

“What is the Role of the Church in Women Battering?”

What is the role of the church in women battering?

First, let me recommend my colleague Kerby Anderson’s article [Abuse and Domestic Violence](#). The final section has a segment called “What the Church Can Do.”

Also, I would respectfully suggest that the role of the church is to challenge battering husbands that their actions are sin and hold them accountable for their behavior, and to provide emotional and physical support to the wife until the home is safe again. The wife and those in church leadership would know it is safe when the husband evidences a changed heart resulting in changed behavior. And a changed heart usually only happens in the context of community, in this case male community, where a small group of men will, in love and commitment, “get in his face” to challenge his wrong thinking, help identify the anger fueling his rage against his wife, and encourage him to move into a deeper relationship with God.

The best specific answer to this question I’ve heard is the policy of church leadership to meet with the husband and wife, to confront the husband in love: about his responsibility to love and cherish his wife as Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25–29), about the importance of using his strength to serve his wife, not hurt or threaten her, and to live with her in an understanding way, honoring her as a weaker vessel (1 Pet. 3:7). Then—and this is extremely important—the husband is warned that if he tries to retaliate in any way, whether by force or even threatening to hurt his wife, she is to call the elders and tell them. And they will take action, either removing her from the home to safety or moving his stuff out so she can stay in the home. And they promise that retaliation will not be tolerated: if she doesn’t press charges for the

domestic violence, they will. Assault and battery is not just a sin; it's a crime.

I know that in many (if not most) churches, those in leadership don't know what to do other than tell the wife "pray harder and submit." (If that had worked, she wouldn't need intervention!) An excellent resource for understanding the dynamics of an abusive husband is Paul Hegstrom's book *Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them*, which is written by a repentant, recovered abuser. And pastor, by the way!

I hope you find this helpful.

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