

Naming Violence with Christian Men (Christian Power and Control) Building Nonviolence with Christian Men (Christian Partnership)

CHANGING MEN, CHANGING LIVES

A Supplement to

Creating a Process of Change for Men Who Batter:
The Duluth Curriculum

This project was possible because of the work of Barb and Ty Schroyer, who have been long-time employees of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs. Barb and Ty worked on this project for five years in partnership with DAIP staff doing numerous focus groups with Christian survivors and working with hundreds of men in class to develop the Changing Men, Changing Lives curriculum supplement to DAIP's Creating a Process of Change for Men Who Batter curriculum. The content of both wheels was derived from survivors who partnered with us to develop both the wheels and the content of the curriculum. It is our hope the Christian Power and Control Wheel and the Christian Partnership Wheel offer a lens into the lives of women who live with men who are abusing them and a path of change that leads to peace in the home.

Men who batter use different tactics to gain control over their partners or families. While the tactics used by Christian men mirror those used by men in the wider culture, the justifications can differ. For example, some men may use their gender as the reason for why they get to decide ("I'm the man so I get to decide"). A Christian man might use Scripture to justify his authority ("wives submit unto your husbands"). In a Christian men's nonviolence class, much of the discussion may sound no different than in any other class, but the culture a man is raised in or is immersed in will reveal a difference in the foundation of his beliefs around privilege and entitlement.

In the general DAIP nonviolence classes we began to see that men with strong, conservative Christian beliefs and practices often did not respect or respond to a process involving secular facilitators who held different spiritual beliefs. Facilitators who were unfamiliar with Scripture were challenged to respond to biblical verses. One of two extremes often ensued: religious debate or disengagement from the discussion altogether. Either way a class participant could avoid dealing with his controlling beliefs. His religious justifications for abuse stayed intact because Scripture became untouchable in class. A program that avoids dialogue around Scripture greatly reduces the effectiveness of a nonviolence program for Christian men who batter. They are left without the critical thinking and reflection that is essential to shifting core beliefs and moving away from abusive behavior.

The DAIP committed to a Christian Men's Nonviolence Program when it realized that the existing process did not adequately support Christian men in exploring their beliefs. If a Christian man in a general group cited "headship" as the basis for his control of the household money or referenced Scripture, other men expressed frustration with talk about religion or separated themselves from what they interpreted as "his problem." The classroom environment directly affected the Christian men's participation level and trust, and the opportunity for positive change in seeing women as partners in a relationship. That lack of change, in turn, directly impacted women's safety, which is a cornerstone of the DAIP's work with men.

Our recognition of the ways in which a general nonviolence group might inadvertently block change for many Christian men led us to develop the class and this supplement. Its goal is to support facilitators in creating a culturally respectful setting in which Christian men who batter can explore their beliefs around abusive behavior, confront the consequences of spiritual abuse for Christian women, and move toward a Biblical foundation for equality and nonviolence. We believe that by doing this, women's lives are safer and the quality and richness of both men and women's experience in relationship will be greatly improved.

[Changing Men, Changing Lives: Building Nonviolence with Christian Men](#), 2006, DAIP