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# Intimate Partner Violence in the Black Church: Bridging the Gap between Awareness and Policy Development

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE BLACK CHURCH:  
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN AWARENESS AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

CARLOS JERMAINE RICHARD

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George Fox Evangelical Seminary  
George Fox University  
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 24, 2015  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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## **Abstract**

The perennial problem of intimate partner violence (IPV) has gained national attention due to the increased awareness efforts of advocates, law enforcement, government, education, and social service agencies. This awareness serves as the catalyst for the upsurge in legislation, law enforcement involvement, and incarceration of abusers. Although the secular community has strategically implemented tactics and policies to combat abuse, the Black church continues to experience challenges with awareness and effective stratagems to address the issue. Further, the issue of domestic violence in the Black church has significant impact on women who suffer intolerable mistreatment at the hands of their abusers. The motive for domestic abuse against women is grounded in power, control, and fear. Therefore, it is imperative for the church to examine the current practices utilized to address IPV against women.

The Black church must also analyze why women are hesitant to report and remain in abusive relationships. The outcome of the writing will emphasize training for pastors and church leaders to recognizing the signs and symptoms of IPV and empower women to report abuse. The training will also present a component on the development of policies embedded within church bylaws and the creation of a human resource department to embed domestic violence awareness and prevention within the church bylaws. The training will also equip congregants to assist in the awareness campaign and prevention efforts to increase reporting. The writing will provide a pragmatic, holistic, and collaborative partnership between the faith-based and advocate communities to build a fence around victims and survivors to provide them with resources and serves to



address IPV, provide safe spaces for women not ready to report, and services to assist victims who desire to flee abusive situations.

First Lady Bonita James, affectionately known to her congregation as First Lady B., is an intelligent and compassionate woman who brings a sense of joy to any room with her contagious smile. She is a proud fourth generation Church of God in Christ (hereafter referred to as COGIC) member from the red hills of Georgia prior to her family relocating to New York City, New York in 1986. She became a Christian at the age of 15. First Lady B. has two brothers and one sister who serve in their father's church, St. Matthew COGIC. Her younger brother Thomas serves as the assistant pastor while her sister Mary serves as the minister of music. The older brother Michael pastors his own congregation with his wife and family.

First Lady B met a handsome and debonair preacher named Delbert James, an ordained elder at a local COGIC in New York City. They soon married in a storybook wedding ceremony. The family quickly grew in size with the birth of four children in an eight year span, the purchase of a five bedroom home in an upper middle class neighborhood, and two vehicles to support the new additions to the family. After Delbert entered into pastoral ministry, church membership quadrupled in the first year – it was hailed as one the fastest growing churches in the city. However, what began as the dream of a lifetime quickly turned into a nightmare. First Lady B. had strong reservations concerning meetings her husband conducted alone with women in the church, but would usually remain silent. The issue never subsided and instead grew more intense. Her concerns escalated after a heated confrontation in which she stood her ground and after one such fight, Pastor Delbert slapped her in the face.

In the past, he had only raised his voice, however, this was the first of many times he began to use physical force. Pastor Delbert left an imprint of his hand on her face as she withdrew to her room and drenched her pillow with tears of shock and pain. The experience continued to grow worse as Delbert became more abusive and their conflict escalated through increasing confrontation, verbal arguments, threats, and abuse that was kept veiled from the children, her family, and the congregation. The family was perceived as the perfect family, always smiling and interacting with congregants, dressed impeccably, and very well behaved when attending family and church events. Pastor Delbert continued to preach every Sunday and remained faithful in addition to the sacerdotal duties of the church. Although he promised on many occasions to never hit her again, the abuse continued for the next twenty-five years and only ended when Pastor Delbert breathed his last breath.

## **Introduction**

The notion of Interpersonal Violence (hereafter referred to as IPV) has garnered a tremendous amount of national attention within the National Football League (NFL) through the video of former Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice hitting his fiancée, now wife Janay in an Atlanta elevator. Further, other NFL stars have had charges of domestic violence filed against them namely Ray McDonald of the San Francisco 49ers, Greg Hardy of the Carolina Panthers, A.J. Jefferson of the Minnesota Vikings, Robert Reynolds of the Tennessee Titans, Dez Bryant of the Dallas Cowboys, and Rod Smith of the Denver Broncos. The theme among all the men listed above is their ethnicity, African American. The issues related to the NFL and the collective reaction to the video of Ray and Janay Rice has re-ignited a national conversation about IPV. Further, the video of Rice knocking Janay unconscious has generated discourse on the issue of power and help for marginalized victims of IPV.

The notion of abuse and hope for the marginalized is immensely similar in the faith based community including the debate stemming from the Rice video that has grasped the attention of the church. The impact of IPV is prevalent in all aspects of the religious spectrum and affects women of all diverse backgrounds, ages, and socioeconomic status. Although the true identity of First Lady B. and Delbert James has been kept confidential in this writing, the story of First Lady B and thousands of women in the Black church is more common than most congregants, community members, and clergy are willing to admit. The issue of domestic abuse, in most cases, is hidden deep within the hearts of women, conveniently tucked away from the pastor and leadership of the church as women silently suffer.

The role of religion, spirituality, and community is immensely sacrosanct to the Black church starting from the dark era of slavery until today in the twenty-first century. The existence of the Black community has always been grounded in the notion of religion, spirituality, and the church as the foundation for communal living and social justice. However, it is these same spiritual communities where change and reform must take place to significantly reduce abuse and assist women in reporting abuse. Although the writing focuses on IPV in the Black church, the intent is to acknowledge that the issue of domestic abuse has a wider application to nearly all Christian communities impacted by domestic violence.

Chapter one will be a discussion concerning the problem, metrics, signs, symptoms, and risk factors for IPV. This chapter will also discuss the application for the Black community, especially the faith community and its impact on children, families, and congregants. The chapter will also discuss the impact of abuse on Black women ranging from the intersection of stalking and domestic violence, the cycle of abuse phases, and the power wheel of abuse. Understanding the impact of domestic violence in the Black church and community is imperative to comprehend the widespread problem in both sectors, but more importantly the church with the goal of exposing the problem in order to help victims report abuse in lieu of masking the pain. Historically, the church is the strongest and most autonomous institution in the Black community and family life.

Chapter two will discuss a brief history of the Black church in America from a Pentecostal perspective, and examine the roots of the Black church in America during the Jim Crow Era, Civil Rights Movement, and the culture of the church in America. The chapter will discuss the Role of Black males in the family and church, the role of the

pastor, the role of women in the family, church, and marriage. The chapter will also assist us in understanding how the historical aspects of the Black church as well as the history of the roles play in supporting abuse in the church, specifically male dominance as a vital construct.

Chapter three will help us understand the theological underpinnings and foundations that support IPV in the church and the lack of education, specifically among pastors during slavery and the Jim Crow Era. This is imperative in providing us with the issue of Biblical interpretation and exegesis among clergy that was utilized to embed abuse in the church. The chapter will briefly examine scripture texts in the Old and New Testaments utilized by clergy and the church to subjugate and oppress women and uphold male dominance.

Chapter four will engage us in a discussion concerning why women remain apprehensive to report abuse and the impact on the family and congregation. The chapter will highlight conversations with women who experienced abuse in the church by sharing their personal experiences with IPV and how they overcame trauma to become survivors. The names and identities of the women will be kept strictly confidential, but their memories and stories are very surreal. This chapter will provide insight into the mind of abuse victims and their courage to escape while continuing to work and care for their children.

Chapter five invites us to a discussion of IPV prevention and how pastors and church leadership can assist in addressing the issue and protect women, the hesitancy of women to report abuse, protocols for reporting in the church, models of reporting, awareness and education, the development of internal policies for the church, the creation

of a human resource department within the church, utilizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Domestic Violence Program (TA-DVS) as a model for the church to provide financial assistance to abuse victims, embedding IPV policy within the Church By-laws, developing a holistic methodology for combating family violence, and building the fence of safety and protection for abuse victims.

Chapter six will provide a summary of this work and findings with some recommendations for the Black church to consider in assisting IPV victims, helping women to report, and the development of internal church and ministry policies to protect victims who disclose. The goal of the chapter is to inspire the church in taking the pole position against domestic abuse and become one of the leaders in offering solutions and help for victims. The chapter will also place a clarion call for prophetic voices in the church to step forward and collectively cry out against abuse and build a coalition from the community and faith based entities that remain relentless in their effort to significantly reduce occurrences of violence while encouraging women and victims to report abuse.

## **Chapter 1: IPV in the Black Experience: The Problem**

Intimate Partner Violence is not confined to a specific culture, ethnicity, race, religion, age, or socioeconomic context; IPV does not discriminate based upon the criteria above and is clearly perceived in nearly every facet of life.<sup>1</sup> The notion of abuse is depicted as the continuation of unwanted behaviors ranging from verbal, physical, financial, oppression, subjugation, sexual assault, rape, and homicide. Further, domestic violence often combines verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual abuse with the goal to control, inflict fear, subjugate, and dominate individuals, particularly women.<sup>2</sup> Domestic abuse is certainly not a new issue; however, the time has come for a coalition of private and public entities to join forces to revise and develop new solutions to address the increasing problem and encourage victims to report early and often.

The methodology of abusers is to devalue victims by utilizing derogatory statements that conjure feelings of negativity and the implementation of bullying tactics to imply that victims are insane, engage in mind game strategies, utilize guilt and humiliation as weapons of control, and treat victims as servants and slaves while functioning in the manner of an owner or master. Further, IPV victims are often perceived as sex objects and purchased property. The abusive and controlling personality of abusers underfunctions in the relationship that forces abusers to overfunction and control all aspects of the relationship, define and enforce rules, and make or carry out threats.

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<sup>1</sup> Vanessa Garcia and Patrick McManimon, *Gendered Justice: Intimate Partner Violence and the Criminal Justice System* (Boulder, CO: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 45-64.

<sup>2</sup> Lyn Shipway, *Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Health Professionals* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 1.

Abusers threaten to harm themselves if victims leave, threaten to harm the victim's family, pets, and threaten to report victims to police or Children Services.<sup>3</sup> Further, the underfunctioning personality of abusers is manifested in their unwillingness to contribute physically or emotionally to the relationship or system requiring others to regularly act on their behalf. Interpersonal violence is prevalent in all racial and ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, religions, faiths, and church size – there is virtually no one on earth that is exempt from experiencing domestic abuse either directly or indirectly. Although the issue permeates through the vicissitudes of life, the scope of this writing will focus on domestic violence in the Black church and community and discuss the issue of why victims are apprehensive to report. The notion of abuse remains a grave issue in the Black church and community context and the time has arrived to provide victims with the necessary tools to help increase reporting.

The writing will also examine the history and methodology of the Black church and its handling of abuse issues that encouraged women to remain in abusive marriages and relationships. This is an important aspect to examine as many women, including First Lady B, were encouraged to stand by their man due to their position and role in the church. The women in the Black church were encouraged to pray, fast, read scripture, and trust in the Lord while suffering abuse in the name of Jesus, holding the church together (by not reporting), and protecting the husbands who abused them. The time has come for the church to emerge as a leading faith-based institution to combat domestic abuse at a higher level by developing internal policies and external relationships that will assist in increasing reports of abuse, provide women with more options, and significantly reduce

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<sup>3</sup> Shawn Haley and Ellie Braun Haley, *War on the Home Front: An Examination of Wife Abuse* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2000), 103-105.



the occurrences of domestic violence. Although the Black church is generally concerned about abuse, it can no longer perceive IPV as a spiritual issue with physical manifestations, but as an issue that impacts women who need assistance from the church.

The Religion and Violence e-Learning Project (RAVE), provides compelling data regarding IPV and women in the church:

- 95% of women in the church report that they have never heard a specific message on abuse preached from the pulpit in their church.
- 58% have helped an abused woman while one in four have offered a victim a bed for a night.
- 69.8% have sought the help of someone in their church regarding a family or related issue, and many women who have experienced IPV do not feel that the term abused is applicable to them.
- 9.3% of pastors have counseled five or more abused women within the last year.
- 83.2% of pastors state they have counseled at least one abused women.
- 8% feel equipped to respond to domestic violence while 31% state that they have preached a message on abuse.
- 40% state that they discuss IPV in pre-marital counseling.
- 74% of pastors underestimate the level of domestic abuse in their congregations, and when they attempt to address the issue, they often do more harm than good.
- 65% of pastors had only spoken once about IPV within the past year.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of pastors do not consider sexual abuse or domestic violence central to larger religious themes. For the pastors who said they do speak about the topic, 72% said they did so because they believed it was a problem in their local communities,

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<sup>4</sup> The Rave Project, "Looking at the Data.....from Church Women" The Rave Project, [http://www.theraveproject.com/index.php/resources/resource/looking\\_at\\_the\\_data\\_from\\_church\\_women](http://www.theraveproject.com/index.php/resources/resource/looking_at_the_data_from_church_women) (accessed June 17, 2014).

compared to only 25% who said they spoke out because they felt it was a problem in their congregations.<sup>5</sup> Al Miles stated that after conducting 158 interviews with pastors most were in denial about abuse in their congregations and the fact that victims and abusers attend their ministries each week.<sup>6</sup> Although some pastors are not aware of the severity of abuse in the congregation, most stated that they would not hesitate to address the issue if they had the proper training and resources.<sup>7</sup>

According to the US Religious Landscape Survey conducted in 2007 by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, Black Americans remain markedly more religious than the US population as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Further, according to the Pew Research for Religion and Public Life Project, 87% of Black Americans describe themselves as belonging to one religious group or another and maintain a high level of affiliation with religion by attending prayer meetings and religious services.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, nearly 80% of Blacks state that religion plays a very important role in their daily lives as compared to 56% of all US adults. Further, 53% of Black Americans attend religious services once per week, with more than 76% reporting that they pray on a daily basis and 88% state that they are absolutely certain that God exists.

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<sup>5</sup> Juliet Verdal, "Broken Silence: Polls Show Lack of Conversation on Domestic, Sexual Violence in Churches" Sojourners: Faith in Action for Social Justice, <http://sojo.net/blogs/2014/06/19/broken-silence-poll-shows-lack-conversation-domestic-sexual-violence-churches> (Accessed June 20, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Al Miles, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Black Demographics.com, "The Black Church: African American Religious Affiliation", <http://blackdemographics.com/culture/religion> (Accessed June 12, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Pew Research Center, "A Religious Portrait of African Americans" Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans> (Accessed June 23, 2014).

Although 72% of Blacks state that they are unaffiliated with a particular faith, most say that religion plays at least a minor role in their lives.<sup>10</sup> The metrics noted above are consequential for our study as they illustrate the direct link between Black Americans and religious faith. The Black church remains an integral part of the community from the early years of slavery, the formation of the first Black churches in America, the Azusa Street Revival, Civil Rights, Post-Civil Rights, and the twenty-first century. The notion of religion plays an important role in the daily lives of Blacks and must be noted that although specific IPV data fails to identify religious affiliation, abuse exists in the church as the church is comprised of community members who regularly participate in religious practice.

The metrics in this context are essential to establish a framework to determine the scope of the issue. In today's society, domestic violence receives a plethora of media attention when professional athletes, celebrities, entertainers, politicians, and millionaire moguls are involved or charged in abuse cases. The widely covered domestic violence case involving Ray Rice has sparked fury and perhaps rage from media journalists, sports analysts, and politicians; even President Barack Obama made remarks on the issue and criticized how the NFL handled the incident. The President commented that stopping domestic violence is bigger than football and all have a responsibility to put a stop to it. Although the President displayed disdain for domestic abuse, his comments were just one among many and more than likely did not have a major impact on ending abuse. The metrics in this section will capture the perennial issue of abuse as the problem is much

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

larger than one incident whether it's a professional athlete, entertainer, politician, or mogul.

### **Metrics for Domestic Violence**

In a 1995-1996 study conducted in all US States and the District of Columbia, a survey based upon sixteen thousand men and women responses regarding IPV concluded that:

- Nearly 76% of women as compared to 25% of men were raped or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, co-habiting partner, date partner, or acquaintance at some point during their life.<sup>11</sup>
- In the United States, approximately 1.3 million women as compared to eight hundred thirty five thousand men are physically assaulted by a partner each year.<sup>12</sup>
- IPV accounted for 20% of all non-fatal violent crime in 2001.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2002, of females who were murdered with a firearm, two-thirds were murdered by an intimate partner.
- The number of females shot and killed by their husbands and intimate partners was three times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined as compared to single victim/single offender incidents in 2002.<sup>14</sup>

According to a study conducted between 1998 and 2002 by the United States Department of Justice:

- Of the 3.5 million violent crimes against family members, 49% were crimes against spouses.

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<sup>11</sup> Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 181867, "Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence," *at iii* (2000), <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/181867.htm> (Accessed July 2, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Callie Marie Rennison, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 197838, Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief: Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001, at 1 (2003).

<sup>14</sup> The Violence Pol'y Ctr., "When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2002 Homicide Data: Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents," (2004), <http://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2004.pdf> (Accessed July 2, 2014).

- 84% of spouse victims were female and 86% of victims of dating partner abuse were females.
- Males were 83% of spouse murderers and 75% of dating murderers.
- 50% of offenders in state prison for spousal abuse killed their victims, wives were more likely than husbands to be killed by their spouses, and wives were about half of all spouses in the population in 2002, but 81% of all persons killed by the spouse.<sup>15</sup>
- Based upon a report from 10 countries, between 55% and 95% of women who had been physically abused by their partners, have never contacted a non-government agency.
- More than 1,500 women are killed per year in the United States of America.<sup>16</sup>
- Approximately every nine seconds a woman is assaulted or beaten. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury for women above car accidents, muggings, and rape combined.<sup>17</sup>
- One in every four women is at risk of experiencing domestic violence.
- 75% of domestic violence victims are women.<sup>18</sup>

Although men experience IPV at the hands of women, the data clearly confirms that women experience abuse, assault, harm, and injury at a much higher rate than men. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) concluded that, based upon a 2010 national survey, more men were victims of IPV and over 40% of severe physical violence was

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew R. Durose et al., U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 207846, "*Bureau of Justice Statistics, Family Violence Statistics: Including Statistics on Strangers and Acquaintances,*" at 31-32 (2005), <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvs.pdf> (Accessed July 9, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Richard J. Gelles, *Intimate Violence in Families*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 70-78.

<sup>17</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Costs of intimate partner violence against women in the United States. Atlanta (GA): CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2003. [cited August 09, 2011]. Available from: URL: [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/ipv\\_cost/ipv.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/ipv_cost/ipv.htm).

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Tjaden, Nancy Thoennes. National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, "Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey," 2000.

directed towards men. Further, the 2010 survey concluded that men were more likely to experience psychological aggression and control over sexual or reproductive health.<sup>19</sup> The CDC study conducted by the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) is strikingly different from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS). The NISVS survey concedes that they fail to measure the ratio of men to women victims of IPV as well as a major contributor to severe physical violence against men that is reported in the NVAWS survey.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, these metrics speak loudly and make us aware that violence against women continues to rise each year.

### **Metrics for Black Women and IPV**

Black Americans, specifically, Black women, suffer deadly violence from family members at a rate decidedly higher than any social group in America. Blacks experience victimization by intimate partners and experience IPV at a rate 35% higher than that of their White female counterparts and twenty-two times more than other ethnicities.<sup>21</sup> Black women experience domestic violence at a significantly higher rate between the ages of twenty to twenty-four and experience similar levels of victimization in all other categories as compared to White women, but experience abuse at a slightly higher rate.<sup>22</sup>

Further, 40% of Black women report some type of coercive contact of a sexual nature by age eighteen and the number one killer between the ages of fifteen to thirty-

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<sup>19</sup> Bert H. Hoff, "CDC Study: More Men than Women Victims of Partner Abuse", Stop Abuse and Violent Environments, <http://www.saveservices.org/2012/02/cdc-study-more-men-than-women-victims-of-partner-abuse> (Accessed July 12, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Callie Marie Rennison. and Sarah Welchans, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 178247, "Intimate Partner Violence" (2000), <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/ipv.txt> (Accessed July 13, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

four is homicide at the hands of a current or former intimate partner.<sup>23</sup> The evidence listed above is important in suggests a link between domestic abuse and the Black church given the data gathering process specific to one's faith and religion is in the development process. The future of IPV metrics must include this important aspect of religious affiliation as individuals who are religious and spiritual are also citizens that make up our communities.

### **The Intersection of Stalking and IPV**

The intersection of stalking and IPV is vital to the discussion as most victims have some knowledge of their stalker or abuser. Although not all stalking and abuse incidents occur in the same venue, the intersection must be noted as serious cases of domestic violence most often involve some form of stalking. The notion of stalking is intertwined with abuse as most women are stalked by abusers, especially on college campuses. Stalking is depicted as a course of behavior conducted directly or indirectly at an individual with the intent to cause fear and harm. Stalking can be immensely serious, escalate over time, and end in violence.<sup>24</sup> Stalking involves the following unwanted activities either direct or indirect towards another individual; repeated, unwanted, intrusive, and frightening communications from the perpetrator by phone, mail, or e-

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<sup>23</sup> Harvard's Black Law Students Association, "Domestic Violence – Sad Facts", Harvard's Black Law Students Association, <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/hblsasj/2009/10/31/domestic-violence-sad-facts> (Accessed July 16, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Stalking Resource Center, "Stalking" Stalking Resource Center, <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center/stalking-information> (Accessed July 14, 2014).

mail.<sup>25</sup> The profile of stalkers and abusers are strikingly similar and involve the same fear tactics against their victims.

The victims of IPV are also victims of stalking and most victims experience this at the hands of a current and former spouse, current or former cohabitating partner, current or former dating partner.<sup>26</sup> Further, 81% of women that have been stalked by an intimate partner have also been physically assaulted by the same partner and 31% of women stalked by an intimate partner have been sexually assaulted by the same partner.<sup>27</sup> Although men experience stalking almost equal to women in certain categories, the focus on women emphasizes abuse and stalking specifically against women thus emphasizing the issues of power and control.<sup>28</sup>

### **Signs and Symptoms of IPV**

The signs and symptoms of IPV are essential to understand in the fight to stop occurrences of abuse, power, control, and oppression of women. The signs and symptoms usually manifest after the honeymoon phase of the relationship, start small, and ultimately progress into abusive and controlling behavior implanting such a high level of fear in women to remain in abusive relationships rather than seek assistance. Further, more and more research also suggests that the signs and symptoms of IPV manifest during the dating period as well.<sup>29</sup> Due to the underfunctioning nature of abusers, most victims blame themselves for the abuse and develop tactics to avoid

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.fcasv.org/>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Al Miles, *Ending Violence in Teen Dating Relationships: A Resource Guide for Parents and Pastors* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Books, 2005), 20-21.



further incidents in lieu of reporting. There are many signs and symptoms of IPV with fear and anxiety being the most telling signs and behavior women exhibit. The signs of an abusive relationship can be discovered in the following behaviors which involve the inner thoughts and feelings of women and victims such as; fear of spouse or partner when you are in their presence or the anticipated interaction with one's spouse or partner when they arrive home.

In addition to this, a sign on IPV may be present when certain topics of discussion must be avoided for fear of angering or upsetting the spouse or partner. Further, a victim may feel they are unable to correctly perform certain functions and tasks for their spouse or partner because they may believe that they deserve to be hurt or mistreated. Thus, victims continue to struggle psychologically with believing they are the problem in the relationship and blame themselves for all negative aspects of the relationship while assigning all positive actions to the abuser.<sup>30</sup> The signs of abusive and controlling behaviors and threats are inclusive of those emanating an extremely unpredictable temperament.

In addition to this, abusers make threats and attempts to hurt the victim by injuring or killing them, make constant threats to take children away from victims or threatening that they will never see the children again. Abusers coerce or force victims to engage in copulation or perform non-consensual sexual acts, threaten to carry out the act of destroying property, utilizing manipulative and convincing behaviors, and threats of suicide if the victim leaves the marriage or relationship.<sup>31</sup> Further, victims experience

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Meg Kennedy Dugan and Roger R. Hock, *It's My Life Now: Starting Over After An Abusive Relationship or Domestic Violence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 10.

behaviors from abusers which are degrading, derogatory, and belittling inclusive of constant humiliation.

This is coupled with unnecessary and excessive criticism, being treated so badly that they are embarrassed to be in the presence of family and friends, ignore the accomplishments and devalue the opinions of victims perceiving them as an object and property rather than a person.<sup>32</sup> The controlling and underfunctioning behavior of abusers is a key factor in instilling fear and anxiety into the mind of women and victims. In the perception of victims, controlling behaviors are the common tools of abusers and become tactics to subjugate, oppress, and control women. The description of controlling behaviors of abusers is inclusive of acting excessively jealous and possessive of victims, stalking victims by monitoring activities, preventing victims from seeing friends and family, and limiting access to money, phone, or cars.<sup>33</sup>

### **Cycle of Abuse**

At this juncture, it is important to discuss the cycle of abuse to further understand the mind of the abuser and manipulative behavior utilized to dominate women and prevent them from reporting IPV.

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<sup>32</sup> Patricia Evans, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How To Recognize It and How To Respond*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Avon, MA: Adam Media, 2010), 8-11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



Image 1: Cycle of Abuse<sup>34</sup>

The cycle of abuse<sup>35</sup> was inoculated by Lenore Walker in 1979 to explicate the patterns of behaviors in abusive relationships based upon her interviews with one thousand five hundred women who experienced abuse in relationships.<sup>36</sup> Some might state that the model is too simplistic, cannot be universally applied, and the data is primarily anecdotal. However, Walker's model was hailed as revolutionary and is still utilized by a myriad of national IPV organizations.<sup>37</sup> The cycle of abuse is demarcated into four phases: Tension building, Acting-out, Reconciliation, and Calm. These phases generally follow one another in order and repeated until the IPV ends when the victim abandons the marriage, relationship, or by intervention.

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<sup>34</sup> Lundy Bancroft, *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Mind of Angry and Controlling Men* (New York, NY: Berkley Books, 2002), 8-11.

<sup>35</sup> Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 1984), 14-33.

<sup>36</sup> Margi Laird McCue, *Domestic Violence: A Reference Handbook*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Denver, CO: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 62-63.

<sup>37</sup> Donald Dutton and Susan K. Golant, *The Batterer: A Psychological Profile* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995), 39-58.

The cycle of abuse can occur numerous times in abusive relationships with the total cycle lasting from a few hours to a few months. The cycle typically happens no matter how hard victims attempt to prevent it and returns to its normal patterns. Further, as the length of the cycle of abuse diminishes overtime, the reconciliation and calm phases are replaced by time, violence, control, and abuse. The Jefferson College of Health Sciences (JCHS) provides detailed information regarding each phase of the cycle of abuse that will give further insight into the mind of abusers.

### **Tension Building Phase**

The tension building phase of the cycle of abuse depicts the behavior of abusers who become extremely edgy resulting in negative behaviors and frustrations. The tension continues to build and increase to the level in which abusers experience feelings of losing control over the behavior and actions of victims. The reaction of abusers to potentially negative circumstances include moodiness, withdrawal of love and affection, constantly condemning, devaluing the victim, threatening, and speaking to victims in an elevated and demeaning tone. The reaction of victims in the tension building phase include attempts to calm the abuser, stop abuse, fulfill the role of nurturer, completely withdraw from activities, and feelings of daily apprehension whether in or out of the presence of the abuser described as “walking on egg shells phase”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jefferson College of Health Sciences, “Cycle of Abuse in Relationships”, Jefferson College of Health Sciences, <http://www.jchs.edu/jchs-voice-program-cycle-abuse-and-power-control-wheel> (Accessed June 14, 2014).

### **Acting-out/Acute Explosion Phase**

The JCHS renames this phase acute explosion rather than acting-out and is often the most diminutive stage as violence regularly occurs at this juncture with the outwardly expression of more anger. At this phase, victims detach themselves from the abuser to prevent triggering more violence; the acute explosion phase generally ends after a violent eruption by the abuser. The abuser will likely respond in the following manner during this phase with physical abuse, rape, emotional violence, humiliation, demeaning language, and potential use of weapons. The victims generally react in the follow manner during this phase; self-protection, calling law enforcement, family, friends, attempting to calm the abuser using reason and logic, fighting back, or withdrawing.<sup>39</sup>

### **Reconciliation**

The reconciliation phase is typically a more welcomed stage by both the abuser and victim. The abuser usually expresses remorse for their actions and the victim starts to believe that the abuser can change. This stage often continues until the abuser begins to feel confident and gain the trust of victims and starts to feel a loss of control over the victim's behavior. This stage has shown to decrease in length over time and has been shown, in some cases, to disappear totally. The reactions of abusers in this stage is inclusive of promises to get help, asking for forgiveness, buying gifts for victims, promises to love and cherish victims, and start a new life free and clear of abuse. The reactions for victims include agreeing to stay, attend individual and family counseling,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

experiencing feelings of happiness and exhibiting hopeful behavior that the issue has improved.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Calm Phase**

The calm phase can be perceived as an extension of the reconciliation phase and evokes an atmosphere of peace. During this phase, the abuser may verbally commit to attend individual and marriage therapy, request forgiveness from the victim, and present a normal family atmosphere. The calming stage also includes the abuser purchasing gifts and presents, even engaging in copulation. However, due to the nature of abusive relationships when the calming phase ends, the tension rebuilds leading to acts of explosion by the abuser, then to reconciliation, and back to the calming phase.<sup>41</sup>

The cycle of abuse in relationships is the foundation for studying IPV and was ground breaking for advocates to provide not only a platform, but a voice from the professional ranks to validate the issue from a medical and academic perspective. The cycle of abuse paved the trajectory for the power wheel of abuse which has become the most commonly used image in abuse IPV trainings. The power wheel of abuse outlines the various tactics utilized by abusers and the impact on victims. The information is extensive and insightful for advocates and should be placed in plain view in every church around the country. The power wheel of abuse is an important tool that the faith-based community can utilize to encourage victims to report abuse. The power wheel of control and abuse demonstrates the cycle of abuse further and depicts the two notions of power and control that abusers utilize to oppress, abuse, and dominate women in the church.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

The power wheel of abuse diagram below is a helpful apparatus for individuals to understand the overall pattern of abusive and violent behavior utilized by abusers to maintain control over women.



Image 2: Power and Control Wheel<sup>42</sup>

The power and control wheel of abuse<sup>43</sup> begins with behaviors of intimidation such as looks, actions, brandishing weapons, and gestures followed by coercion and threats that are carried out, threats to commit suicide by the abuser, threatening to leave, or even contact Child Protective Services (CPS) if women fail to comply with demands. The wheel also presents the aspect of male privilege in which the abuser forces woman

<sup>42</sup> The Duluth Model, "Social Change to End Violence Against Women Wheel Gallery," The Duluth Model, <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html> (Accessed July 16, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

into subjugation through defining the roles of men and women, making all major household decisions, economic abuse, and attempts to prevent women from working to limit their access to people who can possibly help them.

The power and control wheel of abuse provides insight into ways abusers manipulate women into believing that the abuse is not as bad as it appears, minimizing the impact of the abuse and may blame women for the IPV, and fail to take the woman's concerns seriously.<sup>44</sup> The wheel continues with emotional abuse and isolation as chief tactics to depress and discourage women by devaluing their image and persona, and exercise ultimate control of all outside activity inclusive of visiting family, friends, and what publications the victim reads. The power and control wheel of abuse is a resourceful tool to help comprehend the methodology and tactics that abusers utilize to subjugate and abuse women, especially women in the church.<sup>45</sup> The church must understand controlling behaviors and communicate this in training, seminars, and educational sessions to ensure the church recognizes the schemes of abusive men. Christians, in some cases, understand the spiritually the impact of abuse but fail to understand the non-spiritual issues related to IPV. It is imperative to understand that abuse is about control and less about anger or physical violence. Therefore, Disciples of the church must be cognizant and refrain from neglecting the non-spiritual issues in lieu of the spiritual aspect of domestic abuse.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



## **Risk Factors for IPV**

Understanding the risk factors associated with domestic violence will help pastors and leaders frame and analyze questions, determine good effective measures, recognize key intervention points, and select appropriate responses. Risk factors do not automatically indicate that a person will be controlled by an abuser; however, risk factors can be utilized to help women leave IPV situations and recognize abusive or controlling behavior.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

To understand the plight of domestic violence victims, we must recognize their economic position in American culture. Over half of homeless families nationally are Black even though they comprise twelve percent of the total population. Moreover, the U.S. Census Bureau found that while 28% of White female-headed households in 1998 were below the poverty line, 40% of female households headed by Black women were below the poverty line. To better clarify, the median annual income for a White woman in 1996 was \$11,266 and the median income for Black women was \$9,508; this has not changed in today's society. The victims of lower socioeconomic status have less resources as compared to victims who have more resources.<sup>46</sup> Christopher Devery conducted a study that concluded that socioeconomic status is not an indicator of domestic violence for three reasons. The first reason stated that the theoretical perspective that has informed much of the research and comments are inconclusive of the

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<sup>46</sup> Lisa M. Martinson, "An Analysis of Racism and Resources for African-American Female Victims of Domestic Violence in Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Women's Law Journal* 16 (2001), 259-285, 260-270.

relationship between socioeconomic status and IPV. Secondly, the influence of public awareness campaigns have stressed that IPV impacts all women.

Thirdly, there is a stark contrast and differing interpretations of the empirical research on abuse and socioeconomic status.<sup>47</sup> Although Devery believes that the relationship between domestic violence and socioeconomic status is minimal, the metrics overwhelmingly support the link between socioeconomic status and domestic abuse.

Sarah Knapton stated in an article that highlighted a study by Heidi Fischer Bjelland (Ph.D. student at the Norwegian Police University College) that in some cases where women earned 67% of the total household income, they were more likely to suffer or experience psychological and physical abuse. Bjelland argued that wherever power is unevenly allocated in a relationship the likelihood of abuse increases significantly and that violence and control is utilized to compensate for the weak position of the abuser. She further commented that her study indicates that high income and education can work as a protection against IPV as long as the income of the women does not exceed the male partner.<sup>48</sup> Flowers and Kauiken state that it would appear far-fetched that woman with high incomes and societal status would be abused, but also agree with Bjelland in that the higher the income for women the more they are trapped by the same resource. They stated that most women desire to continue their lives as normal as possible to prevent shame and negative reactions from the community. Although women of all socioeconomic backgrounds experience IPV, women of lower socioeconomic

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<sup>47</sup> Bureau of Crime and Research Statistics, "Crime & Socioeconomic Status," [http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar\\_topics/bocsar\\_pub\\_qtot\\_721934.aspx#socioeconomic](http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_topics/bocsar_pub_qtot_721934.aspx#socioeconomic) (Accessed on August 28, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Knapton, "Educated and Well Paid Women More Likely to Suffer Domestic Abuse", The Telegraph, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/sarah-knapton/10679238/Educated-and-well-paid-women-more-likely-to-suffer-domestic-abuse.html> (Accessed October 19, 2015).

backgrounds are many more times at risk due to poverty and factors such as stress and resources for stress reduction including leaving the situation. White women tend to experience a different set of issues as it is likely more arduous for them to flee domestic abuse because of socioeconomic status. However, Black women, who fall into the lower socioeconomic brackets, tend to be more likely victims of abuse as compared to White women, Hispanic women, and Asian women of the same socioeconomic level.

The National Poverty Center (NPC) concluded that:

- While approximately 15.1% of Americans experienced poverty, the poverty rate among Blacks was 27.4 percent as compared to 9.9% of Whites and 12.1% of Asians.
- Further, poverty rates were highest among Black and Hispanic women who were single heads of households.<sup>49</sup>

The National Center for Law and Economic Justice states that in 2012:

- There were more than 46.5 million people living in poverty with an average yearly income of less than \$23, 492 income thresholds.
- In 2012, 27.2% of Blacks were living in poverty as compared to non-Hispanic Whites and three times more likely to live in deep poverty.<sup>50</sup>

Further, the US Census reported that between 2007 and 2011:

- 43 out of the 50 states had poverty rates above 20% for Blacks.
- Iowa, Maine, Mississippi, and Wisconsin had poverty rates above 35% for Blacks.
- Six states (Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey, and Virginia) had poverty rates of 20% or less for Blacks.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> National Poverty Center, “How Does the Government Measure Poverty”, The University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, <http://www.npc.umich.edu/poverty> (Accessed July 2, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

The socioeconomic status is an important factor that confirms that Black women of lower socioeconomic status who are victims of IPV are more likely than middle and upper class white women who are victims of domestic violence to need "extensive services and support" in order to leave an abusive relationship. The socioeconomic status is defined in terms of income, education and occupation.<sup>52</sup> Although White women have difficulty leaving abusive relationships as well, Black women have no access to financial resources as compared to White women who stay because of community status. The socioeconomic status plays an important factor in the Black community and establishes a clear link between the two concepts. The church must understand this crucial link and how it relates to congregants who attend weekly services who are more susceptible to occurrences of abuse as compared to other ethnic and non-ethnic groups based upon socioeconomic status. The ethnic status of women who experience domestic violence is just as important as the socioeconomic status; Black women continue to experience domestic abuse at higher rates as compared to White women. The victims of lower socioeconomic status have fewer resources as compared to victims who have more resources in addressing IPV issues.

### **Race/Ethnicity**

Black women experience intimate partner violence at rates 35% higher than their White counterparts and two and half times the rate of men and other races.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Suzanne Macartney, Alemayehu Bishaw, and Kayla Fontenot, "American Community Survey Briefs" Issued February 2013 ACSBR/11-11.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew J. Carlson, Susan D. Harris, George W. Holden, "Violence in the African American Family," *Journal of Family Violence* 14 (1999): 205-226.

<sup>53</sup> R.L. Hampton, R.J. Gelles, "Violence toward black women in a nationally representative sample of black families," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 25 (1993): 105-119.

Black Americans account for a disproportionate number of intimate partner homicides, and in 2005, Black Americans accounted for almost one third of the intimate partner homicides in this country.<sup>54</sup> Yet domestic violence affects all Americans, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. However, this threat has disproportionately dire consequences for Black women as the social construct of race/ethnicity plays a great role in domestic violence and abuse.<sup>55</sup> There are other risk factors that contribute such as neighborhood, pregnancy, education, and prior abuse; however, socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity are the most prevalent. I believe that the church must be cognizant of these risk factors in order to address the issue of domestic violence in a way that is supportive to victims and families.

### **Impact of IPV on Black Children**

The impact of IPV on Black children remains prevalent in society and continues to grow worse with each incident of abuse given poverty and race are risk factors. Children experience a tremendous amount of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of observing and experiencing domestic violence. In the absence of intervention, children are at severe risk of delinquency, substance abuse, low educational achievement, and the inability to foster good relationships. Children who witness abuse in the home are nine times more like to abuse or accept abuse perpetuating the cycle in addition to other personal and societal costs.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> M.P. Thompson and others, "Partner violence, social support, and distress among inner-city African American women," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28 (2000): 127-132.

<sup>55</sup> R. Hampton, W. Oliver, and L. Magarian, "Domestic Violence in the African American Community: An Analysis of Social and Structural Factors," *Violence Against Women* 13(2003): 533-557.

<sup>56</sup> Carl Buzawa, Eve Buzawa, and Evan Stark, *Responding to Domestic Violence: The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 47-49.

Further, Black male children who are exposed to domestic violence in the home at an early age are at greater risk of emulating abusive behaviors such as bullying relatives and non-relatives in their age category (whether male or female) and intimate partners.<sup>57</sup> When children demonstrate behaviors of abuse in certain social settings, it is a clear manifestation of internal issues that children may not be able to articulate. Some of the symptoms include, but are not limited to: academic failure, sleep difficulties, avoidance of peer relationships, rebellious behavior, low self-esteem, threatening behavior, cruelty to pets and animals, and oppositional defiant behavior.<sup>58</sup> IPV witnessed by teen girls in the home can serve as the catalyst to develop relationships with abusive men. This can have a grave impact on children and serious implications that perpetuate the cycle of abuse.<sup>59</sup>

### **IPV in the Black Church**

The problem of IPV in the Black church given the risk factors has quietly elevated to one of the most important issues that the Black community must address and overcome. The issue of abuse in the church from time period of 1930 to 2004 was mostly reticent and unreported; this led to the perpetuation of a perennial cycle of abuse that dared victimized women to expose family violence. This perpetuation of domestic violence in the church is deeply embedded in cultural and historical traditions of marriage

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<sup>57</sup> Nadine Kaslow, Sheridan Thorn, Anuradha Paranjpe, *Interventions for Abused African American Women and Their Children*, eds. Robert Hampton and Thomas Gullotta (New York, NY: Springer Publishing, 2006), 47-58.

<sup>58</sup> Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing, Company, Inc., 2000), 77-88.

<sup>59</sup> Susan M. Sanders, *Teen Dating Violence: The invisible Peril* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2003), 27-37.

and the ideology of the family structure.<sup>60</sup> Although the writing focuses on IPV in the Black church, the intent is to acknowledge that the issue has a wider application to nearly all Christian communities impacted by domestic violence. Although little is known about IPV experiences and Black church folks<sup>61</sup>, recent study has shown that the connection between domestic violence and spirituality is receiving more attention as Black women turn to the church to address domestic abuse issues in lieu of social service agencies, non-profit organizations, and mental health providers.<sup>62</sup>

There are four factors that lead to the enablement of violence in the Black church that have left many women paralyzed, helpless, petrified of their husbands, and hesitant to report. *The first factor that led to the continuation of IPV in the Black church is the expectation of wives to honor and uphold the cultural and historical traditions even at the costly expense of suffering perennial abuse.* The women committed themselves to the cultural tradition of soundless suffering, only confiding in God when the abuse was overwhelming.

*The second factor that led to the enablement of IPV in the Black church was the cultural and historical tradition of wives protecting their husbands to prevent the church from splitting and keep their families together.* The women were encouraged to pray while being abused in hopes that God would work a miracle and transform the behavior of their abusing husbands who served in church positions including senior pastor,

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<sup>60</sup> Paul E. Johnson, *African American Christianity: Essay in History* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 57.

<sup>61</sup> E.P. Martin and J.M. Martin, *Spirituality and the Black Helping Traditions in Social Work* (Washington, DC.: Nasco Press, 2002), 45.

<sup>62</sup> D. Hassouneh-Phillips, "Strength and Vulnerability: Spirituality in the Abused American Muslim Women's Lives," *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 24 (2010): 681-694.

associate minister, or head deacon. Further, wives were strongly encouraged to refrain from the deviation of this long standing tradition hearing stories from other pastor's wives who "stayed there" and accepted the abuse in lieu of escaping the pain and suffering. *The third factor points to the nature and structure of the family. This structure is based upon a hierarchy in which the husband is the head of the household and the position of the wife is subordinate to the husband.*

In my interview with Pastor Michael Williams, he stated that the wife is expected to obey her husband in all things and rarely question his authority.<sup>63</sup> In the early twentieth century, Black women were encouraged to keep silent in the church, keep their homes well, take good care of the children, and please their husbands at any cost. Thus, the value of women was immensely minute and their roles in the community were parochial as compared to men perceived to be on the same level with God, never to be questioned, just obeyed.<sup>64</sup>

*The last factor leading to the continuations of IPV emphasizes the concept of community, belonging, and kinship that is immensely imperative and vital to the Black church.* Humanity is defined as one belonging to a community and religion is not an isolated aspect of humanity, it is woven into the fabric of every aspect of life. These four factors will be expanded in greater detail in later chapter two. The role of religion and community is incredibly sacred to the Black church. There is virtually no such idea of individualism; religion, church, and community are intertwined and to think of oneself in

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Pastor Michael Williams, House of Prayer for All Nations on May 29, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Beverly Wallace, *A Womanist Legacy of Trauma, Grief, and Loss: Reframing the Notion of the Strong Black Woman* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 21.



isolation to the church community is, in some cases, equivalent to sin.<sup>65</sup> Further, this ideology of church and community is deeply embedded and has its roots in the dark era of slavery. During this bleak time in American history, Blacks were intentionally separated from their families, mothers painfully watched their sons sold to slave owners across state lines, their daughters became house maids and caregivers to slave owners families, and their husbands were lynched and made examples to others who resisted enslavement.

The increased cognizance of domestic violence has a plethora of champions in faith-based, government, non-profit, judicial, and law enforcement communities that continue to provide assistance to women, children, and abusers who embrace transformation and the prosecution of abusers who fail to discontinue abusing.<sup>66</sup> IPV has become one of the most prevailing social issues in American society today. Although many individuals have drawn the line in the sand against abuse, the question still looms in regards to the Black church and its ability to partner with the broader community to aggressively address the issue among their congregants.

Historically, the Black church has not been on the vanguard of the issue of IPV in the church, and in most cases continues to struggle addressing the problem in the twenty-first century. Although there is recognition that Black church leaders have made some progress, much work is still needed to end family violence. The church must position itself to address domestic abuse and embark on the journey of awareness and policy development. The cavity between awareness and policy development must be closed by

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<sup>65</sup> Melva Costen, *African American Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 35.

<sup>66</sup> Paul A. Schewe, *Preventing Violence in Relationships* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2002), 263-266.

inculcating leaders and congregants via training regarding the signs and symptoms of abuse, constructing healthy models that encourage parishioners to report, especially pastor's wives, embed policy within church by-laws and human resource handbooks, and educate future generations on healthy marriage principles to help reduce domestic violence in the Black church.

### **Conclusion**

Although there is need for additional study, the metrics and data for IPV are numerous and depict the severity of the problem that continues to increase and multiply in society and the Black church. The faith-based community must be cognizant of the depth of the issue and the impact to female congregants, children, and families. The notion of abuse must also be inclusive of addressing the issues of the power struggle between victims and abusers as well as help for the marginalized and powerless. The church, specifically males who abuse, have, in some cases, lost the fervor to love their neighbor as themselves and refrain from oppressing the most vulnerable victims, specifically women. The next chapter will help us identify how the passion to love our neighbor as we love ourselves was lost from a historical perspective as we discuss the roots of the Black church.

## **Chapter 2: The History of the Black Church in America**

The Black church in America has a profound history that has evolved through many centuries and continues to progress into the twenty-first century. The Black church has significantly advanced in the spheres of economics, social justice, prominence, leadership, and membership as compared to the days of slavery, racism, and oppression. The church has continued to grow exponentially producing mega-churches, multi-million dollar ministries, first class accommodations, and luxurious palates. The Oxygen Network airs the new reality show Preachers of LA which captures the personal lives of famous Black preachers such as Pastor Wayne Chaney, Bishop Ron Gibson, Pastor Dietrich Haddon, Bishop Noel Jones, and Bishop Clarence E. McClendon.

The faith-based community gained international attention during the Azusa Street Revival and Civil Rights movement, but remained subordinate to the White church. Black congregations have grown into vast corporate organizations and catapulted to astronomical heights with church leaders such as Pastor Creflo Dollar, Bishop Charles E. Blake, Bishop I.V. Hilliard, Bishop T.D. Jakes, Bishop Eddie Long, and Pastor Fredrick K.C. Price reporting memberships of twenty to thirty thousand parishioners. Further, the church is represented in all aspects of secular society, culture, and has a permanent seat at important tables in national politics. This is a far cry from the days of slavery and being considered three fifths of a person<sup>67</sup>, separate but equal, and unworthy to ride in the front of the bus. The Black church no longer rides in the back of the bus; they ride in Bentley's, Phantom Rolls Royce, Mercedes, and BMW's.

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<sup>67</sup> Three fifths a person was a compromise between Northern and Southern states during the Constitutional Convention of 1787 regarding how slaves would be counted when determining a state's total population for legislation and taxation purposes.

Although most of the pastors listed above enjoy successful lives, it is fair to say that most of their income is earned from product sales, speaking engagements, and other economic ventures separate from the church. Mega-church pastors constantly endure the unfair biased opinions of individuals with a parochial view into their lives and ministries. Further, most mega-churches have established and developed effective ministries within the church to serve the needs of congregants; however, more work must be done to address the issue of domestic violence within the congregation.

The history of the Black church is essential to understand the philosophy and methodology utilized to support a perennial hierarchical structure of power and control that subdues women, precludes IPV from being addressed, and leads to underreporting of abuse. Although the historical development of the Black church encompasses the African continent and nearly all Black denominations in America from the 1700's until today, our focus will center on the historical aspect of the Black Pentecostal church in America as it specifically relates to the development, progression, and concentration of power, abuse, and control against women. The writing will help us understand the origin and paradigm of abuse and control beginning with the roots of Black church in America, as well as abuse, control, and power issues of European immigrants in Britain, the era of slavery, the Jim Crow era, and Civil Rights movement.

The discussion will demonstrate the overall mindset of Black men in the periods above and the subjugation of women. Although we will discuss the historical aspect of the Black church and White male dominance in America beginning with slavery, the goal is not to drown our discussion with issues of race, but to help us recognize the patterns

involved in the oppression of women that set the stage for IPV to develop and continue in the Black church.

Although Black congregants are members of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, Assembly of God, United Church of Christ, Church of Christ, Southern Baptist Convention, Conservative Baptist, and Church of God denominations, the higher concentration of Black church membership is found primarily in the National Baptist Convention, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Zion Episcopal (AMEZ), Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), and Apostolic Faith. However, the focus will center on the Black Pentecostal aspect of the church.

Further, throughout the course of the writing, when we use terms such as Black church, church, churches, faith-based community, we, us, parishioners, God's people, congregants, Christians, Jesus followers, and Disciples, it makes reference to the Black church in America. The formation and establishment of the Black church created a power block for pastors who held the authority to address abuse from the most powerful position in the church, the pulpit. This position of power is essential for victims and abusers and has the ability to make an influential impact on how Christians perceive healthy relationships, domestic abuse, and men's attitudes toward females and femininity. The role of men, women, family, marriage, and pastors in the Black church is imperative in understanding the progression of abuse, power, and control as well as the unwritten rules within the congregation that support abuse and prevent victims from reporting. The church endured its own set of challenges with abuse and power during slavery, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Post-Civil Rights eras; the church continues to fight racism, prejudice,

and bigotry against the dominant culture. IPV in the Black church did not begin with issues of poverty, single parent homes, or abusive homes.

Although these are important indicators of the roots of abuse from a community perspective (and have been addressed in the previous chapter), the issue of domestic violence in the Black church centers on the centralization of power in the pulpit by placing ultimate power in the hands of the pastor and chosen male leadership. The concentration of power had its genesis in the standing tradition of male leadership to enforce silence and prohibits victims and congregants from reporting domestic violence to church officials or law enforcement. The goal is to explore a brief historical depiction of the roots of the Black church in America without detracting from the core thought of the writing. This historical piece is critical to trace the beginnings of the Black church and demonstrate the culture of male privilege and methods for holding women in submission which, in many cases, has led to the abuse of women. Further, our goal is to demonstrate how males do not view women as their neighbors, needing help, or viewing the issue of IPV from the lens of the marginalized. Although IPV issues are prevalent in many non-ethnic church denominations as well as conservative denominations, our focus will center on the Black church.

### **Roots of the Black Church in America**

The Black church progressed and developed rapidly in America out of the need to combat punishing oppression, social injustice, and slavery that promoted the White power structure, subjugated women, Blacks, Native American Indians, Mexicans, and

other persons of color.<sup>68</sup> Although Blacks attend churches that are not predominantly ethnic, many attended churches and belonged to denominations such as the AME, AMEZ, Apostolic Faith, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Church of God in Christ, and the National Baptist Convention.<sup>69</sup>

The Black church in America has roots in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and. Further, Protestant Reformation movement that birthed the Black Pentecostal church in America the Black church has deep roots in the Pietist movement that set the trajectory for the Methodist movement, a group of historically related denominations of Protestant Christianity founded by two brothers, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and friend George Whitefield.<sup>70</sup> Beginning with the early Methodist movement in America, Blacks were introduced to the Christianity. The Methodist church in America eventually became the “religion” of many Black slaves who established churches within the Methodist tradition by a preacher named Bishop Richard Allen, who founded the AME church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1794. The AME church convened its first convention in September of 1830 in Philadelphia shortly after the Cincinnati riots when Whites attacked Blacks and destroyed their businesses. The AME convention was the first of its kind organized solely by Black church and community leaders.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> W. Scott Poole, *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction*, ed. Edward J Blum, W. Scott Blum, and Paul Harvey (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 77-90.

<sup>69</sup> Samuel S. Hill, *One Name But Several Faces: Variety in Popular Christian Denominations in Southern History* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 77.

<sup>70</sup> Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley's Relations with the Lutheran Pietists Clergy in Georgia*, ed. Christopher T. Collins Winn, *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 135-145.

<sup>71</sup> Douglas M. Strong, *American Methodism in the Nineteenth Century: Expansion and Fragmentation*, ed. Jason E. Vickers (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 63-72.

In 1870, The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (now known as the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, CME) was established in Jackson, Tennessee by William Miles and Richard H. Vanderhost and grew from forty thousand to sixty-seven thousand members in three years.<sup>72</sup> In 1895, Black church officials established a new Baptist organization; The National Baptist Association that was born out of a unification of three separate national conventions that were organized between 1880 and 1890.<sup>73</sup> In 1906, the Azusa Street revival meeting held in Los Angeles, California and organized by William Seymour, served as the launching pad for the Black Pentecostal church in America around the world. Mostly all Black Pentecostal denominations in America can trace their foundation to the Azusa Street revival and the spread of their organizations into the far regions of the world.<sup>74</sup> Although the Black church experienced limited freedom, Jim Crow laws continued to make circumstances immensely arduous for the parishioners in America.

### **The Jim Crow Era and the Black Church**

Jim Crow laws were enacted during the years of 1876 through 1965 in America and purported racial segregation in nearly all aspects of public life. Blacks held a separate but equal status in society and a position of inferiority to Whites. Jim Crow laws prohibited Blacks and Whites from occupying the same space in public which extended to worshipping together in church services. However, Blacks were allowed to form

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<sup>72</sup> Katharine Dvorak, *An African American Exodus: The Segregation of the Southern Churches* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1991), 160-168.

<sup>73</sup> Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 120-123.

<sup>74</sup> E.L. Harvey, *The Price of Discipleship*, ed. James R. Goff, Jr. & Grant Wacker (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 30-32.



separate congregations and worship together in peace without interruption from law enforcement.<sup>75</sup> The first congregations in America were established by slaves and free Blacks in the 1800's in states such as Georgia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The oldest known Black church was founded by a slave named Peter Durret and his wife who established the First African Church in Lexington, Kentucky in 1790.<sup>76</sup> During the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, Baptist and Methodist preachers travelled extensively throughout the South conducting revival meetings appealing to slaves with many converting to Christianity and experiencing new freedom as a result of finding religion.<sup>77</sup> The churches that were established by slaves during the Great Awakening afforded Blacks the opportunity to experience a new level of respect as they served in very important positions of preacher, pastor, and church leaders.

Blacks were prohibited from serving in such positions in the Episcopal and Anglican Churches.<sup>78</sup> Prior to establishing their own congregations, Blacks were subjected to the worship styles and oversight of White slave masters as they continued to learn the foundations of the Christian faith. The White slave masters held prayer services, Bible studies, and worship services on their plantations supervised by White representatives utilizing the scripture text, specifically the curse of Ham and the Epistle

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<sup>75</sup> Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations* (New York, NY: Penguin Group Publishing, 2010), 164-167.

<sup>76</sup> Lexington, Kentucky: The Athens of the West A National Register of Historic Places, "First African Baptist Church", National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/lexington/fab.htm> (Accessed July 29, 2014).

<sup>77</sup> J. Gordon Melton, *A Will To Choose: The Origins of African American Methodism* (Lanham, MA: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 35-56.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

of Philemon to justify the ownership of slaves and reinforce obedience to slave masters.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the Black church was born out of a response to racism, slavery, bigotry, abuse, control, power, and prejudice cemented in the fabric of American life creating a new level of recognition solely based upon the formation of Black congregations in America. The issues of racism, oppression, bigotry, and prejudice continued for the next eighty years well into the Civil Rights movement.

Although progress was made in America, society still controlled the power structure and forced Blacks into oppression, subjugation, and denial of civil rights. In addition to this, free White women were also victims of the dominance, abuse, power, and control of the White male power structure as they were not permitted to vote, hold limited positions of power in politics, church, or government. The Women's Suffrage Movement of the 1920's galvanized many White women to form social groups to address the oppression and subjugation of women.<sup>80</sup> Further, they continued to experience great victories and progress in the suffrage movement with some women being elected to the United States Congress which led to the passing of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment guaranteeing the right for women to vote. Although they were free due to the color of their skin, women were still bound by the cultural traditions of the times which extended in the Civil Rights Era.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 83-93.

<sup>80</sup> Aimee D. Shouse, *Women's Rights: Documents Decoded* (Santa Barbara, CA: BC-CLIO, INC., 2014), 55-64.

<sup>81</sup> Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009), 139-175.

### **The Civil Rights Era and the Black Church**

During the Civil Rights era, the Black church experienced significant growth and development and many well-known denominations were formed as a result of the outgrowth of the Azusa Street revival.<sup>82</sup> Black organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Urban League paved the way for the rise of the Black church through demonstrations, sit-ins, protests, and marches led by preachers and civic leaders. These actions were critical to growth as they rallied around the church as membership increased significantly.

The churches in America served as major hubs to assemble in the fight against oppression as leaders utilized their power and influence to gather thousands of parishioners together to fight the power structure of oppression. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) played a key role in the struggle for Civil Rights.<sup>83</sup> In addition to this, the Civil Rights movement featured leaders who were not clergyman such as James Meredith, Medgar Evers, Asa Phillip Randolph, Whitney Young, and Bayard Rustin, who were indispensable in the movement.<sup>84</sup> The history of the Black church from the Pietist and Methodist movements, The Jim Crow era, Civil Rights era, and outgrowth of the Azusa Street revival set the

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<sup>82</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 1059-1060.

<sup>83</sup> Ricky K. Green, *Voices in Black Political Thought* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2005), 1-15.

<sup>84</sup> Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Movements in America* (New York, NY: Routledge Press, 1997), 139-149.

framework for understanding how a culture was established and the focus of concentrated power in male leadership that reinforced IPV and underreporting.

The European immigrants that migrated to America to escape the abuse, power, and control of the Church of England utilized the same weapons to subjugate women and persons of color. Further, Blacks that were enslaved also fought for freedom from prejudice, oppression, abuse, power, and control against the White male power structure may have adapted the same tactics to subjugate Black women continuing the male cultural tradition of the submission and oppression of women. The Black church implemented the same culture of the subjugation and oppression of women as victims of the culture and framework instituted by the dominant culture of the time. Furthermore, the history of the Black church displays a church attempting to escape the power struggle against White America, oppressive government, politicians, and state legislatures that sponsored oppression by using the scriptures to subjugate them into obedience by attacking self-esteem, self-confidence, instilling fear, and initiating punishment and retaliation to maintain power and control.

The cultural tradition of male dominance that began in the slave era, continuing through the Jim Crow era, and Civil Rights Movement serves as the substratum for male dominance in the Black church, support for IPV, and discouraged reporting. The cultural tradition of White male dominance that Black leaders worked so diligently to overcome became transmitted into the structure, administration, and formation of ministry culture. The mindset of males during slavery, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights eras is crucial in understanding male dominance and the subjugation of women. Although Blacks were enslaved, males in the community held the same gender biased beliefs as White males

regarding the status of women and their position in society. The belief system regarding women and their position in society produced the atmosphere for the acceptance of abuse and continued subjugation to male dominance.

### **The Culture of the Black Church in America**

Understanding the culture of the Black church helps us to understand the underpinnings for the development of the system of power utilized to support abuse and control against women. The historical characteristics of the church in America provide the framework for understanding the development, concentration of power, and control in the pulpit. The culture of the Black church is vast and runs deep with unwritten rules established over the course of hundreds of years that continue to permeate the institution of congregations today. Further, the culture, rooted in slavery, oppression, power, and control, cultivated a code of secrecy and forced women to remain silent about IPV and never report.

Culture can be defined as the philosophical beliefs, customs, thought process, methodology, behavior, and way of life for a group of individuals, place, or organization.<sup>85</sup> The Black church has developed and adopted a culture based upon a historical framework deeply rooted in African traditions and customs. For example, the church has a strong sense of culture, community, and family that extends to singles in the congregation. There is a sense of no one left behind and no one left out especially during holidays and special occasions where community and family gather together. The sense of belonging is crucial to the culture of the congregation coupled in identification with a family name.

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<sup>85</sup> Tony Lawson and Joan Garrod, *Dictionary of Sociology* (Chicago, IL: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 56.

The family name, in most cases, was all that Blacks held in their possession, especially during slavery; everything was in the name; life, hope, and more importantly a sense of knowing your heritage. The community and families gathered together in the church and supported one another in times of need. The community pooled their resources together to ensure that no one lacked basic necessities.

This established a community in which a village existed for the safety and protection of its members as well as fellowship and encouragement. The culture is valuable when it concerns fellowship with the saints, whether it's joining another church for worship, sharing a meal with members after church, singles hanging out having fun, married couples vacationing together, or the mother's board having a prayer meeting. To be in community was essential for the survival of the church, especially during slavery, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights era; fellowship was critical in providing comfort, edification, and encouragement for individuals who endured suffering, trials, hardships, and tribulations.

The culture of the congregation is grounded in the notions of community and fellowship, but also food. The idea of great tasting food is a staple in Black church culture and most everything happens around the table with a meal. Black congregational culture utilizes food as an invitation for people to participate in community. Food items such as collard greens, fried chicken, fried catfish, hush puppies, corn bread, yams, peach cobbler, and sweet potato pies are just a few dishes served up when the saints gather together for fellowship.<sup>86</sup> The church is also deeply grounded in spiritual roots that have shaped the culture, traditions, norms, and customs that permeate the atmosphere of the

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<sup>86</sup> Michael Battle, *The Black Church in America: African American Christian Spirituality* (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 45.

Black church today. Black church culture in America has roots in the West African culture of the Gullahs, the first slaves to arrive by ship in the Carolinas. The Gullahs came to America with deep spiritual roots grounded in centuries of African nostalgia with dancing, singing, and heavy drum bass music.<sup>87</sup> The theological foundation and beliefs that formed the culture of the Black church in times past remain intact, especially the issue of male dominance and female submission.

The church continues to manifest a culture in which control is utilized by pastors to set the stage for how the church grows, develops, and evolves.<sup>88</sup> The spiritual culture of parishioners is also entrenched in strict obedience to God, obedience to church leadership, strict order, and full support of the pastor and ministry. This culture of obedience to the pastor and church leadership has set the stage for the acceptance and tolerance of IPV against women. The defined gender roles has contributed to the oppression of women as they experience the pressure of fulfilling those roles to be perceived as Godly wives worthy of honor and acceptance. Although times have changed within the Black family with more single mothers as head of the household, in marriage, Black men continue to dominate the family structure. Furthermore, the role of Black women in church has remained consistent for the last five decades even though women continue to experience more freedom and serve in leadership positions such as pastor and bishop. In the COGIC church, Baptist denominations, and conservative organizations, most women have no propensity to enter into leadership positions they believe should be

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<sup>87</sup> Charles Joyner, *Believer I Know: The Emergence of African American Christianity*, ed. Paul E. Johnson, *African American Christianity Essays in History* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 20-36.

<sup>88</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 76-91.

held by men. Although Black women in other denominations may have no desire to serve in the position of pastor, most are content with fulfilling traditional female roles in the church. The concept and roles of marriage and family play an essential role in understanding IPV, power, and control. Although roles within marriage and families have changed overtime with the additions of higher income, livability, and socioeconomic status, most Black married couples follow the traditional roles of marriage and family. The roles listed above are ingrained in the history and structure of Black culture embedded within the family and church life.

### **The Role of Black Males**

The role of Black men has its genesis in the traditions and customs of African history with the male positioned as patriarch of the family and head of household. Males are groomed for this role during their early teenage years and trained accordingly to provide leadership for their families, especially at the demise of the family patriarch.<sup>89</sup> Black males are inculcated with lessons in leadership and talks with fathers who help them understand the importance of leading the family in the father's absence. Although the traditional Black family has experienced a decline due to a lack of fathers in the home,<sup>90</sup> most families acknowledge males as the leader of the family, especially in the Southern, Bible belt states.<sup>91</sup> Black males are perceived as leaders in at least four spheres

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<sup>89</sup> Bridgitt L. Mitchell, *African American Fatherhood*, ed. Jacob C. Gordon (New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2004) 37-46.

<sup>90</sup> M. Belinda Tucker and Angela D. James, *New Families, New functions: Post Modern African American Families in Context*, ed. Vonnie C. McLoyd, Nancy E. Hill, and Kenneth A. Dodge (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2005), 94-95.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*



of family life; *head of the household, leaders of the family, protectors of the family, and provider for the family.*

The church plays an important role in reinforcing these leadership roles through the use of scriptures which we will discuss in our theological chapter emphasizing how Biblical text is utilized to support the subjugation of women. Furthermore, this leadership structure is articulated even when congregants come from fatherless households and experience conversion; they are acclimated to this family structure with the male as leader, head of the household as well as the provider, leader, and protector of the family. The role of the head of household encompasses the roles of provider, leader, and protector.

### **Head of the Household**

The title head of the household is one of great appellations bestowed upon the Black male; it is a sign of respect in the family and community. The head of the household is a term designated for males alone although females have taken on the role in the absence of males in the home.<sup>92</sup> The head of the house comes with certain amenities that are earned based upon leadership and natural selection as the patriarch of the family such as being the first person to eat at the dinner table, leading the family in prayer, acting as family spokesperson, and the decisive voice in all family business and financial matters. This is inclusive of how much money is allotted for mortgage payments, car payments, activities, as well as decisions about when to relocate including moving out of state. Although more Black families are embracing alternative forms of marriage such as swinging, egalitarian, and abandoning the traditional family with the

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<sup>92</sup> Sheryl A. Hill, *Black Intimacies: A Gender Perspective on Families and Relationships* (New York, NY: Altamira Press, 2005), 51-58.

male as head of household, Black families continue to embrace the traditional style of family leadership with the male as head of household.

### **Providers for the Family**

Black males are also the main provider of all needs for the family whether financial, emotional, and spiritual. Black males are trained to ensure that food is on the table, the family is clothed, transportation is ready, and the family has a roof over their heads.<sup>93</sup> Although the role of provider has changed with more women entering the workforce and more fathers staying at home to care for the children,<sup>94</sup> the role of provider is reserved for the male in the Black family. The Black church leans heavily on the scripture which states that “if any fails to provide for his own, he is worse than an infidel or unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8).<sup>95</sup> Black males pride themselves on the ability to fully care for their families and ensure all basic family needs are met. Further, males, although slated first to eat at the dinner table, will sacrifice their own needs to meet the needs of the family. They understand the need to ensure that when basic necessities such as food are lacking in the household, he is the first individual to volunteer his own meal to allow his wife and children to eat and be full while he accepts less. Further, Black males will starve rather than be viewed in the church and community as an infidel, one who thinks of himself first in lieu of placing the needs of the entire family above his title of head of household, provider, and leader.

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<sup>93</sup> John L. McAdoo, *The Roles and African American Fathers in Socialization of Their Children*, ed. Harriette Pipes McAdoo, *Black Families* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997, 183-190.

<sup>94</sup> John Hope Franklin, *African American Families: A Historical Note*, ed. Harriette Pipes McAdoo, *Black Families* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997, 5-9.

<sup>95</sup> 1Timothy 5:8, King James Version

The goal here is to paint an image to the outside world of a strong Black male who provides for the family to cover up narcissistic and underfunctioning behaviors in which they abuse, control, and subjugate their wives.

### **Leaders of the Family**

The next important role that Black males fulfill in the family dynamic is that of the leader. Leadership is defined as having influence<sup>96</sup> and males are inculcated with the concept of leading the family, church, and community from an early age. The notion of leadership has its origin in the lineage of African history that produced kings, queens, princes, princesses, military generals, and many other great leaders. Although Black males were reduced to the position of slaves and three fifths of a person, they continued to function as valiant and respected leaders in their communities, even among White slave masters.<sup>97</sup> The role of the Black male is to lead with dignity, respect, integrity, and at times with a stern hand and deep voice walking tall, proud of this God given responsibility to lead the family in the commandments of the Lord. Further, the wife and children look to the male for trust and leadership as they lead with vision and purpose as the cornerstone of the family. This title of leader comes with the designation of decision maker in family business, consultant for all family members, strong influence on marriage for their sons and daughters, and highest authority in all family matters. The title of leader means they lead and everyone else follows and the church continues to reinforce this message in the teachings on roles in the family. Furthermore, the title of leader comes with certain God given responsibilities that cannot be fulfilled by the

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<sup>96</sup> John Maxwell, *Developing The Leader Within You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 1.

<sup>97</sup> Harriet Pipes McAdoo and John McAdoo, *The Dynamics of African American Fathers Family Roles* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 3-9.

female; for a woman to assume this role in the presence of Black males in the home is taboo and disdained by the church.

### **Protector of the Family**

The Black male serves as the chief protector of the family which is an important role especially for their wives and daughters. They are trained to employ every possible tactic in order to protect their families from dangers in the neighborhood, school yard, church, and broader community. The family is left vulnerable and open for attack from strangers, and intruders. The Black family suffered a great loss when males were publicly whipped, executed, and sold to slave masters, thus breaking down the traditional family structure. The Jim Crow era and struggle for Civil Rights highlighted the need for males to protect their families by any means necessary against prejudice, bigotry, and racism.<sup>98</sup> The rise of drugs and gang violence swept through inner cities in America thus reemphasizing the need for males to ensure that their families were protected from the ills of society. Black males also suffered death trying to protect their families when their homes were attacked, the mistreatment of younger males by White counterparts, and gross disrespect by law enforcement. The role of protector is one that is taken seriously in the community and an important part of leadership for males. The younger males are trained at an early age to become protectors of the family, church, and community.

### **The Role of Males in the Black Church**

The role of the Black male in the church environment is very similar to that of the family context. The males occupy mostly all top echelon leadership positions in the church. As previously stated in the writing, although more women are entering into top

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<sup>98</sup> Leonor Boulin Johnson and Robert Staples, *Black Families at the Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 155-164.

leadership positions of the church the balance still heavily favors males. Furthermore, most leadership and financial decisions are made by males in the church while women are relegated to menial tasks in the kitchen, nursery, teaching, or perhaps assisting with some financial matters such as counting offerings after service.<sup>99</sup> Black males in church leadership continues to exhibit ultimate authority in most business associated with the church following in the cultural tradition previously mentioned in the writing regarding dominance and the subjugation of women based upon their own interpretation of scripture text. The role of males in the church is to lead their family and ensure that all members adhere to his leadership to avoid embarrassment and inability to control the family.

Black males in the church environment pride themselves on possessing complete dominance over their children, especially elders and deacons, oftentimes citing the scripture which poses the question, “How can one rule the house of God, if they cannot rule in their own houses”(1Tim. 5:18). This became and remains the gold standard for males in church especially those who desire to enter into the ministerial work of pastoring. The idea is that strong Black males are needed to shoulder the burden of building great ministries; however, the role of strength has been transformed and became synonymous with abuse, power, control, and subjugation of women. The pastor, who is at the forefront of the church, continued in the tradition of the male culture of dominance, power, and control acquired from the heritage, traditions, cultures, and norms of Africa combined with the European mindset and attitude towards women.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

### **The Role of the Pastor**

The Black church has a long standing history of demonstrating a high level of respect for the senior pastor of the ministry. They give him high esteem and deference placing the lives of the family in the hands of the pastor, whom they emphatically believe has been chosen by God to lead them to the land of promise. Black families seek spiritual guidance, direction, counsel, and prayer from the pastor as well as home and hospital visits, teaching, and preaching that will lift up their souls after experiencing suffering and other issues before attending church on Sunday morning. Furthermore, families trust that the pastor will assist in the decision making process as they believe the pastor has a special connection with God and will lead the family in the right direction.<sup>100</sup> The pastor yields great authority in the church and ministry with most congregants accepting the role and word of the pastor as the gospel. The family is taught to never question the role and authority of the pastor under any circumstance; to do this could be perceived as sin.

The pastor is almost never referred to by his first name; either the initials of the first and middle name and last name or just simply by the title pastor and last name. Although more Blacks pastors are comfortable with being called pastor John or pastor Bob, the ecclesiastical title always preceded the last name. The amount of respect and authority given to the Black pastor has increased due to the size of congregations and influence among colleagues. This has great implications for the role of women in the family and the church setting. This is imperative in understanding the lack of reporting by victims and congregants who abide in subjugated roles with little to no authority in

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<sup>100</sup> Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters, and Jeff Levin, *Religion in the Lives of African Americans: Social, Psychological, and Health Perspectives* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 111-136.

decision making. The pastor is the center of attention and attraction as the congregation seeks guidance and direction in their daily lives clinging to every word spoken as a new born baby clings to its mother.<sup>101</sup>

The pastor is responsible for the spiritual direction and formation of the entire congregation and this has great significance in terms of culture. The pastor determines what messages are taught, sermons preached, and how information is disseminated from the pulpit and all areas of the church. For example, IPV is considered a family issue, legal and criminal issue, but also a spiritual issue that can have direct impact on the culture of the congregation in terms of how abuse is perceived and addressed. The notion of domestic violence can only become part of the culture contingent upon the pastor's willingness to discuss the issue transparently and fully support efforts to increase awareness and education.

The spiritual culture of the church has protected the issue of abuse and control under the umbrella of secrecy and silence. The issue is hidden to stifle discussion and divert the attention of parishioners away from policy and programs that serve to educate and train Christians about domestic violence and equip them with the skill set to provide assistance. The secrecy and silence on abuse coupled with control by male leadership allow family violence to remain veiled under the guise of spirituality and inhibits the issue from being exposed in its true nature and form. The pastor in the Black church plays a critical role in the congregation and has the ultimate authority in the dissemination of information utilizing codified language when speaking to the congregation, small groups, or one on one.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 11-130.

Pastors set the tone and direction on how information is reported and to whom the information is reported. The most powerful position in the Black congregation is that of the pastor who has supreme authority and control of virtually all communication. In addition to this, males sit in other powerful positions such as associate minister, elder, deacon, board member, trustee member, and administrator which carry great weight and influence in all church related matters. Although more women are fulfilling key leadership roles in the Black church, the male voice still dominates almost all final decisions related to the church, business, and ministry. The defined roles contribute to oppression of women as they experience the pressure of fulfilling those roles to be perceived as Godly wives worthy of honor and acceptance. Although times have changed within the Black family with more single mothers as head of the house, in marriage, Black men continue to dominate the family structure. Furthermore, the role of Black women in church has remained consistent for the last five decades even though women continue to experience more freedom and serve in leadership positions such as pastor and bishop.

### **The Role of the Black Female in the Family**

The role of the Black female in the family setting is one of submission to the role of the Black male. The history of the female also has its genesis in the African traditions, norms, heritage, and customs that have continued within the family today. The role of the female is that of the succor of the family providing care and nourishment to her husband and children mostly on an emotional level. The Black female is the primary care giver for the family, especially for the children who run into the arms of their mothers when they scar their knees after a fall on the playground and when more serious issues arise such as



dating and marriage.<sup>102</sup> The female is viewed as more understanding and approachable as compared to males who tend to perceive issues from a logical perspective with no emotional attachment. Black females exhibit a certain level of leadership in the family that is concentrated in the areas of emotional support and active listening to issues and concerns. The females who have built a level of trust based upon their wisdom and ability to induce their husbands during pillow talk are given an expanded role of leadership within the family, especially when the husband is absent from the home during work and business hours.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, their level of authority in the area of discipline is strongly supported by the males who make it extremely clear that no disrespect will be tolerated by children against their mothers. Black females are second in command in the leadership structure of the family having the authority to direct and guide the family with a big stick, and in some cases upsetting the female is worse than upsetting the male. Although females have increasingly embraced the role of primary leader of the family and head of household due to the continued absence of males, females still maintain a subordinate position in the hierarchy of the Black church.<sup>104</sup> The role of the Black women is centered on this essential function to hold the entire family together while simultaneously providing care for themselves. The role of succor further extends to the church as women tend to hold positions such as Sunday school teacher, nursery worker, usher, nurse, and pastor's aide.

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<sup>102</sup> Patricia Dixon, *African American Relationships, Marriages, and Families: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge Press, 2007), 69.

<sup>103</sup> Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For The Woman: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 76-90.

<sup>104</sup> Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 182-183.

### **The Role of the Black Female in Church**

The role of the Black female in the church is similar to the role in the home and family as succor, listener, and nurturer. Although females in the Black Pentecostal church are rising to positions of preacher, minister, associate pastors, and senior pastors, females continue to serve in subservient positions such as secretary, administrative assistant, kitchen administrator, nurse, and usher.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, although Black females serve in leadership positions of the church, they still do not have the same level of authority or voice as the able as compared to Black males. For example, many women who are married pastors, in most cases still provide the primary level of care and household responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, washing and drying clothes. The domestic duties of the Black female in the family does not necessarily cease just because they perform ecclesiastical duties.

The women's department is led by a woman who is respected as the leader of women, but has limited influence in the church beyond that role. The issues that impact women are primarily discussed in women's meetings among women who gather at a specified date and time. Further, they rarely serve on the important boards of the church namely the board of directors or board of trustees, and if they are selected to serve in that capacity their influence is overshadowed by the presence of males limiting their impact. Still further, the education level of females play a vital role in regards to how they are utilized in the broader aspect of ministry. For example, if a female has a certain education level, master's degree or doctorate, she is called upon to function as a consultant to the project and may even be asked to serve on the board in the event it is a win-win for the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

ministry and perhaps connect the church with valuable resources to increase the status and position.

Although women played a vital role in traditional African societies in positions such as priestess, their role in the Black church, as a result of Western Christianity, changed significantly as the Baptist and Methodists adopted the European paradigm of Christianity.<sup>106</sup> The church mother holds a very powerful position in the church and exhibits great influence among women congregants. They are revered as saints and establish relationships of trust and confidence, oftentimes serving as the confidant to many women in the church. Although the church mother has a key position in the church, their voices remain limited to that of the pastor and male leadership. However, the voice of the church mother can greatly assist in the awareness, education, exposure of abuse, and be a great asset in the effort to assist women in addressing IPV issues. Although church mothers can have influence in addressing domestic violence issues, they must be careful not to act as mediators to protect the pastor, male leadership, and abusers.

The difference in roles between males and females in the home, family life, and church still function in a hierarchical structure, particularly in Black marriages. The roles between males and females in marriage follow the same pattern as mentioned above. Leon Podles suggests that femininity can have a negative impact on masculinity. He states that young boys achieve masculinity only when they reject females as his quest for manhood begins with a break from his mother. Podles further suggests that in order for a male to love any woman, he must first discard his mother or suffer the consequence of never becoming masculine.

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<sup>106</sup> L.H. Welcher, Jr., *The History and Heritage of African American Churches: A Way Out of No Way* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2011), 115-120.

When males embrace masculinity by driving the “female” out of themselves, this is the genesis of the mind set in which males perceive females in a lower hierarchical position in the community and family.<sup>107</sup> However, Ron Clark states that instead breaking with females to achieve masculinity, the notion of masculinity is destroyed by removing the “female” out of the lives of males. Masculinity is abolished when males fail to understand how to interact with females and embrace healthy relationships.<sup>108</sup> This is imperative for the Black church and Christendom in order to end family violence and subjugation of women in the church.

### **Marriage in the Black Culture**

The concept of marriage in the Black church and family is rooted in scripture text that has a deep time-honored tradition, especially in Southern states where the notion of traditional marriage between one man and one woman remains strong in the twenty-first century.<sup>109</sup> Although more Blacks are embracing non-traditional forms of marriage such as LBGT and cohabitation, most still favor the traditional form of marriage between a man and woman.<sup>110</sup> Blacks were not allowed the same rights as Whites during the early antebellum years in American history and laws prohibited them from marrying in the same manner. Blacks could not enter into civil contracts such as marriage and thus were innovative in the art of wedding ceremonies. Blacks created the ceremony of jumping the

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<sup>107</sup> Leon Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Co., 1999), 38-41.

<sup>108</sup> Ron Clark, *Am I Sleeping with the Enemy: Males and Females in the Image of God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 49-52.

<sup>109</sup> Faye Z. Belgrave and Kevin W. Allison, *African American Psychology: From Africa to America* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2010), 230.

<sup>110</sup> Anthony Stanford, *Homophobia in the Black Church: How Faith, Politics, and Fear Divide the Black Community* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABL-CLIO, LLC, 2013), 142-144.

broom, scripture wedding, and wedding banquets for the entire community to celebrate as they were prohibited to marry legally until after emancipation and now experience the same positivity in marriage as other ethnicities.<sup>111</sup> Black church culture has an expectation that their children enter in holy matrimony and embrace the institution of marriage.

The Black community believed in the notion of traditional marriage that served as the foundation of society in the African culture and tradition of family. The notion of marriage is still perceived as important part of the institution of family culture.<sup>112</sup>

Marriage in the Black church is viewed in the same manner as the overall culture. The notion of marriage was also established on the great traditions of the African culture and customs; the Black church strongly believes that marriage fosters strong families.

However, marriage in the family and church culture follows the same concept as mentioned in the role of the Black male, female, pastor, and family in that it supports the submission of women to their husband's and limits the voice and influence of women.

Further, the pastor holds the power and control over the church's belief system and interpretation of scripture text which has an enormous impact on how IPV is perceived and addressed in the church setting.

## **Conclusion**

The historical aspect of the Black church is helpful in understanding the continuation of domestic violence and the subjugation of women. The church has continued in the traditions of its African heritage, customs, and norms, as well as

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<sup>111</sup> Susan Scafidi, *Who Owns Culture?: Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 38-39.

<sup>112</sup> Frances Smith Foster, *'Til Death or Distance Do us Part: Love and Marriage in African America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 103-104.

adopting the male cultural mindset and attitude against women during the era of slavery of European males. The Black congregation, specifically males in leadership position, upheld and supported the subjugation of women and encouraged females to fulfill a specific role of submission that continues today. Although more and more women are challenging the traditional role of women in the family and church setting and redefining the nature of that role, they continue to remain in a subservient position to men in the church and family.

This profoundly impacts the issue of domestic abuse against women and underreporting, especially when they are not in positions of power or influence to contribute to the discussion of how IPV is addressed within the congregation. The position and role of the pastor is critical in moving issues of abuse to the forefront and ensuring that women are protected and have a vehicle for reporting. The voice and influence of the pastor must change the course of how domestic violence is addressed by taking a public stand against the issue from behind the pulpit and articulate a message that brings awareness, education, and training to the church that sends a clear signal that male dominance and submission of females is disdained and encourage women and congregants to report abuse to law enforcement or church officials.

The church must understand how the passion for justice was lost after the Civil Rights movement that has relegated IPV to the bottom of the agenda. The prophetic voices must rise to include a discussion of the oppression of women and abuse. Further, the church must teach males that they must love their neighbor, their wives, as they love themselves and to love God means they love their wives. This is one method and a first step to significantly reduce IPV in the Black church and discontinue the practice of

protecting abusers, re-victimizing women, and conceal the issue from the congregation.

The church must be educated about domestic violence in order to help women report and present options in the event a women desires to escape abuse. Pastors in the Black church must be aware that males have the ability to underfunction in marriage and relationships by overcompensating in the areas of provider, protector, and head of household while using these roles as a cover to overfunction by continuing abuse against women.

### **Chapter 3: The Theological Foundations that Support IPV in the Black Church**

The Black church embraces a long tradition of theological engagement and framework for the application of scripture text directly related to relationships, specifically marriage between husbands and wives. The church relies heavily upon the Bible as the definitive text to outline the nature of interaction between married couples, parents, children, pastor, and parishioner. Further, the scriptures are immensely important to Christians who utilize the sacred text as the supreme authority in all church and relationship matters. Most congregations resolve disputes with the support of Biblical interpretation with the pastor as judge in the black robe and gavel in hand utilizing the pulpit as his ruling bench.

Theology, in its most basic definition means the study of God's nature, essence, character, attributes, and interaction with creation.<sup>113</sup> The study of God is inclusive of how we encounter and envision our faith in our daily lives as we seek to live out that faith in a pragmatic manner. For example, when there is death in the family, individuals contemplate all aspects of death and how it affects their lives, as well as how God will see them through. Further, when there is tragedy in the world as experienced with hurricane Katrina, the typhoon that obliterated the Philippines, the Ebola virus in West Africa, the riots in Ferguson, MO and New York City, and beheading of an American journalist, we deliberate about the immanence and transcendence of God in the affairs of mankind,<sup>114</sup> important to parishioners and rich in historical antiquity with some of the most respected fathers of the church such as Clement, Athanasius, Cyprian, Tertullian,

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<sup>113</sup> John Glyndwr Harris, *Christian Theology: The Spiritual Tradition* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2001), 1-2.

<sup>114</sup> William C. Placher, *Why Bother with Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 1.



and Augustine. These church fathers made invaluable contributions to the early church and set the stage for theology today.

The theological foundation and framework of the Black church has its origins in the Protestant Reformation, the Methodist movement, Azusa Street Revival, and many Black preachers in the antebellum period that promulgated the message of freedom and liberation from the cruel oppression of slavery. This became the rallying cry of the Black church and attracted the attention of slaves from the far corners of the country.

Distinguished theologian and scholar James Cone inoculated Christendom to the concept of Black Theology to depict a God on the side of the oppressed and marginalized. Black Theology has a strong emphasis on the Biblical text that addresses freedom, oppression, social justice, and has become the battle cry for the Black church and other oppressed groups.<sup>115</sup>

The Holiness movement produced a theological foundation of sanctification and baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. The theological foundation of the holiness movement focused primarily on strict obedience, living a separated life from the world, adherence to prayer, fasting, Bible study, and fellowship. The holiness movement embraces Christology, Pneumatology, and Eschatology; these are important aspects of theology for parishioners with a strong emphasis on Soteriology. The rich theological foundation of the church has undergone a transformation in the understanding and interpretation of marriage and relationships. Although Christians places great emphasis on the Bible, the theological foundation has suffered tremendously in the arena of proper analysis. The sermons of freedom and deliverance quickly turned

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<sup>115</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1975), 163-183.

into sermons of hell, brimstone, and fire from the pulpit. Furthermore, the theology of the church that pertains to male leadership and marriage supported the established culture of male dominance, oppression, and subjugation of women that established the unwritten protocol for abuse, power, and control.

The task in this section of the writing is to discover the methodology utilized by pastors to subdue women and fortify the prison of oppression with males as the warden. Previously in the writing, the link was established between abuse in the Black church and the adoption of male cultural dominance and submission of women from their heritage in some African traditions and the customs of the European structure during slavery. Further, the theological foundation of the church utilized to oppress women continues in the church today in mostly all mainstream denominations. The scripture text that we will examine will expand our comprehension of how certain passages were interpreted by pastors and explicated to congregants.

### **Education**

During the slavery, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights era Blacks in many instances were denied the opportunity to obtain a quality education and formed segregated schools to assist with educational achievement.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, Blacks who were one generation removed from slavery and could not read or write, depended upon their children to read and interpret writing, and signed documents for their parents.<sup>117</sup> The lack of education also extended to the Black church as most individuals had no formal education lacking basic reading and writing skills.

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<sup>116</sup> William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2001), 152-155.

<sup>117</sup> Phyllis M. Belt-Beyan, *The Emergence of African American Literacy Traditions: Family and Community Efforts in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 79-88.

The lack of reading and writing comprehension continued to be passed down to future generations. Congregants in the church during the slavery and Jim Crow era could not properly decipher the Old and New Testaments in the original Hebrew and Greek context. Christians sat in the pews faithfully for each service, patiently waiting for the pastor to deliver a fiery sermon. The congregation depended solely upon the pastor, deacon, or missionary to expound on the scriptures and assist in helping parishioners apply God's word to their daily lives.

This is an essential aspect of the establishment of the theological foundation in the Black church as congregants had limited institutions to receive understanding of the Bible. Although congregants built a relationship with God, there was virtually no substitution for the opportunity to comprehend the Bible in context. Further, pastors experienced immense difficulty with reading and writing comprehension as well as issues with articulation, enunciation, and an overall command of the English vernacular. Congregants, who leaned so heavily on the pastor, were in most cases, unaware that he encountered the same literacy and writing issues. Although some pastors obtained education including doctorate degrees, the great majority of pastors were at the same educational level as the members. This caused grave issues with providing correct exegesis of scripture.<sup>118</sup> For example, pastors propagated that women should not wear pants basing their theology on Deut. 22:5 (KJV).<sup>119</sup> They literally believed that the passage, written in 40 B.C., meant that God prohibited women from wearing pants in the

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<sup>118</sup> Artis T. Lummis, "Heart and Head in Reaching Pastors of Black Churches", Hartford Institute for Research Religion, [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/lummis\\_article5.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/lummis_article5.html) (Accessed August 17, 2014).

<sup>119</sup> All scripture utilized in this writing derives from the King James Version of the Bible

same fashion as males. Although these exegetical issues were paramount in the holiness/Pentecostal church, the same issues existed in fundamentalist churches as well.

The issue with literacy and writing significantly impacted the ability of the church to properly exegete the scripture text in a manner consistent with the transliteration of the Bible and this made it very difficult for leaders to be more widely read concerning past and present interpretations of the texts. In addition to this, misinformation was transmitted to congregants who then shared the same misinformation to the broader community. Thus, the information continually changed and adapted to various audiences, readers, and speakers. Further, congregants were encouraged to wholly trust the word of the pastor and never question his authority; no matter how limited his research, study, reading, and writing skill set.

Congregants were taught to accept spirituality and moving of the Spirit as a sign of God's approval in lieu of incorrect interpretations of the Bible text. Thus, the theological framework was established in the Black church on an unstable substratum that would become the hallmark of the church experience and lay the cornerstone for support and continuation of abuse, power, oppression, control, and subjugation of women. Further, education in the Black church followed the same dictates as in Biblical times when a few educated elite held power over the uneducated masses, thus utilizing education as a means to control and subjugate women. This strayed away from God's original intent that all Christians would have equality in the church, especially women.

This section of the writing will primarily focus on the theology and interpretation of scripture text utilized by the Black church to define marriage and roles of the husband and wife. This is imperative in aiding us to understand the underpinnings for abuse and

control of women as well as the origin of how power and control is obtained by pastors and males to keep women in submission and discourage reporting. This section will also examine several passages of scripture in the Old and New Testaments utilized by pastors in sermons and teachings that provide support for abuse against women. Although more and more males are victims of abuse, the overwhelming majority of women are victims of domestic violence at the hands of men.<sup>120</sup> The scripture texts that we will examine in the writing are as follows: Gen. 2:19, 21-15, 3:16, Num. 30:5, Deut. 24:1-5, Prov.19:13, 21:9, 25:24, 27:15, 31:10-31, Matt. 19:1-9, Mark 10:1-12, Gal. 3:28, 1Cor. 7:1-17, 11:1-12, Eph. 5:21-32, Col. 3:18-19, and 1Tim. 2:9-15, 3:4-5.

## **The Old Testament**

### **Genesis**

The book of Genesis outlines four major theological themes that are helpful in understanding the writing: 1. God as creator; 2. the entrance of sin into the created order that alters the original created order; 3. God's judgment upon humankind; 4. God's preservation of humankind through unmerited favor, grace.<sup>121</sup> The main themes of Genesis will help provide a clear understanding of the book from the origin of life, creation of humanity, the sin and disobedience of Adam, the fall, and Monotheism. A theology of the book of Genesis is important in understanding the trajectory for theology of the church in regards to marriage and is inclusive of the interpretation of scripture text to control and keep women in a position of submission to male authority by utilizing Gen.

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<sup>120</sup> Margi Laird McCue, *Domestic Violence: A Reference Handbook* (Denver, CO: ABC-CLIO Press, 1995), 77-79.

<sup>121</sup> Diane Bergant, *Genesis: In the Beginning* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 3-8.

3:16. We will examine preceding texts of scripture in Genesis chapter two to set the background for chapter three.

The passage in Gen. 2:19 provides context into the mind of God preceding the creation of Adam and Eve. God created all things for man in the first five days of creation and called His creation good, but when He created man on the sixth day He called the creation of man very good. The writer then recounts the instructions given to Adam regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden. The writer revealed additional insight in the thought of God as He observes that Adam is alone and states that it is not good for him to be in that state. God shifts from the aloneness of Adam and re-enters creation by forming the wild animals and birds of the sky with the task given to Adam name them. The story shifts back to Adam with God removing a rib from his side and forming the female from that rib and brings her to Adam who named her woman. Adam took her as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh and the writer states they were naked and not ashamed.

The phrase not ashamed is imperative to understand marriage before the fall. I believe that it was always God's intent for women (as well as men) not to be ashamed regarding marriage. Next, the writer focused on the fall of humankind via disobedience to the instructions concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After Adam ate from the tree, God looks for him and discovers that he was covered in leaves and questions him about this move. God then pronounced judgment on humankind and brought sweat upon the forehead of Adam while also cursing the ground. The punishment for Eve was pain in child birth; her desire was to be for her husband who would rule over her.

The Black church captures the story of the fall as the primary focal point of a theology of marriage, specifically the hierarchical structure of relationship between a husband and wife. The Black church places great emphasis on the word rule, which carries the meaning of having dominion over, authority, but more importantly to lead, protect, and guard accomplishing this by giving proper respect to all household members.<sup>122</sup>

James McKeown states that prior to the fall, Adam and Eve likely lived in harmony and the term rule was implemented as a consequence of sin. The term is utilized after the fall and as a result of turpitude.<sup>123</sup> Pastors continue to struggle in properly exegeting the passage in Gen. 3:16 which has led to the development of their misinterpretation of the passage and subjugation of women. Pastors must be encouraged to exegete the word rule to mean lead in the context of marriage and God's relationship with the church. Although God rules over the church, His methodology in ruling is to lead the church with love, compassion, and grace; guiding the church through the Holy Spirit, with Jesus as head. As God leads His church with patience and mercy, He does not abuse His church. The theology of marriage in the Black church should mirror the relationship between God and His bride, the church in which husbands lead and carry the relationship by initiating love, care, and compassion in the same manner Yahweh interacts with his bride, the church.

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<sup>122</sup> Armin W. Schuetze, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1993), 47-54.

<sup>123</sup> James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2008), 36-38.

### **Numbers 30:1-5**

A major theme of the book of Numbers centers on the presence of God among His people. The Lord made His presence known in the midst of Israel revealing Himself as a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. When the cloud moved, the camp of Israel moved, and when the cloud settled, Israel settled. The presence of the Lord also provided providence in the wilderness feeding Israel with manna from heaven and Quails when their palate could no longer bear bread.<sup>124</sup> The book of Numbers offers the reader an understanding of God's patience with Israel as they wandered in the wilderness forty years for disobedience and idolatry, yet God was patient and not willing that any should perish.<sup>125</sup> Although Num. 30:1-5 discusses the relationship between fathers and daughters, daughters and husbands; the passage provides insight into the notions of power and oppression in the family against women and in the Black church.

The passage in Num. 30:1-5 discusses the relationship between fathers and daughters as well as daughters and their husbands providing insight into the nature of control over women. The Black church has utilized this text of scripture to exert authority over their lives which has led to abuse and oppression of women in the church. The passage in Num. 30:1-5 changes course to emphasize the role of the father in the private and public affairs of daughters. Women residing in traditional Jewish culture had no legal rights; they were to be in subjection to the husbands. In Num. 30:1-5, Moses gave instructions to fathers concerning the vows of daughters and states that when the daughter, who is unmarried, made a vow and the father held his peace, then the vow

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<sup>124</sup> John Goldingay, *Numbers & Deuteronomy for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 6-9.

<sup>125</sup> David Stubbs, *Numbers: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 29-33.



would stand. However, when the father heard the vow from his daughter's lips and disagreed with the vow, then the vow would not stand. The term vow, in the Hebrew, *Neder*, refers to an oath or promise made by an individual concerning something in their heart they desire to do or fulfill.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, the same method for approving or disapproving vows with a married woman was conducted in the same manner between a father and daughter. During early times in Jewish history in the absence of legal documents, the word of an individual meant everything and they were bound to that word.<sup>127</sup> The act of the husband or father approving or disapproving the vow made by the daughter or wife has been mistranslated by the Black church (as well as some White conservative churches) to mean that husbands and fathers have complete authority over their daughters or wives.

Calum Carmichael helps us understand the nature of the text in which the father or husband approving or disapproving a vow made by the daughter or wife. He states that approving and disapproving the vow suggests that the action is being conducted out of love for the female and her respect for the wisdom of her father or husband by using the example of Jacob and Rachel.<sup>128</sup> Further, the text does not imply that the father or husband governs the thoughts of the female, but suggests that God is love and the Holy

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<sup>126</sup> Timothy Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1993), 574.

<sup>127</sup> Irene Nowell, *Numbers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 126-127.

<sup>128</sup> Calum Carmichael, *The Book of Numbers: A Critique of Genesis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 149-150.

Spirit leads and guides us into all truth, so fathers and husbands must act in the same nature and love of God in the best interest of the female.<sup>129</sup>

Further, this is an act of protection for females, a covering and shield to prevent danger and trouble, helping females count up the costs when making a vow and not put their hands to the gospel plow and reflect back. The males were encouraged to attain the utmost level of integrity and ethics when selecting a suitable mate for their daughters, thus the onus was placed on the male (not females) to protect their daughters during such a serious time in their lives as she prepared for and embraced marriage.<sup>130</sup>

The church must abandon its literal interpretation of the passage in the sense of authority and control, particularly fathers who have the responsibility of raising and training daughters. Christians must view the passage through the lens of love, compassion, and leadership as well as protection for females. This is equally important for young females who at times sense the necessity to participate in life activities that are not necessarily beneficial or promote healthy lifestyle choices. The intent is to encourage a conversation and explanation in lieu of directives and orders in an effort to maintain the relationship in love and grace. Furthermore, pastors should encourage parents to understand their children and lead them with love, respect, and protection in lieu of putting women in their place. The pulpit can be a powerful weapon in the Black church from which the pastor has the obligation to change the nature of the message to fathers and husbands to emanate the love and compassion of God through servant leadership.

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<sup>129</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Numbers* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 262-265.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

When the message from the pastor is presented and understood in the context of dominance and control this erects the foundation for the entrance for IPV against women in the church.

### **Proverbs**

The writing in the book of Proverbs will help our comprehension of the scripture text utilized to continue the power structure of abuse, control, dominance, and subjugation of women in the Black church. There are four scripture texts in the writings of Proverbs; Prov.19:13, 21:9, 25:24, 27:15, and 31:10-31 that have been utilized to keep women in a subservient position in the church, home, and society. These passages have helped to shape a negative image of women in the eyes of males while helping to establish the cultural attitude of men towards women that deduce women to an inferior status in comparison to men. The two terms contentious and brawling characterize women as arduous to build rapport and unable to establish effective marital relationships.

### **Proverbs 19:13**

Proverbs 19:13 utilizes the term contentious to depict contentious women and compares this type of woman to a continual dripping. The comparison of a wife to continual drip paints a vivid picture of a woman who lacks self-control and is unable to refrain from nagging and contentious conduct.<sup>131</sup> This depiction gives life to the current stereotypes of women in film and journalism today. The writer in Proverbs also pens in 27:13, an almost identical verse in 19:13 comparing a contentious woman to a continual dropping on a rainy day; the writer states that the nagging and contentious women are

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<sup>131</sup> Tremper Longman, III, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 369.

one and the same.<sup>132</sup> The weather in Oregon is rainy and at times drenches individuals as they enjoy the liquid sunshine. The rain continues for days on end transitioning from sprinkle, to shower, to rain, and down pour. The picture in mind concerning rain in Oregon compared to a contentious woman, in my opinion, further denigrate women to the lowest level of humanity, almost in comparison to the animal kingdom with no self-control.

The Black church has utilized these passages to control the behavior and more importantly the expression of women, coercing them into the position of a docile newborn needing the assistance of a parent to help control her actions. Further, church mothers and women group leaders, who yield power and influence in the Black church, also present these passages of scripture to assist in the submission of women without understanding how their actions support male dominance in the church.

#### **Proverbs 21:9 and 25:24**

Proverbs 21:9 and 25:24 portray women in a damaging perspective and perceive them as second class citizens to the male power structure. The passages in Prov. 21:9 and 25:24 are identical passages of scripture text and the writer suggests that it is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house.<sup>133</sup> Most scholars agree that during Biblical times, that there probably no “corners” on the roof top, but McKane suggests that these were open air spaces that carried the meaning that it is better to be exposed to outside elements than in a house with a brawling women.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 810.

<sup>133</sup> Milton P. Horne, *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2003), 259-260.

<sup>134</sup> William McKane, *Proverbs* (OTL, London: SCM Press:, 1970), 554-554.

The corner of the housetop proposes a place of hiding from a woman who engaged in fights and skirmishes. The writer does not state explicitly who should flee to the corner of the housetop, however, it should be implicitly understood that the writer is referring to a husband in relationship with his wife. Furthermore, the writer identifies the house as a wide house meaning there is a lot of space and room, perhaps for a woman to engage in combat comfortably without interference from furniture or household items. The women in both passages are depicted as fighters, and present women as individuals who lack self-restraint, unable to resolve issues without violence.

When viewed in isolation, these passages describe women as the aggressors, instigators, abusers, and controllers. This intriguing exposé gives the appearance that men are the victims of abuse and need protection from women. The Black church utilizes these passages of scripture to continue to the suppression of women in the church by emphasizing the term brawling as a method to keep women oppressed, needing the assistance of men to function properly. However, the proverbial author states in Prov. 22:24 that an individual should not make friends with an angry man or follow a furious man. The writer also commented in Prov. 29:22 that an angry man stirs up strife and a furious man abounds in anger.

The church must also address the negative behavior of men as the scripture text does not demarcate men from women in terms of destructive behavior; both are treated equal in this respect. Thus, leaders should not solely focus on brawling women to the exclusion of angry men. Although there are women who have earned the title of brawler, the majority of IPV occurs against women at the hands of men who abuse women. The author of proverbs addresses negative behavior in both males and females.

Further, these passages of scripture must not be utilized to instill fear in women who desire marriage to believe that they will end up lonely, isolated, and unsuitable for marriage. The church must present and implement a theology that reflects the positive nature of women and their significant contribution to the church, community, and society. Further, the church must also be clear that women who express their opinions should be viewed or perceived as contentious. The Proverbs suggest that a wise husband listens to the advice and counsel of his wife, and should accept encouragement and correction from her when appropriate.

### **Proverbs 31:10-31**

Proverbs 31:10-31 gives a depiction of a woman referred to as Lady Wisdom who provides wise counsel to men engaged in the process of selecting a suitable wife. The chapter begins with Lemuel's mother, who is a queen and ruler, giving advice to her son regarding women and ends with the depiction of a virtuous woman that is to be desired by a husband. The writer in Prov. 31:8-9 speaks up for the voiceless in the pathway of destruction and instructs individuals to judge righteously and plead the cause for the poor and needy. This is powerful symbol of Liberation Theology; those who speak up for the oppressed and marginalized will also speak up for their wives, sisters, and females in general. There is a great need for the church to be cautious with this passage and not emphasize the trajectory of the Black church in utilizing this passage to further subjugate women into a role of continued subservience to male leadership. The Proverbial writer in 31:10-31 concludes the book with an epilogue; an impressive acrostic poem giving honor and deference to a worthy woman who demonstrates and epitomizes many of the qualities and values identified with wisdom throughout the book.

Furthermore, the passage is primarily addressed to an audience of young men on the threshold of a maturity. The purpose of the book appears to be two fold in nature. First, *to offer counsel on the kind of wife a young man should seek*; Second, *to advise young men to marry Lady Wisdom*, thus returning to the theme of chapters one through nine comparing Lady Wisdom with a wife of noble character.<sup>135</sup> The Black church in particular pays immense homage to this passage of scripture as the hallmark and true representation of a Godly woman who reverences the Lord and her husband.

This passage is quoted from the most in the church during women's meeting, Mother's Day services, to describe the pastor's wife, church mothers, and women of influence and repute. However, Christians have misinterpreted the passage by placing emphasis on the behavior of women rather than the discernment of men to utilize wisdom in selecting a worthy marriage partner. The church has used this text of scripture to shame women into a place of submission and oppression for those who fail to live up to the qualities, traits, and characteristics of the woman of wisdom in the text. Further, women strive with all their strength to emulate this classy lady only to experience disappointment if she does not please her husband as the text suggests. The misinterpretation of the text sets women up to be vulnerable to abusive men rather than helping men find women to become their partner. The church must discontinue the utilization of this text to dominate women and allow the text to speak directly to the heart of men who in turn will understand that a woman does not deserved to be abused, controlled, or subjugated.

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<sup>135</sup> William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1996), 460.

Men will comprehend that the Lady of Wisdom's price is far above rubies and a woman of this nature who fears the Lord should be praised by her husband.

### **Summary of Old Testament Texts**

The Old Testament (OT) begins with the story of creation culminating with the creation of Adam from the dust of the ground and the creation of woman from the rib of Adam and the dust of the earth. The OT is ripe with scripture texts that have been used to support violence against women, and at first glance, one would think this is the way of life intended for women. However, it is imperative to understand married life pre and post fall. Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve lived in unified harmony as a couple and with God, but after the fall a new structure entered into marriage and man was set to rule over women and their desire would be to their husbands.

Further, with fathers and husbands permitted to exercise power to approve or disapprove the vow of a young daughter or wife, the role of females became dependent on males in society. Likewise, women in OT times had no legal rights to divorce their husbands and could be given a bill of divorce for any reason deemed appropriate by her husband.<sup>136</sup> The women were relegated to task of bearing children, nurturers, primary caretaker of the household, and held a subordinate position in the family structure to males. Further, males were expected to be protectors, providers, and initiate the emotional health of their families. They were responsible for the spiritual direction and safety of all under their care. However, some men abused their role because they were not willing to fulfill the expectations of a man in the ancient world.

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<sup>136</sup> David Werner Amram, *The Jewish Law of Divorce According to the Bible and Talmud* (New York, NY: Hermon Press, 1986), 54-63.



The harmony that existed before the fall was transformed into a relationship of subservience, obedience, dominance, and control. The church, although far removed from Middle Eastern culture, in some respects continues in the traditions of the OT. They rely heavily on the hierarchical structure of marriage and inculcate this structure to congregants as the featured way of life for the family and women in the church. This subordinate post fall position paved the way for IPV and allowed the male power structure to cement itself as a permanent staple in church relations influenced by culture. The Christian church must transition from a post-fall to pre-fall comprehension of marriage and utilize this concept to help eliminate and abuse against women in the church. The church must stretch beyond the post fall theology of marriage and seek to regain God's original intent of marriage and relationships before the fall.

### **The New Testament**

The New Testament (NT) continues to address the issue of marriage particularly in the gospels and writings of Paul. The NT fulfills the prophecy of the coming savior who will reconcile all things unto Himself. Paul in particular spoke of being a new creation in Christ transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we prove those things that are holy and acceptable to God. He constantly drove the point of being children of the kingdom, children of the day, and children of the light; a true reflection of the image of God in relationship to the world and the church. Although the Black church strongly believes in sanctification, holiness, and transformation, this is applicable in salvific terms in lieu of a connection to marriage; meaning transformation for women is an honorable estate in the context of submission to their husbands.

The church must embrace and adopt the NT understanding of marriage particularly in the teachings of Jesus and Paul to once again attain the same level of peace and tranquility enjoyed by Adam and Eve in the Garden – a return to Eden, to remove victimization, abuse, and control, and return to harmonious relationships.

**Matthew 19:1-9 & Mark 10:1-12**

The passages in Matt. 19:1-9 and Mark 10:1-12 depict a scene in which a question is posed and an answer given regarding the subject of divorce and the Law of Moses. The Pharisees, strict keepers and guardians of the law, posed somewhat of a rhetorical question to Jesus about whether a man could put away or divorce his wife for any reason. The Pharisees were considered doctors of the law being fully aware of the question; however, their intent was to confuse and test Jesus on His understanding of the law.<sup>137</sup>

Further, they understood the nature of the question and debate from opposing schools of thought; one argument from the school of Shammai contended that divorce was acceptable for the wife's unfaithfulness, and the Hillel argument stated that a man could divorce his wife for a spoiled dish.<sup>138</sup> The response that Jesus offered the Pharisees confirms the intent of the pre-fall narrative in Genesis regarding marital relationships.<sup>139</sup> Previously, I argued and proposed that Christians should acquire a pre-fall philosophy of marriage in lieu of a post-fall philosophy of marriage. This will aid the church in helping men to understand God's intent for marriage before the fall with the goal of reducing IPV against women in the church.

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<sup>137</sup> Paul J. McCarren, *Matthew: A Simple Guide* (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 102.

<sup>138</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 232-233.

<sup>139</sup> Matt Woodley, *The Gospel of Matthew: God With Us* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 191.

The answer Jesus gave in direct response to the rhetorical question sent shock waves through the Pharisees understanding of the law concerning divorce and caused a firestorm of backlash. Jesus took them on a sojourn to the beginning and quoted the OT in Genesis chapter two making reference to Adam's revelation that the two are now one flesh and what God has joined together no human can unjoin.<sup>140</sup> The Pharisees asked another question of Jesus regarding men who write a bill of divorcement under the Law of Moses to divorce their wives. Jesus gave another damaging response to their rhetorical question and stated that this commandment was written due to the hardness of the heart, but reminded the Pharisees that divorce was not the intent of God in marriage from the beginning. Further, Ron Clark comments that the Pharisees sought various reasons for divorce as a methodology to further victimize women and Rabbi's constructed a complex methodology of validating divorce that victimized women.

Clark contends that Jesus's discussion of divorce did not address all forms of divorce but a prohibition against the victimization of women. Jesus confronted the Pharisees regarding the oppression of women and encouraged men to seek reconciliation.<sup>141</sup> The gospels through the lens of Jesus takes the issue of marriage back in time to the intent of God's thought regarding marriage clothed in peace and harmonious living minus the hierarchical structure that came as a result of the fall. The NT provides a different context for marriage as Paul finds himself in a conundrum when confronted with issues of marriage and divorce in the Roman-Greco world where women

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<sup>140</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 340-341.

<sup>141</sup> Ron Clark, *Freeing the Oppressed: A Call to Christians Concerning Domestic Abuse* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 87.

had more legal rights as compared to Jewish women although they lived in the same geographic area.

Paul addresses the issue of marriage from a slightly different perspective and appears to endorse a post-fall understanding of marriage as well as approaching the issue from a Roman/Greek cultural purview. Although Paul discusses the man being the head of the women and calls for wives to submit and obey their husbands, he calls for men to function in the image of Christ and places great emphasis on husbands to model the responsibility and role in marriage to that of Christ in relation to the church. Thus, the majority of the responsibility in marriage is laid upon husbands, not wives; therefore husbands must function in a pre-fall in lieu of post-fall image of marriage. The scripture is clear that after the fall, God asked where was Adam, not Eve, indicative of the husband as the leader who must give an account when issues arise. The responsibility of husbands and wives was also patterned after the house codes in the Hellenistic Roman-Greco culture.

### **House Codes**

The *haustefal* or house codes was a table of instructions for households in the Hellenistic Roman-Greco culture that guided management of the household for families living in Rome. House codes can be found in scripture texts such as Col. 3:18-19, 1Cor. 7 & 11, 1Tim. 3:1-7, Titus, and 1Pet. 2:12. Scholars agree that Paul addressed the issue of the *haustefal* to demonstrate that the spread of Christianity posed no threat to house codes under Roman law. Paul encouraged believers that they should not walk in the same

manner as the gentiles, but use every opportunity to emanate the light of God in their marriages.<sup>142</sup>

The families of the Hellenistic Roman-Greco culture were inclusive of husbands, wives, children, slaves, business partners, tenants, servants, and laborers, all residing in the same house. The *haustefal* codes were hierarchal in nature according to Roman law which stated that husbands were the head of the family. Although some women who were wealthy in society and may have functioned as heads of households, the majority of households under Roman law were headed by males.<sup>143</sup> There is debate among scholarship that the *haustefal* was internalized by the non-elite as a method to restrict and create separation from an economic paradigm. This debate has been nuanced by the fact that 90% to 95% of the population in Rome lived in crowded conditions of social stratification. However, whether rich or indigent, house codes applied to all as this was a part of Roman culture and law.<sup>144</sup> Although the *haustefal* was a part of Roman law and culture, Paul encouraged Christians to walk in the light and demonstrate a Godly pattern for marriage and family life. Paul states in Gal. 3:28 that there is neither male nor female in Christ, but also advocates that husbands are the head of the household.

This does not connote that Husbands behave as tyrannical dictators and treat their wives as slaves. Paul, through the direction of the Holy Spirit, addressed the issues from the standpoint of historical context under the backdrop of the Hellenistic pagan practices in which women dominated and ruled over men, specifically in the Temple of Diana of

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<sup>142</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 369-378.

<sup>143</sup> Peter Williamson, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 220-221.

<sup>144</sup> Elsa Tamez, *Early Christianity: A Study of the First Letter to Timothy* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 30-33.

which we will discuss later in the chapter. The Black church must be encouraged to move beyond a post-fall image of marriage that subjugates women and leave the door open for abuse and underreporting, and gravitate towards a pre-fall design of marriage to deconstruct male dominance theory and practice that some Christians embraces. The church must delve into the Pauline texts and correctly exegete the passages, and move in the direction of harmonious relationship over hierarchy and dominance.

### **1Corinthians 7:1-5 & 11:1-12**

The city of Corinth was one of the most important cities in Greece during Paul's ministry. Corinth was known as a wealthy, proud, and wicked city located on a four mile strip linked to the Southern Peloponnesus with the mainland of Greece with two thriving seaports of Cenchraea on the east and Lechaemum on the west.<sup>145</sup> The Corinthian church experienced issues such as factions, lawsuits, immorality, dubious practices, abuse of the Lord's Supper, and spiritual gifts.<sup>146</sup> The cities that Paul ministered in were vastly different from Jesus who was sent to the lost sheep of Israel versus Paul who was sent to the gentiles in the Roman world. The complications that Paul encountered in the church were entirely different than Jesus and he had to trust in the Holy Spirit to guide his interaction and guidance to assist the newly converted Christians to embrace Godly principles while living in a pagan society.<sup>147</sup> The issue of marital relationships was an area that Paul addressed in the Corinthian church with instructions on interaction, divorce, and singleness.

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<sup>145</sup> Carleton A. Toppe, *1 Corinthians* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 1-3.

<sup>146</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 18.

<sup>147</sup> Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 64-65.

1 Corinthians 7 is somewhat arduous to understand as Paul distinguished his voice from the Lord's voice. Further, in chapter seven, it appears that Paul is responding to a letter that was written to him probably from someone in the house of Chloe.<sup>148</sup> Paul begins by stating that every man and woman should have their own spouse to avoid fornication and husbands and wives render benevolence unto one another as the wife does not have power over her body and the husband does not have power over his body. The verse implies that not only is there an obligation for the wife, but also that of the husband and allows certain rights and ownership to wives. The verse further implies that males had power over a woman's body, but women did not have power over the male's body.

Thus, Paul implies a mutual sharing in lieu of a one-sided relationship.<sup>149</sup> Further, Paul states that husbands and wives are not to defraud or rob one another of intimacy except by agreement. The implication in this verse seems to suggest that the husband cannot abstain from relations unless the wife consents and the husband cannot use his authority to defraud the wife. Further, the understanding leads us to the term debt meaning each has a debt to pay to one another and must satisfy that debt upon request except for fasting.<sup>150</sup> However, the verse does not suggest that this can be done spitefully with malice; it conveys a message that both husband and wife must reach agreement for abstaining.

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<sup>148</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 104-105.

<sup>149</sup> Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 130-132.

<sup>150</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring 1 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishing, 2002), 137-146.

From a cultural paradigm, men are viewed as hyper-sexual initiators of sex. However, the text also supports women to receive and enjoy sexual gratification in marriage.<sup>151</sup> Christendom tends to utilize this scripture in a Jewish framework with the connotation that it is acceptable for the husband to abstain, but unacceptable for the women to abstain, thus placing women in a powerless position subordinate to men with no rights. Paul suggests that the balance of power must be shared with wives to foster harmonious marital relationships. This has echoes of a pre-fall relationship model proposed in Genesis with woman on the side of man and not underneath man.

The church should be encouraged to embrace the Pauline model in 1Cor. 7:1-5 to uplift wives to a position of equality and teach men to understand the text from a Pauline perspective to confront issues of control and power against women in the church. This chapter heightens the status of women in marriage and elevates wives to a place of respectability beyond the post-fall perspective embraced by the Black church, specifically the Pentecostal church. Further, this can be a serious game changer for women to educate parishioners about the factors that lead to IPV and underreporting through the framework of incorrect exegesis that has contributed in some ways to the proliferation of abuse in the church. The passage in 1Cor.11:1-12 began with a commandment from Paul to the Corinthians to be followers of him as he follows Christ. The Greek word for follow is *μιμητής*, is understood to be an imitator or emulator; one who mimics Christ.<sup>152</sup> Although Paul was not married, he set an example to the church of what it means to obey God in all aspects of life.

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<sup>151</sup> Judith L. Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, ed. Robert Louis Wilken (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2005), 104-113.

<sup>152</sup> Simon Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians: New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 319.



The text then lists another commandment from Paul to keep the ordinances that he delivered to the Corinthian church. Paul describes the order of creation by stating that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. The transliteration in this text does not necessarily always imply a hierarchy in the marriage relationship.<sup>153</sup> However, the text gives insight into the origin of the woman as she was created from the rib of a man.<sup>154</sup> Further, Leon Morris suggest that Paul does not use the phrase the head of the woman is the Lord, he uses the word head not to depict authority over or ruler, but in the sense of origin or source.<sup>155</sup> Still further, although the issue of covering was due in part because of pagan practices, in verse seven, Paul states that the man should not cover his head as he is the image and glory of God and the woman is the glory of man implying the similar meaning in verse three as origin or source.<sup>156</sup> Paul continues in verse eight with the theme of origin and source by stating that the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man and the man was not created for the woman but the woman for the man.<sup>157</sup> Paul makes an interesting observation in verse eleven by stating that the woman is nothing without the man and man nothing without the

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<sup>153</sup> Kenneth Schenck, *1&2 Corinthians: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 151-155.

<sup>154</sup> Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *1 & 2 Corinthians: Holman New Testament Comment* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 177-182.

<sup>155</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 149-151.

<sup>156</sup> Robert Scott Nash, *1 Corinthians* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2009), 328-329.

<sup>157</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 522-523.

woman implying that man and women are demonstrating the restoration as God's creation in Genesis.<sup>158</sup>

Further, Rick Oster suggests that togas offered the impression that males and females sacrificed to pagan gods as many art paintings depict males and females wearing the hoods during sacrifices. Augustus and Julius Caesar were also depicted on coins and statues wearing a hood. The hood suggested that Caesar was not only Lord, but a priest. When American television displays our president going to church, praying, or reading the Bible, the same message is portrayed. The toga had a hood in which those in status used during religious acts of religious devotion.<sup>159</sup>

Bruce Winter comments that the hood seemed to be a sign of religious devotion that both men and women practiced. In the church it seems that there was an issue with what was right. To wear the hood suggested devotion, but to not wear it suggested disrespect and women who did not cover their heads were viewed as prostitutes.<sup>160</sup> For men the issue was more divided as Jewish males were opposed to covering their heads while Romans were expected to wear their hood in worship. Paul gave them a theological foundation, "They were in the image of God and should not hide their head." This provided an opportunity for the elite males to model humility in church. Paul suggested that it was shameful for men to have long hair. For Paul, when men wore a hood (or had long hair) it was shameful conduct both culturally and theologically. Paul encouraged the women to respect the culture and submit. However, Paul encouraged the men to be some-

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<sup>158</sup> N.T. Wright, *1 Corinthians: Paul for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 138.141.

<sup>159</sup> Rick Oster, *1 Corinthians* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 230-240.

<sup>160</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2001), 120.

what counter-cultural. This text does not “put women in their place,” it actually challenges men to practice humility in their spiritual community.<sup>161</sup>

The Christian church should embrace a process that encourages the mutual dependence in relationships between married couples. Paul makes a strong inference that husbands and wives are encouraged to partner with one another and demonstrate that both are the origin of God and creation of life cooperating in agreement to the marriage covenant. Christendom must also recognize that everyone has an origin, a beginning or source of life to which we give honor, praise, and glory. Children understand this best as they honor and respect their parents, students honor and respect their instructors, and players honor and respect their coaches. Men in the church now have the responsibility to view women through the lens of creation and not as property they purchased and own.

When the ownership component is removed from the equation and creation is placed at the core of marriage – men will understand that the greater responsibility is given to them as the head to lead in Christ as an example, not through domination, dictatorship, or authoritarianism. The task is to provide males with God centered leadership that will encourage women to willingly follow and submit themselves under the headship of their husbands which in turn will help marriages in the Black church progress towards a pre-fall state.

### **Colossians 3:18-19**

The book of Colossians contains instructions for husbands and wives which are consistent with teachings to the Corinthian church regarding marriage roles and responsibilities. The first instruction for marriage that Paul pronounces to women is

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<sup>161</sup> Ron Clark, *The Better Way: The Church of Agape in Emerging Corinth* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books), 2009, 106.

submission, *ὑποτάσσεσθε*; the term is understood to mean to willingly subject oneself to your own husband in the Lord.<sup>162</sup> The second instruction to the husband is to love their wives, *ἀγαπάτε*, which means to love, wish well, and show love for. Further, Paul ends verse 19 but instructing husbands to refrain from bitterness against their wives.<sup>163</sup> The Greek word for bitterness, *πικραίνεσθε*, denotes harsh feelings or even resentment.<sup>164</sup> Although some scholars believe that the passage in Col. 3:19 makes reference to a hierarchy, however, Paul does not redact the order in Gal. 3:28 in which he states there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, but all are equal in God.<sup>165</sup>

Paul admonishes wives to relinquish the temptation to behave in domineering ways toward their husbands and that husbands ensure they love their wives as Christ loves the church.<sup>166</sup> Further, Peter confirms the instructions of Paul for wives to be in subjection to their own husbands; however, in this text it is in regards to winning the unconverted pagan husband. Peter states in verse seven that husbands are to dwell together with their wives according to knowledge; although the use of the word knowledge has been debated, most theologians and scholars believe that the term denotes knowledge of the will of God for marriage.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Paul E. Deterding, *Colossians* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 168-169.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Nijay K. Gupta, *Colossians* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Company, 2013), 165-167.

<sup>165</sup> John Riches, *Galatians Through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 207-208.

<sup>166</sup> N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 148-149

<sup>167</sup> Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 142-143.

Peter then instructs husbands to give honor and praise to the wife as the more vulnerable vessel; not necessarily used, as some theologians and scholars have concluded, in the context of intellect or superiority of husbands over wives, but in the sense that the woman is weaker in physical stature as compared to the husband. The wife has a certain level of vulnerability as the weaker vessel but this does not carry the connotation that men should take advantage in certain situations, the inference is for husbands to be sensitive to the wife's vulnerabilities and provide protection, support, and comfort. The culminating result is that husbands will understand that wives are heirs together with them in the grace of life and that women were given authority spiritually in the garden making the case for a pre-fall state of existence in marriage for husbands and wives.<sup>168</sup>

### **1 Timothy 3:1-4 – Ruling the House Well**

The Black church believes strongly in the notion of structure and order for men who believe they have been called to the ministry, particularly those who sense the call to lead a congregation. The pastor is expected to set the bar by having his own house in order before being qualified to manage and administer in the church setting. This places stress and burden on the pastor to keep things intact or suffer ridicule from congregants who turn a deaf ear to their message because they are perceived as weak and unable to control their households. This has somewhat contributed to IPV against women in the church as men utilize fear and domination tactics that lead to abuse and subjugation of women. The passage in 1 Tim. 3:1-4 uses the Greek term *episcope*, which means to administrator or one who oversees affairs or business of a household.

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<sup>168</sup> David A. Chase and David W. Holdren, *1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 90-91.

Although term has a direct translation of bishop, we will use the definition as administrator and overseer without detracting from the origin of the word.<sup>169</sup> This is important to understand due to the many qualifications that administrators and overseers must demonstrate in order to lead the church. The overseer or administrator must not be a contentious leader with the predisposition to arguments and fights, must be balanced, sober, and tempered demonstrating self-control.<sup>170</sup> The passage compares the household of the husband to the household of God; a husband who is incapable of managing his own house is not equipped to manage the house of God. Thus, the administrator has to clearly understand that if the attributes listed above are not exemplified in the home of the administrator, he is unqualified to oversee God's house.<sup>171</sup> The Greek term, *prohistemi* suggests that men not only manage their homes well, but goes further and encourages men to be involved in the affairs and activities of their homes.<sup>172</sup> In the Black community, there is a saying that any man can be a daddy, but it takes a real man to be a father; one who is not only capable of producing babies, but provides for them and is involved in every aspect of their lives as God is involved in every aspect of our lives. Church leadership should be able to recognize when IPV occurs in the home as a strong indicator of a person incapable of being involved or overseeing the house of God.

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<sup>169</sup> Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to Lead: Paul's Letter to Timothy for a New Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2012), 67-69.

<sup>170</sup> Benjamin Fiore, S.J., *The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, ed. by Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 72-83.

<sup>171</sup> Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 83-85.

<sup>172</sup> Ron Clark, "Family Management or Involvement: Paul's Use of Prohistemi 1 Timothy 3 as a Requirement for Church Leadership," *Stone Campbell Journal* 13(2006): 243.

The notion of abuse, power, and control of women is not listed in the passage as a sign of Godly administration. Christendom must be cognizant of the relationship between the domestic and ecclesiastic and seek ways to maintain a healthy balance by first leading in the home to promote glory and honor to God as they prepare to lead in the church. Further, abuse against women in the home oftentimes leads to abuse against women in the church.

### **1Timothy 2:9-15 – To Usurp or not Usurp Authority**

The passage in 1Tim. 2:9-15 has been utilized by the church to “keep women in check” while preserving the prestige of male dominance. The hallmark phrase in verse 11; “Let your women keep or learn in silence with all subjection” is the key scripture text that pastors have utilized to quiet women stripping away their voices and pushing them into the basement of humiliation not allowing women to function in leadership roles in the church. The church, for many years, has continually suggested that a woman should not teach or usurp authority over a man but to be in silence. The Christian church has a long history of misinterpreting the passage as well as the other passages mentioned in this section that continues to victimize women.

Further, church leaders, due to a lack of education and theological training, continue to mislead congregants through incorrect exegesis to believe that women have no authority in the church. The followers of Christ must free women through correct exegesis of the text and tear down the walls of abuse and underreporting and restore women to their rightful place in the church. The historical context of the passage in 1Tim. 2:9-15 is essential to understanding the message and direction that Paul gave to Timothy to convey to the church scattered abroad in Asia Minor.

The apostle Paul instructed him to inform women about appropriate conduct in the synagogue. During this time, some women functioned inappropriately and exhibited unruly behavior towards men in the church. The Greek word *authentain* literally meant to act upon one's own perceived authority, to exercise authority, autocrat, and dominating.<sup>173</sup> The historical context related to this passage is critical in understanding the transliteration of the text in 1Tim. 2:9-15. The epistle Paul penned to Timothy, most scholars believe, was written by Paul during his extended time in Ephesus. The city of Ephesus was home to one of the most famous shrines, The Temple of Artemis, the Greek name for Diana. This temple was a massive structure that dominated the entire area in Ephesus. The temple was headed by female priests, in comparison to a female only cult where women ruled, dominated, and gained followers.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, when Paul is instructing women to be silent in the church and not usurp authority over a man, he is stating this because of the behavior of some women in that particular synagogue who functioned as if they were in the temple of Diana. They believed themselves to be the originator of man as some Gnostics believed that woman was responsible for creation and the enlightenment of man.<sup>175</sup> N.T. Wright comments about the passage and states that the text is not suggesting that women cannot teach and learn in the church. He also makes strong reference to the passage encouraging the church, especially women not to conduct themselves in the same manner as the women in

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<sup>173</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 88-89.

<sup>174</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2006), 222-224.

<sup>175</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 1Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 75-77.



the Temple of Diana who were bossy, domineering, and non-submissive. The women must have their space to learn in the same manner as men, not forcing their way into leadership; both men and women must be free to develop gifts of learning and teaching given to them by God.<sup>176</sup>

Although some believe that Paul was making a literal reference to women being under men<sup>177</sup> this view is widely criticized by mainstream scholars simply on the basis that Paul's ministry features many qualified women who accompanied him in ministry and even taught the word of God to men.<sup>178</sup> Although some scholars state that the text should be applied in a universal setting, modern scholarship believes that the text should not be applicable to all contexts as this is the only place in scripture where this passage is mentioned for women not to teach or usurp authority over men. Therefore, the passage is addressing a specific issue and not the church universal based in part on the fact that Paul's ministry displays many women who teach alongside of him and also in the ministry of Jesus.<sup>179</sup> Further, the issue was specific to women in the passage who were teaching false and heretical doctrine in the church and when corrected opposed the position of men taking a bold and domineering stance even in their misinterpretation of scripture text.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 25-27.

<sup>177</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 108-109.

<sup>178</sup> Robert Black and Ronald McClung, *1&2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004), 57-60.

<sup>179</sup> Deborah Krause, *1 Timothy* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2004), 50-70.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

The church has made significant progress in women's ministry, especially in the Pentecostal church. In the early of COGIC history, it is a well-known fact that many churches were "worked out, preached out, and prayed out" by women. The meaning of the phrase makes reference to the many women who preached (although not from the podium), taught, and made intercession for the church while the pastor was in route from another church or filling in the gap until a male pastor was appointed. Although more women are preaching from behind the sacred desk, many women remain oppressed under the authority of men and are given a short leash to function in certain leadership roles.

### **Ephesians 5:21-32**

The role of wives in the Black church receives significantly more attention as compared to the role of husbands. This is due in large part to cultural attitudes regarding the role of wives in the Bible that has continued for centuries and yet prevails thousands of years later in the West. The church has burdened women with extreme pressure to be perfect and the glue that holds everything together in the home continuing to reinforce the notion of submission to their husbands. Christendom believes strongly in the Prov. 31:10-31 passage that elevates women to a place of honor, far above rubies, if she accomplishes the list of duties outlined in the passage. The woman who does not measure up to the standards of the chapter is accused of failing to be a good wife and a woman pleasing to her husband. The scripture in Eph. 5:21-32 suggests a different message in terms of the role of the husband which removes the substantial weight of responsibility for the marriage from the wife to the husband. Harold W. Hoehner states that in the Eph. 5:21-32 passage there are forty-one words used for women, but one hundred sixteen words used

for men in the depiction of the roles of each spouse.<sup>181</sup> This clearly implies that although the success of the marriage is contingent upon both husband and wife fulfilling their designated roles, the husband has the preponderance of responsibility in the marriage. Francis Foulkes states that although male and female are equal in the eyes of God, in the house codes of marriage and family there must be a head. The marriage between a husband and wife mirrors that of God's relationship to the church reflected in the language of the prophets.<sup>182</sup> The roles and responsibility of marriage in terms of its success is vested in the head, the male is strongly encouraged to function in the marriage in the same manner as Christ with the church.

The act of submission is a voluntary act by the wife who conducts herself accordingly simply because the husband fulfills his role and duty as the head of the house. Furthermore, the text strongly advocates for mutual submission, not that women should submit only, but mutual submission to one another. Men submit to women by loving them as their own bodies. Paul does not divert from the issue of house codes during his time of ministry, but does not use the structure of the house codes to permit male dominance and subjugation of women. Although some scholars believe that the Eph. 5:21 passage makes reference only to previous verses; more recent scholarship suggests verse twenty-one is applicable to the passages that describe the roles of husbands and wives thus pointing forward as well as backward in the text.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 132-135.

<sup>182</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: IPV Academic, 2007), 161-170

<sup>183</sup> Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 186-187.

The pattern of submission flows in this manner; C (wife) is submissive to B (husband) as B is submissive to A (Christ), thus C & B are both submissive to A and to one another. The wife yields to her husband as her husband yields to Christ, thus breaking down attempts at domination and control, but allowing submission in freedom as all parties yield to their respective heads.<sup>184</sup> Further, the wife submits herself to her husband in obedience to God and not simply because of the commandment of the husband. The Christian values and attitudes of women is the catalyst for submitting to the husband.<sup>185</sup> The commands for husband also involve two feminine words, nurture and cherish, which are indicative of the instruction of husbands to be supportive of their wives as well as admire and reverence them. The church has used this text to demand full control of wives, especially verse twenty-three where it states “in everything”. This has taken on a very different meaning than the intent of the text as men bypass their obligation of submission unto Lord demanding that their wives fall into compliance with every command and request.

Christendom must leave behind the principles of dictatorship that support abuse, control, and oppression of women in favor of panoramic submission in which husband and wife submit to one another as they both submit to the Lord out of a sense of Godly obedience. James Boice states that the standard for husbands is higher than woman and list five verbs that add voice to his argument: love, giving of oneself (husband), to make holy and set apart, cleansing, and the presentation of the wife. These five verbs, listed in

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<sup>184</sup> Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 608-614.

<sup>185</sup> John Muddiman, *The Ephesians to the Ephesians* (New York, NY: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 258-259.

verse twenty-five through twenty-eight, set the stage for how women submit to their husbands through the fulfillment of these five verbs by the husband.<sup>186</sup>

The Greek word for love, *agape*, suggests a meaning of unselfish and unconditional love with the husband loving the wife for who she is and the gifts and graces she brings into the marriage expressing an earnest desire and appreciates for the wife. Further, the term love involves a husband who loves his wife so much that he is willing to sacrifice himself following the pattern of Christ and the church. This is the love that a husband should demonstrate for his wife just as Christ demonstrated his love for humanity on Calvary.<sup>187</sup> The love of the husband for his wife should be broad and run deep as ocean waters so that if necessary, the husband sacrifices his own prestige, body, and needs in order to fully care for his wife. The husband must give himself willingly as the writer of Hebrews mentions that Jesus willingly requested that a body be prepared for Him to enter the earth to redeem humanity.<sup>188</sup> Further, Jesus stated that “no man takes His life, but he lays it down”, implying His willingness to sacrifice Himself as a true shepherd for the sheep” (John 10:18).<sup>189</sup>

The husband must also be willing to give of himself in order for the wife to be sanctified and cleansed. Sanctification and cleansing are a result of the sacrifice and death of Christ; the church is set apart and cleansed by the blood of Christ.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 199-202.

<sup>187</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2012), 156-157.

<sup>188</sup> D. Stephen Long, *Hebrews: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 160.

<sup>189</sup> Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 162.

<sup>190</sup> Ernest Best, *Ephesians: A Exegetical and Critical Commentary* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2004), 253-254.

Husbands must sanctify and cleanse their wives by their sacrifice setting them apart as the beloved of God. Further, the imagery of cleansing is significant as it connotes the idea of bathing and washing the bride. Although some scholars believe that cleansing refers to baptism, most scholars agree that the term cleansing makes reference to notion of literally bathing in water.<sup>191</sup> The last verb that depicts the role of the husband in marriage is that of one who presents his wife to himself as a glorious and radiant wife just as the church is presented in glory and radiance to Christ. Further, it speaks of the artistic beauty of the bride as a young attractive woman morally pure with no spots, wrinkles, or blemishes.

When husbands fulfill their roles, duties, and obligations by the five verbs listed above, this is how their wives will look.<sup>192</sup> The wives can feel beautiful if their husbands follow one principle outlined in Ephesians which simply states that husbands must love their wives as their own bodies. Further, Paul states that no man (husband) hates his own flesh; therefore, husbands are prohibited from hating their wives. The text refers back to Gen. 2:24 and further implies that upon consummation of the marriage, husband and wife become one and what the husband inflicts upon the wife, he inflicts upon himself. Therefore, it is immensely imperative that husbands understand this mystical union as the culmination for the test of true love for his wife, loving their wives as they love their neighbors.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010) 382-383.

<sup>192</sup> Walter L Liefeld, *Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997), 146-147.

<sup>193</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 426-427.

### **Summary of New Testament Texts**

The scripture text of the NT regarding marriage must be understood in light of its historical context and meaning. The church has failed to include this in the background of the NT passages to provide a balanced and educated understanding to congregants regarding the issue of husbands and wives. Paul indicated that although God created males first then female, husbands are not to rule, dominate, and control their wives, but love them as Christ loves the church and gave himself for the salvation of the church. Ephesians chapter five lists one hundred and sixteen words for men compared to forty-one for women indicating that the responsibility for the success in marriage falls on the shoulders of husbands. The issue of the husband as the head has been a major bone of contention in the church due to the lack of education about the texts listed above and the continuation in the twenty-first century.

### **Conclusion**

The Black church must embrace a restoration of the pre-fall notion of marriage based upon Gal. 3:28 that brought equality between males and females and utilized as a prototype to eliminate abuse, control, oppression, and IPV against women in the church. Although the notion of house codes still exist in the Black community and church, they must viewed in light of the history and culture of the time Paul wrote to the Christians in Asia Minor. Further, the house codes were not to replace the notion of Godly principles in terms of interaction between husbands and wives. The relationship between husbands and wives was to model the relationship between Christ and the church founded on the basis of unconditional love. The Black church has utilized these scripture text to abuse, control, and subjugate women in lieu of correctly exegeting the text to promote healthy

relationships and marriages. The marriage relationship must mirror the relationship between God and the church, in doing this we can assist in reducing IPV and assist women to report abuse.

The pastors and leaders of mega-churches must understand that it is the best interest of their congregations, church ministries, and collective best interest to place more emphasis on addressing domestic violence among parishioners. This carries an immense theological mandate in terms of a shift in how the ministries shepherd and pastor families impacted by abuse. Further, pastors and mega-church leaders must be encouraged to understand the theological impact of not addressing IPV. The theological aspect of abuse is imperative for mega-church members in terms of discipleship, healing, restoration, growth, and on-going development. God cares about IPV and the church should care about IPV and the ramifications for congregants and the church must embrace the same level of care and understand that it is their collective best interest to help congregants who experience domestic abuse.



## **Chapter 4: Focus Group Interviews**

The historical aspects of IPV steeped in tradition, grounded in scripture text and exegesis, and defined in precise gender roles of men and women as well as explicit roles depicted in marriage, have contributed to the continuation of abusive and controlling behavior. The notion of domestic violence in the church is immersed in the traditions and cultures of how Biblical text is understood and appropriated to different facets of life. The notion of marriage has historically not been viewed through the lens of the marginalized, thus leaving the door open for further victimization of women in the church.

This section will consist of qualitative research from a focus group in which eight different women were presented with six questions regarding their real and personal experiences with IPV developed by Ron Clark and myself. The real names of each woman will be concealed to protect their identities at their explicit request. The questions are as follows:

1. What can you tell me about your experience that will help me understand what you went through?
2. Did you report the abuse to anyone, why or why not?
3. What was the impact on you, your family, and the congregation?
4. Who were some of the people who helped you along the way? What did they do?
5. What were some of the things or actions of people that were not helpful to you?
6. What advice would you give to women today who encounter IPV?

## **Focus Group**

The focus group consisted of eight women ranging in age from twenty-nine to sixty-two. Six of the eight women remarried after experiencing IPV in their first marriage and two of the women have chosen to remain single after experiencing abuse in the marriage. The ethnicity of the focus group of eight women is African American and they all attend predominantly Black churches with pastors of the same ethnicity. Further, three of the women were married to pastors, two of the women were married to associate ministers, one was married to a deacon, and two were married to non-leadership males in the church. All of the women have at least one or more child and graduated from high school; four of the women graduated from college and two of the women obtained graduate degrees at the master's level.

### **Focus Group Interview Questions**

#### **1. What can you tell me about your experience that will help me understand what you went through?**

*One survivor stated that her husband taught a series on the "The Successful Christian Marriage" while abuse was present in their home. She stated that "it was the most difficult sermon series to listen to as her husband portrayed his own marriage as the example for married couples in the church".*

The majority of the responses from the women confirmed that their experiences were immensely devastating and resulted in tremendous amounts of stress and anxiety. Most of the survivors reported that the devastation was arduous to endure on a daily basis while maintaining employment, maintaining the household, and keeping the family together. This tripod approach proved to be a tough balancing act while portraying the perfect family to the church and public. Further, the thought of living a "double life" proved to be a great strain for most of the survivors, fulfilling that role during church services, women's meeting, and other church events that mandated their presence. The

survivors stated that it was very difficult to sit through a Sunday morning service while their husbands functioned in ministry, delivered sermons, prayed for parishioners, served communion, and adorned the holy garments and vestures of the church.

There was one survivor in particular that shared her story of how her husband taught a sermon series on “The Successful Christian Marriage” while abuse was present in their home.

She stated that “it was the most difficult sermon series to listen to as her husband portrayed his own marriage as the example for other married couples in the church”. Further, she stated that the conversation during the drive home was filled with excitement from her husband who received good reviews from congregants who enjoyed the sermon series but had no concept of the issues transpiring in the home of their pastor.

The survivors stated that there was a high level of mental anguish encountered daily as a result of trying to discover a methodology to avoid IPV. Most of the survivors stated that they spent countless hours devising strategies to avoid being abused by their husbands. The strategies ranged from having his favorite meal cooked when he arrived home or massaging his shoulders if they sensed he was stressed or angry due external factors at work or in the church to avoid being the indirect object of his anger and frustration. Some of the women stated that they would contact family members or relatives as their husbands arrived home to give the appearance of being busy with making their husbands feel like kings, and hope that they were just too tired after a hard day of work to abuse them.

Three survivors in particular stated that they would “inform their husbands that they were pregnant to prevent abuse from occurring for a period of time inclusive of

providing a doctor's note as proof of pregnancy". When asked about the husbands suspicions of the pregnancy, they would simply state that they lost the baby due to stress. Another survivor stated that she would "appear to be sleeping when her husband arrived home hoping that he would not wake her and start with the verbal abuse". Mostly all of the women confirmed that fear was one of the most dreadful weapons used to control and abuse.

### **The Weapon of Fear**

The survivors confirmed that fear was the main weapon utilized to control them inclusive of the fear of reporting abuse to anyone especially law enforcement. The women stated that fear was so ingrained into their thought patterns that it dominated their mode of thinking, ability to make decisions, or take actions despite knowing the appropriate manner to address the issue. The notion of fear stripped their ability to think broadly and forced them to focus on protecting their children from the daily horror they experienced. One survivor in particular recited the mental anguish as a result of the constant fear of her husband's volatile behavior and she described how she "would shake when she heard his key unlock the door and observe her husband enter the home not knowing what type of mood he was in or when the abuse would begin". She stated that the abusive behavior would begin after strenuous board meetings in which he was denied a request by the board to start a program or increase funding. Another survivor stated that fear pushed her to the "brink of depression and suicide as she felt helpless and unable to overcome the terror of her husband's thunderous voice and violent outbursts". She stated that the only thing that kept her from suicide was her children.

One woman also reported that her husband was an outstanding member of the community, served on several high profile boards, and was a respected voice among his peers, community, and civic leaders. She stated that “she felt had no one to turn to who would listen to her story because of his standing in the community among the power brokers and elites; a few of these elite power brokers attended services at their church”. The fear she described entailed losing her children if she attempted to report because of her husband’s political and social connections within the community.

The constant fear of losing her children if she reported held her in checkmate and unable to counter her fear. She stated that her husband would threaten her with losing the children periodically if she ever disclosed and this held her tongue captive for many years. Yet another survivor stated that fear had “literally paralyzed her and forced her to accept the abuse although she believed in her heart that IPV was wrong. She stated that her battle was not with her abusive husband but with her internal fear to escape abuse”. Although she remained in the relationship for a few years beyond the recognition of her inner battle with fear, she finally had the courage to report to someone in the church, flee the situation, and obtain a better life with her children. The women re-affirmed that fear was one of the most important weapons in the repertoire of abusers. They further confirmed that the weapon of control was equal to the weapon of fear.

### **The Weapon of Control**

The women overwhelmingly confirmed that control is the twin sibling of fear. They depicted the notion of control as comparable to incarceration after being convicted of a crime and sentenced. The survivors stated that almost every aspect of their lives was controlled and placed on the time table of their husbands. They stated that they were told

when to cook, when to serve, in some cases when to eat, when to leave, when to return, and what individuals to communicate with. The control, in some cases, extended to complete domination of life both inside and outside the home as well as all decisions for the family, finances, and relationships. The women confirmed that because of fear they handed over complete governance to their husband's and most times did not question his authority even if they were aware that the certain requests were dubious. One survivor stated that she was "consistently asked by her husband to write checks even though she was aware there was not enough money in the account to cover the checks."

Further, she stated that her husband dominated the every aspect of the finances to the extent that she never knew how much money was in the account. She was given a certain amount of money to spend per week and when it came to shopping for groceries, clothes for the children, and other household items, she was only given enough cash to cover the costs. The women stated that in some instances control was gained very subtly and deceptively overtime by establishing and building trust. One survivor reported that "her husband was so astute in handling the household finances that she never imagined he would change his behavior and become such a dominating force in that area. She stated that she was literally stripped of knowing anything about the finances and her spending was micro managed down to the very penny".

Further, if there was anything outside of the normal order of spending she was questioned and scolded by her husband. She stated that she lived in constant fear of overspending or not having a good explanation of money spent outside of the allotted amount. Another survivor stated that "her husband controlled the finances of the church and the home which meant that she was not allowed to know too much about money and

was told to appreciate the nice living that she had been provided”. Her husband travelled extensively as an evangelist and received significant amounts in honorariums, but she never knew his yearly income. One survivor shared how she lived a “lavish lifestyle and had everything at her disposal, clothes, shoes, hats, purses, cars, etc. However they were given to her as gifts to encourage her not to report abuse and regain her trust”. There were a few women who also shared the same experience of what they referred to as gifts for silence. Most survivors stated that it was difficult to flee the abusive situation without access to finances inclusive of credit or debit cards.

When asked about the possibility of residing in shelters, the survivors with male children stated that it is virtually impossible to find a shelter that will accept male children over a certain age. The women stated that most individuals who have never experienced IPV fail to understand that money plays a vital role in fleeing abuse and having the ability to care for children. Overall, the survivors identified the major themes of devastation, fear, and control that defined their experience. The women honed in on the themes of fear and control as the two most powerful weapons that their husband’s utilized to maintain dominance over nearly all important area of their lives and the family.

## **2. Did you report the abuse to anyone, why or why not?**

*Most survivors reported that a major factor of not reporting was the potential impact to the church and ministry along with the ramifications of life after reporting.*

### **Fear**

The majority of survivors stated that they did not initially report the abuse to anyone, especially family or church members. The women stated that they often considered reporting abuse, but fear was the main reason they hesitated. The fear that was

described centered on retaliation for reporting or attempting to report, especially to family or law enforcement. Most survivors stated that if they could have filed a report without being caught or suspected they would have attempted to leave in the beginning of the abuse. One survivor stated that she was “so overwhelmed with fear that she erased the very thought of reporting against her husband and kept the focus on her children”. Most survivors reported that a major factor of not reporting was the potential impact to the church and ministry along with the ramifications of life after reporting. For some, their ministries became quite successful through much effort, trials, suffering, and years of painstaking sacrifice to see the ministry reach its pinnacle.

Although most survivors were employed in the secular arena, they stated that ministry and church work was the priority that defined their lives. The battle between reporting and potentially losing the ministry was the catalyst for not reporting which was everything to their husband’s livelihood. One survivor stated that she was afraid to report because of her husband’s strong standing in the community and his respect among ministry colleagues. She stated that she “refused to take the chance of losing her children with full custody being granted to her husband”. The discussion with the survivors transitioned back to the subject of retaliation with most survivors commenting that the pain, mental anguish, and suffering served as a reminder of what could happen if they spoke about abuse outside of the home. One survivor reported that her “husband choked and slammed her against their bedroom wall and threatened that it would be worse if she ever hinted about the abuse to anyone”. She stated that the incident occurred after her husband drilled her with questions about a discussion at a women’s meeting. She stated that it was customary for him to question her about topics discussed in meetings to ensure



that no information was shared outside the home. The incident left her petrified and although she entertained the thought of reporting, she remained nervous to make any attempt to report future incidents.

One survivor stated that she did report abuse to law enforcement and the legal community but received very little assistance to help her address the issue. The first time she involved law enforcement they determined that it was a simple domestic dispute and advised her to separate from her husband for one night and have a cooling down period. She stated that her understanding for the decision by law enforcement was determined due to no physical violence and no visible marks on her body. Further, law enforcement determined that it was a minor disagreement between them which did not reach the level of involvement to take further action.

She stated that the officers did not offer much assistance or ask questions to get to the root of the problem. They remained onsite until her husband got some clothes and then departed. The survivors stated that fear permeates every aspect of life and the thought of reporting handcuffed them into silence to prevent the problem from being exposed. The theme that continues to weave through the first two questions involves fear; fear of the overall experience, fear of reporting, and retaliation from the abuser. The survivors stated that fear is such a powerful weapon in the hands of abusers that the public has difficulty understanding how fear cements women in the ground and shackles their hands and feet from taking the appropriate action. They stated that in the midst of experiencing abuse, the main focus was survival and whatever it took not to lose their children. The survivors commented that experiencing shame was also a major factor in not reporting abuse.

## **Shame**

The survivors overwhelmingly stated that shame is an immensely powerful force that also prevents women from reporting IPV. They stated that living multiple lives was immensely arduous; one life at home, another life at church, and another life in the public eye. One survivor stated that she “wanted to report to the church and district superintendent, but was forced to think about the shame she would potentially encounter after many years of reporting to the church that “all is well” in the home and “the Lord keeps on doing great things” as one liners to avoid the real issues”. The survivors posed questions as part of the discussion with one another, “How was I to face my family with these issues?” “How could I tell anyone in the church about my problems when my husband is the senior pastor?” One survivor stated that there were very few occasions that she could be around other pastor’s wives and listen to them discuss the success of their marriages while her marriage was laden with abuse.

The external shame was only matched by the shame experienced at home. The survivors stated that the experience of shame was long and deep in their minds and hearts. Most of the survivors stated that the internal shame suffered at the hands of their husbands in the home was demoralizing. They stated that a significant majority of the shame experienced came through verbal abuse that directly attacked their character, intelligence, and competence. They stated they were made to feel inferior as compared to their husbands and other women while being treated like children. The verbal onslaughts continued daily as their husbands were relentless with statements, words, and phrases that belittled, degraded, and humiliated them. One survivor told a story of how “most every decision she made was questioned by her husband and was asked to provide a reasonable

explanation as to why she was late coming home or arriving at her destination”. She stated that she was expected to call her husband when she arrived at work, her family’s home, and church. The goal was to monitor her every move and break down her ability to think thus becoming solely dependent upon her husband for all of her needs.

Further, she stated that shame, condemnation, and guilt gripped her mind. She felt extremely dehumanized as she heeded to every call of her husband. At times, she stated that she “experienced deep depression dealing with the shame, losing her self-confidence, and believing the derogatory statements her husband hurled at her for years”. Another survivor stated that her husband utilized a “strategy of posing questions to make her feel stupid and ignorant; they were questions that she could not answer due to the fact that he was highly educated and she only possessed a high school diploma”. She stated that it was agonizing to engage in discussions with him as something in the conversation would trigger his anger. She further stated her husband methodically and systematically deprogrammed her ability to think which triggered shame and condemnation and shut down the conversation.

The survivors stated that when shame is experienced it pushes them into a state of immense low self-esteem to the extent that they severely lack the ability to feel good about themselves and constantly question their every move to avoid abuse. They depicted a process in which the shame and lack of self-confidence is difficult to cope with once they start to believe the deprecating statements made about them especially in front of their children, family, and friends. One survivor stated that the words spoken struck so deep in her mind that all she heard was the following words; stupid, dumb, incompetent, and ignorant each time she would make a mistake she would jokingly make comments

such as. “Oh I’m sorry, I’m just dumb today” or “How could I be that incompetent and stupid, that was so easy”. She stated that she made these comments at work and church; although this was outside of her normal behavior, no one at work or church noticed the negative statements she made regarding herself or they brushed them off as silly comments made in fun.

The major factor that the survivors confirmed regarding shame and not reporting was the process for how shame lead to bouts with depression, misery, despair, and hopelessness to describe their experience. The amount of dejection took its toll on many of the survivors who stated that they no longer lived; they just decided to exist, make no waves, and survive for the sake of the children. They stated that life was sucked out of them leaving them with no reason to lift themselves up from the ashes to live again and enjoy life. They stated that life could not be enjoyed because of the constant shame and blame for mostly everything that went wrong even if they had no part in the matter. The survivors stated that blame was another strong weapon to keep the focus off the real issues of the abuser and place the emphasis indirectly on them. The survivors stated that shame is still difficult to overcome today, but they continue to work through the pain.

### **3. What was the impact on you, your family, and the congregation?**

*She stated that “her husband treated her very cruel and constantly berated her at home although he said nice things about her in front of the congregation. She stated that she spent many days battling the sadness she experienced from the harsh words and yelling that caused her to be moody with her children. The survivor stated that this impacted her emotionally and psychologically as she witnessed her children attempt to understand her emotional imbalance and mental instability”*

#### **Impact on the Survivor**

The survivors overwhelmingly stated that the impact was enormous from a mental, physical, and emotional standpoint. They stated that the mental anguish was very

severe in the midst of holding the family together and keeping the issue hidden from the children. The mental and emotional aspects drained their energy for life, took away their will to live, and stripped them of the little hope they clung to that the abuse would end one day soon. The survivors stated that the impact resulted in mild to severe depression and impaired their ability to complete simple tasks at work, home, and church. They reported often forgetting tasks they started and could not remember what things they had to complete. They also indicated that each day became more difficult to find the strength and the will to live, make it through another day, and care for the children.

The survivors reported thoughts and attempts with suicide and a loss of interest in most activities with friends as their lives centered on the church and home. The survivors stated that it was difficult to form relationships out of fear that the issues in the home would be revealed and their husband's exposed. One survivor talked about her issues with depression as a result of the abuse. She stated that "her husband treated her very cruel and constantly berated her at home although he said nice things about her in front of the congregation. She stated that she spent many days battling the sadness she experienced from the harsh words and yelling that caused her to be moody with her children. The survivor stated that this impacted her emotionally and psychologically as she witnessed her children attempt to understand her emotional imbalance and mental instability". The children walked on egg shells and could feel the tension in the home. She stated that the children became slightly aware of the issues, but kept quiet to prevent more problems.

### **Impact on the Family**

The survivors stated that the impact on the family was not overt, but the children, especially the young children, were not always aware of the issues although they could sense that things were edgy between their parents. The survivors stated that it was difficult to conceal the issues from the children as they grew older and understood that their mother was obscuring the abuse to protect their father. The children respected their father and appreciated him for taking care of their needs, but embraced their mother to help her as best they could to manage the problems. One Survivor talked about the day her daughter observed her husband scolding her for not picking him up from the airport on time as she explained that she was held up in traffic due to a bridge closure. She stated that “her daughter eventually told her siblings about the incident which was eventually revealed to her parents as well as family on both sides of the isle”. She described several meetings and interventions that occurred with her husband that ended with no resolution.

Family on both sides attended the church that her husband pastored and chose to arrange private interventions to avoid the information being leaked to the congregation or community. One woman discussed her longing to have relationships with friends inside and outside of the church, but was fearful to develop those associations to protect her husband and the church. This was a constant battle as she was expected to establish boundaries because most women desire to form a bond with the pastor’s wife. The battle in the mind was a constant struggle on whether to engage and build rapport with other women or remain the faithful dedicated wife and mother supporting the household and her husband as he tended to the responsibility of the church. There were a few survivors who discussed having good relationships with women in the church and community, but

had strict boundaries on the topic of conversation about family and home life. One survivor talked about how she utilized scripture text to discourage a discussion about IPV. She stated that often quoted Psalms 105:10; “Touch not my anointed and do my prophets no harm” (Psalms 105:10) to prevent women from mentioning anything about domestic violence and the pastor”. She was always able to divert the conversation away from her to focus on abuse issues with other women in the church. They stated that it was very hard to trust due to hearing stories of how other women trusted individuals with confidential information only to discover that their secret was exposed causing the abuse to become worse for victims and the family.

The survivors also stated that their children had immensely difficult times understanding why they could not have sleep overs or spend too much time with friends. One survivor stated that it was very hard to explain to her small children about living such a private and secluded life to elude revealing the issues in the home. Another survivor stated that “her husband was a mastermind at using events such as birthday parties, fun activities, and pool parties to present the picture perfect family in front of their children’s friends who were members of the church along with their parents. She stated that her husband would BBQ for his children’s friends and make banana splits and root beer floats only to have the children return home and tell their parents about the good time they had at the pastor’s home”. She stated that that façade irritated her but there was nothing she could do to stop the perception that he built for himself at the expense of the children to the congregation and community.

The survivors also discussed the impact on the family years after the abuse occurred stating that their children revealed what they knew and the effects in terms of dating, relationships, marriage, and the perception of God and spirituality.

### **Impact on the Congregation**

One survivor told a story of how the congregation was made aware of the IPV issues in her home before the family. She told the story of an incident that occurred in the home one Saturday evening in which law enforcement had to intervene. She stated that her husband was taken into custody, posted bail, and released the next morning. The survivor stated that she and the children went to church and was not surprised that her husband showed up and took his seat on the platform to review the Sunday school lesson. However, during children's church, one of the children asked her son about his day on Saturday and he responded by saying the police came to my house and took my daddy away. The survivor stated that the information rocked the church heavily and they desired to know how long the issues had been occurring and what steps were being put in place to address the issue. Most congregants finally understood why the pastor's wife wore sun glasses in the sanctuary on occasion. The reason given by the pastor and wife was due to the bright stage lights that affected her eyes, causing migraines.

The survivors stated that the impact on the church varied from church to church, especially in terms of how the issue is addressed among the elder's board, deacon boards, and church administration. They stated the variation is contingent upon the denomination and culture of the organization, more importantly the leadership's ability to properly address the issue once it rises to their level. One survivor stated that "her church was



devastated when the issue of abuse came to light and many congregants decided to leave and attend other churches.

The church was divided between the pastor, pastor's wife, and the children; this caused great disruption in the services. She stated that the associate pastors preached on Sunday mornings, taught Bible study, and lead the worship services while her, her husband and, children attended individual and family counseling". The survivors stated that the division in the church was easily recognizable as most congregants held to their convictions. They stated that the reputation of the church suffered greatly in the community as most individuals were aware of the issues once the information was discussed in the community.

One survivor stated that in her church "congregants acted as though the issue had no effect on them and many reported that they did not know what to do or how to respond when the abuse was revealed to the congregation. She stated that most parishioners "continued with their ministry tasks and assignments leaving church administration, leadership, and the pastor's family to deal with the problem". She also stated that congregants were nervous to express any concern for fear that they would be punished by God for saying anything that could be perceived as negative against the pastor although they were confident that IPV occurred. She stated that this was disappointing because she finally grasped the span of control of her husband that started in the home and extended to the church.

The survivors stated that many members in churches desire to confront the issue head on and believe that pastors should meet with the entire congregation to explain the details of what happened. Most survivors stated that most men will refuse to meet with

the church and discuss the issue, choosing instead to meet with a select group of ministers and leaders who supported them. The impact on the church was immensely frustrating as church members felt that they received more information from external sources than church leadership which left many in a state of uncertainty regarding the process of how the issue was being addressed. They stated that although some of the husbands stepped down from preaching and ministry assignments; they continued to function as the head of the church or department and direct day to day operations. This was disturbing for some women to observe their husbands continue in ministry in lieu attending and participating in individual counseling sessions to address the issues of abuse. The survivors stated that many congregants looked to leadership above the pastor's level to address the issues, a district official or Bishop; they stated that they received little assistance in dealing with the on-going issues of abuse. The survivors stated that many times parishioners were left with little to no information about the outcome, resolution, or details of the circumstance. The perception of the church was that things were concealed and covered up to protect the pastor from shame, embarrassment, and exposure. There was virtually no transparency throughout the process except a request for prayers and a stern message from leadership forbidding individuals to discuss the issue.

The survivors stated that congregants had become dispirited as they were not allowed to have any contact with the pastor, the wife, children, or family. The survivors reiterated that most congregations suffered tremendously due to a lack of communication throughout the entire process only to see the pastor return to the pulpit and preach without any knowledge of the outcome. They stated that communication is the key for addressing any issue, especially IPV early in the process. Most survivors stated that the

divisions in the congregation usually occurred when the information about abuse was announced or discovered within the church long before the truth was revealed which in turn discourages women from reporting. While the survivors acknowledged that the impact on the congregation was significant, the family suffers in unimaginable ways, especially women who are bombarded with questions and phone calls about the issue and how they plan to address it.

**4. Who were some of the people who helped you along the way? What did they do?**

*The survivors stated that it was very difficult to trust individuals in the church or community with sensitive information because of fear that individuals would report to law enforcement ahead of victims and families.*

**The Trust Factor**

The survivors stated that there were a few individuals who wanted to help and provide support. The issue of individuals providing assistance was, in some cases, buried under the inability to openly discuss the matter due to the position of their husband's in the church. This made it extremely difficult to seek help without exposing their husbands and subjecting their children to undue hardships as a result of the circumstance. The survivors stated that it was very difficult to trust individuals in the church or community with sensitive information because of fear that individuals would report to law enforcement ahead of victims and families. The issue of trust was huge among survivors as many sensed they had nowhere to turn for help. They constantly weighed the options of asking for support but could not decide the best course of action. However, there were a few survivors that did have individuals along the way to help as they endured the abuse.

### **Emotional Support**

One survivor stated that “she had a close confidant she trusted to disclose the abuse and receive support. She stated that her friend approached her after she noticed a small bruise on her lower arm as they were in the women’s restroom at church. The survivor stated that her friend provided much needed emotional support through listening with no response, suggestions, or directives about how to deal with the problem. She stated that her confidant respected the boundary although there were times she knew her friend desired to intervene and help her escape. The survivor stated that this patience proved to be very helpful by allowing her time to think about the issue and assess the most appropriate action while protecting her children.

She stated that having the space to envision an escape plan without feeling overwhelmed or attacked with suggestions from her confidant decreased the confusion and anxiety issues that plagued her mind daily. She further stated that her friend, who never experienced IPV, attended some trainings and seminars to better understand abuse and the impact on victims and families”. This willingness by her confidant to understand the plight of abused women spoke volumes about her commitment and dedication to her and the children. The survivors also discussed turning to family and congregants to divulge their situation and problems and described some good processes and negative processes for how things were handled in both contexts.

### **Active Listening**

One survivor shared a story with the group of “how the associate pastor’s wife was her close friend and keenly aware of the IPV with her husband. She stated that her friend witnessed the abuse on several occasions and was stunned to discover that her

pastor, who was great friends with her husband, acted in such a disrespectful manner in her presence. She stated that her friend made her husband aware of the issues, but voiced concern to address the issue with the pastor or report to church leaders in fear that he would expose the pastor and be punished. The survivor stated that her friend desired desperately to report, but out of respect she remained silent walking hand in hand throughout the duration of the abuse. She stated that her friend cried with her many nights and was torn when the pastor took the podium to tell the congregation how much he loved his wife and children although his wife suffered tremendously behind closed doors. She stated that her friend was a master at listening and avoided the mistake of blaming her for not taking more action”.

The survivors stated that having a confidant to actively listen subjectively to their problems is enormous in terms of allowing time to release some of the pain as they continued to experience the horrific effects of domestic abuse. They stated that far too many times individuals perceive that they are more concerned about the abuse than the actual victim and desire to play the role of hero to help them address the issue. The survivors stated that the art of active listening is one of the most invaluable tools that confidants can employ when assisting victims. The survivors confirmed that too much talking distracts from releasing deep seated pain and begin a process to understand that abuse is wrong as they arrive at their own conclusions. They agreed that education is supreme in assisting victims of domestic violence.

### **Education**

The survivors agreed that blaming victims for failure to take action to protect themselves and the children could be damaging to victims attempting to flee abuse. They

reiterated the importance of education that was shared previously in the discussion by a survivor who expressed appreciation of her confidant educating herself on the matter and developing a list of available resources to assist her when she gained enough courage to confront the issues directly. They stated that most individuals who desired to help have great intentions, but due to a lack of education, they caused more harm by taking charge of the situation and making decisions for the victims functioning in some capacity as the actual abuser with controlling and directive behavior. The survivors reiterated the importance of congregants, family, and friends obtaining education in lieu of fording their will on victims. The survivors shared how they understood that their loved ones acted out of sincere concern, but failed to understand that swift action is not always the best response when dealing with family violence.

The survivors stressed that family, friends, and congregants must educate themselves if they want to be partners with victims to address the issue. They stated that although it may appear that resources and education may not seem to help or resolve the issue quickly, having the resources available helps greatly when victims are ready to confront the issue. They stated that validating and helping victim to build on strengths is key for victims and families.

### **Validation and Building on Strengths**

The survivors stated during the discussion that having a confidant to validate and build on their strengths was imperative in helping them survive the abuse. One survivor told a story of “how her sister, who was very aware of the IPV issues, consistently validated her feelings regarding the situation. She reported that she spent many days and nights experiencing a wide spectrum of feelings although her husband abused her

physically. The survivor confided in her sister that she still loved him very much and could not imagine leaving. She would tell her sister how her husband was under duress because the ministry was not flourishing as he expected and finances continued to fluctuate monthly. She stated that her sister would constantly reinforce that her feelings and emotions were normal and encouraged her to take time to sort through the full range of her emotions before she made important decisions about when to leave". The survivors stated that the worse outcome of not validating feelings reinforces the blame game and self-deprecating behaviors that push victims into a hole of isolation refusing to communicate and fall further into despair and depression. They stated that it is most difficult to quickly separate from the person they married, birthed and nurtured children with, and built a life around ministry and family despite abuse issues. They stated that to forsake everything they established without validating their feelings and emotions is comparable to removing a scab before the sore is healed.

The validation aspect is crucial especially in the early stages and progression of IPV to help victims cope with the shock of the initial abuse, gain emotional stability, and develop an escape plan. The survivors discussed how supportive individuals understand the need to build on strengths to constantly reinforce positive behavior in decision making. The survivors stated that having someone to support their initial decision to stay with the abuser was enormous in terms allowing them to think on their own about the next steps to address the issue. They stated that most individuals, although they have good intentions, rarely understand the psychological impact of IPV and how this affects the decision making process on a daily basis. They stated that most individuals believe

that victims are free to make and implement decisions on their own even when the abuser is not present.

One survivor stated that “her sister had good intentions but lacked the skill set to help her address the IPV. She stated that her sister constantly told her what she needed to do instead of listening to her needs and supporting her thoughts about safety and protection. Further, she stated that her sister acted in some respects as the abuser by dominating the discussion and refusing to listen to her and encourage her during the process”.

The survivors commented that it was important to experience small victories that provided strength and hope in the midst of daily encounters with abuse. They stated that taking these small steps in the direction of making phone calls for resources, talking with advocates, or packing important information in preparation for transition took immense courage and validating victims for taking these imperative steps proved to very helpful for survivors. They stated that individuals fail to understand that each time victims makes a decision to leave it literally means that they take a chance with their lives or the lives of their children.

They discussed how they must be extremely careful in how they implement a process of transition and need individuals to understand their plight, build their strengths, validate their emotions, constantly acknowledge small victories, and support their decision making process, even if they disagree.

##### **5. What were some of the actions from people that were not helpful to you?**

*The survivor stated that she was told to believe God for a miracle and not leave her family destitute and helpless. The survivor commented that the action of the Bishop was misguided and immensely inappropriate as he had no formal training to address IPV”.*



The survivors reiterated that individuals who displayed dominant behaviors in terms of directing them on how to deal with IPV was certainly not helpful in their transition to safety. They reiterated that although individuals desired to help, this caused them to shut down and withhold information as they perceived them in the same light as the abusers. The action of directing them took away their ability to think and take ownership of their transition process instead relying on another individual to validate their thoughts rather than treat them as the expert. One survivor told of a confrontation “she encountered a friend in church who openly discussed her situation without mentioning her name in hopes that this would motivate her to contact law enforcement. She stated that eventually church members discovered the problem and how the circumstance escalated with her husband. He accepted another pastorate in a different state and continued with the abuse. The survivor stated that this made things worse as the family moved to a very small town of five thousand residents which made it more difficult to address the issues as her husband became a respected pastor in the community by establishing relationships with law enforcement and politicians, serving as a volunteer chaplain, and board member on various volunteer committees. Further, many of the small town officials eventually became members of the church and considered him an upstanding civil servant, thus making it arduous to deal with the yelling and threatening behavior of her husband.

### **Misguided Faith**

The survivors stated that another action that was not helpful was church members who encouraged them to rely on the help of God at the expense of other means of intervention to address the issue. They stated that it became apparent that spirituality was

not the answer as they discussed different options with confidants, friends, and family. One survivor told a story of “how she disclosed the abuse to the local Bishop and he suggested that she continue to seek the face of the Lord and pray that her husband would be delivered from the spirit of anger and control. The survivor stated that the Bishop encouraged her to believe God that He would turn the situation around and her husband would become the loving person she believed him to be while continuing to suffer daily. The survivor stated that she was told to believe God for a miracle and not leave her family destitute and helpless. The survivor commented that the action of the Bishop was misguided and immensely inappropriate as he had no formal training to address IPV”.

### **Prayer and Fasting**

The survivors stated that the action and suggestion to enter a season of prayer and fasting to cast the devil out of their husbands was not helpful in addressing the problem. They stated that at the end of the experience they understood that prayer and fasting were not actions that immediately helped them transition to safety. They confirmed that although prayer and fasting are necessary spiritual disciplines, they did not assist in the process of addressing abuse. Some survivors stated that it made the issue worse in most cases. The survivors further stated that they grew weary of the recommendation to believe God through prayer, fasting, faith, and scripture of how God would use them to bring deliverance to their husbands.

A few of the survivors commented that the worse aspect of misguided faith was the pastor or Bishop suggesting that they speak with other women who were abused, but prayed and fasted and their husbands were miraculously delivered from abuse and serving God faithfully in the church. One survivor shared a story of “how her confidant

requested that they commit to daily prayer and fasting together and believe that God would touch her husband in a special way to open his eyes about his behavior with the goal of him repenting of his sin and being reconciled to God and his wife. The survivor stated that she committed to prayer and fasting but the abuse grew worse once her husband discovered her intent of praying and fasting at the church. The survivor stated that in retrospect she would have handled the process much differently”.

### **Better Wife**

The survivors agreed that the next action that was not very helpful as well as the suggestion that if they would seek to become better wives, more supportive of their husband’s ministry, and faithful to the church, their husbands would relate to them better and have little time for IPV. They stated in some cases they were encouraged to be more pleasing and loving as a strategy to decrease the tension their husbands encountered with the demands of ministry. This form of blaming the wife to justify the husband’s behavior pushed them further into depression with virtually no hope to see light at the end of the tunnel. Further, the survivors stated that the action of blaming provided support for continued abuse by placing the blame in the wrong aspect of the relationship. The survivors stated that blaming led them to believe that they needed to become better wives and support their husband’s to ease the burden at home. They implemented many diverse methods to become better wives that included becoming more spiritual and increase interest in their husbands ministry work in lieu of pursuing their own callings and ministry gifts. They also stated that they perceived that becoming a better wife meant changing their approach and response to their husband by cooking his favorite dinner, looking more attractive in their physical appearance, taking better care of the children at

home, and creating an environment that reduced his level of anger. One survivor told a story of “how she did everything to become a better wife at the advice of a friend in hopes that her husband would no longer abuse. The survivor stated that the strategy back fired as her husband became suspicious of her behavior and began to question her to determine if she was sincere or attempting to transition to safety”. There was another survivor who stated that “her husband noticed the change in her behavior and conversation about becoming a better wife and although the abuse decreased this allowed him to delve into alternative activities such as internet pornography and on-line dating that led to an affair”. The survivors stated that the advice of accepting blame and becoming a better wife was not helpful and in most cases increased the problem or created a pathway for their husband’s to participate in other immoral activities.

#### **Treat Him in This Manner**

The survivors stated that another action that was not helpful was recommendations from individuals on exactly how to treat and support their husbands. They stated that this comes under the umbrella of becoming a better wife. They commented that advice on how they should interact and engage with their husbands was highly insensitive and perturbing. They further stated that individuals lacked the discernment to understand victims, abuse, and the devastating impact on families. The survivors stated that the individuals who provide preposterous suggestions were merely caught up in the man behind the pulpit preaching, teaching, praying for the sick, performing infant baptisms, and other pastoral duties. They failed to understand that the man behind the pulpit was an abusive, angry, and controlling person behind closed doors and damaged the lives of his family on a daily basis. The survivors stated that individuals

must be extremely careful in their perceptions and understanding of another woman's husband and IPV, and not judge the person too quickly.

#### **6. What advice would you give to women today who encounter IPV?**

*One survivor stated that "her inner voice spoke loud and clear about the warning signs of IPV, but she married her fiancé in a lavish ceremony that endured after years of IPV.*

#### **Recognize the Warning Signs**

The survivors stated that the advice they would give to women who encounter abuse is to quickly recognize the warning signs and symptoms before the situation escalates. They stated that in most cases women fall deeply in love and ignore the warning signs, especially in the event that the abuse is non-physical. The survivors commented that most women who experience the non-physical aspects of domestic violence fail to understand that it still falls under the umbrella of abuse. They stated that women will allow or permit elevated voices, intimidation, bullying tactics, economic control, and psychological abuse, but fail to understanding that those forms of abuse in some cases lead to physical abuse. The survivors stated that it is important for women to pay special attention to the patterns and behaviors of the non-physical characteristics during the courting period and refrain from looking the other way in lieu of infatuation, love, and marriage.

#### **Be Aware of their Fear**

The survivors stated that women should not be afraid to seek for assistance and report when they recognize signs and symptoms, talk to a friend, or confidant who can help them analyze the situation and strategically construct a transition plan. They reaffirmed that fear is one of the most tantalizing weapons that abusers utilize to stifle women from thinking and preparing safety plans.

The survivors commented that it is immensely difficult to overcome the initial and on-going fear associated with domestic violence, but acknowledged that women who experience abuse must not allow fear to strip them of the ability to formulate a transition plan to escape. They stated that they would encourage women to embrace their inner strength to confront the issue of fear that prevents women from reporting.

### **Practice Prevention**

The survivors talked at length about recognizing the signs and symptoms of IPV early in the process to prevent the issue from becoming a much larger problem. They stated that most women whole heartedly believe that their husbands will change through prayer, fasting, becoming a better wife, and taking a subservient position which allows their husbands to maintain complete dominance without resistance. The survivors reaffirmed the danger of disregarding the early signs and symptoms and stated that they would advise women to seek assistance quickly to decrease the opportunity for abuse to overtake their lives. One survivor stated that “her inner voice spoke loud and clear about the warning signs, but she married her fiancé in a lavish ceremony that endured after years of IPV.

The survivor stated that she regrets failing to address the issues early in the process that were right in plain view. She stated that women can ill afford to deliberate the signs, she commented that women must take immediate action to prohibit further issues that impact women and entire families”. The survivors also stated that it is important for women to be fully aware of the power and control wheel of abuse as well as the cycle of abuse that depict the abusers strategy in gaining full control over a period of time. The survivors stated that awareness of the eclectic stages of IPV and methods of

abusers provide women with the tools and resources necessary to minimize the intensification in the early stages.

One survivor commented that “awareness and education saved her from experiencing long term issues in her marriage as compared to another woman she knew in her church. The survivor stated that the training she obtained at her church prior to marrying her husband was essential in discontinuing IPV for any long period of time. She stated that through awareness she was able to identify the signs early and escape the abuse”.

### **Educating People**

The survivors overwhelmingly stated that the lack of education was one of the most prevalent factors in on-going cases of IPV. They stated that they would advise any woman to ensure that they obtain the necessary education by attending seminars, training, and conferences to gain a full understanding of the issue. The survivors stated that most women in the church have no clue about the nature of abuse and fail to possess the knowledge to escape abusive situations. They commented that most women in church do not believe that their husbands possess the attitude to initiate domestic violence because they minister and preach God’s word and are not susceptible to commit such heinous acts of violence against women. They stated that the church is the perfect environment for men to camouflage and masquerade their love for God and the church while abusing their wives under the nose of the most spiritual Christians in the church. The survivors stated that they would advise women to educate themselves prior to any courtship, proposal, or engagement leading to marriage. The survivors stated that once the marriage is consummated it is almost too late for many women to avoid IPV and arduous to begin an

education process once the abuse has begun which would take them out of the presence of the abuser who would otherwise become suspicious and guarded of her travels in the community. The survivors stated that they would advise women to educate themselves during the single years and would also advise pastors and ministry leadership teams to provide educational opportunities in youth settings starting at the elementary stage, continuing through college, and well into adulthood. They state that it is essential for young girls and women to comprehend the signs and symptoms of abuse and be able to recognize the behaviors and patterns of abusive men.

### **Understanding What God Says**

The survivors commented that women should take additional time to ensure that they obtain a Biblical understanding of marriage and the roles of husbands and wives. They stated that most women in the church lack the understanding of these roles and the issue of IPV is almost never discussed in any length during pre-marital counseling, especially from a theological perspective. The survivors stated that they would advise women to attend seminary, enroll into courses at a seminary, or locate a ministry that can assist them with obtaining a correct Biblical view on marriage and roles. They commented that having this understanding about the scripture text will help women recognize when the roles are blurred and what to expect from a potential husband during the course of the marriage. Further, this will also equip women to deal with the potential trap of remaining in abusive marriages supported by an incorrect interpretation of the scripture text. The survivors encouraged women to present questions to pastors and church leaders to gain an understanding of how the ministry views marriage, IPV, femininity, and marriage roles.



They stated that most women in the Black church simply trust the words of the pastor and church leadership as a result of how they were reared in the church and family. Most Blacks are taught to obey and not question the pastor as God's leader of the church to avoid punishment for disobedience and lack of faith. The survivors stated that although more pastors have received training about IPV in the Black church and enrolled into seminary, the process for addressing the issue from a pastoral perspective needs much improvement in order to help women decrease the chances of marrying an abuser or remaining in an abusive relationship. They commented that more pastors must shift their mindset and promote the message of domestic abuse from the pulpit and every ministry department to help victims overcome the impact abuse and increase reporting.

### **Summary & Conclusion**

The focus group provided some great insights into the world of victims through their lens regarding the impact of IPV on the family. The experiences shared by these brave and courageous women highlight and emphasize abuse and help us understand the mindset of abusers and victims. The stories shared by these women confirm the responsibility of pastors and the church to protect women and encourage them to report. Christendom must understand the issue through the eyes of direct victims to grasp the full effect on women in effort to provide helpful assistance and prevent the escalation of abuse. The church must be cognizant of the reasons why many victims fail to report abuse and understand that it takes at least seven to nine occurrences before they report or attempt to leave. Further, it is important for Christians to comprehend the impact of abuse on families, especially when individuals take it upon themselves to act in the best interest of victims without permission.

This can quickly escalate the issue and cause more harm to victims and families. The church must be aware of their role in providing acceptance and assistance to victims and families who experience domestic abuse. Their actions are critical, whether positive or negative, and can have an immense impact on the ability of victims to transition into safety. Further, active listening was the most essential tool in helping victims to develop plans to address their circumstance. The survivors overwhelmingly stated that some friends and confidants appear to be experts, but lack the necessary training to be effective in their approach. Lastly, survivors reiterated that women must recognize the signs and symptoms early and educate themselves during their single years to obtain a better chance of having an abuse-free marriage.

## **Chapter 5: IPV Prevention in the Black Church**

The Black church is poised to enhance their methodology for addressing and reducing IPV against women. The previous chapter illustrated the devastating impact of abuse against women as they shared personal and surreal experiences first hand with domestic violence. The women suffered unimaginable abuse, some for longer periods of time than others, enduring the pain and agony of coping with family and marital issues in multiple forms. The arduous experiences of these women demonstrate the need for enhanced prevention efforts by the church not only to reduce the occurrences of abuse, but more importantly help women report. Further, the direct experience of the women in chapter four underscores the need for the church to develop internal policies through the creation of a human resource department where staff, volunteers, and congregants can report abuse to a separate entity within the church to combat domestic violence and underreporting.

The catalyst for this writing centers on the victimization of women and their hesitation to report IPV. Prevention in the church must start with encouraging women to report to church officials and law enforcement, especially when abuse occurs in the presence of children. Christendom must continue its education and awareness about violence against women and progress to the next steps of training and the implementation of policies that hold abusers accountable while protecting victims in the process. The church must incorporate a model of reporting abuse gleaned from government, education, and social services to aid women in coming forward. Further, the Christian church should embrace a new model of helping victims inclusive of collaboration with advocates to assist women who report with services and resources that help protect women and

children from on-going abuse. The goal of embracing a new paradigm assistance is centered on helping women report abuse at the first occurrence.

The church has historically been the center of the Black community, one of the few places where people could meet to strategize and develop plans to fight for justice and equality against the cruel and crippling effects of oppression, racism, bigotry, and prejudice.<sup>194</sup> The Black church must begin to utilize the most powerful position in the church, the pulpit, as a place of power to advocate a zero tolerance policy against IPV. The pulpit was the place of power for the galvanization of Blacks during slavery, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement. As the spoken word proved to be the power of hope, comfort, and confrontation in the prophets, so the spoken word can again become a source of justice for victims of violence in our pulpits today.

Further, the church has always been a place of empowerment, providing Blacks with the courage to challenge the dominant forces of White slave masters and government officials to gain freedom that would ring loud like the liberty bell in the city of brotherly love.<sup>195</sup> Today, the church faces perhaps a greater challenge in providing services for victims, utilizing the pulpit as in times past as the place to galvanize pastors and leaders to decry the distressing effects of abuse, walking hand in hand with advocates to lift the plight of women sending a strong message to abusers that violence is prohibited

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<sup>194</sup> Judy Belk, "On Sunday, Faith, and Freedom: Black Churches in the South Were Always About Much than Religion", <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/apr/07/opinion/la-oe-belk-religion-20130407> (Accessed December 17, 2014).

<sup>195</sup> Thom Moore, "The African American Church: A Source of Empowerment, Mutual Help, and Social Change," *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community* – Published on-line 10-20-2008, 147-167.

against women in the church.<sup>196</sup> The spoken word is the key to reducing abuse by empowering women to report. The hallmark of encouraging women to report begins with training and educating pastors and leaders on the impact of abuse using the previous four chapters as an outline to assist in understanding the issue, the historical origins, the theological underpinnings, and stories from survivors with a strong focus on reporting.

The church must realize that IPV has two sides, spiritual and secular. Although this section will not delve into an understanding of both sides, the focus will center on a methodology for collaboration. Christendom cannot address the issue alone though the use of scripture, prayer, and fasting; this has to be combined with collective efforts of law enforcement, the legal community, hospitals, and government to provide services to victims and families, and bring accountability to the abusers. The church must evolve into one of the leading entities that directly challenges the stereotypes and myths of domestic violence by providing innovative and intentional services to protect women and help them report.

### **Women's Hesitance to Report IPV**

The survivors in chapter four overwhelmingly confirmed their fear to report IPV for a three reasons. First, *they feared that their lives and the lives of their children would be in great danger and even greater danger if they attempted to escape.* Second, *they commented that reporting to pastors and church officials accomplished nothing and in most cases added to the duress of the circumstance and incited revenge against them for reporting.* Third, *they stated that there was a lack of understanding among law*

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<sup>196</sup> Monika Black, "The Role of the Black Church in Addressing IPV at the Community Level" (2012). College of Science and Health Theses and Dissertations. Paper 22. [http://via.library.depaul.edu/csh\\_etd/22](http://via.library.depaul.edu/csh_etd/22) (Accessed November 30, 2014).

*enforcement and pastors concerning abuse.* Christendom must respond with vigilance to assist women in the church who experience abuse and respond to the perennial issue of how to increase the opportunities of women to report. The Black church must be willing to alter its perspective, examine diverse models of reporting, and embed a reporting model within the internal policies of the church bylaws and human resource handbook. Further, as previously stated in the writing, the church must collaborate with a wide array of advocates in the community to extend services and resources available to women and children. The response must be extensive and robust from the most powerful position in the church, the pulpit and the most powerful person in the church, the pastor. The goal is to create an environment of deterrence and empower women to report.

### **Protocol for Reporting IPV in the Black Church**

The Black churches has a long history of suppressing reports of IPV as well as discouraging women from reporting abuse and take this great opportunity to develop a protocol that empowers women to report which is essential in reducing abuse in the church and can start prevention efforts. Although there is some level of awareness regarding domestic violence against women, the church must increase its attentiveness to the problem and inoculate several strategies to significantly abuse against women; this will be accomplished in two phases. First, by developing a reporting requirement and embedding it into the internal policies of the church and bylaws through training, education, and awareness. Secondly, through building a strong network of advocates and community experts to provide immediate and on-going services to victims and survivors. This two prong approach is the substratum for the church to develop an efficacious model to address the issue of abuse against women in the church.

The internal approach is immensely essential in supporting efforts to heighten awareness and increase the church's response to IPV. The church must analyze the various models of reporting from public and private entities in order to develop an internal model for congregants and women to report.

### **Models of Reporting**

Churches are in a great position to create a reporting system to help address IPV and reduce the length of time women remain in abusive relationships or be involved with abusers. Although national data states that it takes seven to nine times before a woman seeks help<sup>197</sup>, it is imperative to note that most women continue in abusive relationships due to a limited understanding of resources available and the knowledge to access those resources. This is further exacerbated by the fact that most parishioners are not aware of the depth of the issue and receive little training about abuse in the church and community. Further, congregants are not educated about the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse which is ostensibly indicative of the lack of training. The lack of reporting is the crux of this writing coupled with the goal of accomplished by establishing mandatory reporters within the ministry – individuals who are mandated to report domestic abuse in the same manner as most social service professionals are mandated to report child abuse and neglect. The United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe have mandatory reporting laws for professionals who have regular contact with the most vulnerable members of society namely seniors, the disabled, and children.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence, "Barriers to Leaving", Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence, <http://www.acadv.org/barriers.html> (Accessed November 30, 2014).

<sup>198</sup> Benjamin Mathews (2008). "Mandatory reporting legislation in the USA, Canada and Australia: a cross-jurisdictional review of key features, differences and issues.". Retrieved 4 August 2013.

Mandatory reporters are required to report cases of abuse directly observed or where abuse is suspected. Contingent upon the state and laws, mandatory reporters are required to report cases of financial, physical, sexual, neglect, and other types of abuse as identified by respective state laws.<sup>199</sup>

In 1962, two doctors, Henry Kempe and Brandt Steele published the “The Battered Child Syndrome” to assist doctors in recognizing the impact of child abuse and reporting requirements to authorities.<sup>200</sup> Subsequently, in 1974, the United States congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) that provided funding to states to develop Child Protection Services (CPS) and reporting hotlines to combat serious injuries to children. Although CAPTA was specific to physical abuse, reporting abuse evolved into the reporting of sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect, bruises, abuse of the developmentally delayed, psychological abuse, and exposure to IPV.<sup>201</sup> Further, mandatory reporters are required to report actual or suspected cases of abuse whether they are in paid, unpaid, or voluntary positions as well as child care providers, adult care providers, and elder care providers.

### **State of Oregon Mandatory Reporting**

The state of Oregon requires that any private or public official having reasonable cause to believe that any child they come in contact with has experienced some type of abuse is required to immediately report.

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<sup>199</sup> Douglas J. Besharov "Doing Something" About Child Abuse: The Need to Narrow the Grounds For State Intervention," *Harvard J.L. & Pub. Pol'y* (1985): 539–590.

<sup>200</sup> C. Henry Kempe and Ray E. Helfer, editors: *The Battered Child*. 1st edition, 1968. 2nd edition, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974.

<sup>201</sup> Stephen Krason, "The Critics Of Current Child Abuse Laws And The Child Protective System: A Survey Of The Leading Literature," *The Catholic Social Science Review*, (2007): 307,308,307–350.



Public and private individuals who are required to report include; doctors, law enforcement, government employees, legislators, educators, clergy, therapists, hospital staff, and practitioners per the Abused and Neglected Child Abuse Act.<sup>202</sup> The state of Oregon has a model of reporting in which mandatory reporters contact the child abuse hotline and file a confidential report of abuse. The confidential report of abuse information is taken by a child abuse hotline employee who conducts research to determine if there were previous reports of abuse. A report can also be made via writing or through the agency website.

If the employee determines that there were no previous reports of abuse and the information presented does not meet the criteria of abuse, the case is considered unsubstantiated and closed. However, if there is evidence, based upon a report to the child abuse hotline that abuse has occurred or is suspected, and the employee believes that the report meets the threshold for abuse, a referral is made to a local office for a CPS worker to follow up within twenty-four hours with a home visit, interviews of all parties involved, and a written assessment that will outline whether the case was substantiated or unsubstantiated upon the initial investigation. If the claim of abuse is unsubstantiated, then the case is closed. If the claim of abuse is substantiated, the next steps involve CPS workers interviewing all individuals involved and making the difficult decision to either remove the child from the home and place in temporary foster care or advocate for the child to remain in the home and provide services to the family. If the child is removed from the home this usually involves presenting the findings to a judge who determines if

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<sup>202</sup> Oregon.Gov, “Mandatory Reporting: Reporting Abuse and Neglect”, State of Oregon, DHS, [http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/abuse/pages/mandatory\\_report.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/abuse/pages/mandatory_report.aspx) (Accessed December 18, 2014).

the child will be removed from the home and placed in temporary foster care, remain in the home, or a combination of the two.<sup>203</sup> All fifty states in the US have mandatory laws for reporting child abuse and neglect.<sup>204</sup>

### **DuPage County, Illinois School District**

The DuPage County Illinois School District established a policy to address the reporting of child abuse and neglect. All school personnel are required to report per the Abused and Neglected Child Abuse Act. The policy states that all school personnel must contact the Children and Family Services (CFS) hotline when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a minor child has been abused, neglected, or in danger of being abused and neglected. After the phone call has been made to CFS, an investigation will be conducted to determine the accuracy of the report and next steps to protect the child in collaboration with law enforcement. Mandatory reporters who fail to make a good faith effort to report abuse may be subject to prosecution, license suspension, and civil liability.<sup>205</sup>

### **Clergy as Mandatory Reporters**

In many states in the US, clergy, per state statute, are designated as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. As of November 2013, there were approximately twenty-seven states that mandated clergy as a mandatory reporter.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Oregon.gov, “Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Numbers,” <http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/pages/abuse/cps/report.aspx> (Accessed December 11, 2014).

<sup>204</sup> National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse, “Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect,” <http://www.ndaa.org/pdf/Mandatory%20Reporting%20of%20Child%20Abuse%20and%20Neglect-nov2012.pdf> (Accessed December 10, 2015)

<sup>205</sup> DuPage County, “Models Policy: Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect for Schools in DuPage County,” <http://www.dupage.k12.il.us/districts/resources/pdf/ModelPolicy.pdf> (Accessed December 19, 2015).

<sup>206</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2014). Clergy as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau.

Although in the states of Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Utah, and Wyoming where clergy are not considered mandatory reporters, they may be included in the “any person” category required to report.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, not all states allow confidentiality of pastor communications or clergy-pentinent privilege in which communication remains confidential. The privilege of confidentiality varies from state to state and clergy must be cognizant of the laws in their respective state regarding clergy-pentinent privilege.<sup>208</sup>

The church should be encouraged to follow the model of reporting as outlined above for local, regional, and national agencies. Christendom must ensure that clergy understand that they are mandated in some states to report child abuse and IPV that occurs in the presence of children. Further, the Christian church must develop internal ministry protocols and policies that require church officials to report domestic abuse in the same manner that child abuse is reported although reporting domestic violence is not required by law unless it occurs in the presence of a minor child.

### **Theological Mandate for Reporting**

The mandate to report should be a part of the initial training for pastors and leaders. The mandate for reporting IPV falls under the framework of a theological mandate based in scripture text. The proverbial writer states in Prov. 21:13 that if an individual shuts their ears to the cry of the poor they will not be heard and during the time they cry they will also not be heard. Church leaders must fully embrace the theological mandate for reporting abuse and protecting victims.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

Further, they must keep their ears open to hear the cry of the oppressed and not divert the response of the marginalized to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and devotion as a methodology to assist victims. The Leviticus writer warned the Children of Israel to refrain from sacrificing their children through the fire of Moloch. Moloch was a Canaanite god that was offered the sacrifices of children by their parents, the Canaanites and Phoenicians.<sup>209</sup> Although this may be perceived as a difficult comparison to abuse victims, pastors and church leaders must comprehend that if they shut their ears to the cry of the oppressed, they assist in the process of sacrificing the health and well-being of victims and children to the fire of domestic abuse.

The Christian church must place a greater emphasis on reporting first hand incidents of IPV in the same manner as child abuse and neglect. Although there are no state or federal laws that require clergy or community members to report domestic violence unless in the presence of children, the church and community must be strongly encouraged to follow the Good Samaritan principal and report abuse occurrences even when children are not present. This is a grey area for Christendom and the secular community continues to struggle with the notion and development of a mandatory reporting law for violence. Although this is an arduous position for Christians and non-Christians, nevertheless, community members must understand that turning a deaf ear to the cry of the poor is not an option even in the absence of a legal mandate. The secular and church communities are both comprised of individuals who are human and the heart of human beings must remain compassionate to the cry of abuse victims.

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<sup>209</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 197-200.

The theological mandate to report incidents of IPV not in the presence of children must become central to both the church and broader community.

### **IPV Awareness**

The information provided above is important in developing a framework for mandatory reporting of domestic abuse in the Black church. The model for reporting should begin with a solid definition of IPV as defined in the first chapter. The definition is the catalyst for the “Awareness Campaign” to be launched directly from the pulpit with the pastor serving as the chief ambassador and campaign chairperson with a strong message of awareness and education about domestic violence. The church has a strong and vibrant tradition of oral history particularly in the call and response methodology that exists between the pastor and congregation. The congregation in the Black church adheres to the instructions and direction of the pastor and this can be powerful in the campaign to help women report and reduce abuse in the church.

The pastor must seize the opportunity to utilize the power and influence of his voice to raise and sustain “congregational awareness” in order to embed awareness into the culture of the church. Embedding IPV into church culture is immensely important to prevent abuse from being labeled as a seasonal topic during the month of October (IPV Awareness Month) or when high profile incidents occur among athletes or celebrities. The pastor must take the lead position, along with the entire leadership team to actively participate in routine awareness events promoting healthy relationships, marriages, and family while standing strong against family violence. The Black church must allow innovation and ingenuity to assist in the creation of domestic violence awareness events and activities such as Stomp the Silence, Stop the Violence in Mississippi, Surviving

Domestic Violence in California, The Seminole County Domestic Violence Vigil in Florida, and Marital Bliss: Couples Date Night in Virginia.<sup>210</sup> The church must glean from these events and propose robust activities to raise and sustain awareness. For example, The Black church has a rich history of food and fellowship that can be utilized to draw congregants together for discussion forums, seminars dealing with signs and symptoms via cell group discussions, and a remembrance and celebration event to reflect on the stories of survivors. The church must implement these and other innovative activities to permeate and embed awareness within the culture of the church and congregation. The Christian church can ill afford to causally discuss the issue as the problem is immensely prevalent in the media and social airways. The followers of the kingdom must tear down the walls of silence and bring the issue to the forefront of the church starting in the pulpit. The stigmas that stifle's women in the Black church from reporting must be totally shattered to allow women the freedom to report abuse or seek a safe space to discuss safety plans and strategies.

### **IPV Education**

The educational aspect is immensely important in prevention and helping congregants comprehend the perennial effects of abuse. Education helps to remove the plethora of myths and misinformation about IPV that allows silence and secrecy to prevail. The Black church is primed to offer a robust educational campaign that inculcates parishioners and transcends well beyond awareness. The educational campaign is the second step in the prevention process after awareness.

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<sup>210</sup> National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, "DVAM Events," <http://www.nrcdv.org/dvam/DVAM-Events> (Accessed January 5, 2015).

Christendom must create a framework for educating congregants and should begin with a survey to measure the educational baseline to develop the appropriate training sessions. The next step in the educational process centers on the development of material utilized to educate the church about IPV. This is imperative as congregants will arrive at the training session with preconceived notions and understandings based upon cultural, regional, and self-imposed comprehension. The educational training can also be demarcated based upon the level of understanding of each congregant or parishioner group. The education sessions could be separated based upon the results of the individual survey in the following manner: introductory level, intermediate level, experienced level, and advocate level.

### **The Introductory Level**

The introductory level would assist congregants to understand the working definition of IPV, signs, symptoms, the cycle of abuse, the power and control wheel of abuse, and general basic information. The introductory session would also consist of a personal reflection moment for congregants to reflect on how abuse has impacted their lives directly or indirectly, discussion in small groups, question and answers, and post training follow up sessions. The question and answer sessions for the introductory level is crucial to build a solid foundation for congregants who have little to no awareness of domestic violence issues. In the introductory level, congregants would be introduced to local agencies that provide services for victims and survivors.

### **The Intermediate Level**

The intermediate level would consist of a review of the basic comprehension of IPV, delve into the specifics of the signs and symptoms, an in depth breakdown of the

cycle of abuse, the power and control wheel of abuse, an introduction into the mind of victims, an introduction into the mind of abusers, self-reflection of the impact directly or indirectly, small group discussions, and question and answer sessions.

The intermediate level is equally important as the introductory level to continue the overall education by providing more in depth education and increase the ability of congregants to intervene in certain circumstances.

### **The Experienced Level**

The experienced level would begin with a basic knowledge test of IPV, the cycle of abuse, the power and control wheel of abuse, signs and symptoms, and the impact of abuse on children, and impact on family life. At the experienced level, an agency advocate is present and they learn about a couple of the resources, how they work to help victims, and how we can work with them.

### **The Advocate Level**

The advocate level is the substratum for training which is the goal for all congregants. The advocate level is the pinnacle for prevention in the church. The goal of the first three levels of educational training are important components to the advocate level as the step where all congregants must attain in order to build a coalition of advocates armed to increase the frequency of reporting and to help significantly reduce abuse against women in the church. The advocate level of training will consist of a train the trainer framework in which advocates are trained to provide assistance to congregants in the first three levels and serve as residence experts and consultants for the church and ministry. The advocates will be responsible for conducting quarterly or semi-annual training, education, and awareness inclusive of the latest trends in IPV. Although every



parishioner will not attain this desired level, the goal is for all congregants, the pastor and ministry leaders would be required to reach this level. At this level, advocates teach why victims experience what they do, and why batterers are controlling as well as an introduction to some of the legal issues victims encounter.

This is important for pastors and leadership teams on all levels continue to be the catalysts in assisting victims to report, create safe spaces for discussion and consultation, and significantly reduce incidents through vigorous training and education. The advocates would be required to attend some type of advanced training each year and attend a national or regional conference as a type of continuing education credit to stay abreast on the latest trends. The awareness campaign, education, and training at the introductory, intermediate, experienced, and advocate level are essential for the church to launch an aggressive internal campaign from the pulpit to the congregation to raise awareness and encourage women to report IPV. The Black church must take the lead in the faith-based community not only by taking a strong stance against domestic abuse, but develop a reporting system for church officials and ministry leaders that offer victims a safe space for listening and consultation. This can be furthered by ensuring that churches create a Human Resource Departments (HR) that aid the ministerial and leadership staff in the development of internal policies that help embed awareness in the church environment.

The notion of policy development through an HR department not only assists in embedding awareness in the ministry culture, but holds all paid and volunteer staff accountable for addressing and reporting issues as well as reporting domestic abuse when they become aware of the issue. Although, there is no state or federal law that requires

individuals to report IPV, except in the presence of children, the church must invoke the theological mandate of reporting to protect victims and encourage victims to report. Further, the issue of domestic violence must reach the same level as child abuse and neglect although one major difference is mandatory reporting for minors versus adults. However, the focus must be on the issue of the lack of power, vulnerability, and lack of control that both victims of abuse and children experience at the hands of those in positions of power, namely other human beings. Victims of IPV will continue to suffer as long as the issue remains at a non-mandatory reporting level.

### **Internal Policy Development**

The state of Oregon, as well as many other states in the US, have internal policies housed in the local and state Health and Human Service Departments that provide guidance to staff and volunteers who assist victims of IPV. The model that will be utilized in this writing will focus on the state of Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) and Human Resource Department (HR) to assist the Black church in creating a policy and guideline for churches to follow when reports of abuse are received. The development of an internal policy is critical in helping victims report and the formation of safe spaces to tell their story, develop safety plans, and request assistance for relocation and safety, especially for children. Although it is a daunting task for churches and ministries to develop internal policies, it is equally daunting to handle domestic violence issues in the same manner that has left many victims abused, unprotected, and children exposed to psychological and sociological harm. The church is now poised to move from awareness, education, and training into effective internal policy development.

### **Pastoral Care Departments – IPV focused**

The development of a pastoral care department that is specific in addressing IPV within the context of church ministry is not a new process as more mega-church ministries continue to hire full time paid staff to lead ministry departments such as, music, praise & worship, education and schools, youth and young adults, men's and women's ministries. The pastoral care department would function in similar fashion to a secular Human Resource Department (HR).

The HR department for the state of Oregon is specific to each state agency but similar in scope and responsibility in guiding managers and employees. The HR department handles issues of employee discipline and discharge, roles and responsibilities of all employees, core values, healthy interactions between employees, as well as Civil Rights and Discrimination, and background checks for all employees. These full time paid staff members agree to a criminal, child abuse, and elder abuse background check that they must successfully pass in order to be hired, especially when employment involves providing services to Oregon's most vulnerable citizens. Further, the HR departments in state government are now mandated by federal and state law to provide assistance for employees who are victims of IPV and stalking. This is inclusive of assisting employees with relocation efforts to different offices, changing the employees name on the staff roster, only providing other agency staff with their name on a need to know basis, approved time off work to obtain restraining orders, attend court, and meet with lawyers, counselors, and advocates for on-going assistance with abuse. The state of Oregon also offers a program for clients who are desire to address IPV issues.

### **Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors**

The state of Oregon has a program entitled Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) administered by case work staff who determine eligibility for the program, provide financial and non-financial assistance to eligible clients, and broker for services with community partners to help victims of including relocation efforts. The term *client* refers to individual who applies for program and is in need of assistance. The program is housed under the umbrella program of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that provides temporary financial assistance to eligible families with children as adults seek services to become self-sufficient.

The TA-DVS program starts with an individual making a request and completing an application. Once the application is received and screened, an appointment is made with case work staff to determine eligibility and discuss next steps. The victim does not have to provide proof of abuse in the form of bodily marks or scars, file for a restraining order or no contact order, or file a police report. The victim's story is the only proof needed to apply and be eligible for services.

The crux of the TA-DVS program involves case management services to assist victims by creating a safety plan developed jointly by the client and case worker for protection, safety, and employment. The goal at this juncture is not to explore all of the eligibility requirements, but to discuss how to create a safety plan and provide services and resources for victims and families to be used as a model and guide for the pastoral care department in the church to assist victims. The TA-DVS program may provide assistance in the form of paying for motels and safe places in undisclosed locations away from the abuser. The program also works in conjunction with the state of Oregon

Department of Justice (DOJ) to provide services of confidential addresses and phone numbers, and identity protection. The program also has limited funding to relocate victims and families to undisclosed locations out of state via airplane, train, bus, or provide gas vouchers for those who choose to drive to an undisclosed location. These options are part of the safety plan for victims and families. The pastoral care department must also develop internal policies for abuse victims, especially if they are an employee or member of the church. The policies must be inclusive of specific actions that occur when issues have been discovered or reported by a church official or victim. The policy must consist of the following components: definition of IPV, reporting requirements for pastors, associate ministers, ministry leaders, and volunteers, methodology for reporting, providing assistance for abuse victims, reporting domestic violence in the presence of children, policy for staff and volunteers who are victims of family violence, and specific policy for members that are non-paid staff or volunteers.

#### **Development of a Pastoral Care Department to Address IPV**

The pastoral care department in the church must review the TA-DVS program and seek ways to implement portions of the program to provide assistance to congregants in need of help. The church must invoke a new prototype that is different from the past and embraces a new vision of how to aid victims and families. The past methods of prayer, fasting, Bible study, blame, and silence have discouraged victims from reporting and continue in abusive relationships. The antiquated system must be exchanged for the creation of a pastoral care department that mirrors the model above and helps victims. The criteria of having a minor child may not be required in the manner as the TA-DVS program.

Further, the policy within the pastoral care department can simply state that congregants who are victims can simply require that when they report IPV to a pastor or church official, the request is forwarded to the pastoral care department to address with the victim. This is immensely imperative when the abuser attends the same church as the victim. The pastoral care department would function as an independent entity to investigate reports specifically when the incident is between a husband and wife or significant other. This removes the investigation and decision making from the hands of the pastor, ministerial team, or church officials, who in the past, have protected abusers and left victims helpless encouraging them to remain in or return to abusive relationships.

The pastoral care department is the sole entity responsible for assisting women, investigating reports of abuse, helping to resolve conflicts in cases of reconciliation, refer couples to neutral entities for family and individual therapy and counseling, develop strategic safety plans, and assist in the relocation of congregants for safety and protection if necessary. The role of the pastor and church officials is immensely important specifically around the financial assistance piece as the pastoral care department typically does not handle financial matters. They would work in conjunction with the finance committee and pastoral team as well as broker for services with local IPV advocate groups to provide services to victims. The internal process for congregants is vital for helping victims report abuse. The process must be inclusive of presenting the pastoral care department with a restraining order or no contact order naming the abuser and associates as a deterrent against abusers and associates. They would be prohibited from entering the property; law enforcement would be notified of the violation of the restraining order or no contact order, and removed from all church property.

The next option to assist an individual who desires to remain at the same church is a change of identity, specifically their name as a preventative measure to confuse the abuser or associates of the whereabouts of the victim and assist victims with relocating to a totally different church. The Black church should embrace this concept of assisting women in the ministry to assist in employment retention, safety, and protection. For example, in the COGIC church, there are thousands of congregations in the US and worldwide where pastoral care departments, working in conjunction with the local pastor, district superintendent, and jurisdictional Bishops in various states, can relocate a congregant who requests a transfer due to on-going and unresolved IPV issues.

The pastoral care department in the church is encouraged embrace this policy for congregants who experience IPV and are in need of services and assistance. The paradigm must shift with sending the victim to one corner and the abuser to the other corner in hopes that through prayer and fasting that the abuser “sees the light” and the victim has a spirit of forgiveness, thus encouraging the victim to reconcile with the abuser and start with a clean slate. The Christian church should create pastoral care departments to specifically address abuse with qualified experts and academics who are able to assist victims and families with resources and assistance to address domestic violence. The establishment of an independent pastoral care department will encourage more women to report and provide hope that the report will not be swept under the rug of silence and pushed to the back burner of secrecy. The formation of the pastoral care department must be granted authority to investigate reports of abuse, even if a report is made against the pastor, will provide fairness, safety, and protection for victims, but more importantly encourage more women to report regardless of the position, power, and

authority of the abuser. The awareness campaign, education, training, policy development, and establishment of an independent pastoral care department are crucial to prevention and essential in assisting women to report. The pastoral care department would also consist of individuals with the title of shepherding teams of church elders, church leaders, married couples who provide support to victims and families in the church community. The notion of policy development assists greatly in embedding IPV prevention in the culture of the church and ministry. The next step to further embed domestic violence awareness into the culture is taking the protocols developed and embedding them into the by-laws of the church.

### **Embedding IPV Policy within the Church By-laws**

The by-laws of any church serve as the organizations operating rules. The federal government does not require specific language although some states may require certain language. In Oregon, non-profit organizations, specifically religious organizations, are mandated to have certain language in the Articles of Incorporation that requests basic information such as name of the president, vice president, secretary, board members, and place of worship. Further, and more importantly, religious organizations are required to explain the process for the dissemination of assets upon dissolution as the laws are clear that no one person can profit from a non-profit organization. The by-laws and Articles of Incorporation serve as the main deterrent from individuals who seek to profit from a non-profit organization. The by-laws are the main document that binds all church members to the operating rules and procedures that cannot be superseded by any member of the church, not even the pastor. The by-laws are the single most powerful body of words second only to the Bible; however, if an issue arises in the church that cannot be resolved



by the members and results in litigation, the judge will not request a copy of the Bible, the judge will request a copy of the church by-laws to make a ruling.

The Black church must form and shape a new pattern for other ministries to follow by utilizing the by-laws to further embed IPV awareness within the culture of the church. The by-laws must be the vehicle that cements awareness in a document that cannot be altered by the pastor, HR department, board of directors, trustees, or any member of the church. Church officials and leaders must follow the proper protocols the make changes to church by-laws. The by-laws are immensely vital in aiding women in the church to shake the chains of silence and encouraging reporting in the church.

The church by-laws generally are composed of separate articles that outline the operation of a particular function in the church. For example, articles can state the principle and primary place of worship, dissolution of assets, qualifications of ministers and leaders, role of board members and trustees, times and places of board meetings, etc. The key aspect to the by-laws reside in the fact that although a committee may develop and construct them, the entire church body must approve and adopt by a simple 66 2/3 majority vote of members present at the meeting. This is crucial as all members of the congregation have a voice and more importantly a vote.

Although the politics of persuasion and inducement can play a role in swaying the votes of members, all eligible voting parishioners play a vital role in the formation, development, and approval process. Christendom must take the next step to entrench IPV awareness into the culture of the church by specifically and strategically constructing explicit language regarding the impact of abuse against women and outline a process to address abuse when it has been reported to church officials.

Further, the by-laws must specifically outline the process for investigating reports of IPV, confidentiality, decision making, role of the HR department, the pastor, the financial committee, associate ministers, and community partners. The necessity of outlining the roles of each entity is critical to remove the threat of the most powerful position, the pastor, from over involvement in the process that may be detrimental to victims. The message must be embedded in the chief document of the church in order to permanently cement abuse awareness and process for addressing abuse in the foundation of the church raising the bar for other churches while increasing opportunities for women to report. The by-laws process allows all members present at the meeting to have input in the development and approval process.

This is a much different process than policy development which is generally done without consent of the congregation created by the hands of a select few and presented to parishioners absent of their input. Further, the policy development cannot be a process that is imposed upon members, but rather than rely on the vast knowledge, expertise, experience, and ingenuity of all congregants. The by-laws surpass the authority and power of anyone single individual and centralizes the process for investigations. Further, the church must sustain the internal process, but jointly develop an external process to work in collaboration and assist women in addressing family abuse issues. The church is also poised to begin the process of establishing relationships with the IPV community to address the broader issues of abuse. The Christian church has mastered the ability to form relationships when addressing issues of civil rights, racism, prejudice, and poverty, but lack strong partnerships with advocate communities to reduce domestic violence in the

church and community. The internal and external process must join together to provide the greatest level assistance for victims.

### **The External Process: Community Collaboration**

The state of Oregon, DHS, and TA-DVS program must join forces with a myriad of community partners and advocates to assist and provide financial and non-financial services to abused women. Christendom can ill afford to act in a silo, disconnected from the broader community to resolve IPV issues by the spiritual disciplines alone. The church can also ill afford to address domestic abuse “in house” especially when it occurs in the presence of minor children, sweeping the problem under the carpet of silence and secrecy to protect men and exploit women. Although the Christian community generally mistrusts external intervention for reasons such as prejudice, racism, and oppression; the time is now for the church to stretch beyond its ceiled walls and marble pulpits to lock hands with the community and provide assistance for victims. The external process for assisting victims must begin with the Disciples of Jesus gaining awareness about organizations in the community that provide assistance and services to women and victims of IPV. The awareness of the church should extend beyond the local community and rise to the state and federal level to keep pastors and church leaders abreast of the most current trends in prevention and effective partnerships that assist victims.

The church must place prevention on the same platform as civil rights and work diligently to protect abused women and ensure that the broader society refrains from violating their basic rights to freedom and safety. The external process is what I will refer to as the establishment of the fence approach.

The fence approach is designed to place women in the middle of available services and build a fence of resources, advocates, and community partners that will assist women and help them report. The fence approach is modeled after the fence that home owners erect around their homes to prevent animals and humans from freely walking through their property and causing damage. The most important aspect of the fence is to prevent children from the dangers of running into oncoming traffic. The approach would attempt to provide the same methodology for women impacted by domestic violence. Christendom must embrace the fence approach by establishing links and chains within the broader IPV community and build a fence to help protect parishioners who encounter abuse issues.

### **Building the Fence**

The Black church, as previously stated, must embrace the fence approach by developing relationships with IPV advocates and supporters to extend the level of support and reach of available resources for women and victims. The church must be extremely knowledgeable about all available resources to build the fence which establishes the first link and chain in building the fence. For example, in the state of Oregon anyone can place a call to the 211 Resource Line and request information about IPV services. Further, domestic violence resources and services can be accessed through the following agencies; American Bar Association Commission on Domestic and Sexual Assault, Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, Battered Women's Justice Project, Futures without Violence, Incite! Women of Color Against Domestic Violence, National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence,

The Rave Project, The Faith Institute, and V-Day. These organizations provide a litany of services for individuals who need help reporting or escaping IPV.

The fence is constructed of diverse building materials that play their role and support the overall goal of protecting women from abuse, power, control, and oppression. Christendom must be willing to build the fence of resources around women in the church who experience issues with abuse, power, control, subjugation, and oppression and ensure that these resources are available for women and victims. The fence approach can be one of the most powerful coalitions that Christians can develop to fight against IPV and increase opportunities for information to be disseminated into the community which in turn will increase reports. The scope of this writing is to discover methods that will assist women in the church to break the tentacles of fear that hinder them from reporting and transition them to a place in which women are not only confident to report, but recognize the signs and symptoms and avoid abusive relationships altogether. The Black church must leverage community resources and build the fence of coalition to support women who suffer abuse. The church must also combine spiritual disciplines with the fence approach to provide a holistic approach to IPV prevention. Spiritual support must marry fence support to assist women in accessing available resources from the spiritual community and IPV community. The task for Christians is to expand their reach to form links and chains to help women in the church.

The IPV community is primed and ready to join with the faith-based community placing religious and philosophical differences aside to work for the betterment of women in the church to report abuse.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The story of First Lady B and the survivors in chapter four serve as the voice for many women in the church and resonate with congregants impacted by IPV. There are many stories immensely similar to First Lady B yet to be heard as victims remain fearful to report abuse. The Black church, as well as Christendom, must recognize not only the significance, but the vastness of the issue, no longer pretending that the problem is accentuated by the media, journalist, and advocates. The perennial issue of the fear to report domestic violence in the Black church continues to impede the necessary progress that is vital to significantly reducing abuse and non-reporting. The hesitant to report is twofold in nature. First, *women are terrified to report out of fear of ensuring more abuse, suffering injury, or even a fatality.* Secondly, *the notion that reporting IPV to the pastor or church officials will place them and their families in greater risk of imminent danger.* This is further exacerbated when the abuser has an influential position of power in the church, specifically as the senior pastor.

The Christian church must tear down the bars of iron and walls of fear that protect abusers in the church that contribute to the perpetual victimization of women. Further, it is imperative that Black congregations understand the historical underpinnings of abuse in the church beginning with their own history as well as the historical perspective as slaves in the US. This is important as the church seeks to discover solutions to help victims and increase reporting. Further, Christians must refrain from over spiritualization of IPV, burying the issue in the cemetery of prayer, fasting, Bible study, and other spiritual disciplines. Christendom must be encouraged to embrace education, training, and development with the goal of understanding how to serve women impacted by abuse. This is imperative for the Black Pentecostal church in particular as ministers and church

leaders tend to be less educated as compared to Baptist and Methodists clergy and administrators.

The stories of the women in chapter four and metrics in chapter one confirm that lack of education and awareness among pastors and the inability to adequately assist IPV victims. The church is in prime position to augment awareness of the issue and develop effective strategies to combat abuse and provide a pathway for women to report. The church can position itself in the fight against abuse to be one of the leading faith-based entities that permeates, inundates, and disseminates domestic violence education and awareness across the entire congregation and help increase reporting for women. The church must utilize the entire month of October as domestic awareness month to promote an awareness campaign that rivals breast cancer awareness.

Many congregations across the world have implemented breast cancer awareness Sunday to highlight the issue, early detection, treatment, and stories of survival. The success of this service has catapulted breast cancer awareness to a level almost unattainable by any other societal issue. The church should embrace domestic violence awareness month with the same vigor as breast cancer awareness. This could be inclusive of creating an ecumenical worship service to honor victims and celebrate survivors of abuse. The next step is to move beyond the worship service and extend the campaign to include seminars, trainings, and educational sessions to increase awareness and equip parishioners with the tools to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and skills of how to assist victims. The church must be encouraged to expand their community partnerships to encourage individuals to wear purple (IPV awareness color) in the same manner as breast cancer awareness supporters wear pink. The church can be a powerful

force in this campaign as many congregants are sports fans, entertainers, or business leaders in the community.

The followers of Christ should establish goals to measure the number of parishioners who receive training, on-going education, and reporting. The metrics captured will assist the church in reaching a significant number of congregants to augment awareness, analyze and revamp training, and understand trends of abuse to provide the most current and updated information on the issue. This is imperative for pastors and church leaders who have the propensity to spiritualize domestic violence in lieu of viewing the issue the lens of victims. The church should embrace a collaborative holistic approach and model and continue to build the fence of protection for victims and families. Christendom can ill afford to maintain a position of reaction to abuse in the manner as society.

The notion of abuse has once again risen to the top community issues and reignited the fight against IPV with the recent problems in the National Football League with players such as Jonathan Dwyer, Quincy Greg Hardy, Brandon Marshall, Ray McDonald, Ray Rice, and Ultimate Fighting Champions Thiago Silva and Anthony Johnson. The next step for disciples of Christ is to sustain the momentum of IPV awareness by developing yearlong events and activities to keep the issue in the forefront with the hope of helping more women report. The Christian church must also be encouraged to assist victims in the healing process.

The healing process must be inclusive of individual counseling, marriage counseling (when appropriate), and family therapy, specifically for children impacted by domestic violence. Further, the process can be a dual approach with spiritual disciplines



and holistic therapy; however, the process cannot lean toward spirituality to the extent that the counseling stands in the shadows. Christendom has to be confident that healing can occur over time in safe spaces and will not always be immediate or miraculous. The church should also develop a program that helps abusive men who are willing to seek assistance and engage in on-going counseling.

There are limited programs specifically designed for men who abuse. The Christian church must view abuse through the lens of sin, serving these men with the goal of healing and reducing the number of occurrences. Ray Rice was recently reinstated back to the NFL as a result of the appeal process and many analysts are confident that he will play again although some teams may be slow to offer and sign Rice to a contract. However, the issue moving forward is how will the team that signs Rice ensure that he receives the on-going counseling (along with his wife) to reduce the chances of the incident reoccurring. The Black church in particular has perhaps the greatest opportunity to help men understand the nature of their issues and once again love their wives as they love themselves. Further, it is high time that the church become the prophetic voice to confront and challenge the oppression of the poor.

### **Oppression of the Poor**

The instruction from the Lord in Exod. 22:21 prohibits Israel from oppressing or vexing strangers as they were strangers in the land of Egypt. The passage in Exod. 23:9 states the same instruction in Exod. 22:21; however, God reminds Israel of how they also understand the heart of a stranger as they were strangers in the land of Egypt. The passage in Lev. 25:14 warns Israel to cease from oppressing their neighbors. Further, in Lev. 25:17, the writer warns Israel not to oppress one another, but to fear God. In Deut.

23:16, God states that servants should not be oppressed by their masters. Prov. 14:31 states that the individual who oppresses the poor reproaches their creator, but those that honor God have mercy on the poor. The plight of the powerless and help for the poor (IPV victims) is the hope that God's people should offer women through the prophetic voice and leadership platform that the church has been granted by God to be the voice for voiceless and strength for the powerless.

The church has the responsibility to strengthen victims that have been made feeble via IPV and offer hope; not only hope for the future but hope for the present. The abuse victims that I interviewed understood that God was with them (although most acknowledged there were times when it did not feel like He was present); however, their foremost concern was the lack of understanding and education by pastors and leaders and the feeling of hopelessness in addressing the issue through their lens. Those who identify as Jesus disciples are encouraged to replicate His fight for the marginalized and challenge to those in power, particularly male religious leaders who believe in the oppression and subjugation of women. The fight of Jesus for the marginalized must become the fight of the Black church and Christendom in the twenty-first century to bring light unto the land and hope for victims and families of IPV.

The future of IPV in the Black church will be encouraged to focus more on providing services for men or women who abuse. There is a plethora of services and resources specifically focused on women and children, but lacking for abusers. Christendom must initiate a process to assist abusers that remain a part of the church and secular community who are fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, employees, and even business owners. The church cannot spiritualize the intrinsic issues of abusers by simply

stating that they are possessed by evil spirits in need of spiritual exorcism. Pastors and church leaders address the problem head on and provide assistance to abusers as one of many methods to reduce the occurrences of IPV in the church. The church will also have to address the problem of domestic violence among same gender loving couples who attend worship services and are accepted as members in some denominations. Intimate partner violence is on the rise among same sex couples and as they become more involved in the life of the church, protocols must be in place to provide meaningful help to same gender loving couples.

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