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End It Now

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End It Now

Marriage began in Eden where everything was perfect — complete and perfect unity between Adam and Eve and their Creator.



▲ Melissa Ponce-Rodas

Can you imagine what that perfect communion would be like — you and your spouse walking in harmony with God?

Since the fall, godly marriage has continued to be under attack; broken marriages and hurting families are indications of a dysfunctional society. A major destructive force is domestic violence, a pattern of power and control perpetrated by one partner over another (see [ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)). In response, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is calling all of its members to say “No” to violence and participate in a campaign to enditnow.

Enditnow is co-sponsored by the General Conference’s Family, Children, Youth, Women, Health and Education departments, as well as the Ministerial Association, and is a global church initiative to promote learning more about the destructive pattern of domestic violence that includes verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse, to name a few. The General Conference has reserved the fourth Sabbath in August as a special day for churches around the world to promote and participate in this initiative, although churches can participate at any time. For instance, in the United States, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, so churches may want to take advantage of the public’s heightened awareness during this time.

Domestic violence is something that affects the health of individuals, as well as the health of our churches and communities, which is why so many departments are actively participating to end it now. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (<http://www.ncadv.org>), one out of every three women and one out of every 10 men will experience some form of domestic violence in their lifetime. Studies conducted within Adventist populations find the rates of domestic

violence in the Adventist Church mirror the rates of domestic violence outside of the church.

How can this happen, you may ask? It often starts with verbal and emotional abuse. The perpetrator may insult or belittle his/her spouse. The victim may believe s/he is at fault and deserves the attack. Following an abusive confrontation, the perpetrator may ask for forgiveness, assuring the victim they will never do it again. The victim wants to believe the perpetrator; however, domestic violence is a pattern and chances are it will happen again. The abuse worsens and becomes more frequent, and verbal and emotional abuse lead into all other types.

So, how do we change? Resources are available at: <http://enditnow.org>. Explore the resources and share with others. Study the Scriptures to know God’s definition of true love and what defines a godly marriage. Reflect using David’s example as a guide: *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting* (Psalm 139:23-24 KJV). Seek help as needed.

Perpetrators need a program for abusers while victims need support services. If you are not directly impacted by domestic violence or abuse, be a voice and an advocate for the oppressed. Let us all work together to enditnow. ■

Melissa Ponce-Rodas is an assistant professor of Psychology at Andrews University. She and her husband, Segundo, have twin boys, Samuel and Jonathan. Her research and advocacy revolve around the intersections of religion and domestic violence.