

# Bible study: The silent epidemic

**Topic:** A Christian response to domestic and family violence

**Key verses:** Proverbs 31:8-9, Psalm 11:5, 1 Peter 3:7-8, John 13:34-35

**Note for group leader:** Discussing this topic may be an emotional trigger for people who have experienced trauma or abuse, so consider warning them in advance that this topic will be covered and/or give them the opportunity to leave.

## Question 1

- What comes to mind when you think of 'domestic and family violence'?

## Introduction

- On average, one woman every eight days and one man every 14 days is killed by a current or former partner.<sup>1</sup>
- 40% of people who sought help from homelessness services in 2024-25 had experienced domestic and family violence.<sup>2</sup>
- While domestic violence can affect both genders, 75% of those seeking help were female.<sup>2</sup>

Were you aware of the scale of these statistics?

## Question 2

While the church has traditionally been vocal on the sanctity of marriage and the permanence of wedding vows ... it's been much less common for a sermon to touch on domestic violence.

Do you believe Christians have a role to play in tackling violence occurring behind closed doors? Why do you think it is rarely discussed in public?

## Question 3

Domestic and family violence comes in many forms. These include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse

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<sup>1</sup> AIHW (2025): Domestic homicide 2023–24. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/domestic-homicide>

<sup>2</sup> AIHW (2025): Specialist homelessness services annual report 2024–25. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-who-have-experienced-fdsv>

- Sexual abuse
- Social abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Economic abuse
- Spiritual abuse

Can you think of examples of each of these?

#### Question 4

- **READ: Proverbs 31:8-9** *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

- What does 'speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves' ... the destitute ... poor and needy ... look like in the context of domestic violence? What are some of the risks to consider?

- **How to SPEAK UP if you suspect a friend is a victim of domestic violence:**

**Listen to them.** Don't jump in with answers, take time to listen (James 1:19)

**Validate and believe them.** Often victims of abuse fear not being believed.

**Be clear they're not to blame.** Be careful that what you say doesn't accidentally suggest that they could avoid the violence by changing their own behaviour.

**Help them seek help.** Remember they need to desire change and take the first step. If their life is in danger, call 000. Otherwise the best starting point is for them to call 1800 RESPECT or go to [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

**Pray with them.**

#### Question 5

- **READ: Psalm 11:5** *The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion.*

God is unequivocal - He hates violence. (See also Gen 6:11-13; Ezek 8:17-18, Hos 12:1-3, Obadiah:10)

Why do you think God hates violence?

What are the challenges that Christians might face in trying to represent God's heart in an issue like domestic violence that is usually deeply personal and often associated with a sense of shame?

- **How to SPEAK UP if you see or hear a friend acting abusively:**

**Confront them.** Tell them it's not right, there's no excuse for it and you want them to get help.

**Have compassion but hold them accountable.** Personal history may partially explain their mindset, but it doesn't excuse it. They need to get help. 24x7 phone counselling is available through Men's Line (1300 78 99 78 or [mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)). They can also contact the Men's Referral Service (1300 766 491 or [ntv.org.au](http://ntv.org.au)).

## Question 6

- **READ: 1 Peter 3:7-8** *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.*

Scan through the key words in this passage (considerate, respect, like-minded, sympathetic, love, compassionate and humble). What can we learn from this passage about God's desire for a Christian marriage? Would these things be helpful in other relationships?

- **READ: John 13:34-35** *A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

Even if we're not married, we know that Jesus wants us to love the way he loves us, and violence is definitely not loving. What does Christ-like love look like?

Is there anything that you need to apply to your own life here and now?

## Discuss: Three ways you can help victims of domestic violence

1. **PRAY:** Pray for those in abusive relationships and for those working actively to help them. Pray for organisations such as Mission Australia who help people that have experienced domestic and family violence.

Sign up to receive Mission Australia's prayer diary at [missionaustralia.com.au/prayer](http://missionaustralia.com.au/prayer)

2. **VOLUNTEER:** There are many ways to help, from simply offering a smile and warm conversation to giving of your time and talents to bless others. You could offer to read the Bible, pray, and encourage someone suffering from domestic violence. You could do the same to help hold accountable someone you know who is struggling with their anger and violence. Or your church could serve alongside a Christian service organisation like Mission Australia.

For ideas, go to [missionaustralia.com.au/churches](http://missionaustralia.com.au/churches)

3. **GIVE:** Give of your finances to support the work of God in this area. As Jesus said in **Matthew 25:35** *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.*

This could be through your local church's ministries or you can donate to Mission Australia securely online at [missionaustralia.com.au](http://missionaustralia.com.au) or by phoning 1800 88 88 68.

## Know someone who needs help?

If their life is in danger, they should call 000.

For other concerns, the [National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line](https://www.nsv.gov.au/) is available on 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732).

Each state government has their own resources and support services available. You can access them from [www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/children-youth-families-and-communities/domestic-family-violence](http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/children-youth-families-and-communities/domestic-family-violence).

Mission Australia's services are available at [missionaustralia.com.au/find-support](http://missionaustralia.com.au/find-support).