

# AVA'S CALL

## SAFE SANCTUARIES — Yvonne DeVaughn

AVA'S CALL is a quarterly publication of the Department of Women Ministries' program Advocacy for Victims of Abuse.

**AVA's Goals are to:**

- Provide resources to bring healing to victims of abuse
- Equip the church to minister to victims of abuse
- Promote preventative measures to combat abuse

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**AVA Website:**

[www.covchurch.org/cov/women/ava](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/women/ava)

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**

800-799-Safe (7233)

**You may give without loving, but you can not love without giving.**

~Henry Bosch

One of the great myths about domestic violence is that it is a "private family matter." The reality is that it is a public matter because it impacts and devastates families and communities. No act that can leave a person permanently injured (physically or mentally), or result in their death should be considered a "private family matter." Arguing in such cases that the "privacy" of the family must be upheld is erroneous because the violence can result in injury, death, or virtual imprisonment for many battered men, women and children. *Not only is domestic assault a criminal act, it is a justice issue that is blind to race, culture, gender, age, socioeconomic status and belief system.*

Because domestic violence is often viewed as a private matter, this mindset creates the perfect environment for families to treat it as a highly guarded secret fueled by shame and fear. Even in the Christian community it is often thought and taught that this type of violence does not occur in Christian families. Unfortunately, approximately 28% of marriages contain physical violence and 50-65% contain abuse in some form (Dr. Nancy Nason-Clark, 10/07/2006, *When Terror Strikes the Christian Home; Keynote Address at The Awakening Conference, FL. Lauderdale*). It is estimated that over 3.3 million American children witness intimate partner violence (IPV) within their families. Witnessing violence is a risk factor for long-term physical and mental problems, including alcohol and substance abuse, being a victim of abuse, and perpetrating IPV. (Felitti V., Anda R., Nordenber D., Williamson D., Spitz, A., Edwards, V., et al. *Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction*



*to many of the leading causes of death in adults, American Journal of Preventive Medicine 1998; 14(4):245.568)* When comparing the statistics for domestic violence in Christian families there is no discernable difference from those of non-Christians (Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse). Abuse and violence in relationships can and does occur in families where there are devout Christians who regularly attend church, pray, read their bibles and hold leadership positions in their church. This dichotomy creates the need for a paradigm shift among the Christian community.

We must be willing to openly acknowledge that many families in our congregations are experiencing domestic violence and are suffering due to the underlying tension, fear, anger and distrust from the abuse that happens in their lives time after time. It is time to seriously educate ourselves on the types of abuse that can occur—physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, financial and religious—so that we can respond in a correct Biblical way. We need to view abuse as an issue of power and control that cannot be treated with anger management techniques. Our

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modus operandi should not only be to believe, but also to honor, recognize and tend to the needs of the abused members of our congregations.

*Unwillingness to speak out against domestic violence in our congregations helps to reinforce the pattern of secrecy and silence making it harder to eradicate.* It also creates a climate that enables abusers to continue their violence without any sense of accountability for their actions. Because violence in families cannot be quarantined, it impacts the entire family system—not just the person(s) specifically involved—sisters, brothers, future relationships, marriages, children, grandchildren, to name a few.

In scripture, Luke 10:27(b), we are admonished to “love your neighbor as yourself.” One of the best examples of this type of love in action is depicted in the account of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:27-37. In this story a Good Samaritan finds a man lying on the side of the road who was been beaten, violated and left for dead. Overcome with compassion the Samaritan tends to the injured man’s wounds and connects him with additional resources so that he can heal properly. This is a wonderful picture of how we can respond to God’s call to help ensure that those in our midst who are suffering from domestic violence are cared for, provided space and resources to heal! Our churches can and should become safe sanctuaries for weary men, women and children to unburden themselves in the midst of caring, loving people.

*This is more than a woman’s issue; it’s a family issue, a public issue, a justice issue, a God issue that demands a godly response!*

## STANDING WITH AVA

AVA is the call to the whole church to advocate for victims of abuse. Through our partnership together, AVA will, by God’s grace, equip the Evangelical Covenant Church to bring the healing touch of Jesus into this needy area.

Your prayers and donations will strengthen this important ministry. Make check payable to Women Ministries with AVA on the memo line.

## From the Book Shelf



Two great reads are John Shiver’s novels “*Here My Cry*” and the sequel, “*The Path of Judgment*.”

The story unfolds in a small Georgia community where a well-off family, considered pillars in the community and their church, are keeping their secret of domestic violence. The author engages the reader in the day-to-day issues of what life is like when families begin to fall apart because of domestic abuse. Both books are fast-paced, suspenseful and provide some understanding about why those who are abused find it so difficult to leave. They also may be helpful for those who want to know more about this topic.

### *A Litany of God’s Love*

Edited by Ruth C. Duck – Bread for the Journey

LEADER: Whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future in store for us.

**PEOPLE: The whole of creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the daughters and sons of God coming into their own.**

LEADER: If God is for us, who can be against us?

**PEOPLE: The Great Spirit who does not hesitate to be manifest in human form—can we not trust such a Presence to give us everything we need?**

LEADER: Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble pain or persecution?

**PEOPLE: Can lack of clothes and food, danger to life and limb, the threat of force of arms?**

LEADER: No, in all these things we win an overwhelming victory through One whose love for us has been proved.

**ALL: I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of heaven nor ruler on earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither power from on high nor power from below, nor anything else in God’s whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God! Amen.**

The Message