



FELLOWSHIP
— B I B L E C H U R C H —

abuse policy and plan



FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH

abuse policy

Fellowship Bible Church has created this domestic abuse policy to protect spouses, children, and others residing in the homes of our church members and attenders when abuse occurs within those homes.

Abuse occurs as a person in a position of greater influence uses his/her personal capacities to diminish the personal capacities of those under his/her influence in order to control them. Because God made people as embodied souls, these personal capacities are both physical and spiritual. Abuse is identified from two directions: (1) the manipulative intent and behavioral forcefulness of the one in a position of influence, and (2) the diminishing effect of those under that influence. Simply put, abuse is characterized by something more than me BEFORE you; it is characterized by me OVER you.

Abuse is an assault upon the image of God in another human being.

Abuse usually occurs in a pattern that is typically increasing in frequency and /or intensity.

Abuse is intentional, though the abuser may not be self-aware enough to recognize the intentions of his or her heart. Abuse is never perpetrated by accident.

Abuse is about the misuse of power to control or manipulate another for selfish gain.
It is an act of oppression.

Abuse can involve physical force, intimidation, ridicule, isolation, denial and blame, using the children, male privilege, economics, coercion and threats. Sadly, abuse is often perpetrated through a combination of these.

The goal of abuse is self-gratification - to get what one wants at the expense of another.

Domestic violence in any form – physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological, or spiritual – is an assault upon the image of God in a fellow human being and is therefore an assault upon God Himself. When it is between a husband and wife, it further violates the one-flesh covenantal relationship that God established. Under no circumstances is abuse ever justified. Neither is it the fault of the victim. Domestic abuse severely damages relationships and often destroys the relationship beyond repair. An act of abuse is never an act of Christlike love. Christ’s self-giving love encourages the flourishing of the individual, while domestic abuse seeks to limit the victim’s capacities through dominance, replacing love with fear.

We live in a land of laws. Abuse is not just a sin against a person, it can be a crime as well. The Elders recommend using law enforcement as needed or appropriate and to err on the side of safety. Given this acknowledgement, the elders of our church affirm the following:

Domestic abuse in all its forms is sinful and thus like all sins is incompatible with Christlikeness and a biblical way of living. Abuse must stop immediately.

We will teach that domestic abuse is a sin.

We will teach what it means to be male and female image bearers of God, equal in value, dignity and worth.

All abuse is spiritually damaging for both the victim and the abuser, and has collateral damage that extends to children, extended family, close relationships and even to the body of Christ.

We will report suspected abuse of children, elderly, and the disabled to the proper authorities without delay, in accordance with the laws of Virginia.

Domestic abuse is a serious problem which occurs in church families as well as in wider society.

Domestic abuse is not primarily an anger problem, a marriage problem, the victim’s problem, or even simply a legal problem, but rather a sinful heart problem of the abuser.

We will provide training for all pastors, elders, deacons, and lay leaders in appropriate domestic abuse awareness and response training and update this training regularly.

We will seek to utilize best practices and provide ongoing training for church leadership and the FBC Abuse Care Team.

We will listen to, take seriously, support, and care for those affected by domestic abuse.

We will urge abused persons to consider their own safety and that of family members as top priority. We encourage the abused to seek help first from law enforcement if appropriate, then the church, competent biblical counseling, and legal resources to bring healing to the individuals in all relationships impacted by the abuse.

We will gather information in the context of biblical soul care, but we as an Elder Board will not seek to investigate charges of abuse. We will refer both the abused person and the abuser to competent biblical counselors, and potentially legal counsel, and rely upon their determinations.

We will call abusers to repent and wait patiently for them to demonstrate consistent fruit of repentance before acknowledging repentance.

We will discipline abusers and remove them from the church if they are unrepentant.

We will not encourage marriage counseling in cases of domestic abuse until both parties and their counselors are in agreement that they are ready for marriage counseling.

When domestic violence in any form is an issue, we may recommend a separation. Reunification (coming back together) of any relationship, including marriage, is only recommended when the abuser has demonstrated evidence of repentance and reconciliation with God first and then when both parties and counselors agree.

When needed we will work with local domestic violence support agencies, will learn from them and support them in appropriate ways.

abuse triage

OVERVIEW

VICTIM CARE

Safety of the victim(s) is paramount.

Listen to the victim and take their concerns seriously.

Recognize the signs and ask questions (data gathering).

Report if you suspect harm to children, elderly, or disabled persons.

Assure the victim of your support.

Assist in practical ways as desired by the victim.

Safety planning *with* the victim.

Provide individual counseling as desired by the victim.

ABUSER CORRECTION

Engagement/Confrontation of the abuser ONLY after safety is established and WITH the victim's advice and consent.

Provide discipleship and accountability if the abuser is open to this.

Individual counseling if open to it.

Repentance is the goal.

Move more quickly with care and slower on correction.

RELATIONSHIP RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation to God precedes reconciliation of the relationship.

Reconciliation of any relationship, including marriage is **only** recommended **when the abuser has demonstrated evidence of repentance** and when **both parties and counselors agree**.