

## Thoughts and Reflections on Abuse and Domestic Violence in Plain Communities

By Uncle Joe

“Are you aware sister Mary is having a hard time?” James asked at a family gathering. “Josh appears to treat her so harshly, from what I hear.”

The family had gathered from various communities to reconnect and visit. Mary and Josh were unable to come. In fact, Josh was keeping her from coming to her family gatherings as he claimed they filled her head with ideas and caused her to expect “better treatment.” As the husband he felt that being the “head of the wife” meant his words and wishes must be respected and obeyed. Also, how could a woman as the “weaker vessel” offer a better option on how to spend the money and understand what is best for the family?

“I feel sorry for her” offered Henry, “but I feel we must stay neutral and not get involved with taking sides. After all, aren’t there always two sides? And they need to get along. Isn’t that what marriage is all about?”

“I agree” said James, “we need to be extra nice and understanding to him and do everything we can not to upset him. She needs to learn to be more submissive and not disagree with him. And we certainly don’t want to get between husband and wife.”

Harvey, who lived in another community, said nothing at first. He listened to the comments and attitudes, then finally cleared his throat to speak. “You know, I think what’s going on is abuse; and according to my understanding of the Bible it’s wrong. It is a sin, and it is against the law. I think we need to stand for the truth and what is right. Is there a way to help her

out of that situation? If nothing is done, a woman can die at the hands of her abuser!”

Everyone became quiet to the point where you could hear a pin drop, but soon the conversation turned to other subjects.

The next day Henry and Harvey were riding together to go visiting. After a while Henry glanced at Harvey warily and cleared his throat. He said “My wife and I talked about our conversation yesterday on abuse. She thinks you are right. After giving it much thought, I agree with her.”

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Some of the questions that I have found in searching for the deeper meaning of what is truth and what is right are these:

- Where is our duty – as church leaders, lay members, extended family, neighbors, and friends?
- Can a woman expect a safe place in the faith community?
- Where does she go for help?
- Will she be believed?
- Does a man’s word automatically override a woman’s word?
- When and where should the law become involved?
- Is the woman at fault for what the man chooses to do?
- If a woman’s place is to be “silent in the church,” how can she reach out for help?

- What is true submission?
- How are the children affected?

As the men in the family, church, and communities, we can stand together, listening to these women to bring hope instead of despair, healing instead of pain, strengthening the weak, and helping to carry the burden.

Let us begin.