

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

"Part XVII: Renewing Household Marriages: Addressing Roadblocks - Overcoming Irresponsible Spouse Trials"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The Waterbury Republican-American insert, "Today's Woman" (May 13, 1997) ran a story of a woman named "Jackie" who came from a broken home. So hurt was she from this event, that Jackie ever after expected disappointment as a norm in her life in order to keep her hopes from being set up too high lest she be hurt.

Eventually, Jackie met a wonderful man, Mitchell, a 32 year old doctor who was all she would ever want in a spouse. After a whirlwind romance, they were married and started out happily together.

However, due to her old fears of letting her hopes get up too high, Jackie became afraid, and started pulling back from her emotional ties with Mitchell. After a year of trying to cool the relationship, Mitchell finally tired of the "new" Jackie's unappetizing coolness, and divorced her!

Jackie admitted to columnist, Cheryl Lavin that "I was probably so afraid of being disappointed myself -- would this great guy leave me, let me down, etc. -- that I fended off what I probably viewed as inevitable disappointment by breaking off the relationship before he could. I guess you could say I shot myself in the foot to protect myself from somebody else shooting me there."

Fear of somebody else dropping the ball of responsibility had made Jackie herself irresponsible as a defense mechanism.

What's the solution to such fear-induced irresponsibility?!

(2) A letter to Abigail Van Buren of the "Dear Abby" column reported a terrible ordeal for a woman named Donna from Hilltown, Pennsylvania. She wrote that her husband, Lee of 10 years, due to work-related stresses, suddenly up and left her for another woman, her girlfriend! Donna was left with their fourth child, a 3-week-old infant suffering from mononucleosis. She lost 47 pounds, got hooked on downers, so Lee had Donna committed to a mental hospital!

What can counter such heartless spousal irresponsibility?

(3) Though these are extreme examples, they nevertheless represent cases similar to what we all see exist around us on a regular basis! I can assume from conversations over the years that almost everyone in our audience knows of associates in such straits.

What can change the irresponsible spouse? What is the responsible, OPPRESSED spouse supposed to do to SURVIVE?

(We turn to the "Need" section of the message . . .)

Need: "Though I am committed to doing MY part to making my marriage work, my SPOUSE is irresponsible: he or she doesn't uphold his end of the arrangement because he doesn't want to or doesn't feel ABLE to do so or some such reason. Please HELP!!!"

- I. **Whether one is lazy OR fearful of failing were he to assume spousal responsibility, from analyzing Scripture's teaching, we can tell that the CAUSE of spousal irresponsibility is SIN!**
 - A. On the one hand, **respect for God** makes one a **responsible** spouse:
 1. In the case of a male spouse, **respect for God** leads to obedience, with resulting blessings in his marriage and family life, Ps. 128:1-4:
 - a. Psalm 128 addresses the welfare of a **male** human at the height of his powers through use of the word, **geber** in verse 4 (Biblia Hebraica, p. 1090; Theol. Wordbook of the O.T., vol. I, p. 148).
 - b. It teaches that such a man, married with children, is blessed by God as he respects God to the point of obeying Him!
 2. As for the female spouse, **respect for God** leads to obedience, with resulting blessings in her marriage and family life, Pr. 31:10-31: Solomon summarizes that what makes a woman "virtuous" versus being vain is her quality of respecting the Lord, Pr. 31:30.
 - B. Conversely then, **IRRESPONSIBILITY** in a spouse comes from a **lack of respect for God: BOTH** (a) laziness **AND** (b) fear of failing that leads to irresponsible living arise from such disrespect as follows:
 1. A lack of respect for God with a prideful, selfish outlook naturally explains the presence of blatant laziness in spousal irresponsibility.
 2. Yet, fear of failing that leads to irresponsibility as a spouse is also caused by a lack of fearing God as follows:
 - a. When one is **afraid** to **assume** spousal responsibility, he in effect **doubts** the ability of **GOD** to **use him** as an effective spouse, and such **doubt** arises from of a **small** view of **GOD**!
 - b. For such **fear**, Jesus **corrected** Peter in Matthew 14:26-32!
- II. **By the same token, getting upset at HAVING an irresponsible spouse is also the SAME SIN: such irritation reveals a lack of faith that God is big enough to work His will in one's life in spite of the blockading irresponsibility of the OTHER party in the marriage!**

III. Thus, irresponsible spouse trials are overcome by handling SIN:

- A. Since all have sinned due to Adam's fall (Romans 5:12), all must believe in Christ for salvation from sin, John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:17.
- B. Once saved, one is indwelt by the Holy Spirit Who equips him to live a godly life if he depends on that Spirit, Rom. 8:9b; Ga. 5:16-23.
- C. Then, (a) confessing acts of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) relying on the Spirit for behavior control (Gal. 5:16-23) to (c) obey God's commands (1 Jn. 2:2-6) equips one to **be able** to handle irresponsible spouse trials.
- D. **Specifically**, various parties must apply Scriptures as follows for help:
 1. Irresponsible spouses with arrogant, lazy attitudes must realize that we must all give an account to a God Who fiercely judges sin (Hebrews 12:29) and respect Him to obey His Word, Ex. 20:18-20.
 2. Irresponsible spouses with unbelief in God's ability to use them must realize that we must all give an account to a God who fiercely judges the sin of unbelief in His power to use us (Heb. 12:29; 2 Cor. 4:7). Thus, out of fear of judgment for **not** trusting God, step out on faith in His Word or face His discipline (Hebrews 4:1)!
 3. For those wed to irresponsible spouses, God has directives via case studies: (We have additional notes on these studies upon request)
 - a. Case One - 2 Kings 4:8-17, 18-37 reveals that God will encourage us and provide for our needs if our irresponsible spouse (the Shunammite woman's husband) lets us down.
 - b. Case Two - 2 Kings 8:1-6 reveals that God will supply all of our livelihood needs if the "breadwinner" doesn't come through: God provided **retroactively for 7 years** for the Shunammite woman with a "weak" husband though she was to stay in Philistia those years, and that through the **last** parties she would expect to want to help her -- judged Gehazi, Elisha's "fired" servant, and king Jehoram, son of wicked Ahab, the belligerent enemy of Elijah!!
 - c. Thus, **if God wants us to achieve or to live a certain way, He will "force-feed" events to make room for us to obey Him!**
 - d. Thus, spouses wed to irresponsible parties must **also** fear divine accountability and believe God's power to have their needs met!

Application: As irresponsibility is caused by SIN, (1) **FEAR** God and (2) **BELIEVE** on His Son, Jesus Christ for new life and power. (3) **Then, no matter our marital condition, use the many resources He offers to "carry" us to fulfill our role in relating to our spouse!**

Lesson: God is (a) **BIGGER** than US if we are an irresponsible spouse due to laziness, (b) **BIGGER** than our **WEAKNESS** if we are irresponsible due to fear of failure were we to **TRY** being responsible, and (c) **BIGGER** than the irresponsible spouse if we suffer as the innocent spouse. Thus, **RESPECT** God and adjust thereupon to our area of need!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the lesson . . .)

When James Braga was born to American parents living in China before the land went under communist rule, he grew up in a home where a ruthless father returned only occasionally. When he did come home, another child was born, and he would then leave and work off on the distant railroads of China.

James' father was a staunch adherent to the local parochial school system, and made the children all go there. The beliefs taught were errant, but the children had no choice but to attend!

However, James' mother was a godly believer, and she was very concerned about the theological error her children were learning in this errant parochial school. Desiring to function as best she could in a very difficult marriage with an irresponsible spouse, she came up with what she felt was her only possible recourse: James recalled that his mother would ask him every day when he returned from the parochial school what he had learned for that day. When James told his mother, she would correct any theological error he had been told earlier in the day. James thus became a convert to faith in Christ and grew strong in his faith amidst the backdrop of overcoming theological error.

Eventually, James wrote a tract that permeated China with the Gospel though it had been taken over by the communist forces.

James Braga came to teach Bible Study Methods, the art of how to study the Bible, at the Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, Oregon. This then elderly gentleman was one of my teachers who showed me a vibrant, kind, deep love of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word that he had learned at the knee of a very oppressed, godly mother in faraway China!

There is a clearing in the woods of marital trials for those with irresponsible spouses, a clearing that God provides for the godly who but seek His fellowship and leading. Mrs. Braga found it two generations ago in China, and her little son, James partook of the benefits of it at his godly mother's knee. Thousands of Chinese and hundreds of trained Bible teachers in America since have been blessed because of it!

Look to the Lord for victory over irresponsible spousal trials! He will provide -- He always does!