

## A marriage relationship looks like this:

### **Ephesians 5:21-33**

Christian wives are often told that it is their duty to submit to their husbands, as instructed in Ephesians 5:22-24. The previous verse says “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (v21). This indicates mutual submission, choosing to place oneself under the authority of another. Here there is no male domination, but equality within the marriage relationship.

Submission, then, must not be forced, but is something which must be chosen and should not be an expectation within a marriage. Not submitting does not justify abuse.

Paul also describes the Christian husband as the head of the wife, but in the same way as Christ is the head of the Church, which is His body. The head is in relationship with the rest and Christ demonstrates His headship in the form of service and self-sacrifice. There is nothing in the interpretation of the Greek word (kephale) to imply superiority.

There is nothing in this passage which justifies any form of domestic abuse, whether physical, mental or emotional.

## A marriage looks like this:

### **1 Corinthians 13: 4-7**

Here Paul describes what it means to love someone. A marriage should be between two people who love each other and who therefore want to treat each other in a loving way. Reading this list from Paul about what love is, reminds us that love includes being patient, being kind, giving honour to another person, is not self-seeking and does not delight in evil, which includes dishonesty and hypocrisy. A loving relationship is one where trust prevails and where there is protection for each other.

### **Proverbs 3: 30-34**

“Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways.” (v31)

These verses show that God specifically says that He dislikes the behaviour that abusers show; false accusation, violence, deliberate and obstinate unreasonable and unacceptable behaviour. Instead, we are told, God blesses those who live in an upright, truthful and humble way.

## Permission to leave:

### **Divorce – 1 Corinthians 7: 10-16**

This passage is often used to tell an abused wife that she cannot divorce or even leave her husband because scripture forbids it. Marriage is a solemn covenant undertaken by both people before God and divorce can be the point at which that covenant is broken. However, when a man chooses to abuse his wife, that is the point at which the covenant is broken. A wife who divorces her husband because of abuse is exposing his breaking of the marriage covenant. We also need to remember that abuse is not only breaking the marriage covenant, but it is breaking the law.

### **Turn the other cheek – Matthew 5: 38-42**

This passage is *not* Jesus giving permission for abuse within marriage. The marriage vow “for better or worse” is *not* referring to behaviour. In these verses, Jesus is teaching his followers, men and women, how they should behave to those who are not his followers, showing love to their enemies. Throughout the Bible, it is clear that God hates abuse and oppression, showing instead, that He is a loving, protective God who wants nothing but the best for His children.

There is nothing in scripture that says an abused wife must stay with her abuser.

For further information  
or help with domestic abuse the  
following agencies have information  
or offer help and assistance:

**National Domestic Violence Helpline**

0808 2000 247 (Freephone 24hr)

**NSPCC Helpline**

(If you have concerns about a child)

0808 800 5000

**Childline**

0800 1111

**Women's Aid & Refuge Crisis**

**National Helpline**

0808 2000 247

**Lighthouse (Women's Aid - Ipswich) Helpline**

01473 745111

**Men's Advice line**

(For male victims of domestic violence)

0808 801 0327

**P.H.O.E.B.E.**

(For black and ethnic minority women and  
children)

01473 231566

**Respect**

(Help for perpetrators - male or female)

0808 802 4040

**Restored**

(Help for churches)

[www.restoredrelationships.org](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)

**When I look at the blood**

By Godfrey Birtill

(used with permission)

When I look at the blood

All I see is love, love, love.

When I stop at the cross

I can see the love of God.

But I can't see competition.

I can't see hierarchy.

I can't see pride or prejudice

Or the abuse of authority.

I can't see lust for power.

I can't see manipulation.

I can't see rage or anger

Or selfish ambition.

I can't see unforgiveness.

I can't see hate or envy.

I can't see stupid fighting

Or bitterness, or jealousy.

I can't see empire building.

I can't see self-importance.

I can't see back-stabbing

Or vanity or arrogance.

I see surrender, sacrifice, salvation,  
Humility, righteousness, faithfulness, grace,  
forgiveness,  
Love! Love... love...

When I stop! ...at the cross

I can see the love of God

# Open Up

Equipping churches to support those  
impacted by domestic abuse

A brief look at  
what the Bible says  
about marriage

*Love is*  
**patient** *Love is*  
**kind** *it does not envy* *it does not boast*  
**IT IS NOT PROUD**  
*Love is not rude or selfish*  
**it can not be easily angered**  
**LOVE** *always protects*  
*always trusts*  
*always hopes*  
*always perseveres*  
**LOVE NEVER FAILS**