

## Once an Offender, Always...?



How do people of faith reconcile belief in redemption – even resurrection – with repeated abuse and violence? Associates at Kyros Ministry struggle with this question, as we help congregations protect themselves from abuse *and* witness to the possibility of changing abusive behavior. As politicians argue for “One Strike and You’re Out!” Kyros argues for hope and transformation.

“One of the safest places I know is a classroom full of violent men!” says Mark Throckmorton, facilitator in the *ManAlive* batterers’ re-education program and new Kyros Ministry Associate. *ManAlive* was founded in the ‘70s by Bay Area men who realized that their behavior was a major factor in why their partners left them. They had all *learned* the same image of what it was to “be a man,” which led to emotionally, verbally, and physically battering their partners. To “be a man” means counting on your partner to recognize your authority over her and to do exactly what you expect of her. “Enforcing the belief that a man is superior to his female partner is the objective of family violence,” Mark explains.

“Men don’t need ‘anger management.’ We use just enough anger to get control, then we are done with it. Once the woman is subservient, violent expressions of anger suddenly end. Anger management classes are about maintaining more self-control; we’ve got plenty. We need transformation!”

Because it arises from a pervasive male-role belief system of how a “normal” man behaves, domestic violence and most clergy professional misconduct and sexual harassment can be “unlearned.” With diligent group work and counseling, offenders can begin to shift their behavior and attitudes. The same intervention will help those with sexual addiction, pedophilia, and persistent sexual harassment; however, those problems stem from deeper issues than gender conditioning and require more intense work. And, whatever the abusive behavior, recovery is an ongoing process, just as being Christian is an on-going effort.

Even if not recognized as such, some form of verbal or physical violence is practiced in so many marriages and partnerships that a perpetrator and victim often sit elbow-to-elbow in the pews, and that violence may even impact the clergy’s family. How then can a congregation promote a sense of *sanctuary* for the vulnerable in its midst? Through transformative education, Mark’s ministry seeks to equip church leaders and congregations to respond to male-role violence around and among us.

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