

GREATER THINGS - WEEK 6

Scripture used: [Acts 12:1-3; 6-9 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon invited us to consider a troubling topic this week: domestic abuse. He used the story of King Herod's behavior toward Peter to highlight patterns of abuse. And one incredible woman in our congregation, Christina Coleman, shared her story as someone who faced domestic violence for years. She is now happily married and the proud mother of two wonderful children. For both Christina and the Apostle Peter, there didn't seem to be much hope. And yet God rescued them. He has plans and a purpose for His beloved children. This message of redemption and hope should inspire us to look around. If we see any troubling patterns, this is the time to speak up. Please note that victims or perpetrators of domestic violence can be either men or women, but for the purposes of this message, we focused on the greater numbers of victims who are women.

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Abusers follow certain patterns of behavior.** In [Acts 12:1-3 \(NLT\)](#), King Herod demonstrates many of these traits. Symbolically, he represents the oppressive power of imperial Rome. But, King Herod's behavior is much worse than that. He is insecure and manipulative. He is obsessed with what his victims, the Israelites, think about him. King Herod also gets more aggressive over time, escalating his violent behavior. At first King Herod kills James, but then he arrests Peter even though it is Passover.
- 2) **Victims find it hard to leave abusive situations.** People often feel trapped but stay in bad situations.
 - a. **They aren't aware of their own insecurities.** All of us have issues. We have suffered trauma as a part of life in a broken world. Many women struggle with their sense of self-worth, and that leads them into relationships with men who are prone to becoming abusive.
 - b. **They try to fix the abuser.** Many women think they can fix the man they love. This draws them deep into the relationship at precisely the time they should be trying to leave.
 - c. **They are intimidated, coerced, and abused.** The more a victim suffers emotional trauma, the harder it is to believe there is a way out. Victims feel like they're not worthy of a healthy relationship, or are afraid to advocate for themselves.
 - d. **They get cut off from others.** Abusers usually try to isolate the abused, to keep them away from family and friends. This heightens the sense of being trapped, and the feeling of despair.
- 3) **The church must help people speak up about domestic abuse.** Over 2,000 calls are made every day reporting domestic abuse. Sheltering in place has made a bad situation worse, and we cannot be silent. It's up to all of us to act like the angels who freed Peter from prison. God can use us to illuminate:
 - a. **It's never too late.** Peter was facing a trial where he was sure to be executed by King Herod. We learn in [Acts 12:6 \(NLT\)](#) that he was freed the night before the trial! Many women suffering from domestic abuse are facing violence that gets worse over time. In fact, 82% of people killed by their partners are women. But God can work through us to intervene.
 - b. **God uses our trauma and brokenness.** Like Peter, we can be rescued and go on to do miraculous things. God can turn around horrible experiences, using them to bless and enrich others. And it's not just victims. Pastor Hurmon told the story of a man who spiraled into violence in his first marriage, who then reformed and restored a meaningful relationship with his family.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Have you ever been in the role of the abused or the abuser? What steps did you take to exit? Do you identify in general with being a situation where you feel trapped, and you need to know you can take a personal step to move in the direction of God's good purpose for your life?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Is there a whisper from God you've been ignoring? Is there someone who plays the role of "King Herod" in your life? What is the biggest obstacle for you to say "yes" to God right now?
- 3) **DO** - Even if you aren't a victim of domestic abuse, someone you know may need help. Affirm the role you can play as an angel sent by God: "I will do my part!" Share the National Domestic Abuse Hotline (1-800-799-7233) with anyone you think might be the victim of abuse. Tell them to ask for the Battering Intervention & Protection Program. You can also review additional resources on the church website: <https://www.nbccbayarea.com/resources-domestic-violence>