

# Why It Is So Important to Preach About Domestic Violence In the Church

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- Victims need to know that their pastor can define domestic violence, what it looks like, the many tactics used, and that pastors are prepared to help in times of need.
- Preaching against, or speaking knowledgeably, about domestic violence from the pulpit communicates to victims that the pastor will take this crime seriously.
- Preaching about domestic violence is one way to communicate your concern about this topic to the whole congregation. This creates a culture where victims know their pastoral staff is ready and able to talk to them about any concerns in their own relationships (but the pastor and staff must also have awareness about abuse, know the signs, and how to respond).
- For perpetrators, hearing preaching against domestic violence from the pulpit communicates that abuse is never okay. It creates boundaries for behavior and speech. Coming from the pulpit, this carries weight and has authority among churchgoers.
- Clear communication from the pastor that domestic violence is wrong sets the tone for the congregation regarding healthy relationships. Harm, aggression, and deceit never glorify God and are harmful to the bonds between people.
- Consider how the words of your sermon might sound to one who is a victim of domestic violence. Know that perpetrators of abuse may weaponize your words and sermons against their victims to require subjection and compliance under the guise of God's commands. (Doing this would be a form of spiritual abuse, which is not uncommon in faith-based homes and settings.)
- Know what NOT to say about domestic violence: do not assume that the victim caused the domestic violence; do not say that the victim deserved it; do not ask what the victim did to cause the abuse; do not minimize or dismiss the reports of abuse; do not automatically defend the perpetrator; do not tell the victim that God requires them to stay in the abusive relationship; do not tell the victim that prayer/love/submission will make the perpetrator a better person – that work falls onto the perpetrator alone.
- Know how to respond: express your concern for the victim's safety; let the victim know that abuse is never okay; offer the church's support; provide resources for assistance; point them to the local family violence shelter; respect the victim's choices and autonomy; if there are children or elderly persons involved know your state's laws about mandated reporting.