

Week 4

Significance Of the Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse in Marriage

Current research has demonstrated that the success or failure of marriages can be predicted with 96% accuracy. Astonishingly, the first three minutes of a fight can be used to predict who will still be married and who will be divorced six years later. What is so obvious as to tip us off that a marriage is in desperate straits in the first three minutes of a fight?

First, couples need to hit a certain ratio of positive to negative interactions during conflict, in order to have a successful marriage. That ratio is five positive interactions for every negative interaction. Hit the rewind button on your life and think back to your latest argument. Was there *any* positivity involved?

Interestingly, most divorcing couples exhibit a .8/1 positive to negative ratio of behaviors while fighting. In other words, more bad things are happening than good.

Second, couples who exhibited four key behaviors, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Criticism, Defensiveness, Contempt, and Stonewalling), are likely to divorce an average of five years after their wedding day. For more comprehensive explanations of the Four Horsemen, please see last week's column.

At the other end of the spectrum from the couples who have toxic styles of conflict are those who have little to no conflict. Ironically, these couples usually divorce 15 years after their wedding day.

Once again, conflict, if done well, offers the opportunity for connection, which is what all couples desire. Therefore, neither poor conflict, nor the complete absence of conflict, offer what is most needed in marriage. Join us next week to learn about the types of conflict we experience.

I am available for any questions or concerns.