

Bible Verses About Domestic Violence

Abuse is Sin

Domestic violence is sinful. These scriptures describe the sinful behaviors abusers use to control their victims.

*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; **hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.** I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

(Galatians 5:19-21)

*Do not **lie**. Do not **deceive** one another.*

(Leviticus 19:11)

*The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates those who **love violence**. He will rain down blazing coals and burning sulfur on the wicked, punishing them with scorching winds.*

(Psalm 11:5-7, NLT)

*They are always **twisting what I say**; they spend their days to harm me.*

(Psalm 56:5, NLT)

*Therefore, **pride** is their necklace. **They clothe themselves with violence**.*

(Psalm 73:6)

*A scoundrel and villain, who goes about with a **corrupt mouth**, who **winks with his eye**, **signals with his feet and motions with his fingers**, who **plots evil with deceit in his heart**—he always stirs up dissension. Therefore, disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed without remedy.*

(Proverbs 6:12-15)

*Here are six things God hates, and one more that he loathes with a passion: eyes that are **arrogant**, a **tongue that lies**, **hands that murder the innocent**, a **heart that hatches evil plots**, **feet that race down a wicked track**, a **mouth that lies under oath**, a **troublemaker in the family**.*

(Proverbs 6:16, The Message)

*The Lord detests all the **proud of heart**. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.*

(Proverbs 15:5)

*A worthless man **plots evil**, and his **speech is like a scorching fire**. A dishonest man **spreads strife**, and a whisperer separates close friends. A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good.*

(Proverbs 16:27-29)

*Do you see a person **wise in their own eyes**?
There is more hope for a fool than for them.*
(Proverbs 26:12)

*Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, “**I was only joking!**”*
(Proverbs 26:18–19)

*A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart, he harbors **deceit**. Though his **speech is charming**, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. His malice may be concealed by **deception**, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.*
(Proverbs 26:24–26)

*Your fasting ends in **quarreling and strife**,
and in **striking each other** with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.*
(Isaiah 58:4)

*“For I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel. “And **I hate the man who does wrong to his wife**,” says the Lord of All. “So be careful in your spirit and **be one who can be trusted**.”*
(Malachi 2:16)

*You’re familiar with the command to the ancients, “Do not murder.” I’m telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother “idiot!” and you just might find yourself hauled into court. **Thoughtlessly yell “stupid!” at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill.***
(Matthew 5:21–22, The Message)

*Love is patient, love is kind. **It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.***
(1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

*Do not let any **unwholesome talk** come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*
(Ephesians 4:29)

*Nor should there be **obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking**, which are out of place...*
(Ephesians 5:4)

*If you claim to be religious but **don’t control your tongue**, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.”*
(James 1:26, NLT)

Abusers Look Good to those Outside the Home Because They Usually Only Abuse Those Inside the Home

It is often hard for us to believe an “upstanding Christian” could abuse. But God is not surprised.

*But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. **People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**”*

(1 Samuel 16:7)

*“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, **but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.** Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but **a bad tree bears bad fruit.** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

(Matthew 7:15-20)

Separating from the Unrepentant

The Bible supports the idea of **limiting togetherness** for the sake of “binding evil.”

***Turn from evil** and do good;
then you will dwell in the land forever.*

(Psalm 37:27)

***Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil,**
to take part in wicked deeds
with men who are evildoers;
let me not eat of their delicacies.
Keep me from the snares they have laid for me,
from the traps set by evildoers.
Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
while I pass by in safety.*

(Psalm 141:4, 9-10)

*They rejected my advice and paid no attention when I corrected them. **Therefore, they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way, choking on their own schemes.***

(Proverbs 1:30-31)

***Go from the presence of a foolish man,** when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.*

(Proverbs 14:7)

*The prudent see danger and **take refuge,**
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.*

(Proverbs 27:12)

*When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and **escape** to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So, he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt.*

(Matthew 2:13-14)

*When you are persecuted in one place, **flee to another.***

(Matthew 10:23)

*If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, **treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.***

(Matthew 18:15–17)

*But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. **Do not even eat with such people. . . Expel the wicked person from among you.***

(1 Corinthians 5:11, 13)

Take no part** in the unfruitful works of darkness, **but instead expose them.

(Ephesians 5:11)

*People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. **Have nothing to do with such people.***

(2 Timothy 3:2-5)

In 1 Samuel chapters 18 through 31, in spite of God’s general instructions to submit to the laws of the land and to higher authorities, when David feared for his life because of King Saul’s jealous rages, God didn’t instruct David to “submit to the King and trust me to take care of you.” Instead, **David fled**, always respecting the position of King Saul, but not allowing himself to be abused by him.

Standing Up Against Abusive Behavior

Abuse victims are often told to submit to the abusive behavior of their spouses.

In 1 Samuel chapter 25, we see the story of Abigail and her husband Nabal. When Abigail’s fool of a husband speaks abusively to David and David is about to slaughter him and every male in his household, Abigail comes to the rescue. She doesn’t “submit” to her foolish husband. Instead, rather than following Nabal’s irrational wishes, she decides to protect her household.

1. Abigail made the protection of her household a priority over obedience to an irrational and violent husband.
2. Abigail **didn't wait** for her husband's permission **to do the right thing**.
3. She wasn't afraid to correctly identify her husband's character. She called him wicked and ill-tempered, and a fool.
4. She was strong in her faith and trusted in David as God's anointed.
5. God punished Nabal for his actions. He died ten days later.

What Does the Bible Say About Divorce for Abuse?

1. Many Christians believe there are only two valid reasons given for divorce in the Bible: adultery (Matthew 5:31-32), and desertion by an unbeliever, (1 Corinthians 7:1-16). Both of these reasons come from the New Testament. However, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. In his booklet *God's Protection of Women: When Abuse is Worse than Divorce*,¹ Herb Vander Lugt, author and senior research editor for RBC Ministries explains how Jesus and the Apostle Paul both knew the Old Testament completely, and their **comments were meant to add to**, rather than replace or change **what was already said in the Old Testament about marriage and divorce**. In Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:1-9, Jesus was not giving a full treatise on divorce law, and he was not responding to abused women. Instead, in Matthew 5 He was focusing on hard-hearted men who were "adulterizing" their wives, and in Matthew 19, He was responding to self-righteous Pharisees who were trying to pit Jesus's words against those of Moses.
3. The Old Testament prescribed laws for Israelite women who were sold for the purpose of marriage, and foreign women taken as captives during war. Both these groups of women were allowed to "**go free**" (divorce) if it were possible they were going to be mistreated, i.e. *abused* (Exodus 21:7-11 and Deuteronomy 21:10-14).
4. Many Christians say God "hates divorce," and therefore, victims of abuse should never divorce. **God said He hated the specific divorces** in Malachi 2:10 – 16, where Israelite men were divorcing the godly Israelite wives they had married in their youth and were marrying instead the idol worshipping women of surrounding tribes.
5. Though **God** hates divorce, He **required** the Israelite men to **divorce their pagan, idol worshipping wives** in order not to defile the people of Israel, (Ezra 9 – 10).
6. Throughout the gospels, **Jesus** showed how He is **more concerned with the intent of the law** than He is about the *letter* of the law. He was often angry with those who put more

¹ Taken and adapted from *God's Protection of Women, When Abuse is Worse than Divorce* by Herb Vander Lugt, Copyright 2005 by RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

value on keeping the Sabbath law than on showing love toward those the law was meant to protect, (Luke 13:10-17). In a similar way, Herb Vander Lugt proposes Jesus would put more value on showing love toward those marriage law was meant to protect, rather than keeping a narrow interpretation of what the bible says about marriage and divorce.

7. In **1 Corinthians 7:1-16**, Paul, knowing all the laws set out by Moses, and what Jesus had already said about divorce, **answered questions asked by the Corinthians about sexual abstinence**, and how it pertained to marriage. It was in this context he said a wife must not separate from her husband, but if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband.

8. In his book *A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides in Your Church*,² Pastor Jeff Crippen, an evangelical pastor, looks at 1 Corinthians 7:13 which says,

*And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is **willing to live with her**, she must not divorce him.*

9. Crippen says the phrase *willing to live with her* “cannot be limited to a narrow, wooden definition such as ‘if the unbeliever agrees to remain in the same house with the Christian.’ Crippen contends that **domestic abuse is a form of desertion**, calling it “constructive desertion.” He says, “‘Constructive desertion’ occurs when one partner’s evil conduct ends the marriage because it causes the other partner to leave. *But the abuser is construed as the deserter, not the victim. The victim bears no blame.*”

What Does the Bible Say about Remarriage?

1. Many Christians have struggled with what the Bible says about this. Some will say based on 1 Corinthians 7:11 if you are divorced, you should never remarry. Others say that in the Old Testament, a husband was required to give his wife a certificate of divorce, thus, divorce always came with the right to remarry.

In his booklet *God’s Protection of Women*, Herb Vander Lugt studies Deuteronomy 24:1-4: *If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, **is not allowed to marry her again** after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.*

² Jeff Crippen and Anna Wood, *A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides in Your Church* (United States: Calvary Press Publishing, 2012), 303.

Vander Lugt writes, “In this passage, a divorce so completely dissolves a marriage that the **only restriction** imposed on a man who divorces his wife is that he is **forbidden from ever marrying her again if she has been remarried, divorced, or even widowed in the meantime.**”

2. Concerning this passage, in *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*,³ Jay Adams says the wife “becomes the ‘wife of another man,’ who is called her ‘husband.’ If she were still her first husband’s wife ‘in God’s sight,’ then she would be committing adultery here, and also bigamy. But she is not accused of that. No, **she is clearly called the second husband’s ‘wife.’** Indeed, the first husband is forbidden to marry her ‘again.’ This obviously means she is not his wife after their divorce, or during her second marriage.”

³ Jay Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 43-44.