



SANCTUARY

A Simple Guide for the Complex Shift

By Tyson & Jules Morlet

What is Sanctuary

Sanctuary is one of those battle strategies that really helped get Jules and I into an offensive stature when it comes to the wounds and hurts that we are not only unpacking from childhood, but even from wounds that we accumulate through the marriage. I wanted to go more in depth, here, on how to do it.

My prayer is that this intentional time each week would set you up to learn the skills of communication and conflict that are necessary to defeat our enemy and set up our legacies for a future of wealth and wisdom.

The First Three Steps

1. Set a Time

The first step is deciding it's time to implement something like sanctuary. Again, if you are experiencing conflict on date night, side comments at bed time, and are feeling that slow drift begin to take place, then it might be time.

Gently nudge your spouse, "I heard about this thing called Sanctuary. It's us taking an intentional time each week to talk about real things that we're going through. What do you think?" Once you have explained it, tip toed into it, or straight pulled the bait and switch (wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove) the next step is finding an hour for that very first one.

The first one is gonna be one of the hardest, so you need a place that is quiet and free of distraction. (Read it again.)

You also might need a place with natural breaks in the awkward silence that might ensue. I recommend a nice restaurant that doesn't serve alcohol (won't help to numb here). The cadence of the server visiting for drink orders, then food, might be the natural cycle that helps move the conversation along.

2. Where to Start

Sanctuary starts before you get there. You've collected offenses from your spouse over the past week. Some of those offense have illuminated past hurts and opened old wounds. Here's the thing about Sanctuary. You have got to be willing to leave them better than they were when you bring them up at Sanctuary.

The concept of Sanctuary only works if your heart is ready to heal and move forward. This means that while you are biting your tongue throughout the week looking forward to Sanctuary, you need to be allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through those wounds. Let Him gently do what He does and begin the healing process.

Pray through them. Journal about them (Hey, I don't journal, but I admire those who have found that outlet). Talk through them with the safe people you and your spouse have picked. There's this lie that when something offends us we have to

voice it. This just isn't true. What I have found is that most of the things that offend us won't even make it to sanctuary because they just really aren't that important.

There are some offenses that need to be voiced but you're not ready to bring them out without anger and some really nasty stuff coming out. This is also okay, as long as you are processing them with God and with those safe people in your life. The goal here is to make sure that bitterness is not starting to take root. Bitterness is one of the greatest weapons of the enemy to disarm the marriage from the inside out.

When you voice it at Sanctuary it needs to have gone through the process with Jesus of rooting out the bitterness and the Holy Spirit's work of prepping the wound for healing. If you do the work, you will see the fruit.

Okay, you found a place, you've picked a time, you've sat at the table, the water has been served, and now the awkward silence is settling in. Now what?

I usually start the process by asking one simple question: "What's on your list?" I've done the soul work on my stuff, I've prepared my heart to receive what my spouse might say, and so I am ready to hear what she's got. Defensiveness has no place here. She's not talking to hurt me, and even if she is (because she's broken just like I am) that's no excuse for me not to absorb that in this moment and make sure that this stays a safe place to bring offenses. Sometimes this is going to turn into a fight. **That's okay.** Fight fair. Volley back and

forth and try and move towards resolution. Even if you make it a step further than you were, then it is so worth it.

3. How to End

Pay the bill and leave. The bill to me is my favorite part of sanctuary. It's such a good reminder that what happened here has finality and purpose. I don't take the bill with me when I leave. It doesn't cling to me any longer. The debt is no longer owed or necessary. It has been paid in full and I intentionally leave it behind.

It's the same with the work we just did. Those things said and felt had their place and they don't need to come with me. The debt has been paid in full and I can freely leave it behind. Set it down. No matter how heavy or hard that hour was, you can set it down. And if that is just too hard, guess what? You have another sanctuary coming next week where you can pick that crap up and sift through it again.

This intentional hour doesn't work if it just keeps coming up in every crevice of your life throughout the week. I understand that this a discipline that has to be learned and a skill to be sharpened. Work together by gently reminding each other. I use the language, "Can this wait for sanctuary?" In that moment, I'm not downplaying it, or discarding it—I am communicating that this thing is so important that I want to put it in its right place where I am ready and fixed on working on it.

Kiss your spouse. Grab their hand and walk out. You did the work, it was hard, and for that I admire your courage, and you should admire it in each other.

What To Do Next

The Aftermath

There are going to be those Sanctuaries where you walk away with a sense of wonder and awe at the fruit God has brought to your marriage. Relish those and enjoy those seasons, but remember, winter is coming. Life comes in seasons and so does your marriage. You are going to have Sanctuaries that are pure conflict; a big ol' fight with hushed yelling while the waitress fills your water glass. This is okay. Remember the words of Paul, "Be angry, but sin not."

The key here is that when the bill is paid, the fight is over. Put it on hold and sift through it back in the secret place of your heart. Find your safe people and wrestle through the argument with a heart that is ready to hear where you might be in error. If you're doing this right, then by the time the next sanctuary comes around I'd be willing to bet that you are filled with excitement and anticipation at what God might do to move the needle even more in that conflict. If you can develop and keep this heart stature, Sanctuary will become a fountain of blessing and a well-fortified defense for your marriage.

Choose Safe People

Once a few Sanctuaries stack up it might be time to approach the conversation about your "safe people."

Safe people are the people that you can trust to point you back to your spouse when you're in conflict. These are people, and this is key, *that your spouse also trusts to hear the dirty laundry and commit to being part of the solution.*

My wife has a best friend, Christina, who I trust implicitly to help Jules healthy vent, but who I know will point her back to me and help us build the legacy that we are committed to building. I know that when Jules goes to Christina our marriage can only get stronger. This is a safe person.

I think it's paramount that these are people that you've both agreed upon, so that your marriage would be safeguarded on all sides. Your spouse will recognize "friends" who will only regurgitate your own view back to you, or even worse, support your confirmation biases and actually make things worse. You need good friends, who like Solomon says, are willing to wound with the truth, so that your marriage might be healed: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."¹

You also want friends who are rich in wisdom. Jesus says this amazing statement, "when the blind lead the blind, both fall into a pit!"² Gathering to yourself wiser and older safe people will ensure the success of your marriage. When looking for your safe people, find people that are doing this well, not just those who are closest to you. Jules and I both have a few older safe couples that we can vent to, as well as safe peers we can vent to, for in the mouth of many counselors is wisdom³.

This is a Battle Strategy

Remember, this is a battle strategy. *It's not weakness to need outlets to vent.* It's not weakness to need an intentional time to channel conflict. It's wisdom. It is being aware of the enemy's tactics, and beating him at his own game.

He means for conflict to be the place where your relationship disintegrates, but Jesus would see it become the place that solidifies your love and devotion to each other, and pushes you to become naked and without shame!

¹ Proverbs 27:6 KJV

² Matthew 15:4 ESV

³ Proverbs 11:14, 15:22