

Chasing Marriage: Part 3: Responsiveness

Genesis 3:8-13

The truth is, however, that blame is a big deal. The first verbal response of a sinful heart is to blame, we see that here with Adam and Eve, and it is an indicator of a fundamental shift.

They sin, then they hide from God together, and then they start blaming. They jump in the foxhole together, and then they turn on one another. To be honest, I don't think that I've ever heard a better description of most marriages.

Have you ever stopped and thought about the devastating effect of Adam's statement on Eve? It is a pristine world and a perfect relationship, then something goes wrong and Adam's first statement is to blame Eve.

Imagine if it in that moment...everyone is ashamed...the tension is thick...God has asked the question, "What happened?" and is waiting for an answer. Imagine if in that moment Adam says, "I allowed the serpent into the garden and I ate from the tree. I accept full responsibility."

Then the light of true loves dawns in Eve's heart, and she steps up next to Adam and takes his hand and says, "No, I spoke to the serpent, I ate and gave to Adam to eat. I accept full responsibility."

Which version looks more like your relationships, and, if you're married, which version looks more like your marriage?

"I blame you, or anyone else but me," or "I accept full responsibility."

Jesus is our model, and it would have been easy for Him to sit back and blame humanity. He created a perfect world and gave it to the humans, and they wrecked it and wrecked their own lives.

Instead Jesus was not responsive to our actions, but to our need.

Romans 5:6-8

One of the most telling signs that you are taking your spouse for granted is that you become responsive to their actions. Marriage begins to look a lot like this:

If you _____, then I will _____

That is a great form for a contract, but it is not Jesus' model. Jesus said regardless of what you do I will die for you and carry the weight of your sin, then you are free to decide how you want to respond.

So, I am **not content blaming you** for our issues.
I am **not** going to approach our relationship **responding to your actions**.
At every point I am going to **take full responsibility** for the state of things.

That sounds painful and risky. I'm going to give my all regardless of you.

So, if my actions are not responsive to my spouse, then what should those actions be?

Over the last two weeks I think we've laid a strong foundation for what those actions should be:

Week 1: 2 Questions: How can we together love God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies? How can we together love our neighbors as ourselves?

Week 2: Prioritize, Pursue, Possession, Purity

I want to conclude this series with a list that may have a slightly different tone than a sermon, this may sound more like advice, but I think it is biblical advice and it is advice from someone who is working hard at marriage and who has worked with a lot of married couples.

These notes will be accessible in the app, or you can email me and I'll give you a copy, or you can ask for them to be mailed to you and we'll mail them out.

1) Speak Life

How did God create the universe? He spoke! And that began the idea that we see throughout Scripture that words are creative and powerful.

Proverbs 18:21

Jesus transcends all the dietary laws of the OT when He says, **Matthew 15:11**

Apostle Paul **Ephesians 4:26 version?**

There is no easier way to have a positive impact on your marriage or your life than to speak life.

You need to be speaking **encouragement**: giving confidence and persuading to continue

Praise – approval for everyone to hear

Positive and hopeful – the word picture that Paul paints in regard to our speech is that the people around us eat our words. So which of these are you serving up for your spouse day after day and year after year?

Pic of fruit and rotten food

Eliminate sarcasm and criticism out of context. You may think it's funny...it may be funny!, but it will eventually kill.

2) Learn how to apologize and forgive

There are going to be challenges in any relationship, and especially in marriage where we are in such close proximity and so vulnerable with each other.

We need to understand the need to apologize and the absolute biblical mandate to forgive.

We've been talking about the 5 love languages, but there are also 5 different types of apology.

1) Express regret – I'm sorry I raised my voice. I should not have done that, and I know that hurt you and I am very sorry.

2) Accept Responsibility – I was wrong to raise my voice. I should not have allowed my temper to get out of control. It was not your fault. I was wrong to do it and I accept full responsibility.

3) Making Restitution – I am sorry that I raised my voice. I really like to take you to dinner, just the two of us, so I can make it up to you and we can talk and get on the same page.

4) Express Desire to Change – I'm sorry I raised my voice, and I know this is not the first time that this has happened. I really want to change, could you help me come up with a plan to diffuse my anger before this happens again? Maybe I could excuse myself and take a walk?

5) Requesting Forgiveness – Will you please forgive me for raising my voice?

If your apologies are not landing, maybe you are not apologizing in the way that your spouse hears genuine remorse.

The apology is only the first step toward removing the barrier. That apology needs to be accepted and forgiveness extended. Since we are commanded to forgive, it is important to understand what forgiveness is and isn't – what are we commanded to do anyway?

Forgiveness is removing the barrier between you and agreeing to move forward. Forgiveness means I **release my right to punish you.**

Forgiveness is not forgetting...Forgetting is amnesia...dumb

Forgiveness is not a protection from consequences. If you do something wrong, I might release my right to punish you, but that doesn't mean that I step in front of the fire that you called down on yourself.

Forgiveness does not instantly restore trust. Trust has be earned, but forgiveness means I'm open to communicating about how we can rebuild our relationship.

Only with an apology and forgiveness can a barrier be removed. You should be in the habit of quickly apologizing and forgiving for offenses.

- 3) **Guard your expectations** – Most miserable people are miserable because they have high expectations. If you are unhappy with your spouse in a specific area, you need to be humble enough to step back and ask if the real problem is you are expecting too much. Maybe you aren't, but maybe you are.
- 4) **Have a financial plan that you both agree on.** Know where your money is going, and write down your goals.
- 5) **Don't surrender unity.** Recognize that everyday there will be bumps that can bring small cracks of division. Any spiritual attack on you has a single goal, to bring division. My sincere advice is to hug your spouse for 1 full minute every day.
- 6) **Do anything spiritual together.** Study after study shows the benefit of praying together, of going to church together, of attending small group together, or doing devotions together. I'm not saying you have to do all of those things, but you need to do one of them.

Prayer with hand open to God symbolically holding your marriage up to Him to bless. If you are not married, then think about a married family member or friend and hold up their marriage.