

“Sanctified Reactions”
Stewarding the Presence Series, Part 18

I have a file on my computer where I record quotes that have changed my life. One of those quotes from a pastor said, “Our responsibility is to respond to the Father and not live in reaction to the devil. If we react to the devil, it’s like giving him permission to set our agenda.” Our reactions truly reveal some things about us right? We have all been there. We have lost our tempers, reacted to bad news with fear, or said something inappropriate. In my time of study, I read of one pastor who said, “When we are squeezed by stress, what is on the inside comes out.”

The apostle Paul said gave the Philippians instruction to not live in reaction:

“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...” – Philippians 1:27 NASB1995

Not only do we want to live in response to the Father for the sake of submission and obedience, but we have a massive witnessing opportunity when we choose not to react to the devil. A few months ago, I was helping my father-in-law with signing up for his social security. It was a long process and midway through doing the forms online, everything turned to Spanish. I called for support and even they couldn’t fix the problem. So, I spent the next couple hours troubleshooting and eventually just finished the forms with Spanish answers. It all worked out and he was approved. He said, “You have the patience of a saint.” I said to myself, “Thank You Jesus I kept my cool and did not get frustrated in that situation.” What happened was that I was living out the fruit of the Spirit and didn’t realize I was making an impact on my father-in-law. You see, this is what happens when we respond to the Father in a messed up world. When you respond to the Father instead of reacting like the rest of the world, people notice. **Matthew 5:16**, I say it all the time, “Let your light so shine before men that they *see* your good deeds and praise the Father in heaven.”

There are two goals when we respond to the Father. The first goal is that we abide. Abiding means to stay or remain. The presence is our top priority and if we are responding to the Father in all situations, it means that He has all of our attention. It means we are remaining and abiding in His presence. The second goal is that we put God’s love and power on display by our response versus our reactions.

Today we are continuing in the Gospel of John. We have been going through the Gospel of John chapter by chapter to learn from Jesus. Jesus was able to abide in the Father at all times while on earth. Today, we are going to see Jesus responding to the Father and Peter reacting to the devil. If you have your Bibles, please go with me to John chapter 18:

When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples. 2 Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. 3 Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

One Bible commentary I read mentioned that this valley in the Kidron was also used as drainage for the Temple. Can you imagine Jesus walking by a ravine that was more than likely vividly red because of the blood of sacrificed animals from the Temple? Jesus could have looked down and seen what would soon happen to Him. The world was about to change forever. Jesus who was the perfect and final sacrifice would die for the sins of the world and reconcile mankind back to the Father.

Judas knew where Jesus was. How sad. Judas had enough intimacy with Jesus to know where He would be and used it for his own selfish gain. But did you notice that there is such overkill in these verses? A Roman cohort was about 500 men. There's a little over a hundred chairs in this Sanctuary. Add four more sanctuaries and that's how many men came to arrest Jesus. Jesus who was humble and surrendered to the Father's will didn't need that type of force. But maybe Judas was fearful. He had seen Jesus cast out demons, heal the sick, raise the dead. Judas may have thought it would take 500 men to capture Jesus. Foolish because all of hell couldn't stop Jesus.

4 So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. 6 So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." 8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way," 9 to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one." 10 Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus. 11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

The English translations of the Bible say that Jesus said, "I am *He*" but the original language doesn't have the word "He." Jesus here says, "I AM." Now remember, we just saw that a cohort was about 500 men. Judas and these 500 men fell to the ground the moment Jesus said "I AM." What a moment of displayed majesty, power, and divinity.

Jesus is about to voluntarily submit to the authorities so the Father's will would be done. But Jesus who cares for His disciples ensures their safety. In the original language, Jesus is not asking the soldiers to let His disciples go. He is almost commanding it. And even though Peter just sliced a man's ear off, Jesus restored it and Peter himself was not arrested. Only Jesus was taken. It doesn't make a lot of sense letting the disciples go because they were trained by Jesus, the One who the leaders were intimidated by. If I was trying to stop a movement that was threatening my way of living, I would take the leader of that movement and the followers. It is interesting however that Jesus was so protective with His disciples. They all scattered when He was arrested and eventually crucified but this should have proven that the disciples could have remained with Jesus.

I want you to also notice the grace of Jesus in this seen. Peter has a really bad reaction. He slices off a man's ear and the nature of the way it happened suggest Peter was behind Malchus. Jesus in His mercy and grace restores the man's ear and gives a teaching moment to Peter. That

encourages me because although I've never chopped someone's ear off, I have had bad reactions. Although reactions reveal what's going on inside, our bad reactions don't define who we are.

*12 So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, 13 and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people. 15 Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, 16 but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. 17 Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He *said, "I am not." 18 Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.*

19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. 21 Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." 22 When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" 24 So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. 25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not." 26 One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" 27 Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed. – John 18:1-27 NASB1995

Peter made had two bad reactions. The first was obvious, he sliced someone's ear off. The second is that he fled. He fled from Jesus or fled from the presence of God. I want to encourage you today on some things you can do to help you respond to the Father and not react like we saw Peter do. Let me begin with an instruction given by James in chapter 1:19:

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." – James 1:19-20 NASB1995

There are three powerful things you can do to make responding easier and ultimately get better at abiding. If you are taking notes, please fill out these three words:

MAIN KEY: Practice, Pause, and Pray.

#1 – Practice. Nikki and I were able to get away for a night for an extended date and little break from all our people and dogs. We went to Cheesecake Factory for dinner, and I think I was more excited for the bread than the actual food. It was busy so we even waited a little extra and got fresh bread hot out of the oven. I heard a preach on social media this week talk about her experience with the bread at Olive Garden. She just couldn't stop eating the bread sticks. You

know what came next, she was so full off the breadsticks she couldn't eat her meal. At first, she was embarrassed about her lack of self-control but then she thought about it in a spiritual sense. She thought, what if I became so full of God that everything else lost its appeal? The idea that you are so full of God that you simply have no room for anything else.

Brother Lawrence wrote a little book called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. It was all about the development of an awareness of the presence of God. Brother Lawrence would be washing dishes and if he didn't sense the presence of God in a profound way, he would stop with the dishes and get on his face to seek the Lord. We need to practice the presence of God if we are expecting to not react in this world. **Psalm 16:8** says, "I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." Current Christian culture says do a 30-minute devotion to get it out of the way and go about the rest of your day. But the Bible says meditate on the Word of God day and night. If you want to respond to the Father and not react to the devil, it begins with being full of the Spirit. After Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness **Luke 4** says, Jesus returned *full* of the Spirit.

#2 – Pause. **Psalm 46:10** says *be still* and know that I am God. And again, in **James 1** it says, "be quick to hear and *slow* to speak." Over 70 times in the Bible we see the word "selah" which means to pause and ponder. Imagine how many times we could have saved ourselves from failure if we just took a few seconds to not speak but to pause. That's the beauty of the pause. It can just be a few seconds. If you don't have a few seconds in your given day, you need to restructure your life. The Psalmist say in **Psalm 62:1**, "My soul waits in silence for God only...." When you pause instead of give an immediate reaction you are doing a few things. First, you are giving yourself time to get perspective and let emotions settle. Second, you are giving the Holy Spirit time to speak to you. In **Luke 12** and **Matthew 10** Jesus promises us that we don't have to worry about what to say in times of difficulty but that the Holy Spirit will give us the words in that very hour. When we pause, we give the Spirit time to speak to our hearts and give us the words we need for the response.

#3 – Pray. In the pause your first response should be to seek the face of the Father in prayer. Here is a funny example: when Gabe was little Nikki found out about an idea of something to do when your kid gets caught doing something bad. The idea is to say, "Come here and take a picture so I can show your father." Although I did see the picture the whole point of this idea was to save the picture for funny memories. The reason I loved the idea so much is that in the middle of your kid drawing on the wall you can have humor and think ahead to the future. It's kind of hard to be mad when you are laughing. Of course, the kid still gets some kind of punishment but there doesn't need to be a reaction or angry outburst. **Ephesians 4:26** says, "in your anger, do not sin." Notice you can still have emotions you just can't allow your emotions to lead you. Emotions are designed to follow not lead.

If you consistently practice the presence of God more than likely you won't have bad reactions. But if you are tempted in the moment to react in a negative way, remember to pause. In that time of pausing, pray. Seek the Lord for the grace to endure and also lean on the Holy Spirit who has been promised to give you the words in the moment.

