
Preface

In the decade since I wrote the first edition of *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know*, clergy and other pastoral ministers have chosen to equip themselves with the necessary education and training to become effective allies with a diverse group of colleagues. They have developed a clear understanding not only of the important role faith has in the lives of many victims and survivors, but also how perpetrators of domestic violence will often misuse sacred texts and the divine to claim an alleged God-given entitlement over women and children.

Recognizing the importance of a coordinated response from a wide variety of professional disciplines within their communities, these spiritual leaders discuss domestic violence intervention and prevention strategies across denominational and religious traditions—and with such diverse groups as advocates, batterers' intervention counselors, business women and men, healthcare workers, law enforcement officers, legal professionals, military

personnel, shelter workers, and a plethora of other community service providers. This is indeed good news. On the other hand:

There remain widespread myths about domestic violence that serve abusive men far better than violated women, including the belief that there are no abused women in our congregations; Christian survivors need only faith, prayer, a positive attitude, and God to be freed from domestic violence; domestic violence occurs only in urban areas and within certain cultural, racial, and socioeconomic groups; and that victims can stop the battering by changing their behavior.

In addition, many clergy and other pastoral ministers still have not taken the time to receive appropriate and effective training in domestic violence awareness, choosing to believe that no true man of God would ever abuse his wife or girlfriend; that domestic violence is greatly exaggerated in order for radical feminists to secure billions of dollars from the United States federal government; that the primary goal of advocates and other domestic violence community service providers is to change all women into lesbians, encourage divorce, and ruin the fine reputation of Christian men; or simply that pastors cannot take on all social issues.

The need for consistently reliable involvement by spiritual leaders to help address and end intimate partner violence, both in our church and secular communities, cannot be overstated. Battered women, and even the men who abuse them, are most likely to first turn to clergy and other pastoral ministers for help prior to seeking assistance from the host of service providers located throughout their communities.

Thank you for choosing to read this book. The second edition of *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know* is a call to action for all Christian spiritual leaders. A decade ago domestic violence was a major problem in our congregations and communities. This remains the case.

Using the first volume as a starting point, we will expand upon such topics as the reality of domestic violence within and outside of Christian congregations, the dos and don'ts of how to deal with victims-survivors and violators, especially when the abuser is himself a spiritual leader, and the complicated issue of forgiveness.

In addition, we will explore two new topics: the effect the economic downturn is having on victims-survivors and batterers, and helping clergy and other pastoral ministers develop a more compassionate response to victims-survivors who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender.

A huge crisis of consciousness and faith confronts us here in the second decade of the twenty-first century. We can choose to continue to propagate a sexist world in which men are given undeserved power to dominate women and children, a privilege ordained neither by God nor Jesus Christ, but by societal systems. Or we can face head-on the problems of the real world by working in collaboration with women and men in our congregations, neighborhoods, and throughout our communities. Our primary goal as Christians must be to stop all the violence perpetrated by men against their female intimate partners and children within and outside of the Christian church.

The choice is ours. So are the consequences of our actions—and our inactions.