

How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong

Study Guide

Chapter 1

1. Take a moment and examine your motives in wanting a better marriage. How have you been focused on wanting God to change your spouse without examining your own Heart?
2. What is God's purpose in marriage?
- 3.. What were the reasons you got married? How does this align with God's purpose in marriage? Look up 1 Peter 1:16. What is God's desire for us and how can marriage help achieve that goal?
4. What are felt needs and real needs?
5. What are the benefits of acting right when your spouse acts wrong?
6. Write out a prayer asking God to soften your heart, to open your eyes to your own sin and sinful responses. Ask God to help you be teachable as you go through this study.

Chapter 2

1. How can marriage make us more like Christ?
2. Write out 5 situations this week about your spouse's actions using the chart below.

Situation

Your Thoughts__

Feelings

Behavior

What do you learn about yourself?

3. Where in marriage may you be interpreting the behavior of your spouse incorrectly? How can you give him the benefit of the doubt in these circumstances?
4. Keep a thought journal this week. Proverbs 23:7 in the KJV version says, "As a man thinks, so he is." Our thoughts determine a lot about the course of our day, week, year

and life. Three times a day, stop and think about what you've been thinking about. Are these thoughts godly? Are they right, true, lovely, pure, admirable (Philippians 4:8)?

5. What do your spouse's wrongs reveal about you and your heart? Take time to pray and ask God to reveal your sin and heart desires to you. Where have you had unrealistic expectations? What idols do you see in your own heart that result in sinful thinking, speaking and behavior? What fears and insecurities do you experience? Where do pride and selfishness show up in your life?

Chapter 3

1. Write out the following verses and then evaluate how your speech needs to change. At the bottom of these verses, write a paragraph of specific words, phrases, tones, mannerisms, etc that need to change in your communication with your spouse.

Proverbs 15:1

Proverbs 29:11

Proverbs 25:20

Proverbs 21:23

Proverbs 13:3

1 Peter 3:10

Ephesians 4:29,31

Proverbs 12:18

2. Ephesians 4:25 calls us to speak truth in love. In what ways have you withdrawn from your spouse or pretended that everything was alright, rather than speak truth with Love?

3. Who is the real enemy? Look up the following verses and summarize what you learn. Psalm 143:3, 1 Peter 5:8, John 8:44.

4. How do we fight this enemy? Look up 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. What are our weapons?

5. Write out 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 2 Corinthians 5:9. What should our goal in our marriage be?

6. On page 68 it says, "God's word states that we overcome evil with good when we choose to respond to wrongdoing in ways that are godly, righteous, and loving. In other words, we should respond to our spouse's wrongs in ways that are in his or her long-term best interests." In what ways have your responses to your spouse been about what was in your best interest instead of in your spouse's best interest?

Chapter 4

1. Take time to think about your thoughts and about where Satan is prone to attack you. Which lie are you believing? That you deserve better? That your spouse's sins are too big to forgive? Are other people leading you away from your marriage?
2. Write our Proverbs 23:4. Which lie or lies do you need to guard your heart against? Write out two scriptures of truth to combat each lie. Put them on notecards to review regularly.
3. **“Just because you have a strong emotion does not mean that you have to obey it.”** Our emotions are part of what it means to be made in the image of God, but our emotions are affected by our sinful nature just like every other part of us. When we experience a strong emotion, we should go to God and His truth. God's word is absolute truth and never changes. Our feelings and emotions change constantly. Read Mark 14:32-36. What emotions does Jesus experience? What does Jesus declare to be true about God? What did Jesus obey - His emotions or God's will?
4. How have you been reacting out of emotion in dealing with your spouse? What emotions do you need to guard against. Write down the emotion and 2 scriptures that will help you “fight” against that attack.

Chapter 5

1. Work through the following 5 questions for 3 situations each day. Use situations when you are tempted to respond with frustration, anger, anxiety, bitterness, unforgiveness, happiness, or another strong emotion.

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking and feeling?
3. What did you do?
4. What were you desiring or wanting in this situation?
5. What was the outcome?

Some possible desires or wants for question 4 may be:

Pleasure	Freedom/Autonomy
Power	Peace
Love/Intimacy	Happiness
Comfort	Significance/Reputation
Meaning	Respect/Admiration
Control	Success

2. What did you learn about yourself? How were you willing to sin to get one of these desires? How is this really self worship? (Hint: when we are willing to sin to get one of these desires of our hearts, it is an idol that we are sacrificing for and living for.)

3. In what ways have you looked to your spouse to be your god? How have you placed your hope and happiness in how your spouse responds to you? Why is this a problem? Why is this a sinful way to relate to others?

4. God is faithful to forgive us when we repent (1 John 1:9). What sins do you see in your life that you need to confess and repent of?

5. The God of the universe, the God who created all things, breathed out stars, set the boundaries of the oceans, breathed life into every human and governs every aspect of life, wrote a Book to reveal Himself to you. Write out the following verses. What do you need to repent of and what do you need to change in your life to live a life centered on God. Write out 3 specific things you commit to do to know God better.

Psalms 27:4

Psalms 42:1-2

Psalms 40:8

Philippians 3:7-11

Ephesians 1:15-23

Commit to know God better:

1.

2.

3.

6. Matthew 6:24 says "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." While the context of this verse is money, the idea that we cannot serve two masters is always true. Where we spend our time and money really reveals what we love. What people, activities, things take your time and money. Think through your day and week, where did you spend your time? Were these things that showed a life centered on God or you? Where did you spend your money? Were these purchases showing a life centered on God or you?

7. What are 10 attributes of God that you love and admire about Him? Write out a scripture for each attribute. Pray: Ask God to grow your love for Him. Ask God to use your increasing knowledge of Him to stir your affection for Him and delight in Him.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

How could really trusting in this God, trusting that this is Who God is, change the way you act and respond in your marriage? Use the fill in the blank sentence to think through scenarios in your marriage that typically lead to conflict, avoidance, anger, etc.

If I believe God is _____, I will trust Him when _____ happens and respond _____ because He is worthy of my love and obedience.

8. What responses in your marriage need to change to be obedient to God and show a life and heart centered on God? Start with Ephesians 4:25-32 and examine your speech?

Chapter 6

1. Do an attitude check on yourself. Think about your thoughts and your speech. Do you tend to be a complainer or one who gives thanks? What would your friends say?

2. Read Galatians 6:7-9. What does this passage say about our choices and how they impact us?

3. How would you respond differently to your spouse if you trusted wholeheartedly that you will reap what you sow?

4. How have your actions and responses shown a temporal or earthly focused life? How have you lived for present happiness over the joy of eternity that awaits you?

5. We saw in Mark 14 that Jesus had a desire to NOT suffer on the cross. Yet we know He went to the cross for the "joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2). Look up Hebrews 12:2. How did Jesus focus on the eternal, not the earthly?

6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What are the troubles in your marriage achieving?

Read Hebrews 12:3-11. What is God's purpose in your trial or discipline that you are experiencing in your marriage right now?

God promises that we will share in His holiness and experience the peaceful fruit of righteousness when we have been trained by it. Are you going to CHOOSE to be trained by this trial to become more Christlike or are you going to CHOOSE to continue to fight for what you want?

7. On page 112, the author says, "Our choices reveal what we love the most, what we fear, what is of ultimate value to us, and what we think we need in life - in other words, our choices expose the dominant desires of our heart."

Is your dominant desire to be holy or happy?

Is your dominant desire to know God and glorify Him through your life or is it to satisfy yourself?

8. What do you learn about choices and desires based on the following two scriptures? Philippians 1:21-23 and Romans 7:21-24.

9. What competing desires do you see in your life? Which have you chosen in the past? What would it look like to choose to honor God above yourself?

10. **“Just because you have a strong emotion does not mean you have to obey it.”** There are 8 passages in Psalms listed on pages 117 - 119. Write out two that you will memorize this week.

11. You choose how you act when your spouse acts wrong. Will you choose to listen to God and be teachable and believe what He tells you? Will you choose to obey Him? Will you choose to yield your will to His? Or will you choose your own way?

12. “Choose this day whom you will serve”. Practice this week. Write out 5 situations when your spouse acted wrong. How did you act right, showing a trust in God and a desire to live for God’s glory? How did you choose to love, smile, build, persevere, praise, heal, give, forgive or pray?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Chapter 7

1. Ezekiel 33:31-32 “My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.”

Where in your life are you asking God to bless you and sing sweet songs over you without loving Him wholeheartedly and obeying Him?

2. Read Matthew 7:24-27 - How does this passage describe a person who hears the word of God but does not apply it? How has your “house” fell with a great fall because you are not doing God’s word?

3. What is the difference between trying and training? Why is training important? What are you training for?

4. How can difficulty in marriage be a form of training?

5. Why is living for eternity so important when we face trials in marriage?

6. Take inventory of your thoughts this week. Three times a day, write down what you have been thinking about for the past hour. For each thought, write out the belief about God and yourself that is behind that thought. Are these beliefs true? What does scripture say? Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Are these thoughts captive to Christ? What divine weapon, SCRIPTURE, do you need to think about that is truth.

Thought

Example: I deserve a husband who loves me and treats me well.

Example: I can't believe my husband said that!

Belief

God does not care about my situation. If God loved me He would give me a loving husband.

I would never sin that way.

7. Make another chart for your thoughts with what God's word says. Make sure you write a scripture that proves the truth.

Thought

Example: I deserve a husband who loves me and treats me well.

Example: I can't believe my husband said that!

What God says

Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin are death." Everything I have is by grace alone. I don't deserve grace, It is God's gift to me.

Romans 3:10-18 "None is righteous, No one seeks for God". I am sinner just as much as my husband.

8. Change in thinking is possible because we have a great Savior! Jesus experienced suffering at the hands of others both in His family, friends, and enemies. He understands the temptation to respond with wrong thinking and wrong actions. But, Jesus lived perfectly! His death as the perfect sacrifice means you are forgiven for all your sin. His resurrection means that He has already been victorious over sin, Satan and death. That gives you the freedom to change and become more like Him when you are trusting in Him and abiding in Him.

Start Training:

1. Pray - ask God to help you
2. Repent of your sinful patterns of thinking and believing
3. Renew your mind in the truth of what scripture says
4. Stop listening to yourself (guard your heart) and start speaking truth to yourself!
5. Practice, practice, practice taking your thoughts captive to truth. When you realize what your thought are and how wrong they are, stop, pray and speak truth to yourself.
6. The next step will be acting out of those truthful thoughts and beliefs!

Chapter 8

1. Write out Proverbs 12:1 and Proverbs 9:9. What do they have to do with being teachable? How have you been teachable and how have you resisted learning, especially in changing to be obedient to God? Stop and ask God to give you a teachable heart.

2. Define *phileo* love

3. Define *agape* love

4. Write at least 3 things that genuine love has as its agenda.

5. Love is defined as loving actions motivated by the express purpose of doing whatever is in the best interest of our spouse, doing what is in the best interest of what our spouse's real needs are.

Think carefully about this past week. How have your actions not SHOWED love to your spouse? How have your actions SHOWED love?

6. Make a list of 5 "real" needs your spouse has. Next to each one, write how you will show love in action to meet that need this week. As you do each one, check it off.

7. Write out 5 verses about God's sacrificial love for you. Commit these to memory so that when you are struggling to love your spouse, you can remind yourself that you have been loved first by God and it is in His strength and grace that you can love your husband.

8. What does it mean to die to self? What specific area of your life do you need to die to self?

9. What makes loving your spouse worth it, even if your spouse doesn't return the love. For help, look up Hebrews 12:28, Colossians 3:1-4, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

10. Go back to your list of ways to love your spouse in action this week. Ask God to help you focus on how much He loves you as you love your spouse through God's strength.

Chapter 9

1. Think of a time when God gave you a “hard” gift of love. When has God put you through something difficult so that your real need, of knowing and treasuring Him, has been met through that hard gift of trial as you turned to Him and depended on Him?

2. In what area do you need to give the gift of acceptance to your spouse? Can you trust God to work on your spouse in this area while you pray and wait contently for God’s timing?

3. How can confronting your spouse with truth be love in action? How can this confrontation meet the real need of your spouse?

4. How must the gift of truth be given? Look at Ephesians 4:15

5. What does Ezekiel 2:4-5 say about our responsibility for how our spouse responds to truth?

6. What did you learn about kindness? How can God use your kindness to your spouse for His purpose?

7. Make a list of 5 things to pray for your spouse. Write them on notecards and keep them in your bible. Commit to pray for those things every day.

8. True forgiveness is costly and a gift. By definition, forgiveness is not deserved, it is the offended party absorbing the hurt and cost of the sin and by grace and mercy extending pardon. How have you tried to make your spouse pay for his sins? Read Luke 7:36-50. What have you been forgiven by God? How can you extend this gift to your spouse?

9. What is the "gift of consequences"? How does the attitude of your heart matter in giving out consequences? Is this an appropriate action to take in your marriage? Why or why not?

Chapter 10

1. What are the benefits acting right even if your spouse acts wrong?

2. Write out 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 2 Corinthians 5:9. Memorize them. This is your purpose in life!

3. Consider this paraphrase Matthew 5:3-12 from the Message. How can this help change your thinking about your marriage. Write a paragraph about what you need to consider about true blessings.

3 “You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

4 “You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

5 “You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

6 “You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.

7 “You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.

8 “You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

9 “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.

10 “You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.

11-12 “Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don’t like it, *I* do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.