



Week 1: Rethinking Your Reactions

GET GOING

Relationships are the cause of some of life's greatest joys and deepest sorrows. The thing is, relationships involve people, and people are sinners! Some people end up driving us crazy! Even though we cannot control others, we can control how we respond. Are your responses helping or hurting your relationships?

DISCUSS

1. **What drives you crazy? What are some of your biggest pet peeves?** (Note: Have fun with this. Ask participants to comment on each other's pet peeves. For example: if someone is all about having the toilet paper in the "over" position, ask the rest of group to vote on their preference.)
2. Some things just annoy us. Other things hurt us. Pastor Mark talked about two main ways we respond to conflict. We tend to escape ("clam up") or attack ("blow up").
 - Escaping can look like denial, inward stewing, temporary flight, permanent flight, or suicide.
 - Attacking can look like verbal manipulation, verbal assault, litigation (file a lawsuit), physical assault, or murder. **Which response do you tend toward?**
3. **Does your response depend on the person or circumstances? How so?**
4. **Read Matthew 7:1-5.** So, there is someone with a small issue and someone with a big issue. **What is true about both people?** (Answer: They both have issues.)
5. **What does the person with the big issue do?** (Answer: Ignores it and tries to fix the other person's issue first.) **What's wrong with that?** (Answer: Jesus calls it hypocritical.) **Why do you think it is so easy to focus on other people's faults instead of our own?**
6. **Read Matthew 7:5 again. What is the Jesus solution to resolving conflict?** (Answer: Take care of your own issue first and then help someone with their problems.) **What kind of difference would it make in your life if you dealt with your issues first?**
7. **What has helped you resolve conflict in your life?** (Ex: Do you write out a response? Do you go away come back? Count to ten?)
8. **What are some of the best reactions you have seen to conflict?**

WRAP IT UP

When we get into conflict we need to ask ourselves: will my response make the situation better or worse? Maybe we have a track record of making it worse. Is there someone you need to ask for forgiveness? Maybe you need to take Pastor Mark's advice and memorize Ephesians 4:25-26 (if you are prone to escaping) or Proverbs 29:11 (for those who tend to attack). And remember, when you get in a spat, focus on making God smile.