

SHEPHERDING MINISTRY

# Caring for Our Flock

*Training on the 5 A's, Domestic Abuse Policy & Shepherd Guidelines*

# THE 5 A's

*Common Situations Shepherds May Encounter*

**A** **Adultery** Marital unfaithfulness and sexual sin

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**A** **Abandonment** A spouse has left the relationship or home

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**A** **Abnormal Behavior** Mental health concerns, erratic behavior, or emotional instability

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**A** **Addiction** Substance abuse, pornography, gambling, or other compulsive behaviors

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**A** **Abuse** Physical, emotional, mental, verbal, sexual, economic, or spiritual (see full policy)

# When You Encounter Any of the 5 A's

## *Your Role as a Shepherd*

1

### **Listen & Be Present**

You don't need answers. Your presence and willingness to hear them is a gift. Talk little, ask few questions.

2

### **Don't Try to Fix It**

Your role is to walk the first steps with them toward help and resources — not to resolve the problem.

3

### **Connect to Resources**

Point them to pastoral staff, counseling, or support services. You don't need the answer — just the next step.

4

### **Notify Your Team Leader**

Even in general terms (without names if permission not given), let your team leader know. You need support too.

5

### **Maintain Confidentiality**

What is shared with you stays with you — except when their safety is at immediate risk.

# Resources

## For Those in Your Care

### National Domestic Violence Hotline

- 1-800-799-7233 • Text: 2252 (SAFE)
- thehotline.org • 24/7

### Naples Shelter for Abused Women & Children

- Crisis: 239-775-1101
- Shelter: 239-775-3862 • naplesshelter.org • 24/7

### Covenant Counseling Referral

- Charlene Richardson & Rebecca Torres
- 239-591-4354 • covenantnaples.com/care

### FL Dept. of Children & Families

- 1-800-962-2873 • myfamilies.com

### Pure Life Ministries (sexual sin & addiction)

- 1-800-PURELIFE • purelifeministries.org

## For You

### Your Team Leader

- First point of contact for any situation

### Marilyn Mitchell — Domestic Abuse Point Person

- 586-850-7553

### Covenant Counseling Referral

- Charlene Richardson & Rebecca Torres
- 239-591-4354 • covenantnaples.com/care

# Abuse

*Understanding the 5th A*

A **pattern of behavior** used to maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Can happen to anyone, regardless of race, religion, gender, or background. Incidents usually escalate in frequency and severity.

## Types of Abuse

### Physical

Any act of physical harm or intimidation — including hitting, restraining, threats of violence, or acting violently in someone's presence

### Emotional / Mental

Manipulation, gaslighting, threats, isolation, or controlling behavior

### Verbal

Yelling, name-calling, or constant criticism

### Sexual

Any unwanted sexual contact or coercion

### Spiritual

Using faith or Scripture to justify or excuse abuse

### Economic

Controlling finances or creating financial dependency

# What TO Do — The L.O.V.E. Framework

*Follow these guidelines in your conversation:*

## Listen & Believe

**L**

Hear their story. Talk little, ask few questions. Listening restores dignity.

"I believe you. I am glad you told me. What happened to you is not okay."

## Validate & Support

**V**

Assure them it is not their fault. You are seen as safe — a shepherd.

"You are brave to come forward. You are not to blame."

## Offer Empathy & Compassion

**O**

Keep your voice quiet. Look them in the eye. Acknowledge their courage.

"No one should have to experience what you have been through."

## Empower

**E**

Address SAFETY first.

Ask permission to share with an elder/pastor for added support (confidential).

Share resources and plan to reconnect.

**Florida Law: Everyone is a mandatory reporter if the abuse involves a child or vulnerable adult.  
Report to DCF (Dept. Children & Families): 1-800-962-2873.**

# Empower — Connecting to Additional Support

## Asking Permission to Involve an Elder or Pastor:

1

Ask: "Would it be okay if I shared this, in general terms, with an elder or pastor? They are additional support for you — and for me."

2

If they agree: contact your Team Leader or pastor at a high level only. Share no more than necessary.

3

Assure them: Elders and pastors will treat it with confidentiality.

4

If they say no: respect that. Notify your Team Leader in the most general terms possible, without identifying the person, so you have support.

## Before the Conversation Ends:

- Ask: "Are you in a safe place right now?" If NO → call 911. If YES → "Do you have a plan if you need to leave?"
- Share resources and offer to be present while they make the call if needed.
- Ask permission to pray together. Make a plan to reconnect in phone or in person.

# What NOT to Do

*Avoid these responses — even when they feel natural:*

- ✘ Panic
- ✘ Judge the victim
- ✘ Make decisions for them
- ✘ Ask for proof or details of violence
- ✘ Pressure them to act
- ✘ Try to rescue or fix the problem
- ✘ Criticize the person — address only the behavior
- ✘ Contact anyone on their behalf without permission

**⚠ IMPORTANT: If you believe someone is an imminent risk to themselves or others — contact your Team Leader immediately and/or call 911.**

A Simple Reminder

# You Are Called to



L

**Listen**

*Carefully to their story*



O

**Offer**

*Empathy, compassion &  
affirmation*



V

**Validate**

*Their experience & believe them*



E

**Empower**

*With resources & support*

Questions? Contact your Team Leader • Marilyn Mitchell: 586-850-7553 • Covenant Counseling Referral: 239-591-4354