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Strickland's "Is it abuse? A biblical guide to identifying domestic abuse and helping victims" (book review)

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Book Review



Strickland, D.A. (2020). *Is it abuse? A biblical guide to identifying domestic abuse and helping victims*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing. 360 pp. \$15.00. ISBN 9781629956947

Written by a biblical counselor whose work has centered on serving women in abusive marriages, the author's focus is on helping the oppressed, specifically women who may be subjected to domestic abuse since most victims are women. This work is for anyone who desires or is confronted with helping a victim, whether as a friend, ministry leader, or counselor. While it provides a Christian perspective and biblical framework, the practical guides included would assist anyone in identifying different forms of abuse along with practical ways to help those afflicted with it.

It distinguishes the different kinds and impacts of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse. It helps reveal the hearts of the oppressed, who often feel unworthy, at fault, and fearful, and explains their oppressors, who often operate out of entitlement, deceit, and control. Helpers should learn to listen to victims and be patient with them as they tell their stories and gain courage to act, while assessing the severity of the abuse.

It is important that responses or counsel given does not cause more harm. One should believe what they are told and encourage the victim's agency in her situation. A counselor can draw her closer to God through Scripture and truth. Other leaders and authorities should be notified as necessary, especially when safety concerns rise. Children can also be impacted even if not being abused themselves, so there is a chapter devoted to this concern. There are also things to look for to determine if an oppressor is truly repentant, although most marriages this author dealt with did not end in restoration. Identifying and drafting plans for action is key to assisting an abused victim so they can find freedom.

Each chapter contains reflection questions, various abuse screening inventories, and other helpful resources. The appendix includes a safety plan template, tips, assessments, and expert contacts. There are no endnotes, but there is a glossary of key terms and a recommended reading list. This introductory workbook would be a good addition to any seminary or church library, as well as any academic library that has a counseling program.

Reviewer

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