

First Responders Bible Study

Living Responsively in an Over-reactive World

Introduction:

In the movie, “Father of the Bride,” a young woman calls off her wedding after her fiancé presents her with a blender, as a gift. She misinterprets a simple gift as chauvinism and grossly overreacts. When her father tries to understand her reasoning, she defends her decision and declares she is “not an overreactor.” At this point her dad owns his own legendary, volatile behavior in a conversation with the fiancé in which he confesses that his daughter, “comes from a long line of overreactors.” (Seriously, if you’ve not seen this movie, the hot dog bun scene alone is worth the rental price.)

Truthfully, we all come from a long line of over-reactors. When God caught Adam and Eve with forbidden fruit juice dripping off their chins, they both blurted nonsense. Adam blamed God and Eve. “It was the woman you gave me...” From her spot under the bush, Eve blamed the snake. “The serpent deceived me. That’s why I ate it.”

Why couldn’t either Adam or Eve simply say, “You’re right, God. I messed up. What can I do?” Sadly, they passed this flaw onto their son, Cain, who violently overreacted to God’s opinion of his sacrifice and murdered his brother. Over-reaction is in our DNA.

Whenever we come up against life’s lurches, detours and surprises, our old nature wants us to react with emotions and ridiculous behavior. Entire TV shows, like “The Bachelor,” are based on this very premise. God opens the door for his children to a new way of life. A life where we *respond* to what’s thrown at us. Measured. Thoughtful. Displaying the fruit of the Spirit.

In this study we will look at the lives of some responders and reactors featured in the Bible. We can use the reactors’ stories as cautionary tales about our own behavior. My hope is that examining the responders’ characters will inspire us to incorporate the cry of “More of you and less of me, Lord” into our prayers.

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Week One- Abigail and Michal

Day One

Background: The book of 1 Samuel shares the adventures of King David's early life, prior to assuming the throne. His life as a shepherd, anointing for kingship by Samuel, conquests of Goliath and other enemies of Israel are all recorded. The book also documents the turbulent relationship between David and Saul, the first king of Israel. God's rejection of Saul and selection of David does not go over so well with Saul. David and his band of warriors, flee from Saul's murderous anger for years, always staying one step ahead of him. Chapter 16 takes place during this nomadic season of David's life.

Read: 1 Samuel 16:1-17

1. In your own words, describe the relationship between David and his men and Nabal's shepherds.
2. Describe Nabal's behavior toward David's request for food. Does this seem to be a reaction or response?
3. Now describe David's behavior to Nabal's reply. Is David reacting or responding?
4. Instead of the servant speaking to Nabal about the impending attack, he turns to Abigail. Why?
5. Think about a time when you were involved in a volatile situation of anger and misunderstanding like the one between Nabal and David? How did you behave?

Verses to Ponder:

People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness. Proverbs 14:29

Prayer: God, fill me with the fruit of the Holy Spirit today, especially self-control.

Week One-Abigail and Michal-Day Two

Read: 1 Samuel 16: 14-21

1. What action did Abigail take after hearing the servant's report?
2. Can you think of examples in your own life when a righteous response needed to occur quickly? Or is moving quickly a sign of overreacting, as some say? Here's some verses to help your thinking. Genesis 18:2, Genesis 24:20, Exodus 34:8, 2 Samuel 5:24
3. Describe David's mood and intentions by the time Abigail reached him.
4. Challenging situations often do not allow time for us to slip away and ponder a right response. Read Galatians 5:22-25. What secrets are revealed in these verses that can help us respond biblically to difficult moments?

Suggested Reading: "**The Road Back to You**," by Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile- a book that describes nine different character types, how they behave under stress and how to become the person God designed you to be.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, please establish your fruit in me that my behavior today will be measured, responsive.

Week One- Abigail and Michal- Day Three

Read: I Samuel 16:23-38

1. What fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) does Abigail demonstrate when she speaks to David?
2. What did David do and say after Abigail finished speaking?
3. Describe the benefits of this resolution for David and his men. Results for Abigail's household? How did it all affect Nabal in the end?
4. What is God's promise to us in Matthew 5:9 when we do the work of making peace with others? What does that mean to you?

“Anyone can love peace but Jesus didn't say ‘Blessed are the peace-lovers.’ He said ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ He is referring to a life vocation not a hobby on the sidelines of life.” Jim Wallis

Prayer: Father, forgive me for the times I've tried to “keep the peace,” instead of doing the harder task of making peace.

Week One-Abigail and Michal- Day Four

David's marriage with King Saul's daughter takes place during his early life. At first Saul is pleased with David becoming part of his family, but that all changes quite quickly.

Read: I Samuel 18

1. Describe the relationship between King Saul and David at this time.
2. Why did David and Michal want to get married?
3. What event created jealousy in Saul toward David? How did Saul behave after he felt jealousy? Would you say that was a response or a reaction?
4. Can you think of a time when someone else's success tempted you to be jealous? How did you behave during that time?

Verse to ponder James 4:14-16

“Jealousy is a kind of civil war in the soul, where judgment and imagination are at perpetual jars. This civil dissension in the mind, like that of the body politic, commits great disorders, and lays all waste. Nothing stands safe in its way.” William Penn

Prayer: God, reveal to me any area of my life where I've made room in my heart for jealousy. Forgive me and change my envy towards what I do not have into gratitude for what you've given me.

Week One-Abigail and Michal- Day Five

With a murderous father-in-law, David and Michal's marriage is filled with intrigue and danger (1 Samuel 19:12-17). Eventually, Saul breaks their marriage vow and gives Michal to another man. (1 Samuel 25:44). David is angry and the situation between he and Saul becomes a full-fledged war. (2 Samuel 3:1) During a time of negotiation between David and Saul, Michal is forcibly returned to the house of David. After that, the event we will look at today, occurs. (2 Samuel 3:12-16)

Read 2 Samuel 6:16-23

1. What was Michal feeling and how did she behave during David's public dance to celebrate the return of the Ark? What are your ideas about why she might have acted this way?
2. Describe what happened between David and Michal after he arrived home to "bless his family."
3. Do you think Michal might have had valid reasons for the way she felt about David and treated him, by this time in their relationship? If so, what were those reasons?
4. Compare the way Abigail responded to a difficult husband and turbulent set of circumstances and the way Michal reacted to the events of her turbulent marriage to David. How are they similar? How are they different? (You may need to read the passages in the intro of Day Four to form a good answer for this).
5. Abigail and Michal are an interesting contrast in their responses to volatile men. How did their lives turn out after the events we've studied? 1 Samuel 25:40-42, 2 Samuel 6:23

Prayer: God remind me when I am confronted by a difficult person, that I cannot change or control them. I can only choose how I will respond to them.

