

CHRISTIANITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

PREPARED BY EMILY ASKEW, PH.D.

Facts

- Studies show that women in Christian marriages stay in abuse much longer than those who do not define themselves as Christian. They believe that they should stay. That God wants this for them. They are urged to forgive repeatedly, or that this is God's will for their lives.
- One study found that the average length of marriage for religious victims was 3.5 years longer than for non-religious victims. In the case of religious victims, the abuse had continued for an average of 2 years longer than for non-Christians. People who cited a "strong faith" faced the same severity of abuse as people whose faith was less strong (Horton, A and Williamson, J. [Eds] (1988) *Abuse and Religion: When praying isn't enough*, New York, NY: Heath)

Texts: Scripture that has been used condone violence against women

- 1 Corinthians 14:34 Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.
- Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
- Ephesians 5:22-24. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
- 1 Timothy 2: 11-15 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Texts: Scripture that supports the dignity of women

- Genesis 1-2:4a Remember that in Genesis 1 males and females were created at the same time—male and female God created them. Both are made in the image of God.
- Jesus healed women as well as men. Women were the first at his tomb, women stayed at the cross, women followed him, he was born of a woman.
- A soothing [healing] tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit" (Proverbs 15:14).
- "He will rescue the poor when they cry to him; he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them. He feels pity for the weak and the needy, and he will rescue them. He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious to him." –Psalm 72:12-14
- God demonstrates repeatedly that God cares for the least of these—those who are oppressed, marginalized hurting. God desires wholeness for the abused and not continued abuse.
- God deplores violence in humankind. Jesus was a passivist.

True Christian Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is for the person harmed, when she is ready to let that burden down, the abuser should not expect to be forgiven or coerce it.
- Forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse. Rather, forgiveness means that the victim decides to let go of the experience and move on with greater insight and conviction not to tolerate abuse of any kind again.
- Forgiveness may not always be possible.
- Forgiveness does not guarantee a future relationship with the perpetrator
- Jesus never expected the less powerful person in a relationship to forgive the more powerful person. He is forgiven only when he gives up power.

JEWISH REALITIES & WISDOM FOR CONFRONTING ABUSE
PREPARED BY RABBI MIRA WASSERMAN, PH.D.

- In the general An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.
- In Jewish homes, domestic abuse occurs at about the same rate as in the general population (15-25 percent) among all socioeconomic levels and denominations (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse).

Ethical Foundations (Leviticus 19:16-18)

Do not go tale-bearing among your people. **Do not stand upon the blood of your neighbor.** I am God.
Do not hate your brother in your heart. **You shall surely rebuke your fellow** and not bear guilt because of him.
Do not avenge or bear grudges against those of your people. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am God.

Human Dignity (Sifra 2:16)

“Love your neighbor as yourself. I am God” (Lev. 19:18).
Rabbi Akiva teaches: This is the fundamental principle of Torah.
Ben Azzai teaches: “This is the book of the generations of Adam: [On the day God created Adam, in the image of God did God make him].” (Gen. 5:1) This principle is even more fundamental.

Divine Help (Psalms 27:10-14)

For my father and mother abandoned me, but God will gather me up.
Show me your way, God, and place me on a smooth path because of my enemies.
Do not give me over to my enemies, for false witnesses rose up against me, breathing violence.
If only I trusted would see God’s goodness in the land of the living!
Hope in God. Be strong and brave of heart and hope in God.

Speaking Up and Speaking Out (Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 54b)

Anyone who is able to protest against the transgressions of one’s household and does not is punished for the actions of the members of the household; anyone who is able to protest against the transgressions of one’s townspeople and does not is punished for the transgressions of the townspeople; anyone who is able to protest against the transgressions of the entire world and does not is punished for the transgressions of the entire world.

COMMUNAL RESOURCES

For Immediate Help: RAINN staffs a national sexual assault telephone hotline.

Call 800-656-HOPE (4673) to speak to a trained staff member.

For more information, support, or a referral, visit rainn.org

Safety Respect Equity: A Jewish coalition to address sexual harassment and gender discrimination
safetyrespectequity.org

“We Need to Talk: A Review of Public Discourse and Survivor Experiences of Safety, Respect, and Equity in Jewish Workplaces and Communal Spaces” by Dr. Guila Benchimol and Marie Huber (downloadable on SRE website)

Jewish Women’s Archive (jwa.org/metoo): Archiving #MeToo

Sacred Spaces: Preventing Institutional Abuse in Jewish Communities jewishsacredspaces.org

Ta’amod: Training Consultation and Resources for Safe Respectful Jewish Workplaces taamod.org

ISLAMIC REALITIES & WISDOM
COMPILED FROM THE RESOURCES LISTED BELOW BY SHANA SIPPY, PH.D.

Facts (according to a 2011 survey by Peaceful Families & Project Sakina)

- 66% of Muslims reported that they knew a Muslim that has been physically abused
- More than 40% of those abused as adults said their spouse abused them.
- 80% of Muslims surveyed have experienced emotional abuse and 77% experienced verbal abuse.
- 56 % of women responded that they had experienced some type of family or relationship violence in their life.

From *Peaceful Families*

<https://www.peacefulfamilies.org/islam-and-dv.html>

Islam as a preventive model

- Men & women equal in eyes of Allah (Qur'an 49:13) and created from single soul (Qur'an 4:1)
- Spouses are garments for one another (Qur'an 2:187)
- Marriage based on mutual love and compassion for purpose of mutual tranquility (Qur'an 30:21)
- Communication should be positive (Qur'an 16:125, 14:24)
- Mocking, name-calling is prohibited (Qur'an 49:11)
- Qiwaamah is the responsibility that all men are given by Allah to tend to the needs of women, as modelled by the Prophet (pbuh), and is not a right for men to abuse, hurt or control (Qur'an 4:34)
- Prophet's leadership in home and community based on gentleness (Qur'an 3:159), shura (Qur'an 42:37-38 and 65:6)
- It is not our job to control others, just to advise (Qur'an 88:21-24)
- And among his signs is this: that He has created for you mates from among yourself so you may dwell in tranquility with them. He has put love and mercy between your hearts. Verily, in that are signs for those who reflect." (Surah Ar-Rum Ayah 21)

Islam mandates intervention

- Must stand for justice (Qur'an 4:135)
- Hadith: The prophet (pbuh) said: "Help you brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one. People asked, "Oh Allah's Apostle! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?"
- Must help and defend oneself in the face of oppression (Qur'an 42:39-40)
 - Forgiving and seeking safety are not mutually exclusive
- Blame is on the perpetrator, not the victim (Qur'an 42:42)
 - Do not ask the victim, "What did you do to make him angry or to make him hit you?" Rather, hold the perpetrator accountable and provide comfort and safety for the victim.
- Divorce can be a peaceful solution when safety and well-being cannot be obtained in the marriage (*imsaak bi ma' rufaw tasreeh bi ihsaan*). (Qur'an 2:226-234 and 65:1-12).
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COMMUNAL RESOURCES

Peaceful Families Project, an organization devoted to preventing domestic violence, with a particular focus on Muslim families of diverse cultural backgrounds: <https://www.peacefulfamilies.org/>

Heart Women and Girls seeks to ensure that all Muslims have the resources, language, and choice to nurture sexual health and confront sexual violence: <http://heartwomenandgirls.org/>

A series of videos that seek to address Muslim girls and woman about issues around sex and sexual health in a culturally sensitive way: <http://heartwomenandgirls.org/heart-to-heart-video-series/>

Project Sakinah directory of services for Muslims dealing with relationship issues and family violence. <http://projectsakinah.org/directory>

From **Yaqeen Institute**, an organization that tries to make academic and Islamic scholarship mainstream and accessible. Islam and Violence Against Women: <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/nazir-khan/women-in-islamic-law-examining-five-prevalent-myths/?fbclid=IwAR2q-afytdukXC7cljNc-HwUXu2KSLtmuXs-8c3t3NCImyzLFZ732Jax1il#.XcGlpUVKjs1>

Bibliography on Muslim Women and Domestic Violence: <https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/muslim-bibliography-by-topic/>

See Juliana Hammer's new book, *Peaceful Families: American Muslim Efforts Against Domestic Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)

* EXCERPT FROM "BEYOND HALAL AND HARAM: MUSLIMS SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS"

MODIFIED TO BE APPLICABLE BROADLY, NOT SIMPLY FOR MUSLIMS

BY FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

The full information can be found at <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/>

Traditions and values for sexual health decision-making and relationships can be both empowering and/or confusing at the same time. Consider these points as you think about how your sexual identity and faith/cultural identity overlap:

- ✓ Religious communities are racially and ethnically diverse, and diverse with respect to religious practice.
- ✓ Having questions about your body and sex is natural and nothing to be ashamed of. Most of our traditions value learning, and there is a long history of asking questions and seeking answers.
- ✓ Decisions about sexual health such as getting pelvic exams, abstinence, birth control, and addressing sexual violence can change over your lifetime.
- ✓ Your relationship with your body, your sexual behaviors, who you love, and what you share with others is up to you.
- ✓ Generally, single actions, sexual orientation, or identities don't determine identifies with a particular religion or not. It is more about your relationship with God/community/tradition/culture than anything else.
- ✓ Most traditions find hold up the values of mercy, compassion, and love. Consider how these values may apply to your relationship with yourself, your family, and your partners.

How to help a friend

Often in religious communities, talking about relationships, marital conflicts, and sex can be hard because of shame and stigma. Tell your friend you care about them and that you're worried.

- ✓ Respond with compassion and not with judgment.
- ✓ Remember not to make assumptions about someone's sexual orientation, gender identity, or their experiences.
- ✓ If they are feeling so sad that they plan to hurt themselves and/or wish they could die—they can get help. **Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255.** *National hotlines provide anonymous support 24/7 via phone or online chat*

Other useful info found at:

Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity: <http://muslimalliance.org/>

GENERAL RESOURCES

LoveisRespect.org

1-866-331-9474 | text loveis to 22522

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-4673 | www.rainn.org

Queer Suicide Helpline

866-488-7386