



Chaplaincy Tools For Serving Victims of Domestic Violence

Presentation Summary: This training conversation with Sandra Ziebold is designed to equip faith leaders with an understanding that chaplaincy is uniquely placed to reach victims. We will explore how abusers use faith as a weapon against victims and how that may impact victims being receptive to help from faith leaders. We will discuss how the Bible can be a barrier to freedom and a healing resource. The goal is that faith leaders will gain helpful information, have a broadened perspective and valuable resource tools for serving the community.

FAITH LEADERS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

uniquely placed to reach out to victims

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ABOUT SANDY

Sandra Ziebold is an experienced CEO with 25 years of non-profit and for-profit executive and board leadership experience. She is known for creative solutions. A business topics forerunner on problem solving, perspective taking, and organizational leadership. She excels at human-centered leadership and trauma. She has been in the media heavily, influenced positive changes to law and is a certified expert witness. Her expert witness testimony has positively impacted lives. Her opinion is requested by prosecutors for advisory consult. She is an expert in matters pertaining to domestic violence, pet abuse and strangulation. Involved with numerous organizations, task forces and coalitions.

Domestic violence affects people of every faith

- In fact, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence or stalking at the hands of an intimate partner.
- Comparing 2019 to 2020 violence has increased exponentially. Trends show an increase in our overall homicide rates, domestic murder-suicides, stalking/harassment, requests for protective orders and a significant increase in strangulation.

WHAT DOES FAITH HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

A study of older adults
found that,

*"respondents, especially
minorities, often indicated
that their 'first stop' would
be a member of the clergy
if they were to discuss
their [abuse] with
anyone." **

*Richard Beaulaurier, Laura Seff, and Frederick Newman, "Barriers to Help-Seeking for Older Women Who Experience Intimate Partner Violence: A Descriptive Model," *Journal of Women and Aging*, Vol. 20(3/4) 2008, p. 240-241.

You are uniquely placed to reach out to victims

- Clergy and lay leaders stand on the front lines of the domestic violence and elder abuse crisis. However, we do not always feel prepared to respond. To make matters worse, an abuser may have already used faith as a weapon against the victim. As a result, victims may believe that they should forgive, live with the abuse, or honor the covenant of marriage no matter what.
- Faith leaders are uniquely placed to reach out to victims and help direct them to services and safety. Starting right in our own congregations, we can transform faith from a weapon to a resource and support victims with knowledge and compassion.

Spiritual and Religious Abuse

- Misusing
 - Scripture
 - Traditions
 - Cultural Norms
- To Assert Power and Control

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

Prolonging Abusive Relationships

Misusing Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to encourage you to forgive abuse, to prolong an abusive relationship, to excuse or minimize the abuse, to remain silent, or to accept suffering and abuse.

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

Isolation

Isolating you from your faith community by not allowing you to participate in services or events, 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.

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

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 include letters or phone calls on the abuser's behalf, comments in social settings and on social media.

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

Blaming the Victim

Misusing Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to blame you and justify abuse because you are sinful, estranged from God, not created in God's image, created to be a servant or slave, unclean, polluted, or defiled.

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

Restricting Access or Use of Health Care

Misusing Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to force you to forego regular checkups and medical care, family planning, medications, emergency medical care, or to neglect medical care for your children.

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

Using Children

Misusing Scripture, traditions, or cultural norms to coerce or force marriage for teens, to value male over female children, to use girls as commodities for bride price or dowry, to sell young girls as commodities, to force you to raise children in another faith or no faith.

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

Controlling Sexuality and Reproduction

Misusing 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 a coerced or forced marriage.

Ways of asserting spiritual and religious abuse:

Asserting Authority

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

For Christian victims of sexual and domestic violence, the Bible can be a barrier to freedom...

- **“This is just my cross to bear.”** When Christ told his followers to “pick up your cross and follow me” (Mt. 10:38, 16:24; Luke 9:23), he meant that his followers may have to suffer if they follow in his footsteps. It is dangerous to speak out against injustice, to be in ministry in broken communities, or to speak God’s word of peace in a violent and power-hungry world. Jesus was prepared to suffer in order to make God’s kingdom of peace and justice a reality. But the suffering that domestic violence inflicts is different. It is imposed from without, rather than freely chosen by the victim. Instead of establishing God’s Kingdom, the suffering of domestic violence is in opposition to God’s kingdom, where peace and joy abound. God does not mean for anyone to suffer abuse.

...the Bible can be a barrier to freedom...

- **“Christ suffered for me, now it’s my turn to suffer for Christ.”** Paul said that Christ dies for our sins, not so that we may continue to suffer, but that we may have eternal life (Rom. 6:23). The writer of Hebrews says, “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14). Suffering for the sake of suffering is not redemptive. Jesus has justified and redeemed us.
- **“I made a vow before God. What God has joined, let no one tear asunder.”** (Matt. 19:6). The covenant of marriage is “torn asunder” by the abuser’s violence, not by the victim’s need to speak the truth about the violence. God does not intend for the marriage covenant to be a place of violence, verbal abuse, or victimization.
- **“I was taught to turn the other cheek, and to forgive 7 x 70.”** Jesus taught us not to return evil for evil, to pray for our enemies, and not to be vindictive. But this does not mean that Christians are to be punching bags. Paul says, “hate what is evil; cling to what is good... never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written: ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the lord.’” (Rom. 12:17, 19). Abusers are subject to God’s judgment, and their behavior is condemned by God. Forgiveness must be predicated on the batterer’s repentance, and repentance means changed behavior, not just saying, “I’m sorry, honey.”

...the Bible can be a barrier to freedom...

- **“Women should be subject to their husbands.”** The Bible says that the husband and the wife should “be subject to one another out of reverence to Christ.” (Eph. 5:21). Within that context, Paul goes on to say that “women should be subject to their husbands, “but also that “the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, his body and himself its Savior” (Eph. 5:22-23). Remember that, as the head of the Church, Christ served, nourished, and cherished the Church, and even died for its sake. Christ would never do anything to abuse or oppress the Church. Neither should husbands abuse or oppress their wives. Rather, the two are to live together in mutual respect and love. As the writer of Colossians says, “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them” (Col. 3:19).

For Christian victims, the Bible can also be a resource more precious than gold...

- **All people are “a temple of the Holy Spirit.** If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him” (1Cor. 3:16-17). We are all precious and valued children of God. We are made in God’s likeness, and God’s spirit dwells in us. God never wills for one of His children to be abused. Abusers stand against God’s judgment.
- **“Jesus came to give life, and to give it abundantly”** (John 10:10). God’s will for us is not that we merely survive from day to day, wondering when this nightmare will be over, but that we have a life that is rewarding, joyful, faithful, and fulfilling. God wants us to grow spiritually and be able to respond to God’s call in our lives. Physical, mental, verbal, financial, and spiritual abuse undermine a life of faith.

...the Bible can also be a resource more precious than gold...

- **God calls people of faith out of oppression and into the Promised Land.** When the people of Israel were in slavery in Egypt, God heard their cries for help (Ex. 3:7-9) and came to their aid. God delivered them from their oppression “with a mighty hand” (Ex. 3:39) and led them through the Wilderness to the Promised Land. God stands on the side of the oppressed and is active in human lives to move people from oppression to freedom. God hears the cries of domestic violence victims too and walks with them towards safety and freedom.
- **God will not abandon us.** People of the Bible knew what it was to have their friend, their intimate partner, turn against them. The Psalms are a great resource for victims who are feeling abandoned (Ps. 22) or distressed (Ps. 55, 120). However, the Psalmist also speaks of the comfort of God’s presence (Ps. 22, 91, 118) and God’s guidance on the journey toward freedom. (Ps. 22, 107)

*Material from Marie Fortune’s Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse.



Thank You For Your Chaplaincy Service To Our Community

Handouts:

1. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Community Referral Resources
2. Power and Control Wheels
3. Faith-Based Response Wheels
4. Contact information for Sandy