

Pastoral letter to a Christian woman navigating domestic abuse during lockdown



Project Esther
Women & their families

Hello friend

This letter to let you know that we are thinking of you. While some people are pleased to have spouses, husbands, or partners home over the lockdown period, you have other feelings and face big and specific challenges.

You will have been wondering just how you are going to manage the on-going abusive behavior of your spouse in the absence of having your work to go to or having the freedom to check in with friends and family. These options helped you manage what happens at home and it may well be that others (friends and family) have absolutely no idea how fraught your home life home actually is. Also, your opportunities for getting help are diminished when you are confined 24/7 with an abusive person. As you will have experienced domestic violence is about power and control. Your partner does this in varying ways, isolating you is a significant trait and the lockdown has just given him more opportunities to secretly hurt and restrict you. His complete access to you is having its consequences.

By now, after a few days of being in lockdown the abuse has ramped up as your Christian husband uses the COVID-19 virus circumstances as a further excuse to treat you abusively. There are more controlling behaviors, more requests for you to meet unreasonable demands and more fuel to keep you more socially isolated than necessary.

*If he is a Christian, you may be continuing to endure misuse of bible verses as he abuses power and validates abusive behavior. If you have children you will have so many other layers of burden, trying to protect them and counter the displays and impact of his abusive behaviors. All over the world there is evidence of an expectation that domestic abuse will be even more of a problem when people are in lockdown with their abusers. In NZ, Government, community services, agencies and churches are continuing to highlight that abuse of women and children in **any** circumstance is wrong and unacceptable. Help is available. Keep in mind abuse is not only physical. It also includes other dimensions like willful neglect, verbal, sexual, emotional, financial abuses and threats to your safety.*

If your husband is verbally throwing scripture at you about forgiveness, submission, silence, husband authority and headship, this is not what is on God's heart for you.

*God has a different agenda completely. Consider instead scriptures about compassion, understanding, a distain and abhorrence for injustice (abuse is injustice), your entitlement to peace and safety and how God calls for respect and equality in our marriage relationships. The **following websites and links (see below)** maybe places of clarification, direction, help and inspiration to hold to what is true and right about you and your right safety and wellbeing at this time.*

Our police, refuges, and hospital care are all still available, resourcing the specific needs you have. You are entitled and encouraged to make contact. This will be difficult, if possible, ask a friend, relative or Pastor to make the call on your behalf if needed. Take care.

From The team at Project Esther (Community Ministry SWBC)

Some links:

<https://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/living-in-nz/safety/emergency-services>

<https://www.avivafamilies.org.nz/>

<https://www.2shine.org.nz/>

<https://projectesther.co.nz/how-we-help/christian-domestic-violence/>

<https://www.theraveproject.org/resources/>

<https://www.govt.nz/browse/law-crime-and-justice/abuse-harassment-domestic-violence/domestic-and-family-violence/>

<https://www.police.govt.nz/105info>