

When we see that rudeness has given way to abuse, we must go from assessment to action. The most difficult situations are those where the victim is unwilling, at least at the moment, to make any changes in the relationship. But let's talk about the ideal scenario before we consider a context where the victim is vacillating in their response.

Regardless of whether the victim wants to take steps to pursue safety, there are two powerful things you can do as a ministry leader. First, you can *believe the victim*. "Innocence until proven guilty" is the appropriate legal standard, but you are a ministry leader, not a judge or investigator. We take the posture of 1 Corinthians 13:7, "love believes all things," until there is evidence to the contrary.

Second, you can *connect the victim with counseling resources*. The proper expression of humility in ministry is to know our limits. An experienced abuse counselor or social worker is better able to assess the degree of safety concern. Any effective pastoral ministry builds from a foundation of safety for the victim.

Third, and this is where a victim is sometimes is indecisive, *you can help them develop a safety plan*. The outline of a safety plan is included in the follow up resources. If you are inexperienced at this, you can call a domestic abuse hot line with the victim and support them in processing what they learn. We don't have to have all the answers to be a good pastor. Even if the victim is unsure about enacting the safety plan, having a plan will help them respond with greater intentionality in moments when it is needed.