

# An End to Domestic Violence

**Scenario 1:** Isabel's\* parents have come for a visit. They share an enjoyable evening with their daughter and her husband, marked by pleasant conversation. What parent would not beam with pride at the man their daughter married? He is so kind to her.

**Scenario 2:** Frank is boiling with rage. Once again, he will take out his anger in typical fashion—which for him means hitting his wife in the face, kicking her, pulling her hair, or repeatedly knocking her head against the wall.

\* Some names in this article have been changed.

**I**T MIGHT surprise you to learn that both of those scenarios are about the same couple.

Like many perpetrators of domestic violence, Frank knows how to put on a

“good-guy” pretense when he is in the public eye or with his wife’s parents. But when he is alone with his wife, Frank is terribly cruel.

Many men like Frank grew up in violent

Perpetrators of domestic violence often display two personalities





families, and as adults they think that their behavior is acceptable—even normal. But there is nothing normal about domestic violence. That is why most people are appalled when they learn that a man has battered his wife.

Still, domestic violence is disturbingly common. In the United States, for example, one survey found that during one day an average of over 16 calls per minute were directed to domestic-violence hot-lines across the country. Domestic violence is a worldwide epidemic, crossing cultural, economic, and social groups. Since many incidents go unreported, no doubt the situation is worse than statistics reveal.\*

Reports of domestic violence raise the questions: How can a man come to the point of treating anyone—let alone his wife—so outrageously? Can men who batter their wives be helped?

Jehovah's Witnesses, the publishers of this magazine, believe that the Bible's practical advice can help violent spouses change their behavior. Is such a reversal easy? No. Is it possible? Yes! Bible education has helped many to replace a violent disposition with one of kindness and respect. (Colossians 3:8-10) Consider the experience of Troy and Valerie.

### What was your relationship like at first?

**Valerie:** On the night of our engagement, Troy slapped me so hard that I had a bruise for a week. He apologized profusely and promised he would never do it

\* Admittedly, a considerable number of men are battered by women. In most reported incidents of domestic violence, however, men are the perpetrators.

## WHY DON'T THEY LEAVE?

Why do some wives choose to remain with a violent mate? A common reason is that they fear the abuse will get worse if they leave. Some husbands have threatened to harm or even kill their wife if she tried to escape. A number have carried out that threat.

Others have hesitated to leave because they fear that their friends and relatives would turn against them, refusing to believe that the situation at home was so severe. For example, Isabel, whose experience is referred to at the outset of this article, left her husband. She states: "My sister was angry with me and urged me to return to him—she did not believe that such a 'good' man could be so cruel. The entire neighborhood shunned me, and I was forced to move away with my children."

Still other reasons why some wives choose to stay are:

- They want their children to grow up with both parents.
- They worry about being able to support themselves and their children financially.
- They erroneously believe that they are to blame.
- They are ashamed to admit that they are being abused.
- They hope the situation will improve.

Jehovah's Witnesses hold to the Bible standard that the only ground for *divorce* is adultery. (Matthew 5:32) However, there are circumstances that might move some to *separate*, including the extreme conduct of a physically abusive mate.

again. In the years to come, I would hear those words many times.

**Troy:** Anything would set me off—late meals, for instance. Once I pistol-whipped Valerie. On another occasion, I beat her so badly that I thought I had killed her. Then, I tried to frighten her by threatening

to kill our son while holding a knife to his throat.

**Valerie:** I lived in constant fear. At times I had to flee the house until Troy calmed down. For all that, I found his verbal abuse even more difficult to endure than the physical violence.

### **Troy, had you always been violent?**

**Troy:** Yes, from my childhood on. I grew up in a violent atmosphere. My father regularly beat my mother in front of me and my siblings. After he left, my mother took up with another man, and he also beat her. He also raped my sister—and me. He went to prison for that. Of course, I realize that none of this excuses my behavior.

### **Valerie, you stayed in the marriage. Why?**

**Valerie:** I was afraid. I thought to myself, ‘What if he hunts me down and kills me or my parents? What if I report him and the situation gets worse?’

### **When did things begin to change?**

**Troy:** My wife began studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. At first, I was jealous of her new friends, and I thought I needed to save her from this strange “sect.” So I became even more violent, not only toward Valerie but also toward the Witnesses. But one day our four-year-old son, Daniel, who suffered from seizures, was hospitalized for nearly three weeks. During that period, the Witnesses did so much for us—even to the point of taking care of our six-year-old daughter, Desiree. After working the night shift, one Witness spent the day with Daniel so that Valerie could get some sleep. The kindness of those people—the very people toward whom I had been so insolent—affected me deeply. I realized that I had seen true Christianity in action, so I asked the Witnesses if I could

## **HELPFUL BIBLE PRINCIPLES FOR HUSBANDS**

**Treat your wife with honor and respect.**

—1 Peter 3:7.

**Love your wife as your own body.**

—Ephesians 5:28, 29.

**Keep your love alive and growing.**

—Ephesians 5:25.

**Avoid abusive speech.**—Ephesians 4:29, 31.

**Cultivate self-restraint.**—Proverbs 29:11.

**Know that self-respect comes, not from controlling others, but from controlling yourself.**—Proverbs 16:32.

**Think of the consequences of your actions.**

—Galatians 6:7.

**If you feel you are going to lose control, it may be best to walk away.**—Proverbs 17:14.

**Learn to detest violent behavior.**—Psalm 11:5.

**View your wife, not as inferior, but as a capable partner.**—Genesis 1:31; 2:18.





study the Bible with them. In the course of studying the Bible, I learned how a man should, and should not, treat his wife. I put away my violent and abusive behavior permanently. Eventually, I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

### What Bible principles helped you to change?

**Troy:** There are so many. At 1 Peter 3:7, the Bible says that I should show my wife "honor." Galatians 5:23 encourages "mildness" and "self-control." Ephesians 4:31 condemns "abusive speech." Hebrews 4:13 says that "all things are . . . openly exposed" to God. So God sees my conduct, even if my neighbors do not. I also learned that I needed to change my associates, since "bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) You see, my former friends actually encouraged my violent ways. They felt it was right to beat a woman to keep her "under control."

### How do you feel about your marriage now?

**Valerie:** It has been 25 years since Troy became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Since then, he has been genuinely loving, kind, and considerate toward me.

**Troy:** I cannot change the evil that I brought on my family, and my wife certainly never deserved the treatment I gave her. But I look forward to the fulfillment of Isaiah 65:17, when this dark part of our history will fade from memory.

### What advice would each of you give to families that are afflicted with domestic violence?

**Troy:** If you are physically or verbally violent toward your family, admit that you need help, and get it. There is plenty of help available. For me, studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and associat-



A study of the Bible has helped many men to make needed changes

ing with them helped me to overcome my deeply entrenched violent tendencies.

**Valerie:** Do not be quick to compare your situation with that of anyone else or to follow advice from people who *think* they know what is best for you. Although not everyone will have the same outcome, I am glad that I did not throw my marriage away, because we have been blessed with a good relationship now.

### ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Bible states: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight." (2 Timothy 3:16) Like Troy, whose story is related above, many abusive spouses have applied the Bible's counsel and have been able to change their thinking and conduct.

Would you like to learn more about how the Bible can benefit your marriage? For further information contact Jehovah's Witnesses locally, or log on to [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org). ■