

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
A FOCUS GUIDE FOR
CLERGY AND
RELIGIOUS LEADERS

for Lincoln and Lancaster County

A special Public Health Guide prepared by
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department,
Health Promotion and Outreach Division, 1996.

Author:
Jeri Gray-Reneberg, M.Div.
Coordinator, Domestic Violence Prevention Program

Steve Beal
Manager, Health Promotion
and Outreach Division

M. Jane Ford
Health Director

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the ecumenical group of clergy and laity which provided input and direction in the development of this guide: Bonnie, Coffey, Jane Cogan, Revs. Dale and Christy Dowdy, Joanna Kennedy, Ann Lafler, Rev. Dr. Norman Leach, Rev. Elizabeth Liggett, Kay Matthews, Rev. Patsy Moore, Rev. Charlene Morris, Bob Moyer, Rev. Dr. Clarke Mundhenke, Rev. Ed Price, Kay Reed, Rev. Jean Samuelson-Bruhn, Stork, and Rev. Jay Vetter.

A special thanks to Bryan Memorial Hospital for their commitment to the issue of domestic violence made evident by their printing of this guide.

The Purpose of This Guide

This guide is a supplement for religious leaders (clergy and lay) to the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department publication, *Domestic Violence: A Public Health Education and Resource Guide*. That publication addresses the issue of domestic violence in greater depth and provides resources which this booklet, due to length restrictions, is unable to contain. It is highly recommended that this guide be used as an adjunct to that publication.

Why a Domestic Violence Booklet for Religious Leaders?

Recently 1,300 racially diverse Americans in five cities were polled by EDK Associates in New York City Regarding the issue of domestic violence. 93% of those polled said that if they were being physically abused, they would speak to friends, family, or *clergy* (italics mine) about the abuse. Clergy and lay leaders, even in 1996, still have access to families in a way afforded few helping professionals. As religious leaders, their words are often given extra weight, in prescriptive sense. For these reasons, leaders of congregations should become familiar with the issues surrounding domestic violence, which estimates say impact 25 to 50% of women at some time in their lives.

Why Not Just Refer to the Experts?

It is important to remember that there are experts working in the domestic Violence field, and to provide these referrals when a domestic violence situation comes to your attention. (For information on resources, as well as a more in-depth analysis of domestic violence issues, please see *Domestic Violence: A Public Health Education and Resource Guide*, copyright 1996 by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department.) Victims of domestic violence with a strong faith, however, may look to you for guidance as a religious authority. This is often a function of religious leadership. Conversely, perpetrators of Domestic violence will count on your silence about and lack of intervention in the situation, which help maintain the status quo. Religious leaders, especially Clergy, are often called upon to “bind up the brokenhearted,” as well as to act as A prophetic voice which calls people to accountability and shows them where They fall short.

Why is There So Much Domestic Violence?

Statistics show that approximately 95% of domestic violence (which includes dating violence) is perpetrated by men against women. World history for several thousand years has shown an institutional pattern of dominance by men known as patriarchy. Although most of us today affirm that women are indeed created in the image of God, that early equality was eclipsed in most religions, including the Judeo-Christian tradition. Why this happened is cause for speculation, but the result has been a tragic loss for women – a loss of self-esteem, a loss of life options, a staggering loss of talent and creativity. Women were often powerless and invisible outside the home. In addition, domestic violence was often used instrumentally by men to dominate their wives and to keep order in the patriarchal family. Women owe debt of gratitude to the women's movement of the 60s and 70s, which spawned the battered women's movement, without which there would be no 24-hour hotlines and no shelters for battered women and their children. Although the struggle to end domestic violence continues, it is still tacitly condoned in some quarters. For this reason, it is especially important for clergy and lay leaders, who are often "bearers of meaning" in family crisis situations, to become informed about the issues of domestic violence and to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider their role in stopping the abuse. This booklet attempts to give some suggestions as to how religious leaders can become more effective, consistent witnesses regarding domestic violence to both the local congregation and the larger community.

Recent Scholarship in the Domestic Violence Field

In 1979, Lenore Walker's landmark book, *The Battered Woman*, was published. Two years later, Del Martin followed with *Battered Wives*. In the mid – 80s, Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar of the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project created a batterers' treatment program which was revolutionary at the time and is still used as a national model. Called "Power and Control: Tactics of Men who Batter," the program is based upon two "wheels": a "Power and Control Wheel" and an "Equality Wheel," which graphically demonstrate how a system of power and control supports violence and how, alternatively, a system of equality supports non-violence.

The Process

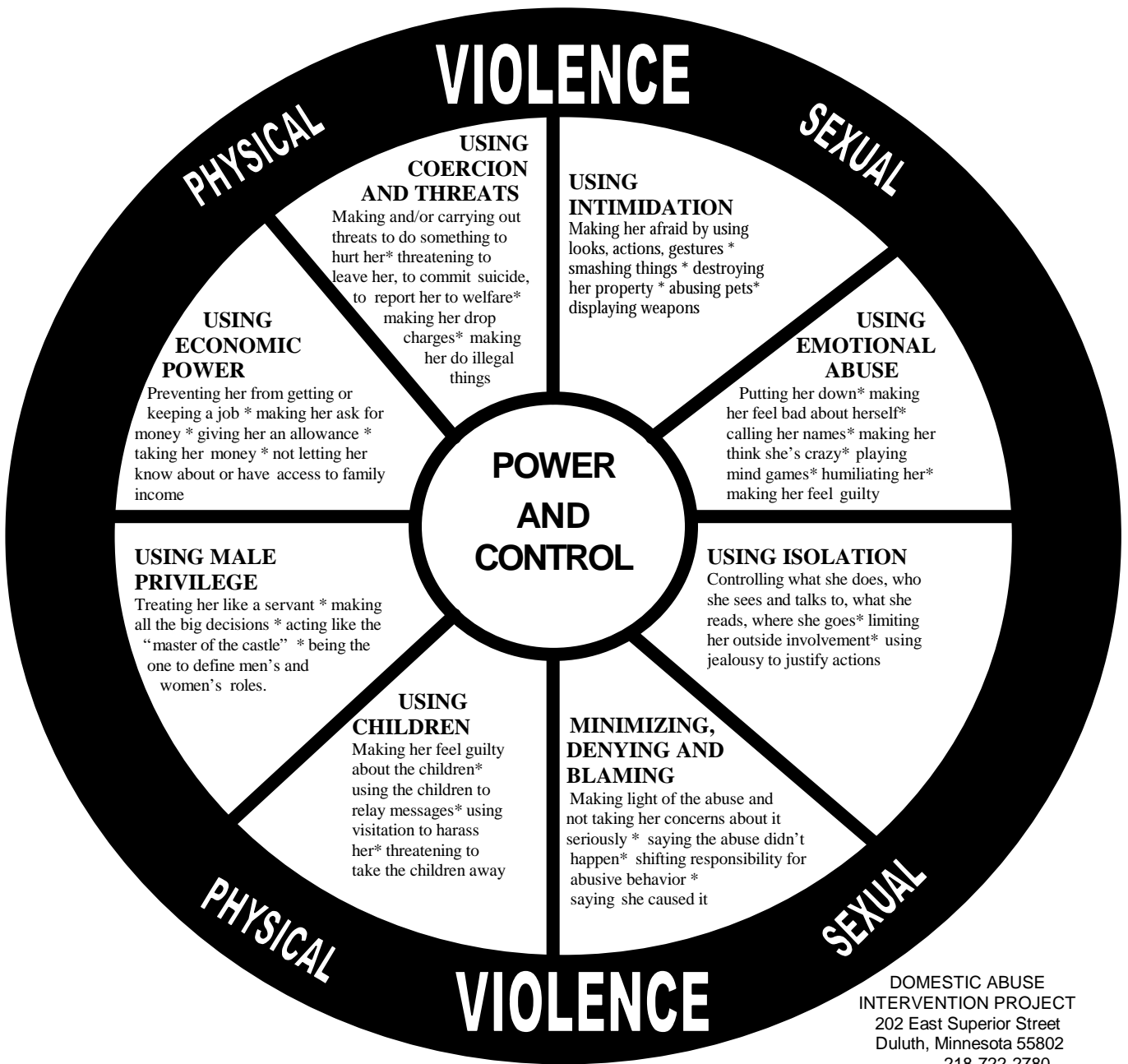
One of the clergy who gave input into the format of this booklet was inspired to suggest that it might be a good thing to adapt the “Power and Control” and “Equality” wheels, to include Christian scriptural references, for the use of congregations. There were three reasons behind this decision. First, according to the Lincoln Interfaith council, 227 bodies of worship, or 95% of Lincoln’s congregations, identify themselves as “Christian.” Second, sometimes attempting to create such a tool in as neutral terms as possible can result in a tool which has no application for anyone. Third, another wheel, called “Mending the Sacred Hoop,” produced by the Duluth program, is also included as an example of a wheel generated by someone of a different tradition, in this case the Minnesota Native American tradition. It is to be hoped that clergy and religious leaders from other faith traditions might be able to look carefully and critically at their own texts and historical quotations and to develop wheels which will have meaning for those of their tradition.

The original “Power and Control” and “Equality” wheels and the “Mending the Sacred Hoop” wheel are included here. The Christian wheels which follow and are based upon them are entitled, “Power and Control of Women in Patriarchal Society” and “Women Created in God’s Image as Equal to Men.” The underlying assumption in creating two wheels is that there are parts of the Christian Bible and of subsequent Christian history which have been more, or less, helpful to women in the Christian tradition.

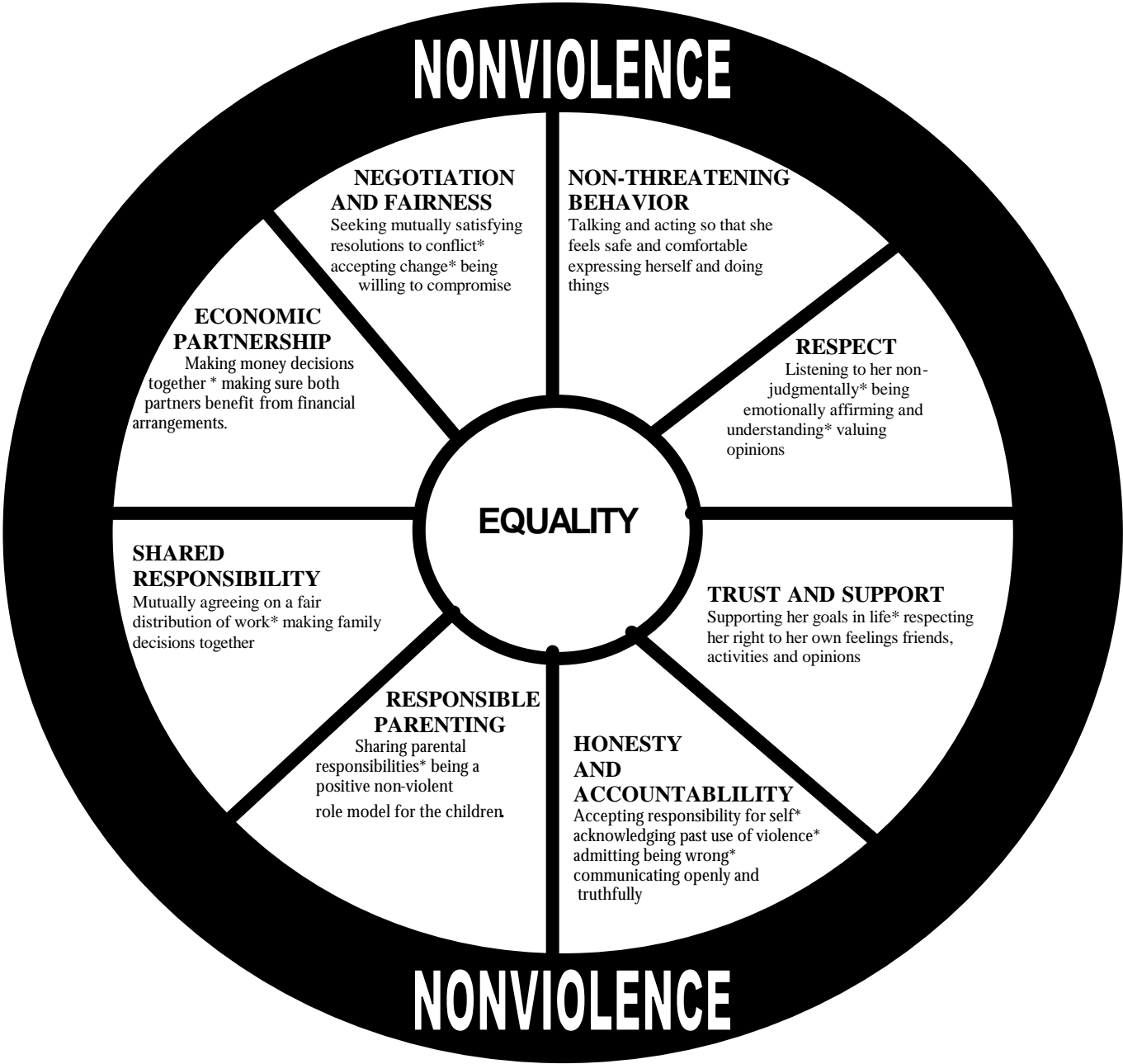
Power and Control Wheel

The Power and Control and Equality Wheels

These wheels were developed by Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) to use in connection with the DAIP batterers' treatment program, "Power and Control: Tactics of Men Who Batter." They show graphically how a system of power and control supports violence and how, alternatively, a system of equality supports non-violence. In the authorized programs, batterers' group look closely at each of these issues and examine their own behaviors and underlying attitudes.

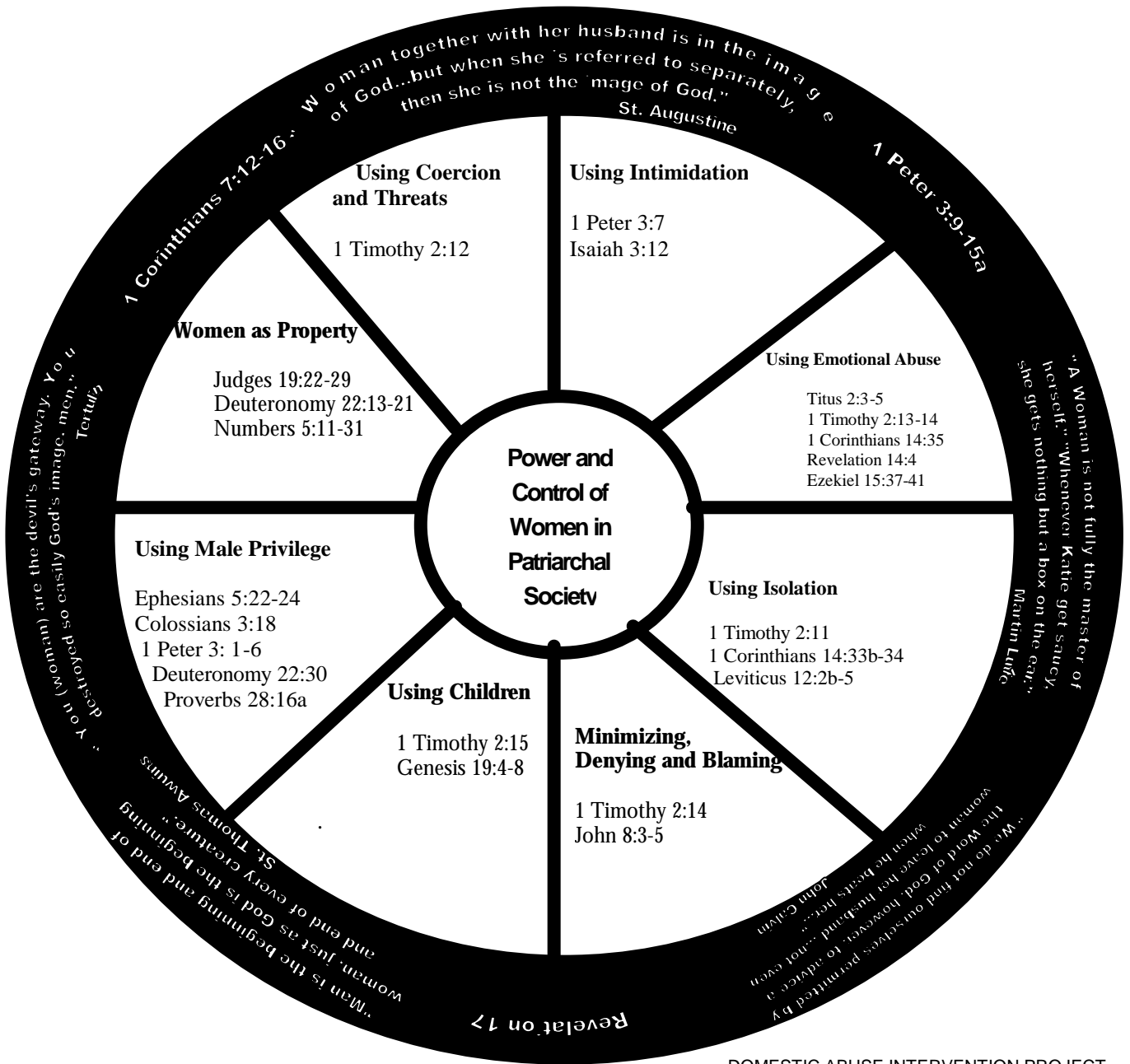


Equality Wheel



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

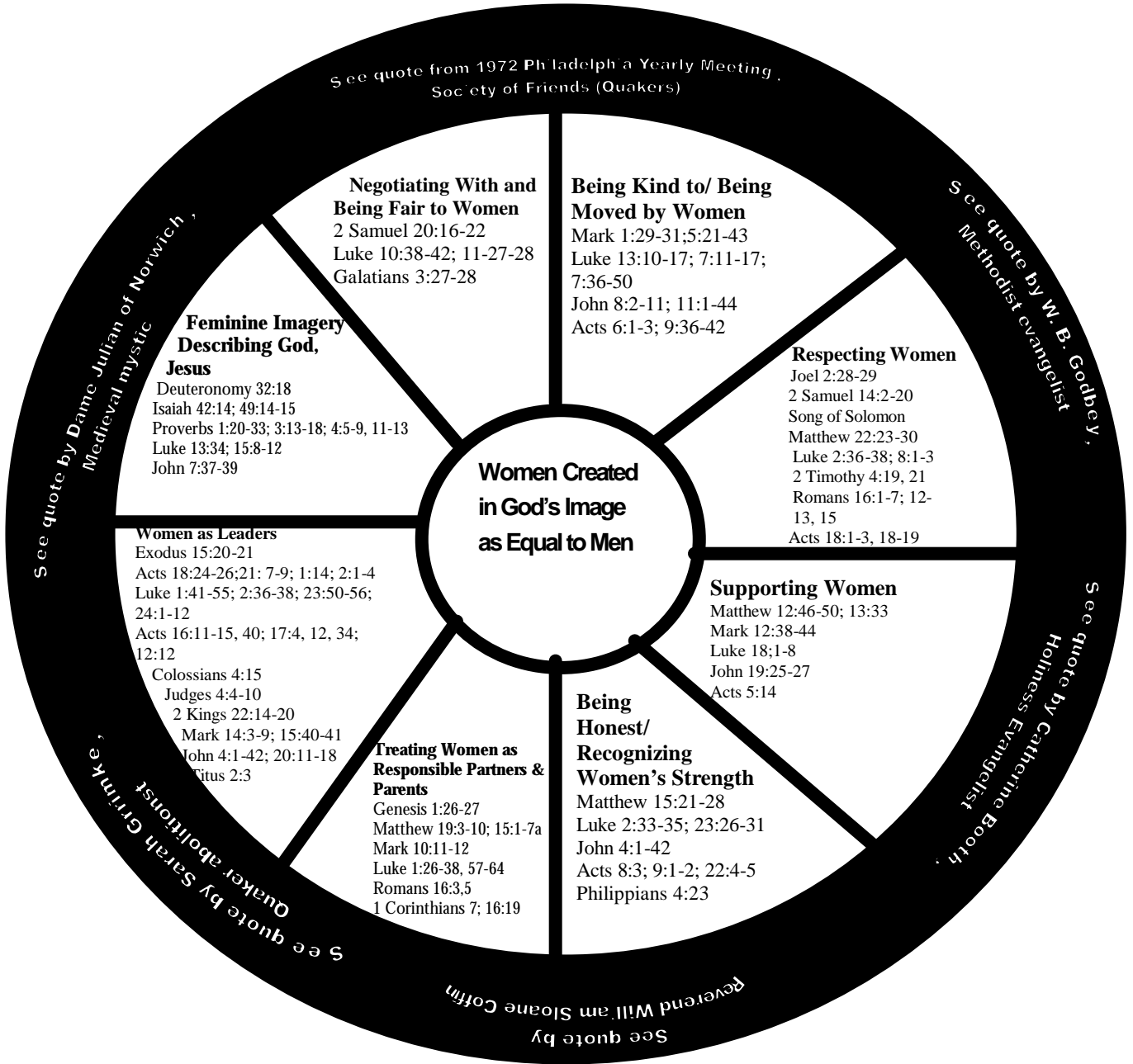
218-722-2780



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
 202 East Superior Street
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802

218-722-2780

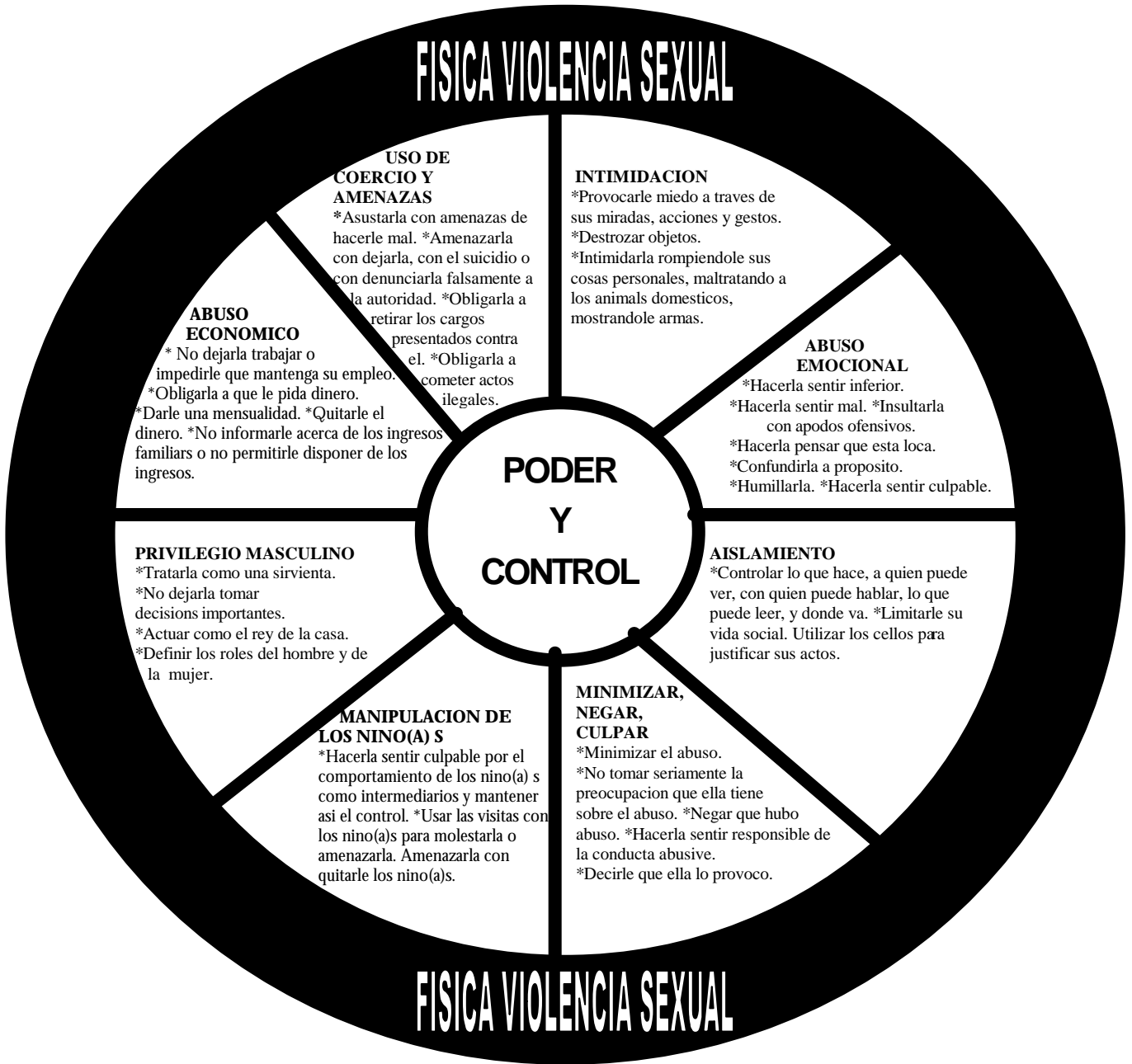
Developed by Jeri Gray-Reneberg, M.Div., for the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department;
 Modeled upon the "Power and Control" and "Equality" Wheels, Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project.



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

218-722-2780

Developed by Jeri Gray-Reneberg, M.Div., for the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department;
Modeled upon the "Power and Control" and "Equality" Wheels, Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention
Project



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
 202 East Superior Street
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802

218-722-2780



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
 202 East Superior Street
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802

218-722-2780

“There is one teacher, namely Christ, and ...in his spirit there are no distinctions between persons, nor any reason of age, sex or race that elects some to domination... combativeness in family life, whereby man and wife or parents are children strive to assert a supremacy of will, is not compatible with the conviction that there is that of God in everyone.”

1972 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Society of Friends (Quakers)

“And though, possibly, an earthly mother may suffer her child to perish, our heavenly Mother Jesus can never suffer us who are his children to perish. For he is almighty, all-Wisdom and all-love.”

Dame Julian of Norwich, Medieval mystic

“I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on the ground which God has designed for us to occupy.”

Sarah Grimke, Quaker abolitionist

“Men who repress in themselves the ‘feminine’ side of their nature will generally...be anti-feminine... The woman most in need of liberation is the woman in every man. When at last this woman is liberated—along with the man in every woman—our homes, the churches, and the world, will be much better places. There can no longer be true community between women and men unless that community is based on full equality.”

Reverend William Sloane Coffin

“If she have the necessary gifts, and feels herself called by the Spirit to preach, there is not a single word in the whole book of God to restrain her, but many, very many, to urge and encourage her. God says she SHALL do so...”

Catherine Booth, Holiness evangelist

“It is a God-given, blood-brought privilege, and bounden duty of the women as well as the men, to preach the gospel.”

W.B. Godbey, Methodist evangelist

Reflection on the Wheels

The process of reviewing biblical texts and historical quotations was a consuming one. The task was made easier by the use of the book, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* by Leonard Swidler, copyright 1979 by the Westminster Press.

The final product emerged as somewhat different than expected. Most biblical Texts referring to women, directly or indirectly, are to be found on the wheel, “Women Created in God’s Image as Equal to Men.” There are specifically 73 total positive, as compared to 26 total negative, texts listed (there are, in addition, many ambivalent texts which were not included on either wheel). It is striking that, of the 73 positive texts, 50 are to be found in the Gospels and in Acts (penned by the same evangelist as the book of Luke). In other words, 68% of the positive texts about women are to be found in the words and actions of Jesus, and in Jesus’ immediate legacy to the early Christian Church. By contrast, no references from the Gospels or the Book of Acts are found on the wheel entitled, “Power and Control of Women in Patriarchal Society”- instead, historical quotations of several of the influential Church fathers are easily placed in the outer ring, which corresponds to the “Physical and Sexual Violence” outer ring on the original “Power and Control” wheel.

What becomes apparent is that the weight of Christian scripture attests to the fact that women are created in the image of God, and Jesus reaffirmed the value of women as capable persons who should have the same options as men. However, very early in Christian history, something happened to change the Church’s move toward full inclusiveness. To answer why would divert from the intent of this booklet, which is to focus on churches’ response to victims of domestic violence. But it’s important to see these wheels as symbols of what the patriarchal system has meant to women. Although there are several significant quotations encircling the “Women Created in God’s image...” wheel, none carry the same weight as those prescriptions spoken by the Church “fathers,” who in many cases systematized Christian theology. This is the heritage received by all women. Because of this heritage, many centuries passed before women were allowed to own property; to vote; to decide whether, or whom to marry; and to speak the Word of God. Because of this heritage, many centuries passed before women were no longer subject to the chastising of their husbands by any means, including domestic violence.

How Can My Faith Community Respond to the Issue of Domestic Violence?

The environment of your congregation may be perceived as being sympathetic to the victim's dilemma and intolerant of the abuser's violent behavior, or conversely, as preferring that "private family issues stay private"- effectively isolating the victim and ensuring that she does not feel safe raising the issue with anyone.

Your congregation's governing body may want to look seriously at these general Issues:

- Is the congregation friendly and approachable? Do they feel it their responsibility to "welcome the stranger"?
- Is the congregation small enough that people come to know each other fairly well? If not, are there small groups meeting regularly for support and to build relationships, that members (and interested visitors) are assigned to?
- Is there a regular adult education hour? Might it be used once or twice to offer education about domestic violence?
- Is your congregation committed to helping human service agencies in the community through financial and in-kind donations and by providing volunteer assistance? (It sends a strong message to victims of abuse when a congregation departs occasionally from a choice to "adopt" less controversial organizations, such as those that help the homeless or abused children, and instead chooses to support the battered women's shelter or the domestic violence hotline.)

Spoken, Unspoken and Internalized Messages

Would a victim of abuse who is a member of your worship body receive a strong Message that, if she were to disclose, she would not be blamed for the abuse? Even an innocent question like, "What did you do before he hit you?" can sound like, "What did you do to provoke the abuse?" The point is, violence is never justified, and a victim is literally incapable of "provoking" a violent act. In any given moment, there are an infinite number of ways a person can act. Other messages which may be perceived negatively by a battered women include the assumption, spoken or unspoken, that the clergy or lay person in whom she is confiding understands her reasons for staying or for leaving. It is much more appropriate to ask, "What made you decide to go to the shelter at this time?" than to say, "So you decided to leave because your husband began to abuse your son?" The spoken messages which can give the most trouble to abused women include the pastor or priest seeming to speak for God; for example: "God has healed your husband (of his abusive condition)." Or, "God wants you to stay

with your husband and try to work it out.” Or even, “God wants you to be free of abuse.” A more sure method of helping to empower a victim of domestic violence is to take yourself, as a religious leader, out of the equation entirely, directly or indirectly. It might mean sharing some affirming scripture about what God did in a particular situation or about the response of a biblical person. It might mean sharing the story of someone you know, being careful not to imply judgment of the person sitting in front of you. It might certainly mean praying with, and for the abused woman, that God would guide and strengthen her. And it will mean asking her what she would like to have happen or what she would like her life to be like. (See “Facilitating Conversation with a Suspected Victim of Domestic Violence.” in *Domestic Violence: A Public Health Education and Resource Guide*.)

You may ask, “What if she asks for my advice?” This may happen. Most victims of domestic violence have been told in so many words, by their batterer, “You are worthless. You can’t think for yourself. You’re stupid. You need me to tell you what to do.” If a woman hears these messages enough, coupled with seeing a repeated lack of appropriate consequences for her batterer’s abusive behavior, she may internalize the messages and begin to believe that she is, indeed, incapable of making good decisions for herself and her children. Although it might be tempting to tell her what you think she should do, it honors her personhood, and is more effective in the long term, if you steadfastly refuse to be cast in the role of expert or hero for her life. If she listens for God’s voice through prayer, if she takes one small step at a time, it will eventually become clear to her that she is the only possible expert in her own life. That realization may make her strong still; however, a word of warning: even a strong woman may end up dead. With your support, she may alternate between risk-taking behaviors and behaviors which assure that she and her children will be safe for a period of time. It is a dance which requires some finesse, and she should be affirmed for small, internal, moments of realization as well as for major, courageous, outward signs.

Pastoral Counseling: The Pastor as Generalist

When clergy study to become ordained ministers, they often take course in theology, church history, pastoral care and counseling, and the Bible. When they become ordained, it is an ordination into the practice of ministry. Unless they pursue further study, they are generalists by education, ready to respond to the prompting of the Spirit or to their congregation as a situation arises. This must not be forgotten when you, as a pastor or priest, are confronted by domestic violence. You know something about how to speak a prophetic word or to support and affirm people as part of your ministry; however, you are most likely not familiar with arrest procedures, prosecution, sentencing and batterers' treatment programs. Unless you have had the time and the interest in learning, you are most likely not versed in the legal ramifications surrounding the obtaining, and enforcing, of Protection Order.

Remember that there are experts in the field of domestic violence who are as close as the local shelter or domestic violence hotline. Although they have been caricatured by some religious authorities as "rabid feminists interested only in breaking up the family," they are, in reality, eager to empower abused women to make their own decisions.

Although they may express a degree of concern about safety occasionally, they are very careful to avoid saying, or implying, "This is what you should do." They are, locally and nation-wide, trustworthy and knowledgeable professionals, ready to provide expert assistance in an area in which you, as a clergy person, are most likely a novice or an interested generalist.

Pastoral Counseling: Couple Counseling – Yes or No?

Doctors have a saying which is significant to those in their profession: “First, do no harm.” It is wise to consider this saying when reflecting upon the issue of couple counseling in a domestic violence situation. Although a couple may seem to want this type of counseling, there are undercurrents in an abusive relationship which may sabotage the process. The battered spouse (nearly always the woman) may appear hopeful and compliant. She may seem to want to save the relationship; however, not at any cost. She wants the relationship to continue, but free of the violent and controlling behavior exhibited by her abusive partner. The abuser has his own hidden agenda. He may say he wants to stop the violence; this may or may not be true. At heart, however, he wants her to be more compliant, to stop complaining and to try harder to please him. He is looking for a religious authority who will calm her down, and while continuing to hold out hope for the future, may slip in some advice about “submission” or “subjection.” (Any reference to mutual submission will be ignored by the batterer – as a domineering man, he will most likely believe that deference is due him, and will suffer no qualms of conscience if he lets himself off the hook.)

This undercurrent of expectation on the part of both partners may act as a trap for an unwary minister. If, during a couple counseling session, you make any statement that could be construed as supportive of the batterer, the woman will feel further beaten down by the weight of your pastoral authority. On the other hand, if you say anything supportive of the woman, her delight at hearing an affirming word may be forgotten later if she “pays for it” when the batterer becomes violent with her.

The most crucial argument against couple counseling is the power inequity between the partners can't be dealt with in that setting. A battered woman who has no power has no freedom to negotiate and finally, no voice. The “couple counseling” session becomes, at best, a sham, and at worst, a real danger to an already abused woman made more vulnerable by her hope that things will change.

You, as a pastor, or as a lay religious counselor, may be aware of the existence of domestic violence in a relationship at the time the couple states they would like to make a counseling appointment with you. Alternatively, you may become aware of the problem while counseling the couple, or while utilizing a premarital/marital counseling instrument like Prepare/Enrich, published by Life Innovations, Inc. which tests for “Partner Dominance,” among other characteristics. In either case, the most “pastoral” way to handle the situation is to offer to counsel each person separately. In an individual setting, it is much easier to respond to a battered woman with support and referrals, or to respond to a batterer with a firm statement about the inappropriateness of his behavior and a referral to a batterer's treatment program.

The battered woman will likely separate from the abuser at some point, and may eventually divorce him if they are married. If you appear too concerned about “saving the marriage,” the victim of abuse may come to believe that you value her life, and the possibly the lives of her children, less highly than maintaining the image of an intact relationship. It is most important to remember that the abuser introduces an element of brokenness into the marriage by his choice to behave in a violent and controlling manner.

Suggestions for Worship

Clergy and lay worship leaders have a unique opportunity to raise the issue of domestic violence – to remember victims, to educate the congregation, and to address that God intends for those in covenant relationships to live lives of mutuality, not violent control and fearful compliance.

Some way in which the issue might be raised include:

- Borrowing or creating a litany remembering victims of domestic violence
- Using bulletin inserts to create an awareness of the issue (see sample inserts following)
- Preaching a series of sermons on relationships, or in denominations which use a lectionary, looking for ways to educate and increase awareness whenever a particular text would lend itself to that use (story sermons are a good vehicle; see the sample sermon following)
- Praying aloud that victims might be strengthened and protected and batterers might feel convicted about the destruction they cause
- Designating that the weekly offering be donated to programs serving victims of abuse
- Inviting an expert on the issue to address the congregation – during the adult education time or during the sermon (much as missionaries have done)

Samples for Congregational Use: Sermon

This story sermon was based on a lectionary text, *Luke 18: 9-14*. It was subsequently preached at a church using the Common Lectionary and at a church where clergy choose their own texts. It is an example of a sermon which is not explicitly about domestic violence, but which educated obliquely while addressing a Christian theme.

One gray, November day, toward evening, Sharon locked up the church office. She was anticipating doing some early Christmas shopping at the mall, where they were having a number of sales. She locked both doors to the outside, and walked quickly to the sanctuary, where someone had left the lights on. She was about to flip off the sanctuary lights just outside the door, when she happened to glance in and notice a person sitting in one of the pews near the front.

Probably one of those homeless people, she thought. That's what came from being an inner-city church and leaving the doors open most of the time. You just never knew what kind of person would wander in off the street! Well, she thought, it's time for this one to find another place to go – the rescue mission or a soup kitchen, or wherever such people go at this time of day. She opened the door and walked in, choosing to walk, not down the carpeted center aisle, but down a side aisle where her heels made brisk “click, click” sound on the bare linoleum. As she drew even with the pew where the person was sitting, it became obvious that it was not a he, but a she. She was Allie Hansen, one of the less active members of the congregation, verging on the “inactive.”

“Excuse me,” said Sharon, “I’m about to close up. You’ll have to leave.”

Allie brought her eyes very slowly to Sharon’s face. Her thoughts seemed to come from an even greater distance away.

“Oh, I’m sorry.” she said, “but could I have just a few more minutes?” And then she said what seemed to Sharon to be very strange thing. With a wry smile, she asked, “This place is called asanctuary isn’t it?”

Allie then seemed to grow quickly absorbed in her own thoughts again, so Sharon didn’t answer what was obviously a rhetorical question. Sharon walked back to the rear of the sanctuary and sat in one of the last pews.

Struggling with her impatience, Sharon thought of what she knew about Allie. There were not many impressions, because Allie’s personality had always seemed to Sharon to be pretty subdued. She had brought her kids (a boy and a girl) to Sunday School once or twice. The girl was so quiet, she seemed to melt into the background. The boy, though, had been asked to leave because he was physically combative with the other kids. That

was the end of Sunday School for both of them.

Allie had come to circle meetings occasionally, but she always came late and left early, and seemed nervous the whole time she was there – not of the other women but of the time. She kept looking at her watch. Sharon remembered that one of the pastors had tried to stop by once for a short visit, but Allie had met him at the door distractedly, saying she couldn't invite him in because her husband was due home from work soon.

Then Sharon remembered the rumor – that Allie was being abused by her Husband. She contemplated that for a minute. Allie seemed mousy enough to allow herself to be pushed around. And it looked like she was training her little girl to be just the same way. Sharon sighed with exasperation. Wasn't that always the way it was? Now, if she were abused just once, she would never stand for any more. She would be out the door, bag in hand – “Adios, jerk!” she could imagine saying. No amount of sweet talking could convince her to do otherwise! And if she didn't have family or friends to help her, well, she would just do it on her own. And thanks to her work skills and God-given strength and determination, she knew she could!

(Pause)

Now Allie had no idea of Sharon's thoughts about her. Her own thoughts had been in turmoil for the past half hour.

She knew she would be expected home soon. She had moved quickly at grocery store just so she could have a few minutes to sit here in God's presence and try to calm her mind.

Last night had been a bad night. The dinner was not as Jack had wanted it, so he had thrown it on the floor and then slapped her around for a while. The kids had disappeared – they'd probably gone to their rooms – she had heard loud music, which meant that they were trying very hard to tune out what was going on.

For the thousandth time, she regretted marrying Jack right out of high school before she could get her degree. He had been so romantic – love letters everyday, caring enough about her that he bought her beautiful clothes to wear (and then told her when to wear them! she thought ruefully). She married him in a blaze of romance, and it was mostly wonderful until she became pregnant with Bobby. Then Jack went crazy (there was no other word for it) – accusing her of seeing other men, pushing her around – once she nearly lost the baby. His need to maintain control over her at all costs became horribly apparent. Bringing herself

by to the present, she asked herself, “Why did I stay with him then?” but of course, she knew the answer. She had no work skills or experience, a tiny baby to care for – and the change had happened so quickly, it was hardly believable. She knew her mother had trouble believing it – her early responses had been unsupportive and blaming – telling her to forgive him, to try harder to please him and to put him first. “But, God – isn’t that idolatry? Putting Jack before you?” she wondered. Thinking again about her present situation, she felt how hopeless it was. She could not jeopardize the safety of family and friends by taking the kids and going to live with one of them. And she couldn’t even chance going to the local shelter – because Jack was a police officer. He knew the location, even though the public did not. Allie chuckled without humor. Jack, as a police officer, had sworn to “Serve and Protect” the public. If his fellow officers only knew!

As was so often the case, Allie’s pondering brought her no solutions. But it did bring her a sense of certainty that Jack was trying to control her actions, and even her thoughts, of nearly every waking moment. “God I know I was made in your image,” she prayed. “And I know my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”

She rubbed her eyes with weariness and painful self-knowledge. As she did so, her left eye ached where it had been blackened a week or so ago. She found herself praying silently: “Please renew my energy so that I might have the imagination to see, and pursue, those possibilities that will bring an end to this sinful situation. And although I realize that the sin is Jack’s, I know that I am also a fallible human being. Please forgive my Despair and help me to choose actions that will bring healing and peace. I ask all this in Jesus’ name, who died for my sins. Amen.”

Allie turned to see Sharon regarding her curiously from the end of the pew. She smiled at Sharon, feeling some of her burden lift. Then she left the pew, walked down the aisle and out the back door. Sharon, wondering what Allie could find to smile about, locked up in a hurry behind her. Glancing at her watch, she sighed. Only another hour until the stores closed! She climbed in her car, started it and sped off while Allie was still fishing in her purse for her car keys. Allie’s hand closed on a piece of paper. She drew it out and looked at it in the fading dusk. It was a song her daughter had learned one of the few times she had attended Sunday School, that she had illustrated with love. Allie had not really looked at the words when she had first glanced at it distractedly and put it in her purse. She read them now.

*God is for Me
Though I am Little
God is for Me
Though I am Young*
God is for Me
Though I am Lazy
Or Mischievous
Or Glad
Or Glum
Think of it
Can you imagine
Think of it
God is for Me
Think of it
Can you imagine
God loves even You and Me!*

Allie drove home with a smile.

(Pause)

The issues that face us in the text are pride and humility. Let's look at them more closely. If you are not conscious of your sinful nature, you may be full of pride. Now, pride can be a tough thing to get past, because you feel so darned self-sufficient and good about yourself. You may feel that you don't really have a need for other people, or even, sometimes, for God! You may be happy in your life; you may feel that you are extremely well-equipped to meet the challenges of life. You may, like the Pharisee, look around you and say, "I thank you, God, that I am not being abused. Or, thank you that I was born a white person. Or thank you that I am American, or that I have enough money to feed and clothe my family, or that my children turned out all right (a reflection on the way I raised them!), or thank you that I am not going to die of AIDS tomorrow." This may become a variation on "count your blessings," which may be a wonderful thing to do generally, but when we use other people's misfortune to bolster our own ego, we look very much like the Pharisee. (Pause) How many Pharisees are here today? (Raise hand.)

And then there's the tax collector. A man who deserves punishment, or at the very least, to be shunned because of his greed and dishonesty. He remembers every time he extracted a few pennies more than what was due, every time he caused a person to despair because of his lack of sympathy. These sins weigh heavily on his mind; he can't pretend before God to be blameless.

He is in one of the times of his life when he knows his absolute need

for God. (Pause) How many tax collectors are here today? (Raise hand.)

Do you feel more like the tax collector or the Pharisee today? Are you conscious of your need for God, like Allie, or are you more like Sharon?

It doesn't matter which you choose. Jesus speaks a word of judgment and promise to those who feel both ways. To those who are not currently conscious of their need for God, he promises, "You will be!" And to those who are too conscious of their failings, Jesus promises, "You will be Exalted." To be exalted can have two meanings: To be made important, or High in the scheme of things. Or literally, "Lifted up." Like Jesus on the cross.

We are promised that if we believe in the Jesus who humbled himself, taking on our sins, so that he was exalted on the cross, we will be exalted too. But not to joy and glory first of all. First we will be exalted on our own crosses, finding there the depth as well as the height of the exaltation - seeing our true need for Jesus Christ.

And so, both ways are difficult.

If you exalt yourself, you will come face to face with a great stumbling block- pride. Yet if you humble yourself, you will come face to face with the greatest

stumbling block of all – the cross. Jesus Christ's – and your own.

God's promise to you today is this:

"I will help you clear the stumbling blocks of sin and unbelief, which keep reappearing just when you think they're gone for good.

And I will be your faithful companion every remaining step of the way; whether or not you are aware of me, I am here beside you. Goading you to notice your pride and lack of love. Carrying your sin-wracked should all the way to the cross."

(Pause)

"Think of it – can you imagine? God loves even you and me!"

Amen.

*Word altered (original word: "dumb")

Copyright holder unknown.

APPENDIX E:

Referrals and References

WHO TO CALL:

For information, advice, or referrals including shelter at Friendship Home :

24-hour Crisis Line: 475-7273

Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center: Non-emergency: 476-2110

For crimes or dangerous situations:

Emergency for city or county: 911

To report suspected child abuse or neglect:

Protection and Safety (Formally Child Protective Services): 471-7000

Lincoln Police: 441-7204 or Lancaster County Sheriff: 441-6500

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS:

Victim Assistance Phone Lines

Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center 24-hour Crisis Line, 475-7273

Nebraska Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-876-6238

Victim service organizations

Friendship Home, 475-7273 for shelter; 434-6353 (for message about non-emergency service information)

Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center, 476-2110 (476-2168 TDD)

Lincoln Police Department's Victim/Witness Unit, 441-7181

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Victim Services, 472-0203

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Lincoln Police Department, 441-7204

Lancaster County Sheriff's Office, 441-6500

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Police, 472-3555

COURTS/LEGAL SERVICES

Clerk of the District Court (to get information on protection orders), 441 -7328

Lancaster County Attorney's Office, 441-7321

Lancaster County Adult Probation Office, 441-7777

Lancaster County Juvenile Probation Office, 441-7364

Lancaster County Juvenile Court, 441-6928

Nebraska Legal Services, 435-2161

Diversion Services, 483-4444

OTHER RESOURCES

Family Violence Council, 489-9292

Lincoln Action Program (for male victims seeking shelter), 471-4515

Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, 441-8000

Lincoln-Lancaster Women's Commission, 441-8695

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition, 476-6256

Respite Network Program, 434-3490

Blue Pages Human Services listing in Alltel telephone