

Respond
Inform
Support
Empower

Unite
Pray



A resource for individual reflection & Bible study and/or use in small groups

A Contextual Note:



Welcome to this RISE UP resource which has not been prepared for those experiencing abuse – but rather for those who are committing to RISE UP and those who are seeking to respond, be better informed, support, empower and unite to work and pray.

However, we recognise that any individual using this resource may also be experiencing abuse and any small group may well include a person or people who are experiencing abuse or who are survivors of abuse. This resource also refers to the

survivor as she/her as the much higher percentage of abused people are female. But, of course, the same care, help and consideration is due to any man who is suffering abuse.

In one of her publications Dorothy Sayers wrote,

'...perhaps it is no wonder that women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross.

They had never known a man like this Man – there never had been such another.

A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered them... who took their questions and answered seriously.'

As we consider these things – let's first consider Jesus, who brought such dignity to women.

The following three sections are from Restored - changing the story for women – 'A guide for churches to address domestic abuse'(used with permission):

1. Read Luke 8:40-48 – Jesus restores

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said,
"Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

'This story details one of Jesus' miracles – he healed a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. This affliction would have taken her already lowly status as a woman and made her unclean (Leviticus 15:19). She would have been an outcast from society, barely spoken to, let alone touched. Jesus healed her and allowed her to recover her voice.

He not only restored her health, but He also restored her dignity in front of her community. She was held up as an example of faith. This occurred when Jesus was on His way to heal the daughter of an important dignitary.

Jesus did not prioritise this important leader at the expense of this woman. He went out of his way to show his impartiality against all the expectations of the time.

What does this mean for victims/survivors?

God's response to someone's need is not affected by status or privilege.

If a victim/survivor of abuse discloses that their abuser is someone of high standing in the Church, we should prioritise her needs over his reputation.'

2. Read John 4:1-30 – Jesus dignifies

Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman

The Disciples Rejoin Jesus

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman.

But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told

me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Jesus challenged the hierarchy of the day everywhere He went. Jews did not associate with Samaritans, but Jesus chose to walk through Samaria. In this journey, He has an encounter with a woman at a well. We learn that she had been married four times, and the likelihood is that she would have been rejected and divorced. Her status was now so low that her current partner would not even marry her. Even the disciples showed surprise at Jesus' encounter with her. Jesus gave her dignity, spoke to her about theology, and incredibly, for the first time in the Bible, chose her to reveal His divine identity. By choosing her, Jesus didn't stand to gain influence, money or support, but by giving this woman value and dignity, He changed her story forever and left an incredible example for His followers.

What does this mean for victims/survivors?

Jesus reminds us that a woman's dignity is not linked to her relationship history but rather on the intrinsic value of being God's creation. No matter their story, using this as a starting point for any conversation with a victim/survivor provides a respectful space where opportunities for restoration and extending God's mission are possible.

3. Read John 8:1-11 – Jesus liberates

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

In John 8, teachers of the law bring out an adulterous woman to test Jesus' reaction. Notice they don't bring the man involved – this is about shaming the woman. The man is not held accountable. Jesus, in His wisdom, turns the tables on the teachers of the law and questions their ability to judge another.

He held up a metaphorical mirror and said, 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her,' and on by one, they left the scene.

Jesus not only prioritised the needs of the adulterous woman over satisfying the Pharisees' expectations but proceeded to engage her in conversation.

In verse 8, Jesus speaks words of freedom to a woman condemned to be subjected to a slow, shameful death. Instead, she is lavished with incredible grace.

What does this mean for victims/survivors?

We need to stop judging women for what men do to them.

Instead, we can open ourselves to listen, be conduits of Jesus' freedom and help to change the story for victims/survivors of abuse. The fault of domestic abuse does not lie with the woman. It lies with the abuser who chooses to abuse.

Contextual Note:

'Restored - changing the story for women – *A guide for churches to address domestic abuse*' is a great resource for churches as they – and we – seek to RISE UP against domestic abuse in all its forms.

Quotes from this resource are all in blue. (www.restored-uk.org)

Respond
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Empower



Respond:

How to respond? In any culture, home should be the safest place – to rest, retreat, revive, to be valued and loved, and to belong.

But for so many, it's the place of fear, of uncertainty – of wondering:

What will happen next? How long can this go on? Can things ever change? Can I survive?

What should I do?

- Listen
- Believe
- Keep confidentiality, unless there is danger to her or children
(if concerned – seek advice from safeguarding person in my church)

'There is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable.'

Ban Ki-moon

Inform:

How to inform? I know so little – and so often I don't want to see and hear the truth.

But I should know, hear, see – understand as best as I can.

I need to listen, to learn, to hear and see, be willing to face the truth, the realities - before I can begin to support.

- Be aware of what domestic abuse is and what services and helps are available
- Understand that it is part of every section of every society, including our churches

'Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.'

Martin Luther King Jnr

'Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime with the abuser usually someone known to her.'

Kofi Annan

Support:

How to support - even those I know and love, who carry such disappointment and trauma with such dignity and courage?

- Finding ways to stand alongside and support, maybe simply providing a safe and friendly space to meet and listen
- Giving time
- Allowing her to decide and guide what happens next – my opinion or 'advice' might be so wrong!
- Find ways to support local refuges in my area

'It is by standing up for the rights of women and girls that we truly measure up as men.' Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Empower:

How can I empower?

Empower means to give authority or power to someone to do something – for themselves, to make someone stronger and more confident especially in controlling their own life and claiming their rights.

Maybe only by standing alongside and affirming her worth and wonder – as she draws breath and takes a stand – or a step – or another breath!

- Affirming her value, and if she has children – their value
- Affirming that the abuse is not her fault
- Referring to services appropriate to her needs
- Respect her choices

'Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.' 1 John 2:7

'God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.' 1 John 1:5

Unite:

Together – the more we speak, say no, draw back the blinds, open the doors and let in the light – the air – the truth... we rise up against domestic abuse, as we also acknowledge and confess our silence – our chosen blindness – our own fear, collusion and neglect.

Everyone has a right to privacy – but it's not privacy when harm is being done – it's secrecy. *And together, we unite, to say no.*

She's worth so much more. They're worth so much more.

- Work for local church to be a Safe Space or partner with Restored to become a Restored Beacon Church
- Take part in the Mothers' Union Rise Up Challenge for bronze, silver or gold levels (www.mothersunion.org riseup@mothersunion.org)
- Ask for/provide teaching about healthy relationships across all age groups
- 'We must speak up and do something' Judges 19:30

'We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstances, by any political leader or by any government.' Ban Ki-moon

'Domestic violence can be so easy for people to ignore, as it often happens without any witnesses and it is sometimes easier not to get involved. Yet, by publicly speaking out against domestic violence, together we can challenge attitudes towards violence in the home and show that domestic violence is a crime and not merely unacceptable.'

Honor Blackman

Pray:

*'Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.'* Martin Luther King Jnr

God of justice, peace, and compassion – Heavenly Father – creator and sustainer of all, we thank you that you gave yourself, your Son, to give every person the opportunity to turn from darkness to the light of your presence and love.

We know that all who endure cruelty and abuse are precious in your sight, that no tear falls without your knowledge and care, and we ask that they would all know your presence, strength, comfort, and wisdom – even in their fear, confusion, and pain.

We commit ourselves, all who have experience of abuse, all whose loved ones have experience of abuse and all of us who enjoy safety and peace in our relationships – to RISE UP against domestic abuse in all its forms.

We pray for your compassion as we seek to RESPOND, for your wisdom as we become better INFORMED, for your gentleness as we try to SUPPORT, for your strength as we hope to EMPOWER, and the mark of your Holy Spirit that UNITES us to work, and to PRAY, unceasingly until situations change and freedom, life and love is restored to all. In your dear and powerful name, we cry out to you together. Amen.



'Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it.' Ezra 10:4

'He has shown you what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' Micah 6:8

'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed.' Proverbs 31:8

'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.' Galatians 6:2

'Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.'
1 Thessalonians 5:11

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