

When Your Spouse Hurts You, Try These 4 Spirit-Fueled Responses

You will be wounded in your marriage. It's not a question of *if*, but *when* your spouse hurts you.

But the more important question is: What will you do next?

Two sinners becoming one in the covenant of marriage is a setup for pain. Always. Without exception. If one or both of you have not been following God's ways, the pain that comes is likely to be much more destructive. If you did your homework and both you and your spouse are seeking to be the people God wants you to be, the pain will be much less, but it will still be there.

But remember that there is a difference between hurt and harm. The dentist who drills the cavity in your tooth to prepare for a filling may hurt you, but he is not harming you.

When your spouse hurts you, your natural response may be to lash out in anger or to isolate and withdraw. Instead, look at these aspects of the situation, and be more intentional about how you respond and what you do next.

1. Evaluate the wound.

Reasonably evaluating how you are affected will be important. Let the emotions cool down, and assess the damage. How bad is it, really?

A huge amount of the "stuff" that irritates you in marriage is likely to be "small stuff;" ways in which your personality is different from your spouse, missing expectations and so on. Growing up, you learned ways of doing life that you never thought about, and those are very different from your spouse's

ways.

Parts of you are vulnerable. Life happened to you for years before you married, and those old wounds will heighten your response when your spouse acts in certain ways. Your own responses to your spouse may also make things worse.

You may need some outside perspective to help you see things realistically. Ignoring or minimizing truly destructive behavior is unwise and unhealthy. Abuse happens! But focusing on a “speck” in your spouse’s eye while the “log” is still in your own is also unhealthy (Luke 6:42).

2. Look at your spouse’s heart.

This is such a critical piece to understand.

Some people feel so desperate for love that they overlook truly destructive behavior, or blame themselves for their spouse’s truly harmful words or actions. “It’s not that bad. If I hadn’t provoked him/her, he/she wouldn’t have become angry (or cheated on me or whatever).”

Other people expect their spouse to meet all their needs, read their minds and overlook their faults while responding perfectly at all times. When the husband doesn’t pay enough attention, or the wife is not interested in sex often enough, they see themselves as devastatingly harmed.

Yes, God designed husband and wife to be connected—physically, emotionally and spiritually. But it makes a huge difference whether your spouse is acting out of an evil heart or from a place of being distracted, tired or overwhelmed. Ask God to show you His perspective—on your own heart and your spouse’s heart.

3. Seek resolution.

Decide right now that you will no longer look to your spouse to fulfill your deepest needs that only God Himself can fill.

Learn to feed yourself; look for and choose to take into your being the healthy godly mental/emotional/spiritual nourishment you need.

And then work to strengthen the relationship with your spouse. (If your spouse has an evil heart, get some help! You may need to get away.)

Ignoring the problem or trying to manipulate your spouse into doing what you want never works. Learn to have those difficult conversations. Stretch yourself to be vulnerable (as long as your spouse is not actively destructive). Take the time to listen. Set boundaries if you need to.

The important thing here is to focus on building the relationship.

4. Grow!

Regardless of how you get wounded in your marriage, God wants to use that to grow you. In my own marriage, that included learning what was most important, how to talk about difficult things and loving unselfishly. It also meant learning to accept love in ways I had not previously experienced.

How might God want to grow you through your marriage? What wounds from your past are being triggered by your spouse's behavior? Where do you need to seek healing yourself?

What might you need to learn? To let some things go? To trust your own intuition more? To listen? To be vulnerable? To be courageous? To allow yourself to be loved? To love unselfishly? To set healthy boundaries? To function as an adult? To trust God with things you can't control?

And there could be many more things you might need to learn in marriage. Most of the time, we only learn and grow when something is painful. Don't minimize your pain, but do use it to learn and grow.

Your Turn: *It's certain you have been hurt by your spouse. What have you done next? Has your response been healthy? What kind of response are you going to choose next? {eo}*

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

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