dismisses that violence against women is a global problem with roots much deeper than the doctrines of one religion or the features of one culture.

ISLAM: WHAT DOES IT TEACH ABOUT SUFFERING?

The Qur'an teaches that this life is a test. Tests can come in a wide variety of forms. A Muslim's goal is to respond to hardships by persevering and by continuing to turn to God for guidance and help.



tested does not in any way relieve an abuser of being accountable for the violence imposed on others. The Qur'an emphasizes that each person is solely responsible for his or her actions, and that no one can blame to justify their abusive behavior. In fact, the Qur'an describes oppressors as people who souls because their behavior will lead them to be punished in the hereafter.



The Qur'an also teaches that believers can avail themselves of God's mercy and compassion while they are experiencing tests and tribulations.

ISLAM: WHAT DOES IT TEACH ABOUT MARRIAGE?

- MARRIAGE IS DESCRIBED IN THE QUR'AN AS A ,SOLEMN COVENANT;'14 IT
 IS A CONTRACT WITNESSED BY GOD BETWEEN TWO CONSENTING ADULTS
 WHO AGREE TO LIVE TOGETHER IN ACCORDANCE TO HIS LAWS. THE
 QUR'AN SAYS THAT ,HE CREATED FOR YOU MATES FROM AMONG
 YOURSELVES THAT YOU MAY DWELL IN TRANQUILITY WITH THEM, AND HE HAS
 PUT LOVE AND MERCY BETWEEN YOUR (HEARTS)<' (30:21).
- ATHE QUR'AN RECOGNIZES THAT NOT ALL MARRIAGES ARE SUSTAINABLE.
 COUPLES ARE ENCOURAGED TO EITHER LIVE TOGETHER IN KINDNESS, OR TO
 SEPARATE IN KINDNESS IF THEY ARE UNABLE TO LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD'S
 TEACHINGS. DIVORCE IS PROVIDED AS AN OPTION OF LAST RESORT TO
 PROTECT INDIVIDUALS FROM EXPERIENCING ANY HARM.



JUDAISM: WHAT DOES IT TEACH ABOUT SUFFERING?

- MANY JEWISH TEACHINGS MAINTAIN THAT DIVINE PUNISHMENT IS NOT METED OUT AT ALL IN THIS WORLD—IT IS
 LEFT FOR THE WORLD TO COME. AND ALL AGREE THAT IT IS NOT FOR US HUMANS TO EXACT DIVINE
 PUNISHMENT OR, FOR THAT MATTER, ANY PUNISHMENT OUTSIDE OF THE JUDICIAL PROCESS.
- ACTS OF PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE CLEARLY ARE NOT UNDERSTOOD TO BE INSTRUMENTS OF
 DIVINE JUSTICE OR PROPER LEGAL PROCEEDINGS. IT IS THE DIVINE GIFT OF FREE WILL THAT UNFORTUNATELY
 ALLOWS SOME TO ACT IN HURTFUL AND SINFUL WAYS. THE ABUSERS, NOT GOD, ARE RECOGNIZED AS THE
 SOURCE OF SUFFERING.
- THOSE WHO SUFFER ARE TO FIND COMFORT IN THE HELP AND SUPPORT OF FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY, AND FROM GOD. JEWS HAVE A RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION TO LESSEN ANOTHER'S BURDEN AND NOT TO STAND BY CALLOUSLY OR INDIFFERENTLY WHEN ANOTHER SUFFERS.

JUDAISM: WHAT DOES IT TEACH ABOUT MARRIAGE?

- Judaism views marriage as necessary for personal fulfillment and is the fundamental unit of community life.
- One of the fundamental values of Jewish family life is ,Shalom Bayit,' peace in the home.
 ,Shalom,' which is simply translated as ,peace,' also signifies wholeness, completeness, and fulfillment.
- THE CONCEPT OF SHALOM BAYIT SHOULD NOT BE INVOKED TO PLACE DOMESTIC HARMONY SOLELY ON THE SHOULDERS OF A WIFE, NOR SHOULD IT BE USED TO ENCOURAGE MAINTAINING AN ABUSIVE MARRIAGE. WHEN DOMESTIC HARMONY IS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL ABUSE, THE ONLY WAY FOR PEACE MAY BE DIVORCE.
- Although marriage is a sacred institution, divorce has always been an option according to the Jewish tradition.

Develop Protocols to Help Domestic Violence Victims

Have an action plan in place to follow if an abused woman asks for help or if a congregant is abusing his family. Prioritize the safety Your Children of victims and accountibility Make sure all teachers of the batterer. Be and youth group leaders ready to make receive training about how to referrals.

recognize abuse and whom to approach with concerns. Include age-appropriate prevention programming about bullying, teen dating violence, and family violence for

Support

children and youth.

Use Your Prophetic Voice

Give some sermons on domestic violence to build awareness, teach that family violence is not acceptable in your community, and emphasize that help is available. Incorporate special prayers on domestic violence into services.

Get Training Participate in workshops designed for religious leaders to learn safe and effective ways to address domestic violence in your congregation. Network with other clergy and communities for support. Contact Safe Havens for education and technical assistance.

Create a Safe Haven

Religious

Community

Response

Work

as a Team

Make your congregation a safe place where abused women can ask for help. Let you community know that you are prepared to provide support. Keep an updated list of referral resources.

Teach Through Life Cycle Events

You may have more contact with families around life cycle events related to the birth of a child, coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. Observe the dynamics within families and share resources as needed Be aware that pregnancy and the arrival of a child may escalate abusive behavior.

Educate Your Community

Sponsor educational programs on domestic violence. Invite staff from local shelters and other providers to speak at services. Print articles that include lists of community resources in your bulletin. Post Domestic violence bathroom flyers with resource numbers.

is a complex problem that requires a team approach. Clearly define your role and be ready to refer by building relationships with domestic violence advocates, police, and staff at state-certified batterer intervention programs.

MHAT CAN BE DONES

- FAITH AND RELIGION CAN BE A SENSE OF HEALING AND COMFORT FOR VICTIMS.
- FAITH LEADERS MUST TAKE STEPS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE DYNAMICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOW TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS.
- Advocates and service providers must UNDERSTAND HOW TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS' RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.
- RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES HAVE THE POWER TO ENSURE THAT FAITH IS NOT MANIPULATED BY ABUSERS, BUT RATHER IS A SOURCE OF EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNITY FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

QUESTIONS?