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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Study Finds Half of Churches Do Not Have a Plan for Helping Domestic Violence Victims Autumn Miles, who commissioned the study, offers resources to assist churches in preparing for cases of abuse

DALLAS, February 20, 2017 — A new study commissioned by Autumn Miles, a Christian author and speaker and survivor of spousal abuse, shows that half of churches do not have a plan to help victims of domestic violence. The study, conducted by LifeWay Research, reveals that while Protestant pastors want to be helpful to victims, many are unprepared to handle urgent cases of abuse.

According to the study, 87 percent of pastors agree with the statement “a person experiencing domestic violence would find our church to be a safe haven.” However, only 50 percent actually have resources in place for abuse victims.

“As a survivor of domestic violence, I know that it is vital to act swiftly and efficiently when aiding victims,” said Miles. “When churches are unprepared, situations can be mishandled, much like mine was.”

Miles married her high school sweetheart at a young age, but the marriage soon turned physically, emotionally and mentally abusive. After years of keeping quiet about the abuse, Miles finally gained the courage to speak up and file for divorce. However, when she shared about the abuse with her local church, many of its leaders did not believe her story.

“I was called before church discipline for filing for divorce from the man who was abusing me every day,” said Miles. “Because the elders did not have a process for dealing with claims of abuse, I had to remove my membership from the church in which I had grown up.”

Miles hopes the results of the study will show pastors the weak spots in their own church’s preparedness for instances of domestic violence. She is also providing resources to help leaders develop a plan. The resources are available at <http://www.autumnmiles.com/lifeway-study/>.

“Church leaders should invest time in developing relationships with shelters, counselors and law enforcement before a victim of domestic violence comes forward,” said Miles. “That investment could save lives in an instance of severe abuse. Also, when victims see that you are prepared to help them, they are more likely to come forward.”

Miles also encourages victims of domestic violence who may have been mistreated by the church in the past to practice forgiveness.

“Domestic violence is a topic church leaders are still learning about, but this study shows they want their churches to be a safe place for victims,” said Miles. “It’s important victims forgive those who mistreated them, and advocate to make faith communities a refuge for those suffering abuse.”

The full study and church resources are available at <http://www.autumnmiles.com/lifeway-study/>.

Autumn Miles is author of “Appointed: Your Future Starts Now,” the founder and CEO of The Blush Network and host of The Autumn Miles Show on Salem Radio Network in Dallas. Miles is an accomplished speaker and has been featured in news outlets such as The 700 Club, The Washington Post, Fox News and the Dallas Morning News. For more information, visit AutumnMiles.com.

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Note to Editors: For more information about Autumn Miles please visit <http://alarryross.com/newsroom/autumn-miles/>. To arrange an interview, please contact Katie Martin at 972.267.1111 or Katie@alarryross.com.