

React VS. Respond

In an ongoing way I always want to look more and more like Jesus. As I read thru the gospels it was brought to attention how Jesus processed information. This morning I want to talk about something that when I began to understand and implement it my life changed for the better.

Prayer

One of the things I love most about Jesus is that he never reacted - He always responded
I have worked the past couple of years to make this change in my own life
This is not an easy task

I find that almost always my initial reaction to any situation is wrong.
WHY is it almost always wrong?

1. We will usually initially do what is in our own self-interest – (survival and selfish)
2. Our nature is selfish, and we will usually default to selfishness
3. IF I don't shoot off my mouth, I don't have to defend something I did not say.
4. I think I know the answer and don't listen to the rest of the story that bring context

Very quick and glancing overview of some brain science
The Limbic system in our brain is where the information comes in for initial processing.

The limbic system is a complex set of structures located in our midbrain. It is called the “feeling or reactive brain” and is responsible for the formation of memories. The limbic system gathers and filters information and stimuli from our environment and responds to this information. It assigns emotional significance to everything we encounter and reacts to this information as safe or unsafe.

One of the most common illustrations is taking a hike in the woods, hear a noise and think it is a snake, start to run, look back and it was just a stick falling. That is our fight/flight reaction, our survival mode.

It is the natural reaction, it is the way God created our brains to help keep us alive.
So it is not bad or wrong, it was just our reaction

But it is also not the way we are to live our whole lives.
It leans toward base, immature and survival, not reasoned.

As we mature, our brain matures also with the development of our reasoning center, the prefrontal cortex. The gray matter of the anterior part of the frontal lobe that is highly developed in humans and plays a role in the regulation of complex cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning. This reasoning center is also one of the things that separates us from animals

Not something we always use, but it really helps to develop this use of it.

I wonder if this is what Paul is referring to in [1 Corinthians 13:11](#) **When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.**

So for the past number of years, I have been trying to push all the cognitive decisions I have to make to my prefrontal cortex so they are considered and not rashly reacted to.

As we look at Jesus in the gospels, we see people or satan trying to trick him into a reaction

Luke 4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted^[a] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’^[b]”⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours.”⁸ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’^[c]”⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”^[d]”¹² Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’^[e]”

All reasoned and Godly responses. I was also Jesus (the Word) using scripture (the Word) to answer a spiritual question with a spiritual answer.

People often will bring up Jesus and the temple money changers as an example of reacting not responding.

3 references to this story only John’s gospel details the response. Matthew 21:12 Mark 11:15

[c]

He did not just go and freak out. Jesus’s anger was righteous reasoned anger to expose sinful behavior that had become commonplace, and was an abomination to God.

Matthew 27²⁷ Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said.³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

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Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him,

for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

IF there were ever a time when a reaction may have been justified, this would be it.

So how, how could Jesus always respond?

Pre-existent Christ knew what was ahead and allowed Him to be calm in each situation

He also knew that there was **hope and a future**.

Often we don't see a future – why should I wait?

Jer 29

Hope and a future. It was not in Babylon that they had hope and a future

It was in Babylon that they were to ⁵“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.

⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

This is what they were to do in Babylon

The rest of the passage says:

¹⁰ This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you **hope and a future**.

¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. ¹⁵ I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

The hope and a future is not what we are experiencing now – but for eternity

Jesus had **hope and a future**

Heb 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He knew what was coming but also knew the “joy set before Him”

We are that joy, the redeemed who believe in His sacrifice unto salvation and will be reunited with Him in His eternal kingdom.

He was not about immediate gratification – He knew what the long-term plan of God was and fulfilled it because He had hope and a future.

Addiction theory – those without hope have nothing to live for – so they live for now (react)

Study of 3-4 year olds and marshmallows deferred gratification

Not a one time decision – daily walking it out

We don't just decide to look like the Son of God one day and that is it.

Probably the 2nd most influential books in my life is

Steven Covey's 7 habits of highly effective people.

1. Be proactive – set yourself up for success
2. Begin with the end in mind – super tricky trim
3. Put first things first – important vs. urgent
4. Think win-win
5. Seek to understand then be understood
6. Synergize
7. Sharpen the saw

These are all are very much respond, not react

Reaction is a default. We will not default into better things

Positive change comes thru effort

There is some value in reaction - Sticker shock- it forces us into the reality that things are not what we thought and helps us to consider how to proceed with proper information.

React does not allow us to reflect the nature and character of God (organizations don't always)

Respond allows us to consider

Answers vs. solutions- a while ago we touched on this.

The immediate (reaction) is to look for answers – short-term fixes – super tricky trim

The response allows us to seek solutions – long-term plans that bring about a proper result

Let's look at both the horizontal and vertical responses to this.

The Horizontal response – what does this mean for me and how do I live it out with my fellow man?

What is my responsibility

It means that I think about how my reactions effect those around me.

Flying off the handle in fits of anger and rage – language unbecoming –not exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (love-joy-peace-patience-kindness-self control-goodness- faithfulness-gentleness) are often defaults that have crept into my life.

Consider that in every situation God is in it somewhere and it is my job to find Him.

Sometimes we see Him immediately, other times it takes 20+ years.

The Vertical response – what does it mean for me in my relationship to God

What is God's responsibility

God promises us HOPE AND A FUTURE – not in this present time, but for eternity

Thank God for how He made us with the ability to respond and not just react.

God sent Jesus to show the way – how can I look like Jesus?

Questions

Are there ways that I can be more aware of responding not reacting?

How can I look more like Jesus daily?