

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do

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MAIN VERSES

[Zechariah 3:1-2](#) • [Job 2:1-6](#) • [Revelation 12:10](#) • [Psalm 119:71](#) • [Isaiah 48:10](#) • [1 Kings 4:1-7](#) • [Luke 22](#) • [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) • [1 Peter 5:6-9](#) • [1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#) • [Matthew 18](#)

Today's message is an agenda for you because I want to see everybody understanding what it means to hold on to hope. And I want to see people, families, at this fellowship, my fellowship, to be able to not get stuck face to face in conflict all the time. To not feel like everything is just out of reach. To not feel like there's nothing they can do in a situation in their life.

And the reason why I want to do this message now is because, well, let's face it, everybody's going through a hard time right now. You guys ever feel trapped? Ever feel trapped? I forgot to print out my notes this morning and so I emailed them to myself. So I'm breaking my own rule about using your cell phone during services. And let's see here.

There's one thing I've noticed. A lot of people are going through a hard time right now. I'm going through a hard time right now. Stress is in my life, right? Stress is in my household. Talk to other people in the fellowship. Stress is in their household. Stress with their kids, with their job, with their marriage, whatever. Stressed out. Why?

What do you do when you're facing problems with your children and you don't know how to solve them? What do you do in your marriage if it's on the rocks and just is crashing against the rocks with every wave? What do you do when there are problems at your job and you don't feel like there's anything you can do? Try to impress your boss as much as possible, try to meet the deadlines as much as possible, but things still aren't looking that great. What do you do when there's not much month left at the end of your money? There's too much month left at the end of your money. Yeah, that's it. Amen to the other one.

Everybody's Going Through a Hard Time

What do you do when you follow the body of a loved one to the graveyard and all that's left is the pain and the loneliness? What do you do when reality breaks your heart? When you had dreams and everything you worked for in your life—I'm gonna do this. Shooting for the stars. They say I could be anything I want to be. I'm doing it. Put all my time and my money in school. Yeah, I owe a little bit of money, but I'm gonna keep going and it's gonna be great. And what do you do when that one shot that's supposed to be the fulfillment of all your dreams in life falls short? What do you do when you're walking through a spiritual wasteland and there seems to be no way out?

I don't think anybody knows the answers to these except for the Lord. But why does it seem like life is getting so hard for everybody? Who in here is going through a hard time right now? Just that hard time? All right, so wow! See, I didn't expect everybody to raise their hands. I thought there was gonna be about 20 or 30 percent of you that were gonna just fib and leave your hands down.

Why is everybody going through a hard time? Whatever that hard time is right now in their life. Why didn't you go through this hard time in January? Why not in June? Why is it now? It's happening right now.

Posted a message on Facebook about what I was gonna be doing today, and I was telling everybody who didn't show up today to come anyway even though it's raining a little bit. And there were a couple of comments from people all over the US because I had a lot of friends and everything that were posting saying yeah, I would love to hear this message because I'm going through a hard time in my life, too. Why is everybody going through a hard time right now?

A Traditional Explanation

I'd like to propose a possible explanation, and it's a traditional explanation, but it makes sense to me. So remember how we spoke about Rosh Hashanah or Yom Teruah a couple weeks back, right? And we spoke about how it's the day, according to Psalms, when the gates are opened. And according to Daniel, it's the day when the books of judgment are opened. It's the day when our King sits down on His throne and convenes the courtroom, if you will, in the heavenlies.

Traditionally, it's thought that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Teruah, that's the day when a verdict is placed on every single living human being on earth. In Judaism, they say whether you're going to be written in the book of life or whether it's going to be the book of death, or just based on your works or whatever's going on—fill in the blank. A verdict is announced about you. And for the next 10 days until Yom Kippur, until the day that God removes all the evidence of sin before

His sight, according to [Leviticus 16](#), 16, those 10 days are called the 10 days of awe, and a trial is taking place in the courtroom.

Anybody ever go to court? It's not a very stressful situation, right? I mean, you go in there, you just chill out for a little bit, you gotta wait forever, and then the judge calls you and you got to plead, and it's just real smooth as butter, right? Not stressful at all?

When the Courtroom Gets Real

Anybody ever sit in the stand and be questioned? When Jenny and I finalized our adoption, we had to go to court, and we thought it was just gonna be a smooth little conversation—"Oh, you guys are beautiful, yeah, here's a baby, yes, slam it, bam, and it's done." They had a prosecutor in the courtroom. He's like the family attorney of York County or something like that. And he's a great guy. I met with him ahead of time and I didn't fully understand who he was. He was like, "I'm the so-and-so." Now, he didn't say whether he was a prosecutor or defense attorney. I forget which he was. He says, "I'm the advocate for the child." Oh, fantastic. Well, so are we. This is going to be great.

The judge called my wife and me up one at a time to sit as witnesses, and we had our attorney there. It was a trial that took place. Our attorney's right there saying, "This is the reason why they're going to be great parents." And I'm like, "Amen." And he's done. I'm thinking, "Well, that's enough, right?" And then he comes out, and he's like, "Hey... Are you sure you can take care of this kid?" Yeah, I'm pretty, pretty sure. I mean, we spent a couple months saving up a lot of money. Are you sure your job's going to be stable? I think so. Are these health conditions going to impair you from taking care of this child? I don't think so. Are you sure you're going to be capable parents for this child? I'm like, "Give me the baby!" Yes.

It was very stressful. It was not fun. And I'm just waiting for, "Oh, is this going to be the last question?" Nope. Here's another one. I didn't think about that one. All right. It's your first child. You went through training. Training? What? It was incredible.

The Courtroom Drama

That's what is traditionally understood about what's going on right now. Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It's amazing. So this tradition comes from numerous scriptures as we discussed a couple weeks ago, but it also comes from the idea that life gets hard at this time of the year. What you're going through right now, looking to your left and right, seeing

everybody raising their hands—that's been going on for quite a while. And it's been a phenomenon among Judaism and the believers in Messiah for thousands of years.

Who are the key players in the courtroom? You got the judge, right? And so that's who you really want to impress. That's who you're going to be presenting evidence to. And the judge is, right? And then you have the defendant. Guess who that is? That's you, right? And then you have the prosecutor, right?

And the prosecuting attorney—his job is to be an accuser, right, in the courtroom. That's his title. That's what he's supposed to do. His job is when you sit on the stand, he's gonna look for weaknesses in your story, for weaknesses in your life, for weaknesses in your spirituality, if you will, and his job is to poke you and stress you out and throw you curve balls until you fall on your face because of these weaknesses in your life. In other words, if the accuser can break you while you're in the court, if he can make you look non-reliable, if he can make you look crazy, if he can make you look like you do have that temper, if he can show the judge that you do have unforgiveness in your life, if he can show the judge that you don't have faith, if he can show the judge that you truly don't care about your wife, if he can do anything that reveals anything like that or anything that may appear like that, that can be entered into the court as evidence. All right?

That's why you see in murder trials, the prosecutor goes up to the witness and the defendant and tries to get him to become emotional on the stand. Why? Because if he has an uncontrolled outburst on the stand, then bam, that's evidence. Look at that judge—everything I said was right. Guys, the accuser or the adversary—that's a term used for Satan in the scriptures. And that's what his job title is. Several stories: [Zechariah 3](#), 1-2, [Job 2](#), 1-6, [Revelation 12](#), 10—he's known as the accuser of the brethren. His job is to keep pushing you until you explode.

Being Tested Before the Day of Judgment

You wonder why life gets hard right now. And you may just think, "Matt, that's just tradition." I wonder if it's because we're being tested. We're being tested before the day of Yom Kippur. We're being tested before the day when God is going to look out and see everybody who is loyal to Him and everybody who is disloyal to Him, because He's going to wipe away the stains of sin from His presence either way.

Identifying Satan's Weaknesses

The question is, who's he going to wipe out with it? What's the weakness in your life that Satan is trying to use against you? Is it lust? Is it anxiety? Is it focus? Lack of faith? Anger? What is it that Satan's trying to use against you and your family right now? What's the weakness in your life that Hasatan—if there really was a courtroom going on and you're up in the stand—would try to poke and prod to use against your marriage? What's the weakness in your life that he would try to use against your relationship with God? Against your kids? Against the witness that you're supposed to be giving as a follower of Yeshua? What's the weakness in your life?

Is that where you're having a hard time? For those of you who raised your hands?

The Days of Awe

In the days of awe—these 10 days specifically—we're supposed to reconcile relationships and seek forgiveness. It's kind of the theme. We seek forgiveness as we forgive others, just as the commandments say. How much more of a technique will it be for the enemy to cause offense so that we fall right back into unforgiveness and resentment?

Any other time of the year, but no—it's now. Guys, I can almost guarantee you the biggest fights of the year happen in every single fellowship around the globe right now. The biggest fights that you have with your spouses happen right now. The biggest fights with your kids happen right now. The biggest conflicts with your brothers and sisters in Yeshua happen right now.

I don't say that because I'm just guessing. I say that from experience.

When Life Feels Overwhelming

So what do you do? What do you do when your life is feeling overwhelming? What do you do when your relationships are falling apart? What do you do when stress hits like a wave? What do you do when you don't know what to do? What do you do when there's really nothing you can do, but still you have this weight in your life?

Fascinating. As the court case drags on, the prosecution doesn't get weaker—it gets stronger. Because there's always an end to every court case. There's always a time when the judge hears from both the side of the defendant and the prosecution, and he says, "You know what? Bam, it's over." But until we get to that point, it's a lot of pressure.

We have a situation that actually plays out like this in Scripture. It's in [1 Kings 4](#), starting in verse 1. So turn with me there. I want you guys to look at this situation. I want to show you the

story about someone else who was under a lot of pressure in her life as well. Very desperate. Didn't know what to do. What was she to do?

She was a widow who had lost everything. She was about to lose her kids. What was she going to do? She was about to lose her house. What was she going to do? She had lost the love of her life. What's she going to do?

The Widow and Her Oil

Starting in verse 1, we see the prophet Elisha, and he's going to the widow, right? And he says: "Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and now, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.' And Elisha said to her, 'What shall I do for you? Tell me, what have you in the house?' And she said, 'Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.'"

A little flask of oil.

Then he said: "Go outside, borrow vessels from all of your neighbors, empty vessels. What kind of vessels? Not too few. Then go in and shut the door behind you, you and your sons, and pour into these vessels. And when one of the vessels was full, set it aside."

So she went in with her kids, shut the door behind her, and as she poured this flask of oil into the empty vessels... It's a big miracle. Almost sounds like Hanukkah, right?

This woman had lost everything. Everything in her life. There was despair in her family. Scripture tells us that she cried out. You guys know what that means—to cry out? Anybody ever cried out before? I'm not talking about when you drop a dish in the kitchen. I'm talking about when you cry out to God. It means to moan, to weep uncontrollably, to shriek out of grief. The word identified here is the sound of a broken heart.

See, there was a death in her family. Scripture tells us that she married one of the sons of the prophets. These were men who were training under Elisha to be prophets and preachers in Israel. Her husband—her romantic lover, her best friend, her provider, her protector—had been taken away. He had died. She is broken because a loved one was taken away from her. Anybody ever been there?

There was a debt in her family. Since her husband was dead, she had no one to pay the bills. The creditor was coming, and the only way that she could pay the bills was to sell her children

into servitude. So overwhelming. You don't know what else to do. She doesn't see how she can make it because she doesn't see the income that she needs to live on.

There was a devotion in her family, though. In spite of her problems, she still held firm to her faith. She needs help, but she doesn't turn to her family or friends. She turns to the man of God. She reminds the prophet that her husband did fear the Lord. "What are we to do? I'm crying out to God right now. What are we to do?"

The prophet tells her to go get some vessels—empty vessels—and pour that little bit of oil she had into these vessels. Man, that was almost like feeding the 5,000. I mean, you could just see it happen: pouring the flask in. "Oh, this one's full. Go. Another one. Another one. Just keep on going." A little flask. Keep on going. This is wonderful, right? "Give me another vessel." "Mom, we got like 100 of them. We're out of vessels. Stop pouring." I love that.

The Lesson of Empty Vessels

And I love that she was told to get empty vessels. See, that taught me a huge lesson. Because in spite of her feeling like she needed to be in control of her life—because I'm sure she did—that's why we get stressed out. When life hits us, when things get hard, when we're being tested in life, the reason why we're so anxious is because we feel like we need to be able to fix it somehow.

Everybody's looking at me like a cow looking at a new gate. Like, "This is the first thing you... like, what?" No, I don't need to control the things in my life. Yeah, yeah, we all feel like we need to control stuff because it's our job to fix the things in our lives. What do you do if you can't fix it? If it's outside of your scope of ability?

She couldn't use the vessels that had stuff in them. She couldn't use her own solutions that weren't working. She couldn't try to hold on and keep repeating the solutions that she felt like should be working in her life. No, she had to dump that out and have the empty vessels so that God could fill it with his solutions.

"Matt, that's really deep in some vague spiritual kind of way."

I know. And we're going to get to what we can do when we don't know what to do here in just a moment.

Very striking verse. Very striking verse. Anybody ever ask God... "God, I wish you'd just make this stop in my life. Fill in the blank—whatever your hardship is that you raised your hand over. I just wish you'd give me an escape. Can't you just, like, let me through to the next level? You

know—left, right, up, down, X, X, Y. Let me just cheat code. Let me through. Please, God. Easy button." Oh my God.

Praying for Endurance

Luke chapter 22. So this is Luke's version of the incident with the Last Supper, and Judas is going off. He's going to sell Yeshua and so on and so forth. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you. So the accuser is demanding to go after Simon to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail you. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Pray that your faith won't fail you. Another translation says, pray that your faith will endure.

"Wait a second, Yeshua. You're going to pray that I can endure it? No, you need to pray that I can get an easy button." Yeshua didn't tell Simon he was going to have an easy button. Yeshua didn't tell Simon, "Hey, you ask God for an escape. He's just going to poof. Everything's going to be okay."

"Simon, I'm going to pray to the Father that your faith will endure this. When the adversary comes at you, when you're in the courtroom and he's throwing every single thing he's got at you, I'm going to pray that you will sit there and you will say, 'My faith is in the Son of God.' Your anger will not get out of control. Your lust will not get out of control. Your anxiety will not get out of control. You will not lash out to your kids. You will not lash out to your spouse. You will not lash out to your brothers and sisters in Messiah. You will not flip that guy off going down the highway. You will be a witness."

"I'm going to pray that your faith endures."

What is Yeshua praying for you right now? He's not praying for an escape for you. He's praying for something else. I'm going to pray that you can hold on to that rope. Even though you feel you're at the very end of it, I'm going to pray that you can hold on to that rope. That's the advocate we have, the Father. I know you can do this. That's incredible.

We see other scriptures that talk about being in places of pressure in our life. [Psalm 119, 71](#): "My suffering was good for you, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees."

My suffering is good for me. What's our suffering supposed to do? Bring us back into focus with what we're supposed to be focusing on. I know through God's strength, I can hold on to this rope. I know with God's strength, I can make it through this situation. I know with God's strength, I can endure. Man, I'm gonna focus on his kingdom. I'm gonna focus on his decrees.

Why? Because I'm at a time of suffering and it's not gonna be me that's gonna bring me through it anyway. So why do I feel like it all has to be on me to do something like that?

What's another one? Here we go. [Isaiah 48:10](#), "I have refined you, but not as silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." How would God make us suffer? Is he? Or is he trying to teach us something? Is he trying to teach us that we need to be more focused on him and his solution to our problems than us and our solutions to our problems?

Now, don't get me wrong. There are many situations in our lives that we have control over. It's irresponsible to sit there and do nothing if God has placed you in a place where you have control over something. But I'm talking about those situations where you have no control over it.

My Suffering is Good for Me

If you're in one of those situations right now, could it be a place where God has you? Not a place that you're supposed to jump out with a parachute and land safely on the ground. No. It's going to be a place where you're going to have to, instead of flying on an airplane that you don't know how to drive, fly on the wings of the eagle that he talks about lifting you up on.

What is it right now that Satan is using as evidence against you in the court of God? That's a phrase that struck me hard. So what is it right now that if you were before God's throne, Satan would know what buttons to push? What's the quickest way to make you fall? Is it patience? Bam. Is it anger? I'm going to make him have an outburst before the Father right now. On Yom Kippur. Bam. Is it lust? Bam. Is it unforgiveness? Oh, Father, forgive me. It's Day of Atonement. Forgive me. Yeah, but you hadn't even forgiven that guy. Remember that? Memories get brought back. No, I won't forgive them. They don't deserve my forgiveness. See, Father? They don't deserve your forgiveness.

What is it? In your life right now, the weakness in your life that Satan is using against your marriage, let that sink in. What is it right now that the adversary is using against you to break up your relationship with your children? To break up your relationship with the people that are sitting right next to you right now? To break up your relationship with God? Hmm.

What Weaknesses is Satan Using?

What do you do when you don't know what to do? What do you do when you come to a place where you've realized, Father, I can't change the way my kids are acting towards me. I can do my

best and I can be an example, but at this point there's nothing I can do to correct the things that they're pursuing in their lives. Father, what can I do? My spouse has turned their backs on our relationship. They act like the covenant that we went into on the day of our marriage doesn't mean anything. What can I do? Father, what can I do with my friends in the fellowship who are going a different direction now. They've turned their backs to righteousness and now they're walking away. These are my friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ. What do I do?

There is one thing you can do and it's something that we neglect very often and that is pray. Now Matt, I know, we went to church every Sunday. We know all about you gotta pray, right? But I mean, what do we really gotta do? You gotta pray. You gotta pray. In situations that you cannot fix, you need to go into a place where God sees you submitting to him, that place is on your hands and knees with your face in the ground crying out to him, pray.

The One Thing You Can Do

Oh, I mean, I prayed about it. God, please fix my relationship. God, please fix my job. God, when I say pray, I mean pray. When was the last time you literally got down on your hands and knees and cried out to God? I mean, think about that. When was the last time that actually happened? I'm not talking about waking up and being like, Dear Lord. No, I'm talking about hands and knees on the ground in the room alone. Father, I can't do anything to fix this. I know you hear the cries of your people. Hear my cry today for fill in the blank.

When was the last time you did that? I'm not talking about just five minutes. An hour. When was the last time you got down on your hands and knees because the situation in your life was so difficult and you were so desperate that you cried out to the Father? Like for a good chunk of time.

Man, pray for an hour? I don't have nothing to say for an hour. When am I supposed to pray for an hour? You're supposed to cry out to God. I don't care if you have words. You're supposed to come to a place where you enable yourself to submit to God in the form of prayer.

Matt, I want to pray something though, and I don't have the words. See, it's funny because among believers in the Messiah, believers in Yeshua, Christianity, even the Hebrew roots, right? We love to mock other denominations and other movements. Like, Catholics, they have prayer books, but that's just repetitive prayers. The Jews, they have prayer books, and that's just repetitive prayers. You don't see them sitting there saying, oh, we don't know what to pray. That's not an excuse for them. Get a prayer book. Go get a sedour if you don't have anything to say to God.

But you need to be on your face frequently if you raised your hand today. I don't have time to pray. Oh Lord. That's why God made an alarm clock so you can wake up an hour earlier every single day and get up. No one else is awake. Get your little cup of coffee, a little Keurig if you need to. Go down and go into the room and fall on your face. And say, Father, I don't know what I can do in this situation, but I know you can.

Fall on Your Face

What do you do when you don't know what to do? There is something you can do. You can stop trying to control an uncontrollable situation and actually say, Father, I know you're still in control, and I will petition you to have peace in my life. I will petition you to fill in the blank that there will be shalom in this area of my life.

I challenge you, if you raised your hand today, as a brother in Messiah, pray. That little five minute thing, pray. Do it once a day for the next three days until Yom Kippur. How about that? Goal oriented. Fall on your face for an hour every day. Get up early. Ask your spouse to watch the kids as you go and pray for whatever it is in your life that you cry out to God for—an hour a day. Three hours. That shouldn't be a big number within the scope of the situation until Yom Kippur.

This is important. It's not something to be neglected. And I know at least like 95% of everyone in this room will probably walk out of here today, feeling, yeah, I need to pray more, get home, turn on the TV, forget all about it. That's fine. The 5% that aren't, you guys will see a change in something in your life. Will.

Why Do You Think Scripture Says to Pray?

Why do you think scripture says to pray? Because it works. You pray and you hold on to that rope. You don't let go of that rope. You know that voice in your head that says you should just let go? Just let go. You can't hold on. It's not worth holding on to. Just say no. You hold on to that rope. Why? Because you have an advocate before the Father that is going to join you in prayer that your faith would endure.

[Proverbs 3](#), 5 through 6. There's nothing to even elaborate. [1 Peter 5](#), 6 through 9. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you. So come to a place where you are showing your humility in the circumstances in your life in contrast to who your king is.

How do you do that? Casting all of your anxieties on him because he cares for you. Be sober-minded, be watchful. Why would he say be sober-minded and watchful? Just in the courtroom. That last verse is awesome. You're not suffering alone. You're not the only one going through a hard time. You should have seen the hard times they were going through in the first and second century. When Nero got all upset. We'll talk about that in just a second.

Respond, Don't React

What do you do when you don't know what to do? Remember that. Remember that. What do you not do when you don't know what to do? Try to control the situation. You saw the slide. You don't give up. You hold on. And when faced with a conflict in your life, you do not react. This is where I'm going to try to give you guys some techniques that I've learned. You respond.

I can almost guarantee you that the biggest fights of the year will occur right now, especially from within the camp. You guys realize that Sukkot's coming up and those of you joining us for Sukkot are going to be camping out for nine days with like a hundred and thirty other people. It's all fun and games. Like everybody gets along for like the first four hours. I mean it's awesome. There will be conflict at Sukkot. Why? Because we're going.

I want to give you guys some tools today. These tools are not just for you to use at Sukkot, but I expect you to use them at Sukkot. These tools are for you to use in your personal relationships as well. These tools are for you to use at work. These tools are for you to use with your kids. These tools are for you to use with your marriage. These tools are for you to use with each other. Okay?

You guys know what the difference between a reaction is and a response?

We get to talk about some mechanics. We're going to talk about psychology here. This is going to be great.

Reactions Originate from Your Subconscious

So a reaction originates from the subconscious and is influenced by buttons and triggers. What does that mean? It means it originates from an area of your subconscious called the id. Everybody say id. The id is one of the three sections of the psyche—the psychic apparatus, the three sections of the conscious and subconscious of your brain. And the id is the basic animal instincts behind who you are. We're talking about the uncoordinated instinctual trends that lie outside the reach of conscious examination. Okay? Animal instincts. When you react real quick

without filtering or buffering what you're doing. When a newborn baby is born, that is the only form of consciousness it has. That's it. Instinct. Look, there's a hot stove. Gotta touch it. There's no filter. Right? The id.

It is influenced by buttons and triggers. Fight or flight. Ever heard of fight or flight? That's animal. Id. Right? Whoa, something's happening. Make a decision. Instinctual. Run away. Run back.

Fight or Flight: What It Looks Like

Yesterday I was running in my neighborhood, and the first time I ever came upon a dog that didn't like me was in an area where I had no friends, nowhere to run. And this big 50-pound mutt-looking thing—ugly little dog, big dog—was across the street. He looked up at me as I was jogging past. "What?" I'm alpha. And then I hear a growl behind me and this dog looks up and starts to run after me. Jaws. Oh crap. I turn around. "Get back!" "What?" Acting all tough. "Get back!" And the dog kind of stops and looks around, so I turn around and start walking away. Then I hear him come up close and I look back—he's following me.

At that moment, I got scared. I'll be honest. I don't carry a gun with me, a big old bat or something. How am I going to get this dog? And I can either run, or I could fight. In that instant, I knew if I ran, he would probably chase me and bite me, kill me or something—Cujo—or I could fight. I didn't think about anything else. The dog was right there. I turned around and tried to imitate the Hulk. What? I pulled my arms out, ready to grab the dog's throat in that moment.

In that split moment, I knew I was going to get bit. I'd already planned to throw my arm out and kill the dog with my other hand. I know you're all laughing. I had this all planned out. I'm going to kill this dog and I'm going to get bit up and I'm going to get all bloody. I'm going to get stitches. But I'm about to kill this dog. What? Come. Come at me. Right? The dog kind of backed down and ran off.

I did not think this situation through. Fight or flight. The id in my brain kicked on. I didn't notice the dog had tags. I didn't even think about maybe the dog lives at this house. I didn't notice that the owner of the dog was coming out of the front door when all of this was occurring, carrying some bags. They had no idea. I was about to kill this dog. Fight or flight. I just, in my mind, it was fight or flight.

When we react like that, that is the id within your brain. All right? If I thought about it, hey ma'am, is this your dog? Hey, somebody help. That would have been a response.

An example of when you react: let's say your child breaks something in the house. It's very important. Real big. Falls off the counter or whatnot because he was messing with it. And you scream at the child. "Ah! What are you doing? Ah!" Raise your voice. You scream. You scare the child. You have no goal whatsoever in that moment. You just react. Kids all scared to death. You don't know what to do. You can't communicate with the child because you're too busy screaming, acting all scared because something broke. That's a reaction.

Example number two: You're at Sukkot and a person you can normally tolerate for two hours every week is getting on your nerves due to personality conflicts. That person doesn't notice the campsite boundaries and unintentionally places their child's toys on your side of the campsite border. You assume intentional offense. You begin to speak down to them, fueled by anger and emotion, not yearning for a solution, but yearning to be heard. That's a reaction.

Response Comes from Your Conscious Mind

Reaction is fueled by stress and not logical thinking. Never react in a conflict. Be solution-oriented instead. Response originates from the conscious part of your brain, where triggers and buttons and reactions are buffered. Okay? And goals can be considered in what the response will influence.

A response comes from a section of the brain called the ego or superego. This isn't narcissism, this isn't egotism. This is just the names of these parts of the brain that actually think things through. They seek to please the desires of the id, but in more realistic ways. Okay? Another way of putting it is they stop the id from making rash decisions.

In other words, if you are in a conflict with your spouse, your id wants it to stop. Your id wants the conflict to stop, right? It's your wife or your husband fighting. All of us on some basic level want peace. That's all of our goals, unless you're a psychopath. And if we leave the id in control, it targets your spouse as a source of the conflict. And then you attack the spouse as a solution to bring peace.

Now, your ego, right? The one that says no. That's the part of your brain that says, "Oh, calm down. Take a breath." No. Attacking your spouse will not bring long-term peace. That's probably not a good thing to do. It will bring divorce, Matthew. Calm down. It'll bring divorce. You don't want that. Calm down.

Your ego is what identifies the source of the conflict and invites your spouse to be your ally in the fight against the conflict and achieving a goal. That's how you respond.

Responding in Practice

Here's an example. Your child breaks something very big, very disastrous in your home. You notice your anger and your reaction. It's about to go off. You notice it, but you stop. You take a breath. You pause for a second. And you consider the situation. What's the first thing you check? If you're goal-oriented, what's the number one priority you have right then and there? Is my boy okay? Is your child okay?

You see the difference there. Every one of us has been in that situation. Benjamin will drag something off the top. "Benjamin, oh!" First thing you do is check for the child's station. Are you hurt? Are they injured? Are they scared? Then you look at the damage. How important is this object that just broke? Is it not a huge deal? Not enough for you to become overwhelmed emotionally? Not enough for you to react? Then you focus on cleaning up the mess with or without the help of the child.

Then you speak to the child and carefully explain how in the future they need to be more careful. It's a response, right? See the difference.

Another example: You're at Sukkot and someone is not respecting your personal boundaries. You calmly assess the situation. Number one: Is their disrespect of your boundaries intentional? We all know that person that we really have a personality conflict with and we don't get along with. Right? Maybe they're wanting to hang out with us all the time at Sukkot. No, we really don't want to go there. You bug me. Is their disrespect of your personal boundaries intentional? Probably not. Most likely not.

Thinking through the situation, you realize that if they are always bugging you—as it's interpreted by your id—it is because they really like you and probably look up to you. Yeah. They think of you as a close friend. They trust you enough to be close to you all the time.

You see, with this in mind, you tell them that you're going to be spending the next few hours with your spouse or family, but that you'll catch up to them at services or out at the games or at the breakout session. You just need to have a little space for a little while. This strengthens your relationship with them and it doesn't make you look like a mean old buffoon either who can't control their emotional triggers.

Preparing for Conflict

Responding is mindful and thinking. So we're not supposed to do what? We're supposed to? So if there's a conflict in our lives, we're going to?

This is fantastic, I know. So since we're on this subject, I want to go over a few techniques for conflict resolution. Is that okay? Can I give you guys some conflict resolution techniques to use in your marriage, in your household, in your family, and with your friends?

I'll give you guys some homework. We're going to be dwelling together for nine days. Conflict is coming and we need to prepare for that. It's going to happen. We knew Hurricane Matthew was coming so our friends in Florida did what? They got prepared. Got a little bit of gasoline in their generators. They realized the weak points of their home windows. Put some boards up. They're going to reinforce the weak points of their life.

Practical Tools for Conflict

I'm hoping this will help you. So Jason is going to pass out these nice little single sheets of paper. And I believe we have one for everybody. I want this to be your go-to whenever there's a conflict. Your wife bugged you and you're about to engage in a conflict. I don't care how silly you look when you say, hold on, I need to pull out a piece of paper first. All right, green light. Okay, and we're going to go through these. All of these techniques are taken from Word of God Christian Counseling Center in Greenville, South Carolina. This is not stuff that I just made up. And a couple of these things you're going to read, and because you're the type of person that reacts, you're going to say, what? That's ridiculous. I know. But we're going to go over them together, okay? Alright, we have enough? We're good? Everybody good?

Love Above Truth

We're going to go over this and see, Yeshua tells us that if we love God and love each other, we fulfill the commandments of God, right? So it's important for us to do what? Your job is to show love. This especially includes your spouse, friends, and family. We've been taught, however, that truth is more important than love. We believe that the truth of whatever our situation is, how we feel justified in whatever's happening in our life, that's more important than love. Meanwhile, the love that our spouse is not going to feel because we're going to engage in a conflict, because we're going to react. We could go on a message about Hebrew roots and the Messianic movement. Right there because of that, we're going to stick with the personal relationships. Ironically, declaring your truth in a conflict often invalidates the other person's truth, and as a result, they feel lack of love. [1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#) tells us that love should be the priority, not your truth. In other words, if you have a conflict with your spouse, right? I say that because anyone who's married, we're familiar with this. Fight starts for whatever reason. Typically there are two sides to create a fight. My point of view from my side is my truth. You

see how that works? The point of view from my spouse's side is her truth. She's going to be arguing her truth the way that she feels, the way that she sees the situation. By me going in and jumping in and being like, "No, I'm going to prove to you that your truth is wrong." It makes her look like the enemy. It makes her feel like the enemy and now she has to pull up a whole defensive line, cock the guns, bring it on. Beach invasion, I'm going to defend this beach right here. Come on, right? This is what happens in a conflict. Since love is always higher than truth, love is always higher than what? It is your responsibility to make sure your spouse, family, and friends feel loved by you above what you believe the truth of the matter is.

Don't Defend with Truth

Number one, when you are accused by your spouse, family, or friends, never defend yourself with truth phrases. What's a truth phrase? A truth phrase is when you say, you should not feel that way. It's not my fault. I did not do anything wrong. What is your problem? That is not the way I said it. And that's not what I meant. Never use these phrases. Why not? When you defend yourself by saying your spouse, friend, or family's feelings are wrong, you're calling them a liar. By you saying that they don't really feel that way, or they're not interpreting the truth, or however they feel is not true, you're calling them a liar. Guys, how you feel is truth. How your spouse or your family or your friend feels is truth to them. By you saying their truth is invalid, you're calling them a liar for feeling that way. The moment you build a defensive line, your spouse, friend, or family no longer feels loved by you. They feel validated in viewing you as an adversary in their life. If you want to be the winner of a conflict, if you want to build your evidence, if you want to tear down your opponent and walk away with the pride of knowing you've won, you can use these phrases. If you don't want a divorce, broken friendship, or broken family, then make reconciliation your goal. What should be the goal in any conflict?

Ask to Understand

Number two, if your spouse, friend, or family member hurts you, do not accuse them. Don't accuse them. Instead, ask them to help you understand why they did or said what they did that resulted in you feeling unloved and hurt by them. In other words, your spouse comes by you and says something mean to you. Do that sometimes. Mess up. We exploit how casual we've become with our spouse and we throw a negative comment out there about them. Peg them down. Instead of reacting and maybe calling them a name because they called you a name, ask them, hey, can you explain to me why you just said that? Because it kind of hurt. That makes me look vulnerable. What's your goal? Reconciliation. Can you explain to me why you would

say such a thing to me? I want to understand why you said that. Avoid phrases like, "It's your fault." "You never" or "You always." Man, we're bad about that. We are bad about saying, "This is how you always do it. This is how you always say it. You always like that. You always..." That's not how you approach a conflict if reconciliation is your goal. If peace is your goal.

Forgive First

Number three. Forgive your spouse, friend, or family member before you engage. Why? If not, you will likely respond in ill emotion and allow your id to speak rather than your ego. That's important. Alright, I forgive you for saying that. Honey, why would you say that? Can you help me understand? Simple stuff, I know.

Own Your Offense

Number four, not going to like this. Plead guilty to what you have been accused of. Agree with your accuser, be it your spouse, friend, or family member. When you are accused, look for a place to agree with what you have been accused of. "Why would I want to do that?" Because you have a goal. Your goal is not to get a broken friendship. Your goal is not to come to fellowship every single week and "Nah, I don't like them." Your goal is not to get a divorce, right? The reason you are being accused is because the accuser feels hurt and they want you to recognize that you did something wrong that resulted in them getting hurt, and you'd be willing to change. I repeat that. The reason why you're being accused of something by your personal relationship with someone else is because you did something in their eyes that resulted in them getting hurt or else they wouldn't come at you. Make sense? Everybody see that? No one wants to be hurt. Most accusations are not rooted in loathful shaming intentions. They are made in hopes that the individual will stop feeling the pain inflicted by you. Someone accuses you? I'm sorry. Help me understand how this played out in your mind. Help me understand how you feel, your truth. I want to change that. I don't want to hurt you anymore. I'm sorry that I hurt you. Be willing to own an offense you did not make. I know there's a couple people who like to react and in their belly right now they're getting that twitch. No! Why should I have to take the blame? It's their fault. They think the same thing about you. You have that in common. Yeshua took on the sin of the world. You can certainly do the same for your close relationships, right? Everybody say, I can do the same. You're committed. Made a vow. Say something like, I am sorry that me saying that hurt you. I am sorry that me doing that hurt you. I see why me doing or saying that would result in your feeling this way.

First to Surrender

After you ask your spouse to explain why they said something, why this fight is going on, be the first to surrender. Because what's your goal? I am sorry that me saying that made you feel this way. I am sorry that when I did that, it made you feel this way. Be willing to change. How? How can I do or say this differently next time so you do not feel the same way? Sometimes, men, we get distracted and we speak in a tone of voice that doesn't seem respectful to our spouse. Maybe we're focused on doing something or whatever, and our spouse is like, I just can't believe you responded to me in that tone of voice. And we're over here like, what are you talking about? I just said okay. It was the way you said okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. All right. Me saying okay a certain way caused my spouse or my friend to feel pain in their life. Was that my intention? But that's the accusation. I'm sorry that me saying okay with that tone of voice made you feel pain. How can I say okay next time? And we laugh, but this is a real situation. I mean, every guy knows about this situation. And it's not a laughing matter to us. I mean, good gracious. How can I respond? How can I do this, say this next time that will make you feel better? You can say okay with a lighter tone. You can jump up and smile and say okay. Whatever they ask, men. Just every time you say okay, give me some flowers. Yes, dear. Okay, okay. Just whatever. How can I do this differently for what goal? Getting somewhere.

Listen Without Fixing

Do not be the fixer when your spouse, friend, or family member shares a problem with you. Men. Men, what are we? We fix junk. That's why we got tools. Because we fix stuff. Our spouse has a problem. Let me get my wrench. We're going to fix this problem. Do not be the fixer unless they ask for advice. Why? This is huge advice. Huge. I'm still honing this in my life. Unsolicited advice is heard as criticism. Someone tells you about a problem, doesn't ask for a solution, and you tell them a solution, it's now viewed as criticism.

Unsolicited Advice

Women, I'm going to pick on you for this. Unsolicited advice is viewed as criticism. Men clapping, but try not to clap too loud. Baby, how can I respond to that statement a different way that would not make you feel? Ladies, you are guilty of giving unsolicited advice when you see a situation in someone else's life that they didn't ask for. And you know how that makes them feel? Makes them feel like you're criticizing them because obviously they don't have the solution or aren't doing the solution that you have because you're perfect, because you know everything. And now you're trying to put your perfection into our life. Men do it too, but men are usually

the fixers sometimes. And we just fix situations. Unsolicited advice typically comes from the ladies.

Unsolicited advice is viewed as what? Take that home. If someone, spouses specifically, come to you to share a problem, most of the time they simply want to be heard. Is that true?

Rules of Engagement

Okay. Number eight. Never. Everybody say never. Never accuse or find fault with your spouse or anyone else who you're planning on having a long-term relationship with. This is something I read in a counseling book. It was actually written by a rabbi a while back. And I read this in one of the first chapters and I thought it was the craziest thing. Don't ever accuse my wife or find fault with her. What in the world? It took me a while to realize why he was saying that.

Never go to bed angry. Never withdraw, leave, or go away. In other words, if you're in a conflict, you can't quite get these rules of engagement quick enough before your id kicks in, stop yourself from walking out of the room and slamming the door. Simple things. Never refuse to forgive. Never stonewall. You guys know what stonewall is? When you refuse to negotiate or resolve a conflict. That happens a lot. That happens when your spouse pulls out a piece of paper or your friend pulls out a piece of paper, hits the coat. Alright, I see that we're in a conflict. Now hold on, how is it that I can do? That means that you need to sit there and pull out your piece of paper too and engage in this conflict to reconciliation. Not just sit there and say, no, I don't want to talk about it. No, I don't like you. Meh. Don't stonewall.

Why Forgiveness Matters

Why is it so important to forgive, to get through these things and forgive? Guys, forgiveness releases you from pain of the offenses and feelings that whoever caused you, whether it be your spouse, friend, or family member, right? That's what forgiveness does. Forgiveness isn't always for them, it's for you so that you can move on. I think I have a quote. Yeah, forgiveness does not make a wrong right. Forgiveness does not make a what? It releases you from the pain, anger, torment of what has occurred.

This is what [Matthew 18](#) is talking about. When Yeshua was talking about the man who wouldn't forgive his servant, and so the king forgave him, but because he wouldn't forgive someone, a petty difference in a conflict or whatnot, a little bit of money owed him, he threw him in jail to be tormented every single day until he forgave him, until he paid back everything

that he owed. That torment is real. Yeshua said that's what the Father will do to you if you do not forgive him. Forgiveness is extremely important.

That Torment

What's that torment? That torment is you thinking back every single day being reminded of that offense that your spouse, friend, family, bully from your childhood, whatever, tree that fell on your tree house, whatever it was, that offense that caused you pain in your life and because you have not forgiven it, every single time you think about it, that pain comes back.

I want you guys to close your eyes. I want to show you something real quick. Everybody close your eyes. See here. I want you guys to remember the best day of your life. Maybe it was the day of your wedding. Maybe it was the day that you graduated school. Maybe it was the day you got your puppy dog for Christmas or whatever happened. Maybe it was the very first time you got on the stage and did a performance. Maybe it was the day your child was born. The happiest day of your life. And I want you to remember how you felt in that moment. You guys remember that? Open your eyes.

You cannot remember a feeling without feeling the feeling. Most of you got a little spark of joy inside you, maybe just a grin. Why? Because I asked you to remember a feeling and you not only remembered the feeling but you have to re-feel the feeling. Every time you're reminded of an offense that you haven't forgiven, you will feel the feeling, the very same feeling that you felt when that offense took place. And that will torture you every single day, every single time it comes into your mind until the day that you pick up the key from the cell floor and unlock the door and walk out of the cell and say, I forgive them, Father. It doesn't right the wrong, but it takes the pain and the suffering and the torment off of your heart.

Go Into Your Prayer Closet

Maybe you're not at the end of your rope today. Maybe you just don't know what to do. If your world is filled with conflict and anxiety, the above techniques may help. Try them out. For everything else, for everything that you don't have a technique for, for everything else that you don't have an instruction manual for, for everything else in your life that you cannot bear on your shoulders, you don't know what to do with it, there's prayer.

And I challenge every single one of you. Go into your prayer closet. Wake up early. No one's awake. Go in there before the kids wake up and fall on your face. I don't know what to say.

Don't matter. Fall on your face before God and say, Father, I'm here. I'm here because I trust you. Amen.

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