

Sermon and Small Group Discussion Questions
From *Responding to Domestic Violence: A Toolkit for Faith Communities*
A resource from the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence

- What do religious texts say about how partners should be treated in intimate partner relationships? Find information on interpretations of religious texts [here](#).
- [What are common myths about domestic violence?](#) What are the facts?
- What should we know about domestic violence in same sex relationships? How is domestic violence different in heterosexual relationships; how is it the same? How does this information affect our faith community's domestic violence prevention and response plans?
- It is a common response to domestic violence to ask, "[Why doesn't the victim just leave?](#)" What are the assumptions and problems with this question? What if instead we asked, "Why doesn't the abuser stop abusing?"
- What can we do as faith community members and leaders to prevent domestic violence? How are we prepared and how can we be better prepared to prevent and address it? How can we keep this issue and our values around it from getting lost among the many issues people care about and/or experience in our congregation?
- Why do many faith communities believe domestic violence is not happening within their congregations? To their youth, to their adults, to their members, to their visitors? How would the congregation or people in it know? What are the facts about who experiences or commits domestic violence? What personal stories are we at liberty to share and what lessons do they hold?
- How do we support families experiencing stress, such as the birth of a new child, loss of a job, or substance abuse? How do we create opportunities to have rich and confidential conversations in our faith community about the bad times in addition to the good times? How do we create opportunities for supportive and effective responses to the needs of those experiencing and committing abuse among us?
- [Who breaks the covenant of marriage; the abuser or the victim who leaves?](#) How can views about the covenant of marriage impact victim and child safety?
- [What is domestic violence?](#) What types of behavior are abusive? How do we teach people in the congregation to be a good partner in an intimate relationship? What more can we do?

- How do we teach and talk to our youth (all genders) about healthy relationships? How do we teach them to be a good partner? How do we help them know what to do if they find themselves in an abusive relationship?
- What is [victim blaming](#) and how does it perpetuate domestic violence? How do we provide opportunities for education within our faith community to counter cultural beliefs that victims have the responsibility to end the abuse?
- [What is helpful and what is not helpful if someone confides in you that they are experiencing abuse?](#) Why is dealing with domestic violence uncomfortable and how can we be prepared to deal with it in ways that prioritize and promote victim and child safety?
- What consequences might a congregation experience if they talk about domestic violence? What consequences might a congregation experience if they do not talk about domestic violence? What personal stories have been offered and how can we learn from them?
- How is domestic violence related to other social justice issues like homelessness, poverty, equality, human rights, child abuse, and oppression? How can faith communities help prevent and end domestic violence within the faith community and elsewhere?
- Many faith communities experience division when an allegation of domestic violence involving a congregation member occurs. What are the major considerations for a congregation when responding to domestic violence? Who in the congregation responds to domestic violence? What are their responsibilities? [What response procedures do we place and do they prioritize victim and child safety needs?](#)
- What is the difference between an unhealthy relationship and an abusive relationship?